

Clan Politics in Village Head Elections: a Case Study of the 2021 Haunatas I Village Head Election and the 2023 Siraja Gorat Village Head Election, Toba Regency, North Sumatra Province

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Abstract

This study examines the clan-based political system as a political process in the village head elections of Haunatas I and Siraja Gorat. Many studies on this topic show that clans often prioritize resources or power. The distribution of resources and power serves as a bargaining chip for clan elites in determining their stance. On the other hand, if an agreement is reached between clans, the possibility of open competition between clans can be minimized. However, if disagreements arise between clans, competition will ensue, potentially triggering inter-clan conflict. The theory applied in this study is the clan politics theory proposed by Kathleen Collins, using qualitative research methods through a case study approach in the 2021 Haunatas I village head election and the 2023 Siraja Gorat village head election. The results show that both villages implemented a village head election mechanism based on inter-clan agreement. However, only Haunatas I village successfully maintained and achieved this agreement. This study found that informal negotiation processes and mediation efforts significantly influenced the continuity and achievement of inter-clan agreements.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ethnic and cultural diversity in Indonesia has demonstrated a variety of behaviors and political systems that have developed within society, particularly at the local level. The variations that have developed within Indonesia's local political context are influenced by developments in the political situation and the policies of the central government. One such political system is the Klan system, derived from Scottish Gaelic. *Clan/Children* means children or extended family from the same lineage. Before the emergence of the state, law, or modern government, humans always organized themselves through clans, namely large kinship groups based on blood, lineage, or common ancestors, and clan society is the oldest form of political organization (Mark S. Weiner, 2013). The Klan political system can be found in several regions of Indonesia, and one of them is in the Batak tribe of North Sumatra Province. The Klan political system implemented by the Batak tribe originated from a community identity system that uses a clan system based on paternal lineage (Patrilineal). Definitely, the clan political system is a form of patrimonial politics in which the clan functions as the main actor in regulating power, resources, and political alliances (Kathleen

Collins, 2004). In the application of the Clan Political system implemented by the Batak indigenous community, it is implemented at a certain level, namely at the Village level or the election of village heads.

The Indonesian government hierarchy is divided into several levels, starting from the central government, provincial government, district/city government, sub-district government, and village government. Politically, the village head is the politically elected leader at the smallest regional level. Law Number 6 of 2014, amended by Law Number 3 of 2024, has mechanically regulated the Village Head Election (Pilkades) system throughout Indonesia. Formally, the Pilkades system is regulated by Indonesian state regulations. Gaining power as a village head is considered to offer an opportunity to improve finances by earning income in the form of a village head salary and profits from managing village funds.

On the other hand, according to the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), there were 851 cases of village head corruption in Indonesia from 2015 to 2024. A total of 973 perpetrators, 50 percent of whom were village heads (Metrotvnews, 2025). This data shows that in many villages, village funds are the goal of exploiting the position of village head. Political escalation in the fight for the village head position also increased after the introduction of village funds, and many studies indicate that village funds are the source of this escalation (Jafar Ahmad, Heri Herdianto, Laode Harjudin, 2014).

Haunatas I and Siraja Gorat Villages, Laguboti District, Toba Regency, North Sumatra Province, held village head elections using a clan political system. The 2021 Haunatas I village head election used traditional mechanisms, utilizing clans as a system. Meanwhile, Siraja Gorat Village held the 2023 village head election using formal mechanisms in accordance with regulations.

The customary mechanisms in the Village Head Election implemented by the communities of Hauantas I Village and Siraja Gorat Village are generally the same. This is because Siraja Gorat Village was formed as a result of the division of Haunatas I Village in 2008 (Regional Regulation of Toba Regency Number 3 of 2008). The community of Haunatas I Village is inhabited by the Lubis clan group, and the community of Siraja Gorat Village is inhabited by the Pasaribu clan group. One of the fundamental reasons for Siraja Gorat Village to separate from Haunatas I Village is the reason for the different clan groups between Lubis and Pasaribu.

The use of clans in village head elections in Haunatas I and Siraja Gorat villages has been ongoing since the villages were founded. Clans are community groupings based on lineage. The groupings used by the communities of Haunatas I and Siraja Gorat villages are intended to facilitate traditional ceremonies and to help them understand their lineage. Furthermore, these clans are associated with village head elections and politics to minimize inter-community conflict. The communities of both villages believe they share common ancestors, thus considering each other as brothers or blood relatives.

The number of Clans in Haunatas I Village consists of three Clans: the Panggomal Clan, the Puniagoni Clan, and the Purajaipadang Clan. These three Clans are considered blood relatives of the Lubis Jobit Mangaraja clan group. The Lubis clan is generally known as three groups: Lubis Tumonggo, Lubis Jobit Mangaraja, and Lubis Butuha Bosi. The customary mechanism for determining the Village Head of Haunatas I is carried out through a meeting between Clan representatives, each representative being a Clan figure or an elder within the Clan. The number of attendees for each Clan is not specified, and attendance is only by invitation given by the community appointed as host of the customary

meeting. In substance, the village head has been elected in a customary meeting decision, so that the formal mechanism is only part of the procedure carried out to fulfill the legitimate Village Head Election process. In the 2021 Haunatas I Village Head Election, Mukhtar Lubis was elected through customary and formal mechanisms. Mukhtar Lubis is the incumbent from the Purajaipadang Clan. Mukhtar Lubis led Haunatas I Village from 2009-2015 and from 2015 to 2021.

Before Mukhtar Lubis was declared village head at the 2021 Haunatas I Village traditional meeting, the issue of a village head replacement arose. This issue originated from the Panggomal and Puniagoni Clans, arguing that the replacement was because the Purajaipadang Clan had led the village head for four terms and therefore it was time for a change. The inter-clan agreement in Haunatas I Village was that all Clans had equal rights to become Village Head and the position rotated periodically between Clans. This agreement between the Haunatas I Village Clans was unwritten and verbal, and was recognized by all Clans. The effort to provide opportunities for all Clans to lead Haunatas I Village was an effort to maintain relations between the community and between Clans. However, in 2021, the inter-clan traditional meeting in Haunatas I Village appointed Mukhtar Lubis as Village Head of Haunatas I for the 2021-2027 period, and the village head election system based on the customary mechanisms of the Haunatas I Village community remained.

Conditions were different in Siraja Gorat Village during the 2023 Village Head Election. The customary system for determining the village head could not be maintained by the community. Siraja Gorat Village is inhabited by the Pasaribu clan of the Batak Toba community. There are three recognized clans: the Toga Pangaribuan Clan, the Namalo Marhohos Clan, and the Mardapot Raja Clan. The village head election mechanism using the customary system was also implemented in Siraja Gorat Village. However, in 2023, this mechanism could not be implemented or could not be continued. Previously, the Siraja Gorat Village Head Election in 2010 and 2017 implemented the Village Head Election using the customary mechanism. The agreement between the clans in Siraja Gorat Village was to give each clan the opportunity every one period to become Village Head without giving rise to contestation. Arnold Pasaribu, the incumbent village head who is part of the Mandapot Raja Clan, decided to contest the 2023 Village Head Election. Arnold Pasaribu and the Mandapot Raja Clan refused to attend and rejected the inter-Clan meeting in the discussion of the Village Head Election. On the other hand, in order, the Namalo Marhohos Clan had the opportunity to become village head, and the Toga Pangaribuan Clan had the opportunity to become village head in 2010-2017.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research will use the theoretical framework of Clan politics to discuss the 2021 Haunatas I Village Head Election and the 2023 Siraja Gorat Village Head Election. Clan politics is a system of power in which clans or large kinship networks play a major political role, governing the struggle for power, patronage, and resource allocation, especially in conditions of weak states and dysfunctional formal institutions (Kathleen Collins, 2004). For Kathleen Collins, clans are formed not only by blood ties but by a combination of historical, social, political, and economic factors. She emphasizes that clan formation is a long process involving real genealogy, imagined genealogy (*imagined descent*), solidarity relationships, and the need for survival.

In implementing a system or mechanism, inter-clan agreements are made to maintain political stability or to minimize inter-clan conflict that could be detrimental to the clan. According to Collins (2004), the main political strength of inter-clan agreements lies not only in their ability to form alliances or coalitions, but also in their ability to maintain agreements in the long term. Clans can maintain agreements because they have social and institutional mechanisms that are much stronger than formal political organizations.

For Collins, inter-clan agreements are possible, but always temporary. They only last as long as all clans feel sufficiently benefited and lack more profitable options outside of them. Inter-clan agreements are always temporary, according to Collins (2004), and are further compounded by informal or non-institutionalized inter-clan agreements. Therefore, inter-clan agreements are vulnerable to any political dynamics that arise within the clans. Collins concludes that inter-clan contestation is always a struggle for power and authority over resources. Echoing Collins, Edward Schatz (2004) notes that inter-clan contestation is also related to contestations over identity and representation. Schatz further concludes that inter-clan contestation is more subtle, through narrative, symbols, and representation, but still related to position, patronage, and access to resources.

This study employs a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a method used to explore and understand the meaning of individuals or groups considered to be an issue, both from a social and humanitarian perspective (Creswell, 2014). In this study, primary data were collected from key informants or through purposive sampling. In determining informants, the researcher utilized purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Purposive sampling is a method of obtaining samples with specific considerations (Creswell, 2014). These considerations can include key informants and comparisons related to the ongoing research. A qualitative approach was chosen as the tool in this study because it allows for in-depth exploration of the data and facts found during the research process.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Continuity of Inter-Clan Agreements in the Election of the Head of Haunatas I Village

This chapter will discuss whether the inter-clan agreement in Haunatas I Village can be maintained or sustained during the 2021 Village Head Election. According to Collins (2004), the primary political strength of clans lies not only in their ability to form alliances or coalitions, but also in their ability to maintain agreements over the long term. Clans can maintain agreements because they possess social and institutional mechanisms that are far stronger than formal political organizations. Collins further explains that the distribution of resources and power serves as a bargaining chip that can maintain inter-clan agreements.

The inter-clan agreement in Haunatas I Village is flexible and always adapts to the political situation. The 2021 village head election marked the beginning of a village head change for the Haunatas I community. The inter-clan agreement, which would have allowed all clans to take turns as village head, did not materialize. Mukhtar Lubis, the incumbent village head of Haunatas I, continues his tenure amidst the ongoing issues of village head change raised by the Panggomal and Puniagoni clans.

The Panggomal Clan had a candidate before the inter-Clan meeting, but Panggomal Clan leaders changed their minds during the meeting. Mukhtar Lubis was able to convince the Panggomal Clan leaders to support Mukhtar Lubis's continued tenure. The Panggomal

Clan's village head candidate resisted registering to run for village head, but Panggomal Clan leaders successfully thwarted the registration by intervening in the election.

Election of Village Head of Haunatas I Village

A village is an administrative area led by a village head who is directly elected by the village community through elections held by the Regency government. The village head is a political position obtained by the community. Hauantas I Village is one of the villages located in Laguboti District, Toba Regency, North Sumatra Province. The people of Haunatas I Village are members of the Toba Batak tribe with a social pattern that uses a clan system. The people of Hauantas I Village have the surname, Lubis; therefore, Hauantas I Village is also known by the local community around Laguboti District as Siraja Lubis Village.

The life of the people of Haunatas I Village is still very closely linked to the cultural life of the Toba Batak customs, this was conveyed by Toga Lubis during an interview "*The life of the people of Haunatas I Village is still very much steeped in customs and traditions, even in daily life, customs and traditions are still carried out, from farming to ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, Toba Batak traditional ceremonies are still carried out.*" (Interview with Toga Lubis, community leader of Haunatas I Village, January 21, 2025).

The customary system carried out by the people of Haunatas I Village is also carried out in the election of the village head. This is intended to maintain relations between the people and between the clans of the people of Haunatas I Village. *In the village head elections themselves, we have actually been carrying them out for a long time using traditional methods according to the stories of our ancestors since the time of independence, and even since the colonial era.*" (Interview with Mangosa Lubis, a community leader of Haunatas I Village, January 24, 2025). The customary system implemented in the Haunatas I Village Head Election involved the Village community based on Clanization.

Haunatas I Village has three clans recognized by lineage: the Panggomal Clan, the Punigoni Clan, and the Purajaipadang Clan. These clans are community groupings intended to facilitate the implementation of customary systems in traditional ceremonies. However, these clans are also used in the Haunatas I Village Head Election. There is an unwritten agreement among the clans in Huanatas I Village to determine the village head. *Since ancient times, we have had an agreement between clans, namely that the village head must rotate between clans, the aim is to maintain relations between clans in Hauantas I Village. Because we also believe that all the people of Haunatas I Village are one family, so our ancestors did not want us to be divided from each other, so that agreement was formed.*" (Toga Lubis)

The opportunity to become a village chief alternately between clans is implemented through customary mechanisms to determine the village head. In essence, the Hauantas I Village Head is elected at an inter-clan meeting or inter-clan customary meeting held by representatives from each clan. These representatives are respected traditional figures or individuals who possess wisdom due to age and lineage. These traditional figures are married, have children, have their children married off, and have grandchildren. This serves as a reference for the community in determining the traditional figures.

Formally, the Village Head Election in Indonesia has been regulated in Law Number 6 of 2014 and was amended to Law Number 3 of 2024. Technically, the Village Head

Election mechanism is regulated in the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 114 of 2014 and was amended by the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 72 of 2021. Furthermore, the technical regulations for the Village Head Election will be based on Regional Regulations (Perda). Haunatas I Village held the Village Head Election formally or procedurally; however, the Village Head of Haunatas I had been elected in substance before the procedural Village Head Election took place. A traditional meeting or meeting between the Haunatas I Village Clans was held before the registration of village head candidates was opened.

Furthermore, the criteria for village heads decided by the customary meeting must be in accordance with customary morality as understood by the customary leaders. *The village head must be wise and have a good life without any cases that show bad examples, the village head must also be active in customs and community, and lastly must be an example in church worship*" (Interview with Eston Lubis, a Puniagoni Clan figure, January 23, 2025). The village head's decision made by the customary meeting cannot be annulled by other members of the community or violate the customary decision. Customary sanctions are carried out against members of the community who violate the decision of the Hauantas I Village customary meeting.

2021 Haunatas I Village Head Election

Based on Toba Regency Regent Regulation Number 2 of 2021, simultaneous village head elections (Pilkada) were held in Toba Regency. A total of 42 villages held the Pilkades simultaneously, one of which was Haunatas I Village, Laguboti District. In the Pilkades I Haunatas I, as explained in the previous chapter, the village head election system in Haunatas I Village still uses or is still based on agreement between clans. The activity of discussing the election of the Haunatas I village head is a cultural act believed by the community; on the other hand, this belief is not recorded but is only part of hereditary information. The discussion took place in informal spaces such as Lapo Tuak (a "Tuak" alcoholic beverage stall). However, officially, the people of Haunatas I Village will hold a meeting of the three clans, Panggomal, Puniagoni, and Purajaipadang. The meeting will take place at a location agreed upon by the three clans.

Before the inter-Clan meeting took place, the issue of changing the village head arose from the Panggomal Clan and the Puniagoni Clan. *The village head change should have taken place in 2021, as agreed by our ancestors, as the village head must take turns. The Purajaipadang Clan has led the village for too long; it's time to hand it over to the Panggomal Clan.*"(Eston Lubis). The issue of change arose because the Purajaipadang Clan's leadership had been in place from 1999 to 2021 (four village head terms). The Clan agreement, explained in the previous chapter, stipulates that each Clan must take a turn as village head.

The emergence of the issue of changing the village head was responded to by Mukhtar Lubis by consolidating with the Purajaipadang Clan to support him to remain as village head for the final term. *"Our meeting with Purajaipadang was to ask for their blessing to support me as village head again, as this is my final term, and there's still a lot of unfinished work. I also met with Panggomal figures, as they are the largest in terms of population, and if we follow the agreement, it's their turn (the Panggomal Clan).*"(Interview with Mukhtar Lubis, January 22, 2025).

The Purajaipadang Clan's blessing for Mukhtar Lubis to continue his final term as village head was further supported by the majority of the Panggomal Clan figures. The appointment of Mukhtar Lubis as Village Head of Haunatas I at a meeting between the

Haunatas I Village Clans to discuss the village head election received the support of the majority of the Panggomal and Purajaipadang Clan figures. *"At that time, we, the Purajaipadang Party, requested (mangelek) all the clans to give Mukhtar Lubis a chance for a final term, and then, perhaps for the next four or six terms, we would hand over the position to the Panggomal Clan or the Puniagoni Clan. Our request was accepted by the majority of the Panggoma Clans."* (Mangosteen Lubis).

The village head candidate from the Panggomal Clan emerged during the customary meeting. Maruli Lubis, a figure supported by all Panggomal Clan figures, faced rejection from the majority of Panggomal Clan figures before the customary meeting. This change in attitude among the majority of Panggomal Clan figures is suspected to be due to Mukhtar Lubis's gift of money and village staff positions to several Panggomal Clan figures. *"At that time, I received some money from Mukhtar Lubis to support me again, but after consulting with several figures and family members, I returned the money."* (Toga Lubis)

The provision of this sum of money was also confirmed by Mukhtar Lubis: *"At that time, I gave it as a form of appreciation to these figures because they had given me advice and always supported my leadership, yes, that's normal in the village, cigarette money or coffee money."* (Mukhtar Lubis). Mukhtar Lubis did not reveal the exact amount of money given.

The placement of several Panggomal Clan figures' families as village staff was clearly visible in the negotiations conducted by Mukhtar Lubis with Panggomal Clan figures. Nine of the 14 Haunatas I village staff are from the Panggomal Clan and are direct descendants of Panggomal Clan figures. Maruli Lubis's candidacy as Haunatas I Village Head was rejected due to his young age, and he was asked to study for one term with Mukhtar Lubis, with the next term being given the opportunity for Maruli Lubis to become village head.

Registration for Haunatas I Village Head Candidates was opened, and Maruli Lubis registered himself as a candidate for village head; however, when Maruli Lubis registered, figures from the Panggomal Clan immediately reacted and thwarted this. *"Several clan figures outside the village of Haunatas I (Perantuan) gave me support; therefore, I registered to run, but the late Arthur Lubis, a highly respected Panggomal figure, withdrew me and threatened me with traditional sanctions, after which I was met by Mukhtar Lubis and given some money to withdraw my registration."* (Interview with Maruli Lubis, village head candidate from the Panggomal Clan, January 24, 2025).

Maruli Lubis failed to become a village head candidate after receiving intervention and intimidation from Panggomal Clan figures and a sum of money from Mukhtar Lubis. The nomination for Haunatas I Village Head was contested by two candidates, Mukhtar Lubis and Arnold Silalahi. Arnold Silalahi was the candidate prepared by Mukhtar Lubis to fulfill the requirements for holding a village head election in accordance with Home Affairs Ministerial Regulation 114 of 2014, which requires a minimum of two village head candidates as a requirement for holding a village head election.

After the voting was carried out, the following were the results obtained by the candidates for Head of Haunatas I Village:

Table of Results of the 2021 Haunatas I Village Head Election

No massage	Candidate Name	Number of Votes	Presentation
1	Arnold Silalahi	12	7,8%
2	Mukhtar Lubis	141	91,5%

Source: Data processed by the author based on information from the Head of Haunatas Village
I Mukhtar Lubis

Mukhtar Lubis won absolute victory with 91.5% of the vote, and Arnold Silalahi got 7.8% of the vote.

Continuation of the Inter-Clan Agreement

The inter-clan interaction process in Haunatas Village took place with the emergence of consolidation efforts undertaken by Mukhtar Lubis to gain support from the Panggomal Clan. This consolidation effort succeeded in changing the decisions of most Panggomal Clan figures, who shifted their support from Maruli Lubis to Mukhtar Lubis. The internal interaction process within the Panggomal Clan was conducted informally. *"Officially, there was no Panggomal meeting, but on several occasions, all the leaders agreed that the Panggomal should take over the village headship, as it had previously been given to Purajaipadang. Maruli Lubis was the umpteenth name proposed, but all the names inquired about declined, and only Maruli Lubis expressed his willingness. I believe this change in attitude was also influenced by Mukhtar Lubis's efforts to visit the traditional leaders and offer them money."* (Toga Lubis)

Internal interactions within the Panggomal Clan are not formally consolidated, as internal clan meetings are not held. Meanwhile, the Purajaipadang Clan holds internal clan meetings initiated by Mukhtar Lubis. *"I proposed to all the figures of Purajaipadang to meet at my house. All the figures I invited from Purajaipadang were present. This was also part of my effort to convey my good intentions to these figures, as I consider them my parents. Purajaipadang's decision was unanimous in my support, and I was asked to meet all the Panggomal figures as our eldest brother."* (Mukhtar Lubis).

Meanwhile, the Puniagoni Clan did not hold any meetings because they were ready to support the Panggomal Clan to take over the village head seat. *"We, the Puniagoni, have no vested interests, nor do we have a candidate, but we fully support the Panggomal Clan for village head. We feel the Purajaipadang Clan's leadership is inadequate, which is why we are disappointed. However, the customary meeting at that time also disappointed us because the Panggomal figures switched their support to Purajaipadang, leaving us unable to do anything else."* (Eston Lubis)

The distribution of resources carried out by Mukhtar Lubis and the distribution of power became one of the main points of change in the attitude of the Panggomal Clan figures. *"I did give a small amount of money to the Panggomal figures I greatly respect. Some accepted it, while others declined. Toga Lubis, for example, returned the envelope I gave him. But it wasn't a bribe; it was simply a token of my appreciation for those figures for their continued positive feedback. So, the money I gave was simply a token of my gratitude, nothing more. Praise God, those figures fully supported my good intentions for this final term."* (Mukhtar Lubis).

According to Kathleen Collins (2004), the sustainability of the agreement between the Clans is influenced by four factors, namely pragmatic interests, distribution of power and resources, informal mediation, and non-binding agreements. Mukhtar Lubis has the authority to manage resources in the form of village funds and village grants; on the other hand, Mukhtar Lubis also has full authority over the placement of village staff. The position of village staff is considered very profitable for the community because they receive a monthly salary that can support the financial quality of the community. So Mukhtar Lubis can utilize all resources to ensure support from the Panggomal Clan and the continuation

of the customary agreement without open contestation. The agreement between the Clans in Haunatas I Village is not binding, so that the agreement can be changed according to the socio-political conditions that occur in Haunatas I Village. The resistance that emerged from Maruli Lubis, who is part of the Panggomal Clan, was due to disappointment with the attitude of Panggomal Clan figures. However, the resistance carried out by Maruli Lubis was successfully overcome and suppressed by Panggomal Clan figures. Informal mediation was carried out by Panggomal Clan figures to avoid violating the decisions of the traditional meeting; on the other hand, Mukhtar Lubis was also asked to be involved in the mediation.

Changes to the Inter-Clan Agreement in the 2023 Siraja Gorat Village Head Election

The previous sub-chapter discussed the continuation of the agreement between the Haunatas I Village Clans in the Village Head Election. This sub-chapter will discuss changes to the agreement between the Clans in Siraja Gorat Village. The Haunatas I Village community held the Village Head Election using a customary system to determine the village head. This has been done since village leadership was recognized in village socio-politics. Siraja Gorat Village has the same conditions as Haunatas I Village in determining the village head using customary agreements between Clans. However, in the 2023 Village Head Election, the customary system in Siraja Gorat Village was no longer used to determine the village head. According to Kathleen Collins (2004), an agreement between Clans can fail because the agreement between Clans is not institutionalized, so the agreement formed is very vulnerable to being violated by one Clan or another. Furthermore, according to Collins, the Clan agreement is informal; there is no independent court, an official institution that can force all parties to comply. So, if *trust in inter-clan* relations is very low, and there is no trusted third party to "monitor" the agreement. The tendency for mutual suspicion between Clans makes the dynamics of agreement-making very weak.

The inter-clan agreement in Siraja Gorat Village was formed to maintain relations between the community and the clans in Siraja Gorat Village. The rotation of power between clans is one of the agreements, and in fact, the most important one. Arnold Pasaribu, the incumbent village head, believes the inter-clan agreement limits individuals' rights to participate in the village head elections. Therefore, Arnold Pasaribu, along with the Mandapot Raja Clan, rejected the inter-clan meeting to discuss determining the village head.

An inter-clan meeting in Siraja Gorat Village was held and attended by representatives from two clans, the Toga Pangaribuan Clan and the Namalo Marhohos Clan. In the inter-clan meeting, it was agreed that the Namalo Marhohos Clan would be elected as Village Head of Siraja Gorat for the next term (2023-2029). However, during the registration of village head candidates, the Toga Pangaribuan Clan also registered its candidates to contest the 2023 Siraja Gorat Village Head Election. The inter-clan agreement was not implemented, and the system for determining village heads using customary agreements was not implemented.

Election of the Head of Siraja Gorat Village

Through the regional regulation of Toba Samosir Regency Number 3 of 2008, Si Raja Gorat village was inaugurated as an administrative village by the government; previously, Si Raja Gorat village was part of Haunatas I Village. After becoming an administrative village, Si Raja Gorat village had to have a village head, so in 2011, the first village head

election was held and was won by Mr. Pasaribu through a decision of the Si Raja Gorat village community meeting.

In the process of electing the village head in 2011, according to Laung Pasaribu, the first community meeting was held in Si Raja Gorat village. *During the meeting, an agreement was formed between the Clans with the following points:*

1. *The Highest Decision is the decision of a community meeting attended by representatives from the Toga Pangaribuan, Mandapot Raja, and Namalo Marhohos groups.*
2. *Determining the village head through a traditional community meeting attended by the Toga Pangaribuan, Namalo Marhohos, and Mandapot Raja.*
3. *The position of village head is given to the three groups alternately, each period.*

The above points were agreed upon in 2011 and became the basis for the decisions of the Si Raja Gorat village community. At the 2011 community meeting, the Toga Pangaribuan Clan was allowed to lead for the first time, and Sudara Pasaribu was the chosen figure. He served as the village head of Si Raja Gorat from 2011 to 2017. (Interview with Laung Pasaribu, a figure from the Toga Pangaribuan Clan, January 28, 2025)

The second village head election in Siraja Gorat village was held in 2017. In that year, the results of the community deliberation decision of Mandapot Raja got the opportunity to become the village head of Siraja Gorat for the 2017-2023 period. Arnold Pasaribu is a figure who represents the Mandapot Raja Clan to become the village head for the 2017-2023 period. when an interview with Arnold Pasaribu said that during the 2017 village head election, he was asked by figures from the Mandapot Raja Clan and was willing to become the village head of Siraja Gorat in 2017-2023.

“The village head for the 2017-2023 period should have come from the Namalo Marhohos Clan according to the agreed order. However, Arnold Pasaribu from the Mandapot Raja side consolidated with all parties from the Toga Pangaribuan Clan and Namalo Marhohos to give the Mandapot Raja side an opportunity. This was granted due to Arnold Pasaribu's good communication to consolidate between the Clans to agree to give the Mandapot Raja Clan an opportunity. (Interview with Tomu Pasaribu, candidate for village head from the Namalo Marhohos Clan and a figure from the Namalo Marhohos Clan, January 27, 2025)

In the 2017 village head election, there were 2 candidates for Village Head of Siraja Gorat, namely Arnold Pasaribu from the Mandapot Raja Clan and Alvin Pasaribu from the Mandapot Raja Clan. *“Alvin Pasaribu is a candidate required to fulfill the primary requirements for village head elections, as per regulations, which require a minimum of two candidates. We are not conducting the scheduled campaign process because we have already received a decision from the community deliberation. Therefore, the campaign phase will not be implemented, as it has no substantial impact on the election.”* (Interview with Arnold Pasaribu, the incumbent village head and candidate for village head from the Mandapot Raja Clan, February 3, 2025).

In terms of the system, the mechanism for determining the village head of Haunatas I Village and Siraja Gorat Village is not much different; this is because the two villages are neighboring villages, and before 2008, Siraja Gorat Village was part of Haunatas I Village. The customary agreement between Clans in Siraja Gorat Village is still considered new because the agreement was reached when Siraja Gorat Village was formed in 2008.

2023 Siraja Gorat Village Head Election

The process of changing power in Siraja Gorat Village in 2023 was carried out in the simultaneous village head elections in Laguboti District, Toba Regency, 2023. Held on October 19, 2023, along with 9 other villages in Laguboti District, Siraja Gorat Village held village head elections with 4 candidates, namely 1. Volda Pasaribu, 2. Tomu Pasaribu, 3. Leonardo Pasaribu, and 4. Arnold Pasaribu.

The emergence of the 4 village head candidates is a form of failure to reach an agreement between the Clans to uphold the results of the deliberations of the Siraja Gorat Village community. *"Since the beginning, the Siraja Gorat village head election process should have been conducted through a deliberation attended by representatives of the clans. This has been the case since the first village head election held by the Siraja Gorat community in 2010. Therefore, in the 2023 village head election, the Siraja Gorat community held another meeting, but not all clan representatives were present."* (Tomu Pasaribu)

Representatives of the Mandapot Raja Clan did not attend the meeting. In an interview with Siraja Gorat Village Head Arnold Pasaribu, who also represents the Mandapot Raja Clan, he stated that *"The meeting should not have taken place because he was running for reelection. Furthermore, Arnold Pasaribu declared the meeting invalid because the Mandapot Raja Clan was not present."* (Arnold Pasaribu)

The meeting, held at the Siraja Gorat Village Head's Office, was initiated by Nurhayati Pasaribu, the head of the Village Consultative Body (BPD). According to Nurhayati Pasaribu, "the meeting was a request from the traditional community leaders of Siraja Gorat Village. As the head of the BPD, Nurhayati Pasaribu carried out the request of these community leaders. All Clan Representatives were invited to the community meeting, including the incumbent village head, Arnold Pasaribu." (Interview with Nurhayati Pasaribu, Head of the Siraja Gorat BPD, January 29, 2025)

The decision of the 2023 Siraja Gorat Village community meeting to discuss the village head election was that the Namalo Marhohos Clan would be elected village head for the 2023-2029 period. Tomu Pasaribu explained, *"The absence of the Mandapot Raja Clan was not a problem from the start, and the entire community at the meeting agreed to give the Namalo Marhohos Clan a turn as village head in Siraja Gorat Village. After the Siraja Gorat village community meeting, a further dynamic emerged, with the Mandapot Raja Clan not accepting the meeting's decision."* (Tomu Pasaribu)

The Mandapot Raja Clan felt they had no agreement with the other clans in 2017, as expressed by Arnold Pasaribu, a Mandapot Raja figure and village head elected in 2017 in Siraja Gorat Village. Arnold Pasaribu added, *"The meeting can be held if he no longer runs for village head. Arnold Pasaribu also emphasized that the 2017 meeting did not include an agreement regarding limiting the term of office of village heads."* (Arnold Pasaribu)

The Namalo Marhohos Clan and the Toga Pangaribuan Clan stated that the village head's limitation of the period was based on mutual agreement. *The agreement was written, but poor archiving meant there was no written record. However, there are still many living witnesses to the meeting. Being a village head is currently highly sought after because of the steady salary and the ability to manage a very large budget for a village community.* (Laung Pasaribu as a figure of the Mandapot Raja Clan, January 28, 2025)

Village funds, which are a government policy, have increased interest in becoming village heads, especially in Siraja Gorat Village. *"In the Siraja Gorat village head election, there were four candidates, and in 2017, it was very difficult to find a suitable candidate. I suspect the availability of village funds and numerous grants has led to a fierce competition*

among residents, especially in Siraja Gorat Village. "(Jefri Pasaribu, Mandapot Raja Clan Figure, February 7, 2025)

After conducting direct elections by the people of Siraja Gorat Village, the results were that Volda Pasaribu received the highest number of votes and became the village head of Siraja Gorat for the 2023-2029 period. According to Tomu Pasaribu, a contestant in the 2021 Siraja Gorat village head election, one of the main factors that won Volda Pasaribu was the Toga Pangaribuan Clan, which was very strong and directly involved in the victory. Tomu Pasaribu added that the largest population was the Namalo Marhohos Clan, but the emergence of two candidates from the Clan made the Toga Pangaribuan Clan win. Leonardo Pasaribu added that some Namalo Marhohos residents also supported Volda Pasaribu, so the numerical strength of the Namalo Marhohos Clan was divided.

The condition of the Mandapot Raja Clan is the smallest in terms of population in Siraja Gorat Village. *"The Mandapot Raja Clan has no more than 15 heads of families, maybe only 30-40 votes, and Arnold added that some of the Mandapot Raja community voted for candidates other than himself, and I suspect that money politics caused some of the Mandapot Raja Clan's votes to shift to other candidates." (Arnold Pasaribu)* The following are the voting results for the 2023 Siraja Gorat Village Head Election:

Siraja Gorat Village Head Election Results Table for 2023

No	Number	Number of Votes	Presentation
1	Volda Pasaribu	51	36%
2	Leonardo Pasaribu	38	27%
3	Tomu Pasaribu	27	19%
3	Arnold Pasaribu	22	15%

Source: Data processed by the author based on information from the Head of Siraja Gorat Village, Volda Pasaribu

Changes to the Agreement between the Siraja Gorat Village Clans in the Election of Village Head

The customary agreement within the beliefs of the Siraja Gorat Village community is considered one solution to conclude. Deliberation to reach consensus was the goal pursued by the Siraja Gorat Village community in the 2023 village head election. However, the customary agreement changed and could not be implemented by the village community. The Mandapot Raja Clan's absence from the Siraja Gorat Village community meeting and the Mandapot Raja Clan's continued nomination of a village head candidate rendered the customary agreement unenforceable.

The Namalo Marhohos Clan's attempts to confirm their relationship with the Mandapot Raja Clan have not received a positive response, and relations between the clans have tended to change. This change in relations also reflects the Namalo Marhohos Clan's disappointment with the Mandapot Raja Clan's breach of the agreement. Meanwhile, the Toga Pangaribuan Clan is also deeply disappointed with the Mandapot Raja Clan's actions in breaking the agreement they maintained during the last two village head elections.

One factor suspected of triggering the failed inter-clan agreement was the emergence of a very large amount of village funds for the village community. The amount of Siraja Gorat village funds varies or is not fixed each year, but generally between Rp. 800,000,000

(eight hundred million rupiah) to Rp. 1,000,000,000 (one billion rupiah). The management of these village funds is suspected to be one of the factors that caused Arnold Pasaribu, as the incumbent village head and representative of the Mandapot Raja Clan, to renege on the agreement that had been implemented and held in the previous village head election.

Village funds are under the authority of the village head, who consults with the community through village budget planning meetings. These funds can be used for the benefit of the village head, both individually and collectively. Village fund management tends to experience minimal oversight from the community and relevant authorized stakeholders. Leaders from the Namalo Marhohos and Toga Pangaribuan clans suspect that village fund management is also a primary reason why Arnold Pasaribu and the Mandapot Raja clan refused to implement the previous agreement.

The Toga Pangaribuan Clan registered a candidate for village head, namely Volda Pasaribu. The registration was proof of the Toga Pangaribuan Clan's stance on the registration carried out by Arnold Pasaribu. *"I was directly asked by Toga Pangaribuan leaders to nominate myself as the village head. We had agreed on Namalo Marhohos as the next village head, but seeing Arnold Pasaribu register, we considered that agreement null and void. On the other hand, we also saw competition emerging between Namalo Marhoho, Leonardon Pasaribu, and Tomu Pasaribu. That, too, violated the agreement that there should be no competition. For that reason, we feel we have the right to become village head."* (interview with Volda Pasaribu, February 1, 2025).

The rivalry that emerged within the Namalo Marhohos Clan was seen as a violation of the inter-clan agreement by the Toga Pangaribuan Clan. The Namalo Marhohos Clan attempted to mediate between Leonardo Pasaribu and Tomu Pasaribu, but this was unsuccessful. *"I am also part of the Namalo Marhohos party, so I have the right to represent them. On the other hand, many Namalo Marhohos figures support my candidacy. Regarding my brother Tomu Pasaribu's request to withdraw, I refused because I also have the support of Namalo Marhohos figures, so I am still running. Our Namalo Marhohos family has never met to decide on a village head candidate, so I believe I have the same right."* (Interview with Leonardo Pasaribu, February 11, 2025).

Leonardo Pasaribu's statement was also part of what prevented an agreement between the Clans from being reached because internally, the Namalo Marhohos Clan experienced divisions. Kathleen Collins (2004) stated that the elites between the Clans deliberated and produced a result. *"Pact Informal"*, Collins explains that *Pact Informal* is essentially a behind-the-scenes political agreement between clan elites, not written in the constitution or laws, but which largely determines who is in power and who gets what share in the country. The inter-clan agreement in Siraja Gorat Village gives each clan a turn to lead the village or become Village Head in turn. The Toga Pangaribuan Clan and the Mandapot Raja Clan have had the opportunity or turn to become village head, and subsequently, based on the inter-clan agreement of Siraja Gorat Village, the Namalo Marhohos Clan gets its turn to become village head. After the political process that occurred, the inter-clan agreement and the system for determining the village head, which was also part of the inter-clan agreement in Siraja Gorat Village, were not implemented or changed.

Furthermore, Collins (2004) also explains that inter-clan agreements are difficult to continue or carry out; there are at least 4 very determining factors, namely: Agreements Have No Institutional Basis: Inter-clan agreements in Siraja Gorat Village are informal and not binding between one Clan and another. On the other hand, there are no logical consequences imposed on Clans that violate inter-clan agreements, so that inter-clan

agreements are vulnerable to being violated. Temporary Clan Coalitions, this second factor is one of the determining factors in the case of Siraja Gorat Village.

The Toga Pangaribuan Clan and the Namalo Marhohos Clan had agreed that the Namalo Marhohos Clan would take turns becoming village head, but the Toga Pangaribuan Clan did not comply, citing the Mandapot Raja Clan's candidacy and the emergence of competition within the Namalo Marhohos Clan. Therefore, the coalition between the two Clans did not take place in the Village Head Election because the agreement between the two Clans, which can be understood as a coalition, was only temporary. Clan politics is zero-sum; in this third factor, Collins explains that in a clan-based political system, the advantage gained by one clan always means a loss for another clan. Thus, it gives rise to efforts between clans to defeat each other. The Toga Pangaribuan Clan considers the opportunities of the Mandapot Raja Clan and the Namalo Marhohos Clan to be equal when the Mandapot Raja Clan is considered to have violated the agreement between the Clans.

On the other hand, the Mandapot Raja Clan considers that the inter-Clan agreement limits the political rights of the community and therefore rejects the agreement. And the fourth factor is exclusion and unfair distribution of resources; this factor is the weakest factor in having an impact on changing the inter-Clan agreement in Siraja Gorat Village. Because there is no content of the inter-Clan agreement in Siraja Gorat Village regarding the distribution of resources between Clans, and this is the authority of the incumbent village head. However, Arnold Pasaribu, as the incumbent village head who intends to continue the term, does not consolidate between Clans by means of resource distribution as done by Mukhtar Lubis in Haunatas I village.

4. CONCLUSION

The struggle for resources in political contestation is one of the essentials of political contestation, and this is also reflected in the battle of political parties in general elections. This study begins with the phenomenon of the Clan political system carried out by Haunatas I Village and Siraja Gorat Village. Both villages use a customary system in determining the village head as an agreement between Clans; however, in the 2021 Haunatas I Village Head Election, the agreement between Clans was able to continue and reached an agreement between Clans without experiencing changes in the determination of the village head. A different condition was experienced by Siraja Gorat Village in the 2023 Village Head Election, which experienced a change in the system in determining the village head because the agreement between Clans could not be continued, or the Clans did not reach an agreement. This study uses the theory put forward by Kathleen Collins (2004) regarding the agreement between clans (*clan pacts*) can be achieved if certain conditions are met, and will fail / not be achieved if those conditions are missing or changed.

There are several findings from the results of this study, namely, first, Mukhtar Lubis's ability to consolidate the Panggomal Clan figures is a key point in Mukhtar Lubis's success in changing the Panggomal Clan's decision. By using resource distribution and power distribution, Mukhtar Lubis was able to convince important figures of the Panggomal Clan. Second, the agreement between Clans in Haunatas I Village is not binding, so that changes in every decision between Clans are possible. Third, Village fund resources are one of the things that create competition in the case study of the Siraja Gorat Village Head Election in 2023; on the other hand, there is no informal mediation and consolidation carried out to maintain the agreement between Clans. Fourth, the consequences for violating the agreement between Clans in Haunatas I Village are determined by customary law, while in

Siraja Gorat Village, violations of the agreement between Clans have no consequences. Fifth, the use of Clans as political entities tends to be carried out by Siraja Gorat Village, while in Haunatas I Village, the use of Clans is not prominent or tends to be dominated by the role of Clan elites in decision-making.

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Interview

Lubis, Toga

Interview with Toga Lubis as a figure of the Panggomal Clan of Haunatas I Village, January 21, 2025 (Interviewer Timoteus Lubis).

Lubis, Mukhtar

Interview with Mukhtar Lubis as the elected Village Head in 2021 from the Purajaipadang Clan, January 22, 2025. (Interviewer Timoteus Lubis).

Lubis, Eston

Interview with Eston Lubis, a figure from the Puniagoni Clan of Haunatas I Village, January 23, 2025. (Interviewer: Timoteus Lubis)

Lubis, Mangosa

Interview with Mangosa Lubis as a figure from the Purajaiapadang Clan, Haunatas I Village, January 24, 2025. (Interviewer Timoteus Lubis)

Lubis, Maruli

Interview with Maruli Lubis as a candidate for Village Head from the Panggomal Clan, January 24, 2025. (Interviewer: Timoteus Lubis)

Pasaribu, Arnold

Interview with Arnold Pasaribu as the candidate for village head from the Mandapot Raja Clan and the incumbent village head, February 3, 2025. (Interviewer Timoteus Lubis)

Pasaribu, Tomu

Interview with Tomu Pasaribu as a candidate for village head from the Namalo Marhohos Clan, January 27, 2025. (Interviewer Timoteus Lubis)

Pasaribu, Volda

Interview with Volda Pasaribu as the village head candidate from the Toga Pangaribuan Clan and the elected village head, February 1, 2025. (Interviewer Timoteus Lubis)

Pasaribu, Leonardo

Interview with Leonardo Pasaribu as a candidate for village head from the Namalo Marhohos Clan, February 11, 2025. (Interviewer Timoteus Lubis)

Pasaribu, Jefri

Interview with Jefri Pasaribu as a figure from the Mandapot Raja Clan, February 7, 2025. (Interviewer: Timoteus Lubis)

Pasaribu, Laung

Interview with Laung Pasaribu as a figure of the Toga Pangaribuan Clan, January 28, 2025. (Interviewer Timoteus Lubis)

Pasaribu, Nurhayati

Interview with Nurhayati Pasaribu as Chair of BPD Siraja Gorat, January 29, 2025. (Interviewer Timoteus Lubis)