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Patterns of Village Fund Corruption Prevention Based on Fatuleu Local Wisdom in Kupang Regency, Indonesia

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Abstract

This research-based article discusses the development of a corruption prevention model for village funds based on the local wisdom of the Fatuleu indigenous community in Kupang Regency, Indonesia. The study highlights the local wisdom within the Fatuleu indigenous community, which has strong potential to prevent the crime of village fund corruption. This socio-legal anthropological is used in this study. The data collection methods used include in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The study reports that the Fatuleu indigenous community perceives corruption as an unethical act akin to abakat/nabak (stealing another person's belongings). Specifically, such unethical actions include abakat loid/abakat none or nabak loid/nabak none (embezzlement of money), and akliut loid/akliut none or amoet loid/amoet none (financial fraud). The study also finds that the Fatuleu indigenous community possesses various forms of local wisdom that can serve as preventive measures against village fund corruption, particularly through the traditional rituals of lasi nekmese and lasi pisit.

Keywords: Village fund, Corruption, Local Wisdom, Indigenous People.

Introduction

Transparency International (2024) has released the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which illustrates that many countries continue to make minimal efforts to combat corruption in the public sector. This is confirmed by the global average CPI score, which has remained unchanged from 2022, standing at 43 out of 100. More than two-thirds of the surveyed countries have a CPI score below 50, indicating that corruption remains a highly serious issue for most nations worldwide. Very few countries have demonstrated sustained improvements or significant changes in corruption levels, while several historically top-ranking countries have gradually seen a decline in their scores.

Transparency International also highlights that Indonesia's CPI has exhibited a downward trend over the past five years (2019–2023). In 2019, Indonesia achieved a score of 40/100, which then sharply declined to 34/100 in 2022. Furthermore, in 2023, Indonesia's CPI remained stagnant at 34/100, placing the country at 115th out of 180 surveyed nations.

The prevalence of corruption in Indonesia coincides with the implementation of regional autonomy as a definitive policy, introduced through Law No. 22 of 1999 of the Republic of Indonesia, later revised by Law No. 32 of 2004 on Regional Governance. Crimes related to governance, such as the misappropriation and embezzlement of state funds—previously more concentrated within central power structures—have seemingly gained further momentum,

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spreading into the fabric of governance at regional levels. This phenomenon is a logical consequence of the increasing allocation of development funds to regional governments, with progressively autonomous distribution and management mechanisms extending to districts, municipalities, and even villages.

Year	Village Fund	Targeted Village	Allocation per Village
2015	46.982.080.000.000	74.754	628.489.178
2016	46.982.080.000.000	74.754	628.489.178
2017	60.000.000.000.000	74.954	802.632.635
2018	60.000.000.000.000	74.954	802.632.635
2019	70.000.000.000.000	74.954	936.404.741
2020	72.000.000.000.000	74.954	963.159.162
2021	72.000.000.000.000	74.954	963.159.162
2022	70.000.000.000.000	74.954	936.404.741
2023	70.000.000.000.000	74.954	936.404.741

Table 1: Data on Village Fund Allocation from the State Budget (APBN) for 2015–2023.

Source: Directorate General of Fiscal Balance, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia (2024).

The data presented in Table 1 illustrates that during President Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) administration, village funds from the central government directly to villages have consistently increased. From 2015 to 2022, a total of IDR 567,964,160,000,000 (approximately IDR 567.964 trillion) has been transferred to 74,954 villages. On average, each village has received an allocation of IDR 7,577,503,001 (approximately IDR 7.58 billion) from the State Budget (APBN).

According to Yuwono (2022), the substantial annual village fund allocation is intended to support the development of various rural infrastructures, including village roads, retention basins, irrigation systems, bridges, village markets, clean water facilities, drainage systems, wells, and other essential infrastructures. This allocation underscores the government's commitment, under President Jokowi's leadership, to fostering development from the periphery, borders, and rural areas. Accordingly, infrastructure development is not limited to toll roads, airports, or seaports but also includes small-scale infrastructure crucial for rural communities. Additionally, villages are now positioned to support economic recovery and priority sectors to accelerate rural development and community empowerment.

Supeno (2009:5–6) further notes that the policy of regional autonomy, which later led to village autonomy, has proven to be an effective strategy for accelerating development and promoting equitable community participation at the village level. However, the sudden influx of substantial financial resources into villages has created opportunities for misappropriation, embezzlement, and even blatant plundering by local authorities.

According to Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), as cited by Dihni (2022), corruption cases prosecuted by law enforcement agencies are most prevalent in the management of village funds. In 2021, 154 cases of village fund corruption were recorded. This figure saw a dramatic increase in 2023, reaching 791 cases and involving 973 village officials, as reported by ICW in Senator

(2023) and Riaupos.jawapos.com (2024). The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), as cited in Fajar (2022), has handled 601 cases of village fund corruption, implicating village heads and other local officials.

This reality presents an irony that may not have been anticipated by the proponents of regional autonomy, who envisioned it as a strategy to enhance the welfare of communities across Indonesia. Instead, regional autonomy has inadvertently facilitated the widespread diffusion of corrupt practices, extending to even the smallest administrative units at the village and sub-district levels. If such corruption practices are not effectively addressed, the substantial village fund allocations will continue to be an easy target for corrupt actors, ultimately failing to benefit rural communities as intended.

The increasing prevalence of corruption has, in effect, diminished the authority and efficacy of legal institutions and their enforcement mechanisms. The failure of legal institutions to curb corruption has left society grappling with the challenge of addressing this pervasive crime. Efforts have largely focused on strengthening modern legal frameworks, including substantive criminal laws addressing corruption and enforcement institutions such as the judiciary and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK). However, such approaches have often overlooked the potential of indigenous wisdom (local wisdom) as an alternative means of fostering community participation in combating corruption.

Criminologists, notably Marc Ancel (1965) and G. Peter Hoefnagels (1969), argue that crime prevention should not rely solely on penal policies (penal policy), which emphasize legal enforcement and punitive measures. Instead, they advocate for a complementary non-penal policy, focusing on preventive measures to mitigate criminal activities before they occur.

Based on this theoretical perspective, optimizing the role of local wisdom in crime prevention constitutes an integral part of a non-penal approach. This premise underscores the urgency of studying corruption prevention models rooted in local wisdom. The present study specifically focuses on the Fatuleu community, an ethnic group in West Timor, Kupang Regency, Indonesia.

A literature review has identified several studies exploring the relationship between local wisdom and corruption prevention. For example, Pratama et al. (2017) and Valentina (2013) examine the integration of local wisdom in anti-corruption education. Similarly, research by Ketut Seregig et al. (2018) emphasizes legal education as a means to cultivate legal awareness and an anti-corruption culture among the public.

Further literature findings suggest that local wisdom has become an essential variable in structuring various aspects of social life. Several studies illustrate this, including: Setiawan et al. (2017), who incorporate local wisdom into the development of science education modules; Murwaningsih et al. (2020), who explore the role of local wisdom in shaping the character development of elementary school students; Albantani et al. (2018), who integrate local wisdom into foreign language instruction in Indonesia; Jufrida et al. (2018), who identify the potential of traditional fishing practices in Jambi, Sumatra, as a source of scientific learning.

Additionally, specific studies focus on leveraging local wisdom as a foundation for corruption prevention. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2021) conducted a study identifying corruption prevention strategies at the local level in Eastern European and Central Asian countries. While the OECD study shares similarities with the present research, it differs in terms of the local wisdom employed as the basis for corruption prevention models. Moreover, the OECD study utilizes a quantitative methodology, whereas the

present study adopts a qualitative approach.

Furthermore, Irawati (2013) examines the role of external environments, particularly local wisdom, as a crucial element in anti-corruption strategies within government bureaucracies. Although thematically related, Irawati's study specifically focuses on the indigenous wisdom of Nagari Lakapu in West Sumatra Province.

This study aims to identify local wisdom traditions within the community that have strong potential for preventing corruption in village fund management and rural development governance and to describe corruption prevention models in rural governance and development based on local wisdom practices that have been implemented by communities over time.

Theoretical Framework

The Term of Corruption

Etymologically, the term "corruption" originates from the Latin words *corruptio* or *corruptus*, which derive from the older Latin term *corrumpere*. This term was later translated into English as *corruption* and *corrupt*, into French as *corruption*, and into Dutch as *corruptie*. The Dutch term *corruptie* was subsequently adopted into the Indonesian language as *korupsi* (Arsyad, 2013:1-2).

Black (1983), in *Black's Law Dictionary*, defines corruption as an act committed with the intent of gaining undue advantages that conflict with one's duties and the rights of others. It refers to the unlawful or improper use of authority by an official or a person in a position of trust to secure benefits for themselves or others, to the detriment of their official responsibilities and the rights of others.

In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) compiled by Poerwadarminta (1976), the terms *korup* (adjective) and *korupsi* (noun) are explained. *Korup* means bad, damaged, or rotten. Another meaning of *korup* is a tendency to misuse entrusted assets (such as money) or being susceptible to bribery (using one's power for personal gain). *Mengkorup* means to damage, misappropriate, or embezzle assets (including money) belonging to a company or the state. *Korupsi* is defined as the misappropriation or misuse of state (or corporate) funds for personal or others' benefit. The verb *mengorupsi* means to divert or embezzle funds or resources. Similarly, according to the Oxford Dictionary, corruption is defined as dishonest or illegal behavior, particularly by individuals in positions of authority. Another meaning of corruption is the act or effect of causing someone to deviate from moral standards into immoral conduct.

According to Indonesian Law No. 31 of 1999, as amended by Law No. 20 of 2001 on the Eradication of Corruption Crimes, corruption is defined as any act committed unlawfully to enrich oneself, another person, or a corporation, resulting in financial losses to the state or national economy. Corruption is also interpreted as any act undertaken with the intent to benefit oneself, another person, or a corporation. Furthermore, corruption encompasses the misuse of authority, opportunities, or means available due to one's position or office, leading to financial harm to the state or national economy.

Corruption as The Extraordinary Crime

The issue of crime and its countermeasures is a persistent challenge faced by every country, regardless of its form of government or legal system. In the past, law enforcement agencies were primarily concerned with street crimes such as murder, robbery, theft, assault, and defamation.

However, with the rapid advancement of technology, crime has evolved significantly and is now often committed by professionals with extensive knowledge, education, high social status, and authority within governmental institutions. These crimes include corruption, money laundering, banking crimes, corporate crimes, and others. Such crimes are not static; they continue to metamorphose in response to societal and technological developments.

Some crimes that were once considered conventional or classified as *white-collar crimes* are now categorized as *extraordinary crimes*. Hatta (2019) defines *extraordinary crime* as a term used to describe offenses that have an exceptionally severe impact on human life. In Indonesia, several crimes fall under this category, including genocide, crimes against humanity, and terrorism.

Over time, the interpretation of *extraordinary crime* has expanded. Certain offenses that do not directly result in human fatalities are now also classified as extraordinary crimes, including corruption, narcotics and psychotropic crimes, and environmental pollution crimes. However, Indonesian positive law does not provide a specific nomenclature distinguishing ordinary crimes from extraordinary crimes. Instead, Indonesian criminal law primarily categorizes offenses into violations and crimes.

Various terms have been used to interpret *extraordinary crime*, including extreme crime, serious crime, and crimes that have widespread and systematic impacts on social, economic, political, legal, and cultural life. Regardless of the terminology, these crimes are fundamentally different from conventional crimes in terms of nature, characteristics, methods of commission, and consequences.

The fight against corruption is a crucial focus in any law-based state and serves as a benchmark for governmental success. One of the most vital components of legal enforcement in a country is the fight against corruption, which is often likened to a “cancerous disease” that is immune, widespread, persistent, and destructive to all aspects of national life, including the economy, which is a key pillar of development. Oscar Arias Sanchez, as cited in Pope (2003), has warned that the “hands” of corruption have infiltrated government structures, not only in developing nations but also in developed countries worldwide. What is most alarming is that corruption is rampant even in the poorest nations, exacerbating poverty and weakening democratic institutions.

It must be acknowledged that corruption in Indonesia has reached a severe and deeply entrenched level, permeating all aspects of society and being widely practiced by state officials and public servants at all levels, from the lowest to the highest ranks. Moreover, corruption has also extended to the private sector, including business actors and service providers. Due to its endemic, systemic, and widespread nature, corruption is now considered an extraordinary crime, necessitating exceptional efforts for its eradication.

The Indonesian National Police Headquarters (Mabes Polri, 2006), through various seminars and expert opinions, has proposed that corruption should not merely be classified as a white-collar crime, but should also be recognized as corruption as a state crime, given its characteristics involving collaboration between state officials and business actors for financing power-related interests (corruption as a means to organizational goals). Furthermore, a concerning trend of tolerating corruption (tolerated corruption) has emerged, alongside systematic corruption conducted through policies that benefit ruling elites and specific organizations (kleptocracy).

Similarly, during the 19th Asia Regional Conference of the ICPO-Interpol in April 2006, a

proposal was made and accepted to classify corruption as a transnational crime, paving the way for international cooperation among Interpol member states. This agreement led to the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Academy in Vienna, Austria, which collaborates with the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC). The issue of corruption as a transnational crime was also raised at The Sixth ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) in Bali on June 7–8, 2006, and further discussed at the SOMTC meeting in 2007 in Hanoi.

The Terminology of Village Fund Corruption

The term "Village Fund" in this context does not solely refer to funds sourced from the State Budget (APBN) allocated for villages and customary villages, which are transferred through the revenue budget. Rather, it pertains to village finances as a whole, encompassing all rights and obligations of the village that can be valued in monetary terms, including all financial resources and assets related to the implementation of the village's rights and obligations.

All funds used in the administration and development of villages are considered state funds and must be managed in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The primary legal foundation for this is Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, along with various derivative regulations, such as Government Regulations, Regulations of the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri), Regulations of the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (Kemendesa), and other related regulations.

Village revenue includes all funds received through the village's bank account, which constitute the village's financial rights within a fiscal year and are not subject to repayment. According to Article 72, Paragraph (1) of the Village Law, village revenue sources include:

1. Own-source revenue (Pendapatan Asli Desa), comprising business proceeds, asset revenues, self-help contributions, community participation, mutual cooperation, and other village-generated revenues.
2. Allocations from the State Budget (APBN), referred to as the "Village Fund" (Dana Desa).
3. A share of regional taxes and retributions from the Regency/City government.
4. Village Fund Allocation (Alokasi Dana Desa, ADD), which constitutes a portion of the fiscal balance funds received by the Regency/City government.
5. Financial assistance from the Provincial and Regency/City Budgets (APBD).
6. Unconditional grants and donations from third parties, which serve as one of the revenue sources for national and regional budgets used for financing local programs.
7. Other legitimate village revenues, including grants and donations from third parties and other legally recognized sources of village income.

The diverse sources of village financing are expected to contribute to national progress, starting from the village level, through proper and proportionate management. One of the key funding sources for villages is the Village Fund (Dana Desa), which is specifically allocated within the State Budget (APBN) and disbursed annually to villages as a primary revenue source. This allocation is designated for various village needs and is managed by village officials to support local development. The outcomes of the Village Fund's utilization ultimately contribute to the

The implementation of the Village Fund is regulated under Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, demonstrating the Indonesian government's strong commitment to advancing national development from the periphery by strengthening village development.

Crime Prevention Policy

Theoretically, Marc Ancel (1965) and G. Peter Hoefnagels (1969:57), as cited by Sudarto (1981), Barda Nawawi (1996), and Kenedi (2017), argue that criminal policy is a rational and organized effort by a society to combat crime. Crime prevention efforts can be classified into various forms, including: (1) the application of criminal law (criminal law application); (2) crime prevention without punishment (prevention without punishment); and (3) influencing public perceptions of crime and punishment through mass media and other means (influencing views of society on crime and punishment). In the context of criminal policy, crime prevention through the application of criminal law is commonly referred to as penal policy, whereas crime prevention without punishment and efforts to shape public perception regarding crime and punishment are categorized as non-penal policy.

Furthermore, Marc Ancel (1965), Barda Nawawi (1996), and Hamdan (2016) classify criminal policy as part of a broader social defense policy. When viewed more broadly, social defense policy itself is an integral component of social policy. Fundamentally, both criminal policy in particular and social policy in general are oriented toward achieving social welfare. Similar to general social policy, criminal policy aims to promote public well-being by ensuring a safe and orderly social environment through both penal and non-penal measures.

Based on this integrative perspective on criminal policy or crime prevention policy within the framework of social welfare development, several key aspects must be considered (Kopong Medan & Masu, 2009): (1) the need for synergy between penal and non-penal approaches in crime prevention (by fostering conducive social conditions); and (2) the necessity of integrating crime prevention efforts with broader social policy and national development planning.

Thus, it is evident that non-penal policy, which primarily focuses on crime prevention, holds a strategic position as an integral part of crime prevention efforts. The urgency of non-penal policy in crime prevention has also been emphasized in multiple United Nations Congresses, such as the 6th UN Congress on Crime Trends and Crime Prevention Strategies in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1980; the 7th UN Congress in Milan, Italy, in 1985; and the 8th UN Congress in Havana, Cuba, in 1990.

Several key resolutions from these congresses include: (1) crime prevention strategies must be based on the elimination of conditions that foster crime; (2) addressing the root causes and conditions that give rise to crime should be the fundamental strategy in crime prevention; and (3) social aspects of development are crucial factors in achieving the goals of crime prevention strategies, and the prioritization of criminal justice within the broader development context must be emphasized.

Local Wisdom as the Basis of Non-Penal Policy in Crime Prevention

According to Stanis (2005), local wisdom is essentially a part of ethics and morality that helps individuals answer moral questions about what ought to be done and how one should act. This local wisdom plays a crucial role in shaping human behavior, both individually and collectively. Moreover, it contributes to the development of a sound socio-political system and informs

decision-making processes and policies that impact the social environment.

Keraf (2002) defines local wisdom as encompassing all forms of knowledge, beliefs, understanding, insights, customs, and ethical values that guide human behavior within a community. Local or traditional wisdom not only pertains to people's knowledge and understanding of human relationships but also includes their comprehension of and customary regulations regarding the interaction between humans and nature. It further guides how individuals should establish relationships within their social communities.

The values embedded in a society's system of local wisdom can be internalized, practiced, taught, and passed down from one generation to the next, shaping and directing human behavior over time. Ataupah (2004) emphasizes that local wisdom is both historical and positive. These values are derived and managed by ancestors and subsequently transmitted orally to future generations. However, the inheritors of this wisdom do not passively accept it; rather, they can modify, expand, or refine it, making local wisdom dynamic and adaptable to situational contexts while remaining inseparable from its social setting.

Furthermore, Ataupah (2004) explains that local wisdom is reflected in high-quality decision-making. The benchmark for a high-quality decision is one made by a prominent figure or a group of figures who carefully examine and understand various social issues within their environment. After thorough deliberation, they make decisions in such a way that those affected by them will attempt to implement them, ranging from those who initially oppose the decision to those who fully endorse it.

Methodology

This socio-legal anthropological study adopts a qualitative paradigm (Silverman, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Creswell, 1994). The research methodology aims to collect primary data related to local wisdom from indigenous community leaders, as well as data on village fund management from local government officials through interviews, observations, and documentation. The collected data is then analyzed and presented in accordance with the research domain, specifically focusing on the structure of local wisdom that has strong potential and has been utilized to prevent corruption in village fund management.

Results and Discussions

The Development of Village Fund Corruption

Despite the significant benefits of village funds allocated by the central, provincial, and district/city governments, as well as those derived from local village revenues to support rural development, the phenomenon of village fund corruption has continued to emerge with various methods and operational mechanisms. Data compiled by Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) and reported by Riaupos.jawapos.com (2024) indicate that from 2015 to 2023, a total of 791 corruption cases related to village fund budgets were recorded, resulting in state losses amounting to IDR 107.7 billion. The number of cases has increased annually, starting from 22 cases in 2015, 48 cases in 2016, 98 cases in 2017, 96 cases in 2018, and continuing to rise until reaching 791 cases in 2023.

In addition to the rising number of village fund corruption cases, ICW also noted an increasing number of village heads being implicated in such offenses. By 2023, a total of 973 village officials were involved in village fund corruption cases. Among these, approximately 400 (over 50%) were village heads, out of the 70,000 village heads across Indonesia (Senator, 2023).

ICW further identified several common corruption schemes in village fund mismanagement, including budget misappropriation, fictitious reports, embezzlement, budget inflation, and bribery. Additionally, the Supreme Audit Agency (*Badan Pemeriksa Keuangan*—BPK) of Indonesia found irregularities in the disbursement of village funds, where funds were distributed based on outdated or inaccurate data.

Village fund corruption cases have also been prevalent in East Nusa Tenggara Province. According to data from the *Case Tracking Information System* (*Sistem Informasi Penelusuran Perkara*—SIPP) of the Kupang District Court, cited by *flrespedia.com* (2019), from March 2016 to March 2019, 22 village heads were convicted of village fund corruption, while four others remained defendants undergoing trial at the *Corruption Court* (*Pengadilan Tindak Pidana Korupsi*—Tipikor) within the Kupang District Court.

When adding the six village heads still under investigation as suspects, the total number of implicated village heads in East Nusa Tenggara reached 32, categorized as follows (*flrespedia.com*, 2019):

1. 22 village heads have been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment ranging from 1 to 3 years, with an additional fine of IDR 50 million;
2. 4 village heads remain defendants, currently undergoing trial at the Corruption Court in the Kupang District Court;
3. 6 former village heads are still under investigation as suspects.

Moreover, in 2020, several cases of village fund corruption were reported in Kupang Regency, with some still under investigation and others already adjudicated by the Kupang Corruption Court. According to *RakyatNTT.Com* (2020), the Kupang District Attorney's Office detained Albert Zefanya Nompetus, the village head of Kolabe, North Amfoang Subdistrict, on July 13, 2020, for alleged corruption of village funds and Village Fund Allocation (ADD) for the 2016 and 2017 fiscal years.

The Corruption Court of the Kupang District Court also handed down verdicts in two village fund corruption cases in 2020 (*RakyatNTT.Com*, 2020):

1. Daud Pandie, Village Head of Kuimasi, Kupang Regency, was sentenced to 1 year and 6 months in prison, a fine of IDR 50 million (subsidiary 1 month imprisonment), and a compensation payment of IDR 16,126,400 (subsidiary 3 months imprisonment).
2. Rifen Letik, Acting Village Head of Noelmina, Kupang Regency, was sentenced to 2 years in prison, a fine of IDR 50 million (subsidiary 1 month imprisonment), and a compensation payment of IDR 66,086,865 (subsidiary 6 months imprisonment).

The increasing trend of village fund corruption underscores the urgent need for enhanced oversight, stricter law enforcement, and stronger governance mechanisms to ensure that village funds are utilized effectively for their intended purpose—advancing rural development and improving community welfare.

Identification of Indigenous Communities' Local Wisdom in Crime Prevention

Local wisdom, as described above, is found in nearly all communities across Indonesia, each possessing distinct characteristics shaped by their cultural and customary traditions. Each community has its own unique wisdom that aligns with its specific socio-cultural context. This

study primarily relies on previous research conducted by the author, supplemented by interviews with two traditional leaders from the Fatuleu community in Kupang Regency, namely Melkianus Manbait and Yohanis Antonius Bait.

Based on these interviews, combined with field observations, several characteristics of local wisdom have been identified that can be utilized in crime prevention. In the Fatuleu community, various criminal acts are collectively referred to as *moeamleut* or *moetkanmatomaf* (Interview, August 2, 2023):

1. Acts of Village Destruction (*Naleun Kuanambak*)

Such actions are considered severe crimes. If an individual or group engages in such acts, they are required to perform a traditional cleansing or village restoration ritual known as "*manaknau kuan mabak aipaham nifu nok'in uis'kin mai'amkin*". This ritual aims to restore the village's harmony and purify the community from the negative impacts of the offense.

2. Murder (*Anlol Fuat/Malolot*), In the Fatuleu Timorese tradition, anyone who commits murder is obligated to undergo the customary practice of "*antau-nafani*", meaning replacing the life taken. In earlier times, this required the perpetrator to provide a family member as compensation. However, in contemporary practice, this obligation is fulfilled symbolically through a traditional ritual witnessed by the *Usif* (king) and *Amaf* (sub-king), wherein monetary compensation and livestock are offered.

3. Rape (*Naleun Ambifel*), The Fatuleu community perceives rape as a grave offense that dishonors both the victim and her family. The perpetrator is therefore required to fulfill the customary obligation of "*hein mapake manoat*", which involves symbolically restoring the victim's dignity by providing monetary compensation and livestock (such as cattle). If the crime takes place inside a house, the perpetrator must perform the ritual "*naleko naek nafani umebale*", a cleansing ceremony of the house, through the offering of money and livestock.

4. Theft (*Abakat/Nabak*), The Fatuleu customary law prohibits the act of taking another person's belongings without permission, known as *abakat* or *nabak*. A similar offense, *akliut/amoet*, refers to fraud or deception.

Corruption, which is also considered a disgraceful act, is classified under *abakat/nabak*, as it involves unlawfully taking property or money belonging to others, either individually or collectively. Corrupt financial practices are specifically termed *abakat loid/none* or *nabak loid/none* (theft of money), and fraudulent financial transactions are referred to as *akliut loid/none* or *amoet loid/none* (fraud involving money).

In the Fatuleu Timorese tradition, restitution of stolen goods is an essential customary obligation. The perpetrator is required to take an oath before the traditional leader while holding *tuak* (palm wine), reciting the following customary mantra:

"Nenoi aufeko pisit ai bono bebau he kaisam taom tin mammoemfit taos mammoet on i. Hom tamtin mammoemtin hailotmi sanko anesnakoi." (I swear never to commit such a disgraceful act again. If I do, the sanctions upon me shall be doubled.)

The customary punishment involves slaughtering livestock to provide a communal feast for the villagers and traditional leaders present. The severity of the crime determines the extent of the penalty. This local wisdom framework reflects the Fatuleu community's integral approach to crime prevention, where customary sanctions serve not only as punitive measures but also as

A Local Wisdom-Based Model for Preventing Village Fund Corruption

The summary of the interview conducted with Fatuleu customary figures, Melkianus Manbait (65) and Yohanis Antonius Bait (59), on September 28, 2020, reveals that the indigenous Fatuleu Timor community adheres to a set of local wisdom principles that remain deeply ingrained. These principles function as a societal control mechanism over governmental actions and policies in village development. One of these principles involves a commitment or pledge to undertake positive actions or avoid negative behaviors. The commitment to perform positive actions is referred to as "lasi nekmese," such as the pledge to develop the village area. Conversely, the customary tradition of "lasi pisit" represents a commitment to refrain from disgraceful and prohibited actions.

As previously outlined, actions strictly forbidden under Fatuleu customary law include: (1) "naleun kuanambale" (vandalism and destruction of village territories); (2) "manuat neumansian/malolot neumansian" (murder); (3) "naleun anbifel" (rape); (4) "abakat/nabak" (theft of others' property); (5) "akliut/amoet" (fraud and deception); and (6) "naleun pahamnifu" (environmental and village destruction).

Corruption is considered a reprehensible act comparable to "abakat/nabak" in Fatuleu tradition, which signifies the theft of property belonging to others, whether individually or collectively. Misappropriating village funds allocated for development and community welfare by entrusted officials is a serious moral violation. This act is termed "abakat loid/none" or "nabak loid/none" (embezzlement of funds) and "akliut loid/none" or "amoet loid/none" (financial fraud). Therefore, "lasi pisit," as a form of local wisdom within the Fatuleu indigenous community, can serve as a preventive measure against corruption in village fund management. This commitment can manifest as "lasi pisit lais palu" (prohibition against greed) and "lasi pisit sin makat" (prohibition against monopolizing) village funds for personal or group interests.

To optimize the role of local wisdom in preventing corruption at the village level, the role of customary figures within the Village Customary Institution becomes crucial. A strong partnership between the Village Customary Institution and the Village Government is necessary. Legally, Article 95 of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages affirms that the "Village Customary Institution is an entity responsible for conducting customary functions and is an integral part of the original village structure, developed based on the initiative of the village community." This institution assists the Village Government and serves as a partner in empowering, preserving, and developing customary traditions, recognizing the cultural heritage of the local community.

Furthermore, Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 18 of 2018 on Village Community Institutions and Village Customary Institutions, specifically Article 10, operationalizes the duties of the Village Customary Institution. These duties include assisting the Village Government and acting as a partner in empowering, preserving, and developing customary traditions, recognizing the cultural identity of the village community. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the Village Customary Institution functions to:

1. Protect the cultural identity and traditional rights of indigenous communities, including birth, death, marriage, and kinship relations;
2. Preserve customary land rights, forests, and other indigenous assets to sustain community livelihoods, environmental conservation, and poverty alleviation in the village;

3. Promote consensus-based decision-making in village discussions;
4. Uphold customary values in resolving inheritance, land ownership, and human interaction conflicts;
5. Foster customary values to maintain peace, security, and social order within the village;
6. Integrate customary values into health, education, arts, culture, environmental, and other communal activities;
7. Develop cooperation with other Village Customary Institutions.

Based on this conceptual framework, the Village Customary Institution holds a strategic role as a partner to the Village Government in preventing corrupt practices that undermine village finances and hinder developmental efforts aimed at enhancing community welfare. The Village Customary Institution provides an open platform for promoting customary values to prevent corruption in village fund management. To this end, the institution can design and implement traditional rituals such as "lasi nekmese" and "lasi pisit" to prevent the misappropriation of village funds by those entrusted with managing them.

The traditional rituals of *lasi nekmese* and *lasi pisit* as preventive measures against corruption or misappropriation of village funds can be implemented at every stage of village fund management, including planning, implementation, and evaluation of fund utilization accountability:

1. Planning Stage: The village head invites traditional leaders, along with other relevant institutions, to participate in village deliberations to discuss development plans.
2. Approval and Socialization Stage: Once the proposed village development plan receives approval, the village head again invites traditional leaders (*Usif Pah* and *Amaf-amaf*) in each village to present the intended use of village funds for development. This meeting can take place at the village office or at a traditional house (*sonaf*), where the village head and officials meet with the traditional leaders.
3. Implementation Stage: During the execution of development projects, the village head, along with the activity management team, invites traditional leaders and beneficiaries to discuss the technical aspects of implementation.

According to an interview conducted on September 28, 2020, with traditional leaders of Fatuleu, Kupang Regency—Melkianus Manbait (65) and Yohanis Antonius Bait (59)—to prevent fraud in the management of village funds, it is essential and urgent to conduct the following traditional rituals at each stage of the process:

1. Traditional Ritual of *Lasi Kakan Memen Ta'fena Pahamnifu Kuanambale* – a customary ritual to announce the village development plan. During this ritual, a traditional prayer is recited to seek the guidance and blessings of *Usif Neno* (God), *Usif Pah* (Landlord), and *Bei Na'i* (Ancestors) so that the development plan proceeds smoothly for the benefit of the community. This prayer is led by a traditional leader who chants the following customary invocation: Praying to Almighty God, the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, and to the ancestors, that the planned development project (mention the specific project) may proceed smoothly and successfully for the enhancement of community welfare. (*Han baisenut senanut neu usif anesit usif afinit neu usif paham neu usif pah usif nifu henfekit beif matanif fekit tetus aumina heta fena hit paham hit nifu neu noka hitobam hitafa.*)

Afterward, the ceremony continues with prayers in accordance with each participant's religion and beliefs, led by a religious leader.

2. Traditional Ritual of *Lasi Nekmese* and *Lasi Pisit (Fainekat)*: The *lasi nekmese* ritual serves as a declaration of commitment or a pledge to implement the development program with utmost dedication and responsibility, ensuring justice and prosperity for the community. This ritual is led by *Manbait Tuaf*, the customary leader who holds the traditional authority over Fatuleu.

At the beginning of the ritual, one of the *Atoin Amaf* or a representative of the *Amaf* brings *sopi/tuak* (an alcoholic beverage extracted from coconut, palmyra, or sugar palm trees) along with ceremonial tools, including a drinking vessel, and presents them to the traditional leader representing *Usif Pah*. The traditional leader then summons the government representative and the head of the program implementation team, who step forward to stand before the customary leader. Additionally, the traditional leader calls upon the *Amaf-amaf*, who stand in a semi-circle formation behind *Usif Pah*.

While the government representative and the development program implementer hold a bottle filled with *sopi (tuak, traditional alcohol)*, the traditional leader chants the customary incantation of *lasi nekmese*, which is then repeated by all participants directly involved in the ritual: Let us unite our resolve to develop our land and region, particularly the development of (mention the project name). May God, the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, and the ancestors bless and approve it (*Aim nekafmese ansaofmese taloitafafena hitkuan hitbale, nahun tafena Henati Usif Neno, Usif Pah, haibabin haiainin anhaeknoka kit*).

3. Traditional Ritual of *Lasi Pisit*, After the recitation of the *lasi nekmese* customary incantation is completed, the ceremony proceeds directly to the recitation of the *lasi pisit* incantation, led by the Traditional Leader and repeated by all participants directly involved in the ritual.

With the spirit of unity and solidarity, we humbly pray to God, the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, and our ancestors that we may not commit any mistakes, whether in words or actions. If we act unjustly or cause harm to others, we accept the consequences, both in this world and the hereafter. Let us unite our resolve to develop our land and region, particularly the development of (mention the project name). May God, the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, and the ancestors bless and approve it (*Noklasi nekmese ansaofmese hita teba tani noi Usif Neno, Usif Afinit, Neo hit Usif Pah, Ma hit Usif Nifu noi noka hit nekaf mese hein ankison pengkit nuenoka hit mepo hit leot heinati kais ataotsan moetsan nok noka hit uap ma hit molok. Kalo hai moemsan mam taonsan haim toit Usif Anesif, Usif Afinit Amkisom moetkai amfekai pisit makasat noenoka hot tobam hotafa kai*).

After reciting the customary incantations in the *lasi nekmese* and *lasi pisit* rituals, the *sopi* (a traditional alcoholic beverage) contained in the bottle is poured into a cup and distributed to all participants of the ritual, including traditional leaders (*Usif Pah* and *Amaf*), representatives of the village government, and the program implementers.

4) Traditional Ritual of *Mamah Siri Pinang* and *Bukae*, The series of customary rituals concludes with the ceremony of *mamah siri pinang* (chewing betel nut) and *bukae* (communal meal), which serves as a symbolic act of unification and commitment to the shared good intentions of all

parties present and involved in the ritual.

As a comparison, a local wisdom-based approach to preventing corruption in village fund management has been implemented by the Government of *Nagari Situjuah Batua* in Limo Nagari District, Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra. This community has developed its own method to prevent the misappropriation of Village Funds (*Dana Desa, DD*) and Village Fund Allocations (*Alokasi Dana Desa, ADD*) disbursed annually by the central government, similar to the efforts being pursued in Fatuleu District, Kupang Regency. In fact, they have enacted *Peraturan Nagari* (Nagari Regulation) No. 8 of 2019 concerning the Prevention of Corruption, Collusion, and Nepotism Based on Customary Law (*Hukum Adat Salingka Nagari*) (Republika.co.id, 2020).

With the establishment of *Peraturan Nagari Situjuah Batua* No. 8 of 2019, the *Nagari* government is not only obligated to disseminate legal regulations on corruption, collusion, and nepotism but also to provide mechanisms for public complaints, place suggestion boxes in public service areas, and ensure transparency through publicly accessible information (Republika.co.id, 2020).

This regulation mandates that the *Nagari* government, *Bamus Nagari* (Nagari Consultative Body), *Lembaga Adat Nagari* (Nagari Customary Institution), *Badan Usaha Milik Nagari* (BUMNag) or *Badan Usaha Milik Desa* (BUMDes), and other official institutions maintain administrative order and accountability in reporting the use of village funds transparently to the public. Furthermore, all institutions, organizations, groups, and individuals managing financial resources derived from the state or community are required to conduct periodic evaluations, maintain orderly administration, and report their financial management openly to the *Nagari* government and the public.

In cases where corruption, collusion, and nepotism persist despite preventive efforts, and where there is failure to comply with administrative reporting or return misused funds within the stipulated timeframe, the *Nagari* government will escalate the matter to law enforcement authorities in accordance with existing legal frameworks. Additionally, if corruption involves public funds and preventive measures have been ignored, offenders will be subject to customary sanctions (*sanksi adat*).

Three types of customary sanctions are imposed for violations of *Peraturan Nagari Situjuah Batua* on Corruption, Collusion, and Nepotism Prevention:

1. *Pangke Pucuak* – a customary sanction classified as a minor offense within the *Nagari* community.
2. *Kabuang Batang* – a mid-level customary sanction applicable within the *Nagari*.
3. *Kakeh Urek* – a severe customary sanction imposed for the most serious offenses (Republika.co.id, 2020).

A similar local wisdom-based corruption prevention model has been implemented in Adobala Village, Kelubagolit District, Adonara, East Flores Regency. The approach used involves the Head of Adobala Village bringing newly disbursed village development funds from the bank to the traditional house (*Lango Belen*) for a customary ritual performed by the Traditional Leader before the funds are used for development (Adobaladesa.co.id, 2020).

The decision of the Adobala Village Head to take the village funds to the traditional house is

based on the principle that the funds belong to *Lewotana* (the village and its people) and should not be misused. During the customary ritual, Geradus Adobala, the Traditional Leader of Adobala Village, advised the Village Head and his officials: "*Lewotana molo mio dore, ti pana akene todok, gawe akene walet*" (The Guardians of the Village and the Universe will guide your steps so that you do not stumble or face obstacles). This customary message carries profound religious and mystical significance—if disregarded, it is believed that misfortune or customary sanctions will follow (www.adobaladesa.id, 2020).

Conclusion

Based on the preceding discussion, several key conclusions can be drawn. First, corruption is an unethical act comparable to *abakat/nabak* in the Fatuleu tradition, which refers to the act of stealing another person's property, either individually or collectively. This dishonorable act is specifically termed *abakat loid/none* or *nabak loid/none* (theft of money) and *akliut loid/none* or *amoet loid/none* (fraud or deception involving money). Second, the Fatuleu Indigenous Community possesses various forms of local wisdom that can be utilized to prevent corrupt practices in the management of village development funds. Among these is the traditional ritual of *lasi nekmese* and *lasi pisit*, which serves as a commitment to engaging in ethical and constructive practices while avoiding negative behaviors. Specifically, *lasi pisit lais palu* prohibits greed, and *lasi pisit sin makat* forbids the monopolization of village funds for personal or group interests. Third, a corruption prevention model in village governance that is considered essential for further development involves integrating the traditional practices of *lasi nekmese* and *lasi pisit* into the management of village development funds. This model of corruption prevention should be implemented across all stages of village fund management, including planning, execution, supervision, and accountability reporting.

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