

Negotiating Tradition in Local Democracy: A Case Study of the Civic Culture of the Tengger Tribe in the Mount Bromo Region

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ABSTRACT

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The current democratic crisis is characterized by declining integrity of political elites, increasing social polarization, digital disinformation, declining engagement of young citizens, and weak public integrity of young citizens. Based on this framework, this study aims to shape the democratic character of young citizens through a civic culture approach that utilizes local cultural wisdom as a source of civic pedagogy. This research method is qualitative, using a case study approach in the Tengger ethnic community in the Mount Bromo area. The results show that the cultural practices of the Tengger ethnic community represent a civic culture that is effective in fostering social trust, empathy, collective participation, and moral integrity. The integration of these values into civic education through experiential learning and community interaction has been proven to strengthen the formation of the democratic character of young citizens. The noble values of the Tengger community, such as honesty, tolerance, mutual cooperation, social harmony, adherence to customary norms, and ecological spirituality, have a strong blend with civic character. Civic culture based on local wisdom has been proven to strengthen the democratic character of citizens, foster collective awareness, and build a civic identity embedded in the nation's culture. The conclusion of this study is that civic culture serves as a strategic foundation for developing inclusive, ethical, and sustainable young citizens. The implications of this research emphasize the need to reorient civic education policy toward a cultural-participatory approach and the utilization of local culture as a national and local democratic value.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of global democracy over the past two decades has demonstrated fundamental ambivalence. On the one hand, citizens' formal political participation has become increasingly open through electoral mechanisms, digital technology, and civil liberties. However, on the other hand, the quality of democracy is experiencing a democratic crisis marked by the

declining integrity of political elites, increasing social polarization, digital disinformation, declining engagement among young citizens, and weak public integrity among young citizens. This phenomenon demonstrates that the problem of democracy lies not solely in the structure of political institutions, but also in aspects of political culture. Civic education has tended to teach democracy conceptually, without understanding it in terms of the democratic culture of citizens. The concept of citizenship emphasizes cultural citizenship as the ability of citizens to maintain cultural identity, access spaces for expression, and participate in the production of social meaning through education, media, and everyday practices (Miller, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2007). Cultural citizenship extends from political and economic rights to symbolic recognition, identity, and collective dignity (Pakulski, 1997; Turner, 2001).

The character development of young citizens has become a central issue in the current discourse on civic education. The character of young citizens today is characterized by declining empathy, weakening national identity, and increasing individualism due to globalization and digitalization (Hoskins & Mascherini, 2009; Print & Lange, 2013). Theoretically, civic culture concerns not only cultural recognition but also the process of subject-making through social practices and public policies (Ong et al., 1996; Ong, 2013). Citizenship is a learning process in which individuals develop democratic capacities through cultural interactions, not simply legal status (Delanty, 2002, 2003). This perspective is reinforced by Stevenson (2001, 2003, 2014), who emphasizes that culture provides the moral infrastructure for cosmopolitan democracy, while Beaman (2016) and Pawley (2008) demonstrate that cultural identity is the actual basis for citizens' public participation. Everyday creative practices can also be a form of civic engagement (Burgess et al., 2006; Goode, 2010; Hull et al., 2010). Civic culture is understood as a set of values, attitudes, and orientations of citizens toward the socio-political system that underpin democratic stability (Almond & Verba, 1963). Civic culture is now understood not only institutionally but also as the lived culture of citizens formed through social experiences, traditions, and local wisdom (Dalton & Welzel, 2014).

Civic cultural approaches still focus on issues of migration, minorities, or multicultural societies in Western countries (Flores, 1998; Zapata-Barrero, 2016; Reijerse et al., 2013). Meanwhile, exploring local culture or traditional communities can be a source of civic character formation. In fact, societies with

practices of communal solidarity, deliberation, and mutual cooperation hold great potential as laboratories of democracy. This gap demands a new approach to Civics Education, one that utilizes cultural wisdom as the foundation for developing the democratic character of young citizens. The integration of cultural values in Civics Education has the potential to transform procedural learning into a more meaningful cultural approach. Indonesia, as a pluralistic nation, possesses a rich cultural heritage that has the potential to become a source for developing democratic character. One indigenous community that consistently upholds local values is the Tengger Tribe in the Mount Bromo area. The Tengger people are known for their peaceful, tolerant, honest, and strong culture of maintaining harmony between humans, nature, and God. The traditions of mutual cooperation, deliberation, interfaith tolerance, and ecological responsibility that exist within indigenous communities demonstrate that civic practices often predate formalization by the state. This culture not only fosters social cohesion but also fosters civic dispositions, namely empathy, integrity, and participation.

Based on this background, this study aims to develop a conceptual framework for developing the democratic character of young citizens based on civic culture. This research is important for formulating a strategy for forming the character of young citizens based on civic culture rooted in the local wisdom of the Tengger people. The literature on civic culture places culture as the primary foundation for shaping citizens' democratic character. This concept stems from Almond & Verba (1963), who viewed civic culture as a set of values, attitudes, and orientations toward the political system that underpin democratic stability. This concept is expanded through the perspective of cultural citizenship, which emphasizes that citizenship is not simply a legal status but a socio-cultural process formed through experience, cultural practices, and social interactions (Delanty, 2002; Ong, 2013). The literature also demonstrates that civic character formation is not simply achieved through the transfer of formal knowledge but requires the internalization of values through meaningful social practices, such as solidarity, participation, and collective responsibility.

Furthermore, various studies confirm that integrating local cultural values into civic education can strengthen civic disposition (Branson, 1999). Previous studies have shown that cultural practices such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, and social tolerance are concrete forms of deliberative democracy that exist within society. This perspective aligns with civic community theory

(Putnam, 2000), which emphasizes the importance of social capital in the form of trust, norms of reciprocity, and social networks in supporting the quality of democracy. Furthermore, the normative citizenship practices approach (Boele van Hensbroek, 2010) demonstrates that everyday community practices can serve as a means of civic learning without having to be formalized in state policy.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach to explore in depth the dynamics of local tradition and democracy negotiations in the formation of democratic character of young citizens through the civic culture practices of the Tenggerese people in the Mount Bromo area. A case study is a qualitative research strategy in which researchers deeply explore a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals within a specific time and activity constraints through detailed and in-depth data collection from various information sources (Creswell, 2013). The research subjects included Tenggerese youth, traditional leaders, local educators, and village officials selected through purposive and snowball sampling to capture variations in generational and structural perspectives. Data were collected through participatory observation of traditional activities and village forums, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and document analysis (village regulations, traditional archives, and local educational materials). Data validity was maintained through source and technique triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail to ensure the credibility and dependability of the findings. The analysis was conducted thematically through a process of data reduction, categorization, and interpretation of meaning in order to identify patterns of negotiation between traditional values such as communal harmony, deliberation, and the sanctity of custom with modern democratic principles such as participation, deliberation, and equality.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Civic education based on local culture increases the effectiveness of character formation (Zembylas, 2017; Kennedy, 2019). Young citizens face complex challenges such as digital disinformation, social polarization, instant culture, and the degradation of public ethics (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). Uncontextualized character education tends to fail to shape authentic civic awareness (Biesta, 2011). Civic culture functions as a space for internalizing values, not simply the transfer of normative knowledge. Almond & Verba (1963)

emphasized that democracy depends not only on political institutions but also on a civic culture that supports public participation, trust, and responsibility. Based on the elements of Civic Education, civic culture consists of 1) civic knowledge, 2) civic skills, and 3) civic disposition (character and attitudes toward citizenship) (Banks, 2017; Schulz et al., 2018). The civic disposition element is the most influential element on the sustainability of democracy, as it concerns internal values such as tolerance, empathy, justice, and social concern (Torney-Purta et al., 2015). Civic tolerance is a key indicator of democratic citizenship (Dalton, 2008). The sacred relationship between humans and nature demonstrates the practice of ecological citizenship, which is now a global concern (Dobson, 2007).

Administratively, the Tengger ethnic community is spread across several regencies in East Java (Probolinggo, Pasuruan, Lumajang, and Malang) surrounding the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park (TNBTS). The meaning of this space has a direct impact on social and political ethics: this indigenous community protects the mountain, upholds rituals, and maintains collective order, all of which have binding social consequences. Meanwhile, democracy is often understood as a formal political system structure based on elections and political parties. However, in the practical lives of citizens, democracy also lives through the culture and ethics that shape daily political habits. Indigenous communities provide a democracy that understands local democratic values, namely mutual cooperation, adherence to shared rules, and participation, built not solely through formal procedures but also through culture.

Ecological, cultural, and political spaces are intertwined for the Tenggerese. This is crucial because local democracy is largely determined by three relationships: human relations, community relations, and living space. The Tenggerese, an indigenous community living around the Bromo, Tengger, and Semeru regions, stand out as an example of a mountainous agrarian society that maintains customary institutions, rituals, and cultural authority structures amidst the pressures of modernization and tourism. Mount Bromo Tengger Semeru is the cosmic center of their socio-spiritual life, and Bromo serves as the axis of community identity.

Historically, the origins of the Tenggerese are often told through the legend of Rara Anteng and Joko Seger. The Kasada ritual is held annually to mark the beginning of the Tenggerese tribe. Based on historical and sociological studies, two narrative strands exist: legend and history. The Tengger community has long lived in the area before the Majapahit Kingdom (often dated to around the 13th century CE), and the Kasada tradition is considered to have a long history in cultural memory. They adhere to the Tengger-Hindu religion. The authority of shamans is seen as active inheritors of traditions that determine

cultural resilience. This is where the connection with democracy begins: democracy is not just an institution, but also a community's resilience in the face of external pressures through norms and leadership deemed legitimate.

Based on culture as a system of meaning, culture is not merely a tradition or custom, but rather a web of meaning spun by humans themselves and used as a guide for action (Geertz, 1973). Rituals such as Yadnya Kasada, the leadership structure of traditional shamans, and the practice of deliberation are not merely ceremonial activities, but symbols that produce social order and legitimacy of power. These rituals are often performed at Pura Luhur Poten and the Bromo crater, which are communal moments that activate social ties, customary authority, and the division of social roles across villages. Tengger society can be seen as a community that maintains a model of reality as well as a model for reality; that is, their culture not only represents social reality but also directs how that reality should be experienced. When citizens submit to customary rules or follow deliberation decisions, what is at work is not structural coercion but rather the symbolic belief that the norms are morally valid. This is where cultural democracy is formed, where obedience arises from shared meaning, not merely formal legal sanctions. Tengger deliberation practices can be understood as social rituals that build consensus, not simply technical meetings. The legitimacy of the traditional shaman is strong: he is not just an administrative leader, but a keeper of collective meaning.

Legitimacy in modern democracy is always achieved through elections, while in cultural democracy, legitimacy is produced through social recognition. In Tengger, the position of traditional shaman is not merely a religious figure, but also a node of social legitimacy that regulates collective norms. Studies on Tengger traditional governance show that the customary government structure has levels, for example, Sulinggih, with the traditional shaman at the top, followed by Sanggar, Sepuh, and Legen, as well as a mechanism for regular meetings of the traditional shaman association to discuss the implementation of customary law. This structure demonstrates the existence of internal deliberative institutions, namely meetings, discussions, coordination, and norm-setting that are in line with the spirit of deliberative democracy. One important characteristic of Tengger society is the overlapping authority between the formal village structure (village government) and the customary structure (shaman/customary stakeholders). Hybrid governance means that some affairs are regulated by the village according to state regulations, while others are bound by custom through collective norms. In Ngadisari Village, one of the villages in the Tengger region, Tengger customs form the basis of socio-political life, with village leadership supported by power based on customary order and religious symbols. Village leaders and residents are bound by a system of customary and religious symbols

that make village institutions crucial. There is minimal competition in the village head elections (Pilkades) with a single candidate and the influence of broader political networks. This is crucial for understanding democracy, as it demonstrates strong communal deliberative values, but also the potential for local oligarchy/kinship politics, common in Javanese rural politics.

In indigenous communities, rituals often function as 1) an arena for social consolidation (strengthening our sense of community), 2) an arena for legitimacy (affirming the authority of the ritual leader/shaman), 3) an arena for value education (solidarity, order, obedience, and respect), and 4) an arena for social negotiation (because rituals foster relationships with the government/tourism/conservation authorities). Tenggerese local democracy cannot be assessed solely from electoral procedures; it must be viewed through a three-layered relationship: 1) customary values and norms (regulating obedience, harmony, and agreement), 2) customary authority structures (shamans, elders, meetings), and 3) formal village/state structures (Village Head, BPD, and development regulations). This relationship can foster social stability (because collective norms are binding), but it can also give rise to representational problems (if access to leadership positions is centralized within certain networks). This is where the study of local democracy becomes relevant: democracy is not simply about the presence or absence of elections, but also about the meaningfulness of competition, participation, and accountability at the village level.

Problem-solving within indigenous communities in Indonesia is carried out through deliberation (musyawarah). In the Tengger community, traces of deliberation are evident in various social matters, including family/inheritance matters, land issues, and community disputes. For example, inheritance law stipulates that if a problem arises regarding inheritance distribution, deliberation and consensus are held, attended by community leaders and the local village government. Although this source is a journal article (not a state document), it demonstrates a deliberative pattern consistent with the practice of communal democracy. Deliberation is not simply a gathering procedure, but rather a mechanism for forming decisions deemed fair by the community in deliberative democracy. This democracy involves listening to all stakeholders, referring to shared norms, and leaders (elders/shamans) acting as guardians of legitimacy, not simply winning votes. Consequently, the civic virtue that develops is not only individual freedom but also communal responsibility.

Research findings indicate that the character formation of young citizens based on civic culture is not solely determined by the transfer of formal political knowledge, but is more effectively built through everyday cultural practices that internalize the values of solidarity, social responsibility, and collective

participation. The literature synthesis demonstrates that the cultural citizenship framework positions citizenship as a socio-cultural process, not simply a legal status. Miller (1998, 2001, 2002, 2007) asserts that citizenship is formed through access to cultural practices, media, education, and symbolic representations that enable individuals to become recognized social subjects. Delanty (2003) further views citizenship as a learning process, namely a continuous learning process through cultural interaction. This perspective is reinforced by Ong (1996, 2013), who defines cultural citizenship as subject-making, namely the mechanism for forming civic identity through everyday life experiences.

Empirically and contextually, the socio-cultural practices of the Tenggerese people demonstrate strong civic culture characteristics. Some of the key values identified include: (1) mutual cooperation as communal solidarity, (2) village deliberation as a practice of deliberative democracy, (3) interfaith tolerance as a foundation for social cohesion, and (4) ecological responsibility through traditional rituals such as Yadnya Kasada. These values shape patterns of social interaction that foster trust, collective participation, and moral integrity, known in citizenship literature as civic dispositions.

These findings strengthen the argument that citizenship is both cultural and political. Andrew, Gattinger, and Jeannotte (2005) emphasize that cultural policy needs to be understood as an instrument for building citizens' capacity to participate in the public sphere. In this context, culture is not simply an expression of identity but also an infrastructure of democracy. This perspective aligns with Beaman (2016), who states that citizenship is inherently cultural because public participation is rooted in social experience and collective meaning.

Tengger cultural practices demonstrate that civic culture operates organically. Gotong royong, for example, is not simply collaborative work but a moral education mechanism that fosters empathy and collective responsibility. Within Boele van Hensbroek's (2010) framework, such practices can be understood as normative citizenship practices, namely, everyday actions that embody civic values without having to be formalized as state policy. In other words, citizenship is learned through social experience, not normative instruction.

Citizenship is not understood as assimilation, but rather as the coexistence of identities. The deliberative dimension of Tenggerese social structure reflects what Delanty (2002) calls the cultural public sphere, a discursive space where citizens negotiate and build consensus. This process is synonymous with learning deliberative democracy. Local culture provides a concrete medium for the younger generation to practice democracy directly, rather than simply learn it theoretically. Cultural citizenship enables communities to maintain their

collective identity while simultaneously participating in the nation-state (Flores, 1998; Rosaldo, 1994). The Tenggerese assert that Tenggerese represent this model, maintaining traditional identity without hindering national integration.

Civics education needs to shift from a knowledge transmission model to a cultural participation model. Empirical findings indicate that Tengger practices of 1) mutual cooperation, 2) deliberation, 3) tolerance, and 4) ecological responsibility represent concrete forms of civic culture that produce social habits (*habitus*) of solidarity, trust, and participation. When these values are integrated into civic education through contextual and participatory learning, civic dispositions are formed that become the foundation of the democratic character of the younger generation. Furthermore, civic practices now also take place in the digital realm and everyday creativity (Burgess et al., 2006; Goode, 2010; Hull et al., 2010). However, this research finding shows that before entering the digital realm, the foundation of civic character still rests on face-to-face social culture. This means that technology can expand participation, but basic character is still formed through direct social interaction. Kuttner (2020) emphasized that civic learning needs to position cultural practices as participatory experiences. Findings in Tengger support this view: the values of mutual cooperation, deliberation, and social responsibility have proven more effective in fostering integrity than normative lecture approaches.

Culture serves as a pedagogical space where citizens learn to become citizens. Conceptually, the findings of this study can be formulated into three main propositions. First, cultural citizenship provides a theoretical framework for understanding citizenship as a cultural practice. Second, local civic culture serves as a concrete laboratory for civic character formation. Third, the integration of both in education produces young citizens who are not only politically literate but also possess moral dispositions such as tolerance, empathy, and public responsibility. Theoretically, this model is based on the assumption that citizenship is not merely a legal status or cognitive competence, but rather a process of subject formation through everyday cultural practices. Miller (1998; 2002; 2007) asserts that cultural citizenship operates through access to symbolic practices and social experiences, while Delanty (2003) views citizenship as a learning process. Ong (2013) expands on this concept as subject-making, namely the formation of identity and social responsibility through cultural interaction.

Democracy requires the rule of law. In indigenous communities, the rule of law does not always take the form of written laws, but rather agreed-upon "living law." The Tengger have customary legal institutions that regulate various aspects—including human relations with land and ownership boundaries. A frequently cited example is the restriction on land sales to outsiders. Academic documents on land registration in the Tengger indigenous community of Ngadas

mention norms that restrict land sales to non-residents; outsiders are generally only permitted to lease under certain conditions, and extensions require the approval of the village head. Regardless of the legal details, such norms demonstrate "community sovereignty" over resources and are a form of distributive justice to ensure that land is not alienated from the community. In a democracy, control over resources often determines the quality of participation; communities that lose land often lose political autonomy. However, this also poses the dilemma of modern democracy: how to balance communal rights, individual rights, and national legal certainty. Many studies of Tengger customary law position the relationship between custom and the state as an arena for negotiation, not simply conflict. Thus, democracy in the context of indigenous communities is a democracy that constantly negotiates between local norms and national law.

Power in a democracy is ideally limited by law and accountability. The authority of traditional shamans stems from ritual knowledge, devotion, and social recognition. Studies of Tenggerese customary governance indicate that traditional shamans are at the highest level of the Sulinggih structure; their position is voluntary, they do not receive honorariums, and the community provides "sesari" as a token of gratitude. This is interesting because it demonstrates a leadership model that is not entirely transactional—although a symbolic economy remains. More importantly, the regular meetings of the traditional shaman association to discuss the implementation of customary law demonstrate that customary authority does not rest with a single individual, but rather on a network of authorities that exercise cultural oversight. This resembles a communal version of the principle of checks and balances: not through state institutions, but through collective norms and social oversight. However, a critical reading is also necessary: cultural recognition can foster stability, but if access to customary authority is too closed, it has the potential to limit the participation of certain groups (e.g., the younger generation or women). This is where democracy requires a "public space" to ensure that cultural authority remains compatible with the principle of equality. Beyond deliberation and customary rituals, the Tengger community also lives within a modern state system, including elections. Healthy democracy requires a bridge between these two channels to ensure that public decisions remain formally accountable and culturally accepted. This finding aligns with local democracy theory, which states that when political literacy is unequal among citizens, local figures/elites often act as political brokers. This can facilitate participation (because there are "guides") but can also invite patronage. Interestingly, Ngadisari Village demonstrates the dynamics of village leadership influenced by broader political networks (e.g., political party ties and district government support for

infrastructure projects), as well as informal policy discussions with specific traditional figures. This suggests that local democracy in the Tengger region operates along two channels: the procedural route of elections/village head/party relations, and the cultural route, which involves traditional symbols, informal authority, and ritual legitimacy.

The Bromo area is a major tourist destination, placing Tengger at the center of the political economy of tourism and conservation. The BB-TNBTS report highlights that the Tengger community should be given a significant role in managing natural resource conservation areas, as they are the ones with the greatest stake in preserving and preserving their customary lands. From a democratic perspective, this is an issue of ecological citizenship: citizens have the right to participate in public decisions regarding their living space. However, an identity crisis has emerged due to the onslaught of "foreign" cultures and the dominance/hegemony of other social actors from the VOC era to the present. This indicates that local democracy does not always occur on equal terms; there is an imbalance of power between indigenous communities, the state, and the tourism industry. If participation is merely formal (mere consultation), democracy becomes an empty procedure. Therefore, the concept of "collaborative management" raised in the report can be read as an agenda for democratizing resource governance: joint decision-making, equitable benefit sharing, and recognition of local knowledge. Local democracy, which can be interpreted as civic ethics, encompasses adherence to shared rules (the customary version of the rule of law), deliberation (deliberation), respect for morally based leaders (legitimacy), communal solidarity (social capital), and self-control and harmony with nature (ecological citizenship).

This community faces pressures from global capitalism and modern media, yet remains an agrarian society that has not yet been completely trapped by consumerism, with shamans as active inheritors of tradition. This can be interpreted as cultural resistance that maintains the community's moral foundation—something relevant for a democracy often fragile by pragmatism. However, we must also avoid romanticizing it. Modern democracy demands equality and openness, while indigenous communities sometimes have hierarchical boundaries of membership and authority. This is precisely where Tengger values become crucial: not to imitate the entire structure, but to draw on democratic ethics (deliberation, order, communal responsibility, and ecological sustainability) as inspiration for strengthening Indonesian democracy. The Tenggerese demonstrate that democracy can be viewed through two lenses: procedural democracy (elections, village government, and party relations) and cultural democracy (deliberation, social legitimacy, customary norms, and communal control over resources).

Rituals like Kasada are not merely spiritual celebrations, but also arenas for the formation of solidarity, the legitimacy of leaders, and the consolidation of community norms. Structured customary governance, regular meetings, and discussions on the implementation of customary law demonstrate the existence of internal deliberative mechanisms that maintain social order. At the same time, reports of local democracy in Ngadisari, which demonstrate the dynamics of power, political networks, and the likely lack of formal competition, remind us that local democracy always contains a tension between communal stability and the demands of modern accountability. Therefore, Tengger's greatest contribution to Indonesian democracy is not merely "cultural uniqueness," but rather lessons in democratic ethics: prioritizing social harmony, deliberation as a public practice, adherence to shared rules, and ecological citizenship in managing living spaces. These lessons help us imagine a democracy that is not just about competition, but also about the maintenance of values.

Consensus democracy, not competitive democracy. Decisions arise from collective agreement, not a battle for majority votes. The theory of social solidarity and communal cohesion distinguishes two types of solidarity: mechanical (based on shared values and beliefs) and organic (based on role differentiation) (Durkheim, 2014). Traditional agrarian communities like the Tengger tend to be dominated by mechanical solidarity, where cohesion is built through shared religious beliefs, rituals, and customary norms. Mechanical solidarity produces a collective conscience, a shared moral awareness that binds individuals to the community (Durkheim, 2014). This concept is highly relevant to understanding the Tenggerese community's adherence to customary law, land restrictions, and collective participation in rituals. Norms are adhered to not because of individual contracts, but because of a sense of moral guilt if they deviate. Based on democracy, mechanical solidarity has two implications: positive, creating high social capital, trust, and strong communal participation, and negative, potentially suppressing dissent or innovation due to pressures of conformity. Tenggerese culture provided the social prerequisites for democracy even before formal state procedures existed. Modern democracy rests on this social foundation. Based on the theory of civic community (Putnam, 2000), relevant to the theory of social capital and participation, it shows that the quality of democracy is largely determined by social trust, norms of reciprocity, and networks of citizen associations (civic engagement).

Communities with high social capital tend to have more responsive and participatory governance. Applied to the Tenggerese, collective rituals, mutual cooperation, and village deliberations serve as engines of social capital production. Routine interactions in Kasada (traditional village councils), traditional meetings, and collective agricultural work build mutual trust. This

social capital explains why open conflict is relatively low and dispute resolution is more often achieved through dialogue. Based on the concept of habitus, a system of mental and behavioral dispositions formed through a long-term socialization process (Bourdieu, 1991), habitus explains why cultural values do not need to be explicitly taught; they are inherent in everyday actions. The practice of respecting shamans, participating in deliberations, and protecting customary land can be understood as collective habitus. Residents are not forced to comply, but compliance has become a cultural reflex. This is what allows customary institutions to persist despite the strong pressures of modernization. Habitus can reproduce power imbalances (Bourdieu, 1991). If social structures tend to be inherited within certain elite circles, formal democracy can be held hostage by symbolic domination. This analysis helps understand the phenomenon of single candidates in village head elections or the strong influence of certain families in Tengger villages. Culture is not only a source of harmony but can also be a mechanism for reproducing domination (Bourdieu, 1991).

Political legitimacy arises from rational public discourse, not simply voting (Habermas, 1996). Tengger customary deliberations bear similarities to deliberative public spaces (Habermas, 1996), where citizens gather, express their opinions, and seek consensus. Decisions are not made through coercion, but through mutual recognition. This demonstrates that democracy is not a monopoly of Western thought. Deliberative practices have long existed in local Indonesian culture. Tengger demonstrates that democracy can be rooted in tradition, not just formal institutions. Based on the concept of the nation-state, indigenous communities like the Tengger need to be understood through the concept of civic culture (Kymlicka, 2001). He emphasized the importance of recognizing minority cultural identities within a liberal democratic system. The Tenggerese's existence in conservation and tourism areas requires the state to not merely regulate but also recognize their collective cultural rights. A just democracy means providing space for participation in resource management and the preservation of customs. Without such recognition, democracy becomes state domination over local communities.

This synthesis demonstrates that Tengger is not simply an indigenous community, but a space for the practice of cultural democracy. Democracy here is not merely an electoral procedure, but rather a habit of living together. Although the Tengger people are often perceived as a harmonious, religious, and cohesive indigenous community, social reality shows that their lives are not free from issues of power, inequality, and conflict of interest. Every cultural system not only produces order but also harbors structural tensions. Therefore, Tengger local democracy needs to be read not simply as a practice of deliberation and solidarity, but as an arena for negotiating interests between custom, the state, the

market, and local elites. Economic changes and external pressures have presented new challenges to the sustainability of Tengger culture. Tengger communities face the threat of marginalization due to tourism expansion, the penetration of external capital, and the dominance of non-local actors in decision-making regarding the management of the National Parks National Parks (BBBTS) conservation area. This situation highlights the gap between the cultural rights of indigenous peoples and state policies based on the tourism economy. Symbolic domination, where groups with greater economic and political capital tend to determine the direction of public policy, while indigenous communities become subordinate (Bourdieu, 1991). Tourism management that is more oriented toward regional revenue has the potential to reduce indigenous communities to mere cultural objects, rather than political subjects. The development of tourism at Mount Bromo has significantly increased the flow of tourists. However, this growth is not always accompanied by a fair distribution of benefits. Management of transportation, accommodation, and tourism services is largely controlled by external investors, while local residents remain informal workers. Based on the theory of deliberative democracy (Habermas, 1996), this condition indicates a weak space for public participation. Decisions regarding regional governance are often top-down. Strong customary deliberations within communities are not necessarily connected to the formal policy processes of local governments. As a result, a gap exists between internal cultural democracy and external procedural democracy. The social consequences are not simple. The commercialization of the Kasada ritual, for example, has the potential to transform sacred meaning into a tourist spectacle. If rituals become commodities, the symbolic legitimacy of culture can be eroded. In the long term, this threatens social cohesion, the foundation of local democracy.

Another prominent issue is the agrarian issue. A study of land law in Ngadas Village (Tengger region) revealed restrictions on land sales to outsiders to maintain communal ownership. However, formal state regulations often do not fully recognize the logic of customary ownership. Tensions arise when the need for investment or infrastructure development clashes with the collective rights system. Community social capital is indeed strong, but without formal legal protection, the bargaining position of indigenous peoples is weakened (Putnam, 2000). Democracy becomes unequal because strategic decisions regarding their living space are not fully in the hands of citizens. This case demonstrates that democracy is not only about deliberation, but also about control over resources. Without agrarian justice, political participation tends to be superficial.

A study of village democracy in the Tengger region revealed an interesting phenomenon: in several village head elections, competition was

relatively low, with even a single candidate emerging. This condition is often interpreted as a sign of social harmony. However, from the perspective of procedural democracy, the lack of competition can also indicate limited elite circulation. This situation may reflect the reproduction of the habitus of power, where kinship networks or certain customary symbols maintain political dominance from generation to generation (Bourdieu, 1991). Deliberation tends to be elitist consensus, rather than equal participation. Tengger cultural democracy needs to be continually revitalized to prevent it from degenerating into a local, custom-based oligarchy.

Modernization of education, social media, and job mobility have changed the orientation of young Tenggerese citizens. Many young people work in the tourism or urban sectors, reducing their involvement in traditional rituals and village deliberations. This shift is occurring from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity (Durkheim, 2014). Differentiation of economic roles leads to a weakening of collective consciousness. If not balanced by values education, community social capital has the potential to decline. The impact on democracy is significant. Public participation can weaken, traditional deliberations lose their place in the next generation, and deliberation spaces are replaced by the logic of market individualism.

This research finds that a culture of democratic culture is a crucial aspect in the implementation of democracy. Without it, democracy becomes merely a procedural ritual, not a practice of social justice. The four cases above demonstrate the ambivalent nature of Tenggerese local democracy. On the one hand, a culture of deliberation, solidarity, and collective norms create a strong foundation for deliberative democracy. On the other hand, market pressures, the state, and elite reproduction have the potential to erode equal participation. Culture can be understood through symbolic meaning (Geertz, 1973). Culture can be a tool of power (Bourdieu, 1991).

CONCLUSION

The fundamental issue of democracy lies in the study of citizen actors, namely the internalization of the values of solidarity, collective responsibility, and social participation in everyday life practices. The character formation of young citizens is a primary prerequisite for the sustainability of democracy. This study shows that Civic Education is multidimensional and rooted in cultural experiences. The cultural citizenship perspective positions culture as a space for the production of identity, social recognition, and public participation, so that citizenship is understood as a process of subject-making and continuous learning (citizenship as a learning process), not simply a legal status. The research findings indicate that the socio-cultural practices of the Tengger Tribe—such as mutual

cooperation, deliberation, interfaith tolerance, and ecological responsibility—represent concrete forms of civic culture that are effective in shaping civic dispositions. These values produce social habits in the form of trust, empathy, integrity, and collective participation, known in the literature as civic dispositions. When these cultural practices are integrated into civic education through experiential learning, the character of young citizens is formed that is democratic, inclusive, and ethical. Theoretically, this article makes three main contributions. First, broaden the discourse on cultural citizenship from a focus on migration and minorities in the Global North to the context of citizenship education in the Global South. Second, position local culture as a source of civic pedagogy, not merely a symbolic heritage. Third, develop a conceptual model that explains the mediating relationship between civic culture, participatory learning, cultural citizenship, and civic character formation. By incorporating these concrete issues, the Tengger people are no longer understood as a static and harmonious indigenous community, but rather as a dynamic social space that continuously negotiates with modernity, the state, and capitalism. It is precisely in this tension that local democracy is tested. Tengger demonstrates that democracy is not a final state, but rather a continuous process between maintaining collective values and responding to structural change. The character formation of young citizens based on civic culture cannot be separated from the nation's cultural roots. The noble values of the Tengger people demonstrate that local wisdom can be an authentic source of civic character education. The integration of civic culture and local culture is not a romanticization of tradition, but rather a scientific and contextual strategy for strengthening Indonesian democracy with character, civility, and sustainability.

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