

***Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia: Money Politics, Patronage and Clientelism at the Grassroots***

EDWARD ASPINALL and MADA SUKMAJATI, eds.

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A central theme in the debate regarding Indonesian politics after democratization concerns its underlying logic. Democracy *qua* institution promises a heightened mobilizational power of the *demos*, and thus some scholars argue the salience of political participation in contemporary Indonesian politics. The implication is that institutional logic underpins post-New Order Indonesia (Pepinsky and Ford 2014). Some other scholars, however, propose that democracy does not necessarily come with such empowerment of the people. The institutional effect of democracy can go hand in hand with oligarchy, defined as a form of politics where wealth defense is its central motive (Winters 2011). The financially endowed few, who wield disproportionate material power to protect their oftentimes non-democratic interest, can hijack democracy in this kind of politics (Hadiz and Robison 2004; Winters 2011). Indonesia after democratization, according to this camp of scholars, is one such case of entanglement between oligarchy and democracy. Not surprisingly, accompanying the presence of competitive elections since 1999 in Indonesia is the recurrent reference to “money politics,” especially at the local level (see, for example, Erb and Sulistyanto 2009).

The central contribution of Edward Aspinall and Mada Sukmajati’s edited volume is its pioneering effort to clarify such so-called money politics. More specifically, this remarkable book describes the varieties of electoral strategies that involve the distribution of material benefits as well as the central mechanism through which politicians wield their material power to win an election. These themes have arguably been neglected in the literature despite the abundant references to money politics in Indonesia.

The authors of the book operationalize money politics into concepts such as patronage and clientelism and scrutinize voter-politician linkages during Indonesia’s 2014 legislative election. Patronage is defined as the material benefit politicians distribute to voters in exchange for political support in the form of votes. Relatedly, clientelism is defined as a personalistic relationship within which that material benefit is distributed. Patronage distribution must meet three additional requirements, however, to qualify as clientelism. These requirements are: (i) reciprocity on the part of voters in the form of political support, (ii) the hierarchy of power relations between politicians and voters, and (iii) iteration, understood as the ongoing nature of their relationship (pp. 3–4).

With the distinction drawn between patronage and clientelism and their relationship made explicit, it is possible to conceive that not all patronage distributions qualify as clientelistic. Some are not clientelistic since not all patronage is reciprocated by political support in the form of votes. Also, very few practices of patronage distribution are built upon personalistic, face-to-face interaction between voters and candidates. Even fewer such distributions develop into ongoing relation-

ships. These tensions inherent in patronage distribution, especially one regarding achieving reciprocity on the part of voters, are well captured by the analytical purchase of the two concepts. In addition, the two concepts enable us to ask empirical questions such as: What are the strategies that politicians employ to ensure reciprocity from voters? This excellent conceptual groundwork of the book serves as the foundation for a set of 22 empirical chapters documenting dynamics of patronage distribution during the 2014 election campaign. The rich and textured narratives in each chapter speak volumes about the rigorous ethnographic method the authors employ. Unifying all these chapters are several key findings that compose the primary value of the book.

First, the book codifies the varieties of patronage found during the grassroots campaigns. Of all possible forms of patronage, outright vote buying is the most common. A set of chapters covering West, Central, and East Java (Chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16) mainly document vote buying in remarkable detail, including the social legitimacy accorded to it by voters. Despite its illegality, voters accept the practice of vote buying and take it as either an expression of gratitude on the part of candidates or a means to punish their alleged corrupt behavior (pp. 245–247). The terms utilized to euphemize the distribution of money are numerous, including *uang makan* (food money), *uang pulsa* (money for mobile phone credit), *uang lelah* (literally “tired money,” meaning money to compensate for labor performed), and *uang transport* (transport money) (p. 93). This set of chapters is a novel contribution to the empirical literature on Indonesian electoral politics. Other varieties of patronage that the book registers include individual gifts to voters in the form of consumables and merchandise bearing the name and image of candidates, community services such as free medical checkups, club goods such as donations to targeted communities, and pork barrel projects.

Second, the book demonstrates that patronage distribution is not merely one among many campaign strategies of candidates in the 2014 legislative election. It is *the* dominant mode of campaigning. All chapters register the practice of patronage distribution as the dominant strategy, with only a few candidates trying to refrain from engaging in this practice. Even those candidates who pledge not to buy votes end up distributing some form of patronage (see Chapter 18 by Ahmad Muhajir, covering South Kalimantan). It is, therefore, largely a question of what kind of patronage candidates distribute rather than whether candidates engage in patronage distribution at all.

Third, the central mechanism of distributing patronage in Indonesia is dominantly informal networks of vote brokers rather than party machines. This intermediary actor between voters and politicians is commonly referred to as *tim sukses*, or success team. The informal networks of *tim sukses* are preferable to party machines since they often have close personal relationships with voters. These close relationships between *tim sukses* and voters elicit trust as well as “the feeling of gratitude and obligation” that helps mitigate the problem of reciprocity after patronage distribution (p. 29).

As the introduction of this review has mentioned above, the entanglement of democracy and oligarchy is a central theme in contemporary Indonesian politics, which this book helps to clarify.

The cases of Blora and Southeast Sulawesi, for example, demonstrate that local oligarchs, or politico-business elites, are the dominant players in the election game (see Chapter 15 by Zusiana Elly Triantini, and Chapter 20 by Eve Warburton). In the case of Blora, they are *the very actors* that introduced vote buying in the 2004 legislative election. A decade after, vote buying had become an established practice in Blora (p. 252). *Sabet*, a local term in Blora for brokers, are the actors helping local oligarchs as candidates distributing patronage. This patronage might take the form of goods, cash, or even services such as holding a local volleyball competition (pp. 252–253).

Intensity of patronage distribution, however, does not guarantee victory to candidates. As Eve Warburton demonstrates in her excellent chapter on Southeast Sulawesi, a materially powerful local oligarch could lose despite the huge amount of money he distributed days before the election (pp. 348, 358–360). In the context of various candidates employing a similar strategy of patronage distribution, the strength of local networks that brokers mobilize makes a difference. Vote buying alone cannot guarantee victory since the amount of money that candidates wield to win an election does not necessarily correspond to the number of votes they project to gain. Candidates always get fewer votes than they initially expect. Thus, only candidates that have both money and active networks, or *basis*, come up victorious.

The book explicitly limits its aim to presenting descriptive accounts of the dynamics of patronage distribution. However, it is not without opportunities for theory building. These opportunities, unfortunately, are left unexploited and are only suggested as a further research avenue (pp. 34–37). For example, consider the following theoretical questions regarding the organizing logic underlying the distribution of patronage. Under a condition of the uncertainty of where and to whom to distribute patronage, what explains the decision of brokers to target a specific demographic and not others? Relatedly, under the condition of multiple patronage distribution from various candidates, what explains the decision of voters to cast votes for certain candidates and not others? It seems that ethnicity and religion play a significant role in answering these two related questions, as the cases of the legislative election in Medan and Bangka Belitung suggest (see Chapters 4 and 5 respectively). Brokers in the two regions tend to distribute patronage to targeted religious or ethnic groups that share their candidates' ethnic or religious background. This strategy of ethno-religious targeting (pp. 74–77) is intended to ensure victory in areas that demonstrate potential as their voter base. Similarly, voters in the two regions in the context of patronage distribution by several candidates tend to cast their votes for candidates who share their religious or ethnic background.

This minor comment regarding a possible addition to the book should by no means be taken as discounting the value of the book. Aspinall and Sukmajati's edited volume undoubtedly is a major empirical contribution to the study of Indonesian democracy as well as patronage and clientelism in the context of developing countries. Students of Indonesian electoral politics will engage and build their work upon this pioneering volume.

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***Yearning to Belong: Malaysia's Indian Muslims, Chitties, Portuguese Eurasians, Peranakan Chinese and Baweanese***

PATRICK PILLAI

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What are the experiences of ethnic minority communities in present-day Malaysia? How do they negotiate their often multiple and fluid identities with national policies and politics that are based primarily on ethnicity? Patrick Pillai, drawing on years of fieldwork in different locations in Peninsular Malaysia and long-term interactions with ethnic communities, provides valuable observations on not one, but five cases of less-studied minority communities in *Yearning to Belong: Malaysia's Indian Muslims, Chitties, Portuguese Eurasians, Peranakan Chinese and Baweanese*. This book investigates Indian Muslims in Penang, Chitties and Portuguese Eurasians in Malacca, Peranakan-type Chinese in Terengganu, and Indonesians from Bawean Island, all in one volume. This itself is an admirable achievement as such a variety often comes from an edited volume by multiple contributors, yet Pillai manages to pull them all together, assembling historical backgrounds, second literatures, and firsthand data to create a panoramic picture of ethnic relationships in Malaysia today.

We start with the first group, Indian Muslims in Penang, in Chapter 1. After a brief history covering the precolonial and colonial eras, the chapter looks at the religious and cultural impacts of this long-standing Muslim community on Malaysian society, in the form of religious buildings, political leadership, and intellectual influence as well as aspects of everyday life such as food and language. It then focuses on the identity challenge of the community, which finds itself in an awkward position being Muslim yet not ethnic Malay (although the constitutional definition of Malay itself is not strictly an ethnic one). Due to this ethnic ambiguity, Indian Muslims are often