Politics of Silaturahmi: Religious Tradition as Political Brokerage Strategy in the 2014 Legislature Election in Indonesia

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Abstract: This study focuses on a strategy of personal contact with voters that was used by many candidates in the 2014 general election. Unlike in earlier elections in 2014 candidates preferred to visit their constituents individually or directly. The silaturahmi was often used to describe such visits and became a popular terms for characterizing a style of campaigning that relied on personal contacts between candidates and voters. At first glance there is nothing wrong with this style of politics because it suggests that candidates will be able to learn directly from constituents about their needs and aspirations. But it becomes complicated by the patterns of power relations that have developed between elites and masses in Indonesia's new democracy. This study examines the rise of silaturahmi as a strategy used by politicians to build patronage networks, facilitating the exchange of material resources for votes. The concept of patronage is used as a theoretical lens to describe the forms of the resources being exchanged, the distribution patterns being used and consequently the power relations formed between the candidates and the public. Silaturahmi is an informal institution used to maintain the patronage power relations. By understanding these dynamics, this study helps show how elites attempt to maintain their power by using a strategy that is at first sight populist. Though the politics of silaturahmi is presented as being all about warm personal contacts connecting politicians and voters, it is simultaneously used to maintain patronage relationships that end up marginalizing ordinary people in political dynamics.

Key words: Patronage, political brokerage, campaign strategy, legislature election, informal institution, contact

INTRODUCTION

General election for legislative members or known as Legislature Election in Indonesia is organized to select the members of the House of Representatives (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat or DPR), Regional Representatives Council (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah or DPRD) and the Regional Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah or DPD) which will run the legislative functions in Indonesia for the next 5 years. In contrast to DPD which selected from individual candidates, DPR and DPRD membership is filled by the candidates nominated by political parties. But with a proportional electoral system used in the, 2014 Legislature Election, the political competition occurs not inter-parties but among candidates. The weakening of party and electoral system that emphasizes competition between individuals causing political dynamics become increasingly pragmatic and transactional. Therefore, the legislative candidates need to choose an appropriate strategy to win the election.

Silaturahmi is choosen to be the main strategy to win the popular vote. Candidates directly visiting the people in his or her constituency to sosialize their self and programme. This strategy is believed to be more effective than installing campaign properties such as banners, baligo or distribute t-shirts. Silaturahmi has a positive meaning because its relation with the values of religious and social traditions so, the practice of mobilizing support through this strategy is relatively easy to be accepted as a good will to foster the relationship between the candidates and their voters. The meaning of silaturahmi as a religious behavior makes this strategy apart from the various political interests that many perceived negatives.

Nevertheless, there is no neutral political strategy. When silaturahmi is used as a political strategy, it became an interesting phenomenon because it shows the interaction between formal and informal institutions in political practice. North (1990) defines institutions as a norm or set of norms that shape human interaction including encouraging or vice versa, limiting a behavior. Formal institutions are often interpreted as rules and norms which written in official documents and the application can be imposed by the state whereas, the reverse is the informal institutional norms or unwritten rules which application is carried out on the basis of social sanctions such as ostracism, loss of access to sources of power and the like (Lauth, 2005). Formal

institution in political campaign means political socialization and communication organized by political party or candidate for maintaining relationships with constituents. While informal institutions are a variety of social and cultural traditions that lived in community including the tradition of silaturahmi. The interaction of this two institutions is not a new phenomena but it is important to recognize when these interactions replace the function of a political party machine which then led to the weakening of political parties which should be the main actors in democratization.

The current electoral system is shifting towards the competition of candidate's figure. Tickets to win seats in the legislature is determined by the number of votes obtained by the candidates while the votes cast for the party only be given to additional candidates based on the achievement of his or her ballots. Political parties no longer have the power to determine which candidates who are going to sit in the legislature. Personalization of politics in the realm of legislaturw elections generally refers to the competition among prominent political party leaders (McAllister, 2007) but in the electoral system in Indonesia today, it is no longer the head of the parties that fought each other but the whole candidates both incumbent and new entrants. Instead of competing with each other in terms of the program in this system, the political competition became increasingly personal. The candidates compete with each other to rely on its ability to raise funds and distribute a wide range of assistance in an effort to gain the sympathy and support of the community. In contrast, constituents tend to hope to gain benefit directly from the candidates. When the playing field becomes personal, then the campaign strategy shifted towards a pattern that highlights the relationship of personal ties.

Silaturahmi in the 2014 Legislature Election is not naturally occurring as part of a social character or the political culture of Indonesian society. Silaturahmi is a product of the interaction between formal and informal institutions in the political dynamics. When the role of the party weakened, party's cadres fail to build political network at the grass roots and party fail to show a positive performance in the public eye, the personalization of politics is arose through the utilizing of the informal institutions that lived in community in the form of the tradition of silaturahmi. Silaturahmi is used as a strategy to build political image of the candidates as a populist figures while strengthen the emotional connection based on clientelistic networks. This study wants to show how the tradition of silaturahmi in the 2014 Legislature Election is reinterpreted, not just a personal effort to build a close relationship with the constituents but also attached with efforts to reproduce clientelistic political network to the community level.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research aimed to analyze how legislature candidates use various campaign strategies to gain public support. To obtain data and information, this research used indepth interview and observation technique. Interviews were conducted with 17 informen, consisting of the candidates and the core members of the candidate's campaign teams. In addition, observation was also conducted to obtain primary data concerning candidate's behavior and the pattern of patronage relation established between candidates and their campaign team. Participant observation was conducted by following the campaign of candidates and party campaign held by the supporters of candidates.

Collected data were analyzed descriptively based on the categorization of data to identify key words that indicate the meaning of the patronage relationship, how informen reconstruct the meaning of religious values contained in the concept of silaturahmi to be relevant in maintaining the relation of candidates and constituents as well as how the candidate nurtures a network of patronage by using the concept of silaturahmi.

Patronage and political brokerage (conceptual framework): After an initial period of scholarly attention to the process of regime transition there has recently been a major effort to explain the origin and effects of democratic institutions such as electoral laws or presidential and parliamentary systems. One important area that has not received sufficient attention is the wide variation in patterns of linkages between politician's parties and citizens. Model of democratic representation clearly captures many of the ways in which partie's appeals and programs reflect and sometimes lead their constituencie's preferences in affluent capitalist democracies (Powell, 2004). Consistent with the standard responsible party model, several studies have found that the partisan complexion of governments does indeed make a difference for a wide range of social and economic policies in advanced capitalist democracies (Castles, 1982; Andersen, 1990; Huber and Stephens, 2001; Klingemann *et al.*, 1994). In a similar vein, scholars have explored patterns of political representation according to the partisan government model and the variability of such citizen-politician relations contingent upon electoral rules and party system formats in a democratic polity (Lijphart, 1999; Powell, 2000). What the responsible-party model ignores, however is that a quite different type of patronage-based, party-voter linkage exists in many countries including some advanced industrial democracies (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). In many political systems, citizen politician linkages are based on direct material inducements targeted to individuals and

small groups of citizens whom politicians know to be highly responsive to such side-payments and willing to surrender their vote for the right price. Democratic accountability in such a system does not result primarily from politician's success in delivering collective goods such as economic growth, jobs, monetary stability or national health care, nor does it rest on improving overall distributive outcomes along the lines favored by broad categories of citizens (e.g., income and asset redistribution through taxes and social benefits schemes). Instead, clientelistic accountability represents a transaction, the direct exchange of a citizen's vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods and services (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007).

Two critical terms in this study are patronage and clientelism which as understood here, refer respectively to: the goods or other favours that are exchanged in political relationships and the nature of the relationships themselves (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007) at other times they are used with narrower meanings (for example, patronage is sometimes used narrowly to describing the awarding of public service jobs to political supporters (Grindle, 2013). Patronage as a political resource is typically used for three major and closely related, purposes in a democratic polity: first to attract support from voters for a particular candidate or party; second, to fund the political parties or networks that those candidates need to organise their campaigns and connect them to voters and third to construct governing coalitions (Aspinall, 2014).

Aspinall (2014) define patronage as a "material resource derived from public sources and disbursed for particularistic benefit"; clientelism refers to a "personalistic relationship of power". Most definitions of clientelism further require at least three components: contingency or reciprocity in which the "delivery of a good or service on the part of both the patron and client is in direct response to a delivery of a reciprocal benefit by the other party" (typically, a material resource exchanged for a vote or other form of political support); hierarchy, emphasising the unequal power relations between the patron and the client and iteration, implying that the clientelistic exchange is never one-off but part of an ongoing relationship.

Clientelism as a particular mode of "exchange" between electoral constituencies as principals and politicians as agents in democratic systems. This exchange is focused on particular classes of goods, though the feasibility and persistence of clientelistic reciprocity is not determined by the type of goods exchanged. Patronage and clientelism as understood here are conceptually distinct but they are often closely related in practice: a voter who receives a cash payment from a politician one day, might approach that politician or his or her subordinate for help in placing a child in a scholarship program the next. Even so, it is important to distinguish between the two concepts. Not all patronage is disbursed by way of relationships that are clientelistic. For example, when politicians or their agents try to buy votes, they are sometimes required to distribute money to people with whom they have no personal relationships and who might therefore feel little obligation to reciprocate by casting their vote for that candidate. This is a challenge which as we shall see, politicians try to overcome by forming vote brokerage networks which consist of people who do have personal relationships with voters. Clientelism, therefore can be understood as a means to try to make the distribution of patronage more effective and the behaviour of people who are receiving and channelling it more trustworthy and predictable (Aspinall, 2014).

Under conditions of democratic enfranchisement the major cost of constructing such linkages is that of building organizational hierarchies of exchange between electoral clients at the ground floor of the system, various levels of brokers organized in a pyramidal fashion and patrons at the top (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). Politicians have to identify resources they can extract and offer to clients in exchange for contributions to their electoral efforts. Moreover, they must construct organizational devices and social networks of supervision that make direct individual or indirect group-based monitoring of political exchange relations viable. In this process, clients and politicians gain confidence in the viability of their relationship by iteration, i.e., the repeated success of exchange relations that makes the behavior of the exchange partner appear predictable and low risk. The evolution of party organizational forms that manage clientelistic relations is a drawn-out process, not an instant result of rational strategic interaction in single-shot games.

Under conditions of democratic competition with full enfranchisement, local exchange networks will rarely suffice to win national elections. Politicians need to organize the flow of material resources across the complex pyramidal network of client-broker-patron exchanges (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). By coordinating large numbers of political operatives they must overcome challenging problems of collective action and principal-agent conflicts through finely balanced systems of incentives. For example, higher-level brokers will wish to divert as much as possible of a party's electoral resources to their private use rather than to confer them on lower-level brokers who then are in turn expected

to restrain their own income-maximizing self-interests and reward external electoral clients with resources that induce the latter to contribute generously to the party through votes, labor and financial contributions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Silaturahmi as patronage practice: Silaturahmi as political strategy would be analyzed within the conceptual framework of patronage and clientelism to explore how silaturahmi functions to obtain vote from the people. Patronage in this stduy is defined as political relationship that build based on money, materials or economic opportunity which distributed in order to obtain political support while clientelism is political relationship based on the exchange of material benefits (money, goods or economic opportunity) with political support in the sense of reciprocity, hierarchy and continuos relationship (Aspinall, 2014). To understand silaturahmi within this framework means that there are 2 aspects to be revealed from this practice that first, what kind of materials or resources that be exchanged between candidates and voters. Second, what kind of network that used to distribute the resources.

Silaturahmi has become popular tradition to preserve social relationship in almost Malay society including in Indonesia. This tradition is imposed by the Islamic belief which is the majority religion in Indonesia. In Moslem perspective, silaturahmi is a religious activity that has great virtue that is both grace within the world and reward in heaven. Silaturahmi is believed to be the activity that could open the door of fortune and long life for those who practice it. This is confirmed in HR. Bukhari and Muslim hadith, said that "whoever wants to be widened his fortune and be length his age he should do silaturahmi" (Mariana and Nurmilah, 2013). This positive meaning makes silaturahmi easier to be accepted by society, even makes the people who practice it have a positive character in the eye of public.

Concept of silaturahmi also contains closeness of personal relationship. The word 'silaturahmi' related to 'silaturahim', means to reestablish family or kinship relationship. From this relation, there is a brotherhood meaning that attached to the tradition. Therefore, tradition of silaturahmi not only contains religious meaning but also social virtue to closely connect one person to another. This social meaning is used to build personal relationship between candidate and constituents or people whom the candidate visited. Social meaning within this tradition enable silaturahmi to be implemented beyond the boundaries of religion and social-economic background, futhermore establish egalitarian value in the relationship between candidate and constituents.

Religious and social values in silaturahmi are adapted into campaign strategy used by legislature candidates. There are various ways used by candidate to socialize themselves. The simplest way is through distributing name card that contain candidate's personal identity and work programme. Some candidates organize various social activities such as prayer gathering (usually called pengajian or gathering to read Al Quran), fun walk with the community, free health service or even held a soccer tournament to gain symphaty from the youth voters. The purpose of these activities is to introduce the personality of candidate and create the image of candidate as populist figure. In these activities, patronage is operated through the distribution of materials in the form of goods and service. This practice identified as club goods pattern of patronage which is performed through the exchange of materials for vote. Many candidates use club goods pattern in the form of social activities for certain group because this pattern could obtain more masses in one occation of campaign gathering. For new comer in candidacy, this strategy is more effective compare to install campaign properties that could be lost or damage.

Beside the silaturahmi in the form of social activities, there were some candidates that use silaturahmi as a medium to strengthen their political networking. This is usually practiced by incumbent candidates or candidates that previously had seat in legislature. This political network usually contains local figures in society such as the head of community government institution (called Rukun Warga or RW) in village, head of village government (called Kepala Desa), former party member and party activist in local branches. For incumbent candidates, the existence of political network is very strategic, not only as a node to consolidate constituents but also to recruit volunteer to help candidate socialize their figure and programme.

Patronage relationship is sustained in a long period, not only before the election time. Incumbent candidate who has resources to public budget such as through the aspiration fund or social grant scheme could use those schemes to fund implementation of various programme for his or her constituents. Relationship with local figures, head of villages or head of Rukun Warga is build through the mechanism of proposing and allocating this aspiration fund. With the help of all the local figures, candidate gains additional benefit that is support from followers of the local figures, in this case, member of youth organization in the village, cadre of women organization in the village, member of security organization in the village and other apparatus of village government which could be the political instrument to build relation to the people in grass root. In other words, once the candidate

gain support from the local brokers, he or she also gain additional support from the followers of the local brokers. This strategic role played by head of villages government in political event sometimes caused a politicization of villages.

Incumbent candidates usually 'coach' the head of villages through several activities such as technical assessment to gain their loyalty to support incumbent candidates. As a return, candidates allocate development programmes to renovate village office or to repair village road which then become the basic argument to claim that apparatus of village has succeeded in obtaining development fund. In this scheme, money is not the only factor to determine support for candidate, the success in obtaining development fund and implementing the programme also play significant role to strengthen clients loyalty toward candidate as their patron. Candidate becomes a patron because he or she can reproduce new local figures in their region and in some cases, those new local figures also participate in election as candidate for lower level of parliament. Through allocating aspiration fund, candidates made themselves well known figure in society and also create new brokers for their political network which in the time of election campaign will work together and share various resources to obtain as many votes as they can. From this perspective, pork barrel pattern is identify through the use of allocating aspiration fund and coaching clientelistic network through the role of head of villages.

Therefore, there are 2 patterns of patronage in the 2014 Legislature Election. First pattern is club goods, which is organized through various social and religious activities for certain group of community such as pengajian for Moslem community or sport tournament for the youth. Frequency of these activities is differ among candidates and is oriented to introduce candidate figure to voters. For incumbent candidates, club goods pattern is utilized to preserve the memory of their constituents toward the candidates. Therefore, many incumbent candidates still using this pattern in between the election period in the form of informal, social or religious activities. The second pattern is pork barrel which is organized especially by incumbent candidates using public budget in the form of aspiration fund and development programme allocated to their constituent's district. This pattern is used to realize the campaign promises made by the candidates so, their constituents believe in their capacity to fulfill constituent's aspirations. Between these two patterns, pork barrel has a more significant impact to sustain political personalisation because in this strategy, not only money and goods provided from patron to

clients to obtain support but also there are effort to establish personal loyalty through creating new brokers in community.

Reproducing the political brokerage: Silaturahmi, in fact, become a political strategy to perpetuate the patterns of patronage which then reproduces a new brokers who expand network of political clientelism. Conceptually, the expansion of political networks should be done by the political parties by establishing a party structure all the way to the community level. But, when the party does not have sufficient capacity to perform this function, then the practice of patronage replace it by using an informal institution called a success team or volunteer which are not included in the party organization and recruited on the basis of personal relationships with the candidates. All the candidates in the 2014 Legislature Election use both party structures and volunteers as a political machine to obtain popular support. Even so, most of the volunteers work more effectively rather than the party structure. The party resources including the formal success team created by the party, should be able to be shared by the candidates. Whilst, the context of the legislative elections is an individual competition, so that the presence of volunteers is more effective because the candidates do not have to share with the other candidates. For the candidates, party only plays as a facilitator to organize mass campaigns. For the purpose of organizing a mass campaign, the candidates submit to the parties mutual aid funds to prepare the party campaign attributes and operational implementation of the campaign rallies. Meanwhile to organize socialization activities, candidates use private funds and formed a team of volunteers who work for the candidates personally. It shows that the personalization of politics also penetrated into the network of campaign strategy.

Candidates really have to struggle to obtain popular votes, so it is necessary to develop a network in their electoral district. To form the volunteer's team, candidates recruit local people who know exactly the characteristics of the district and the local socio and cultural values. Volunteer at the local level which is directly related to the community, constantly fostered voters loyalty by building informal and personal relationships. Therefore, the presence of candidates directly in the electoral district is very important. It should not be delegated to anyone because the goal is to maintain an emotional connection with supporters. For candidates who use silaturahmi as a primary strategy, the existence of volunteers become very important to find out which areas are not visited yet by other candidates, so candidates can turn the 'blank spot' into a new vote bag. In areas that have long been the

basis of candidates voter, the presence of volunteers is also important to maintain the loyalty of the constituents in that area. The candidates are well aware of the character of competition in the 2014 Legislative Election where intercandidates competition occurs both externally and internally from the same party, so it is important to maintain the districts that have been visited by candidates that are not captured by the other candidates. This role is performed by volunteers. Generally, there are several layers of a team of volunteers who came to the district. The first layer's duty is to socialize the candidates, the second layer is usually work to strengthen the support for candidate. Usually 2 days after the socialization this layer came again to meet community leaders to foster informal closeness. A week before the election, there is a shadow team who will survey the consistency of the vote. If the vote is predicted to be directed to other candidate, then the second layer team will go down again to work on it.

Although, there are some candidates who use the party structure to mobilize votes but that is not the party organizationally but individuals who happen to be member in the party. In fact, there were some volunteers who run for parliament at the lower level of legislative body such as at the province or regent and municipal legislative body. Therefore, in reality, we could find package of candidates campaigning together for example, candidate A runs for the seat of National House of Representative, candidate B runs for provincial parliament and candidate C for regent or Municipal Parliament. Candidates B and C are also role as volunteer for Candidate A. This package can save campaign costs because each contributes funds to make campaign attributes. Campaign package pattern is also used by the candidates who have a kinship relationship for example, between father and son, between husband and wife or between brother and sister. In addition to utilizing personal close relationship with the party leaders, the mobilization was also carried out by utilizing a variety of community organizations as a political network to recruit volunteers and build voter support.

The existence of volunteers showed that informal institutions began to replace the role of the formal structure to mobilize votes. This pattern generally emerge when official structures of party are weak. Party does not have enough human resources to mobilize support or institutional mechanism that is strong enough to build relationships with constituents, thus fail to respond the dynamics of the electoral system that puts the competition intercandidates. The candidates have to rely on their ability to build personal relationships with public figures or people who are considered as the liaison

between candidates with the voters (Ockey, 2000). This limitations that open the opportunity for the entry of informal institutions in the form of volunteers. The concept of the volunteer has an unique meaning because it implies the emotional closeness of the relationship between candidates and volunteers. Although, there are funds given to operational activities but money is not a main binder in the concept of volunteering. The candidate acknowledges that there is a special recruitment mechanism conducted for volunteers at the community level but recruitment is not going to happen without the willingness of people to join the campaign as volunteer. In fact, in many cases, person who providing themselves as volunteers are the ones who feel comfortable with the candidates personally, felt helped by the candidate in previous occasion or had been a political student of the candidates such as student and mentor relationship. The relationship between candidates and volunteers constructed on the basis of personal preferences as well as the underlying levels of loyalty in the relationship. The closer the personal relationship between the candidates and volunteers, the higher loyalty of volunteers. This loyalty can be traced down to the willingness of volunteers to share the campaign funds and supporters. Such loyalty can only be formed through friendships that have lasted a long time, therefore, the pattern of effective brokerag to be more prevalent among incumbent candidates who already have knowledge of the political map in their district. In this pattern, the resources exchanged more than just money or goods but rather the access and specific treatments in the field of economic, social or political. This proves that the concept of volunteering actually perpetuate electoral dynamics-based network of informal institutions and personal relations of patronage.

CONCLUSION

Actually there is nothing wrong with silaturahmi tradition that now becoming the most popular model of the campaign. In fact, the frequent moments for candidates to visit their constitutent is the first step to establish good political communication with the people. Usually, political communication is rare to do, legislator's visit to their constituent is limited only in the time of recess, so many representatives of the people who are not known by their constituents. In this case, the electoral system with an open competition to select the candidates directly have a positive impact in a changing relationship with constituents. However, the implementation of the electoral system may also contribute to the declining role

of the party. This seems less anticipated by existing parties, giving the impression that the party only serves as a formal identity provider for candidates to be able to participate in elections. In fact, as a democratic institution, the party should perform the functions of recruitment, selection and regeneration, not only be participating in the election.

The 2014 Legislature Elections confirms the assumption of personalization politics. The competition occurs is indeed a fight intercandidates both internally and externally. The involvement of political party structures as the political engine to gain votes was not done institutionally but by recruiting members or party leaders as volunteers from each of the candidates. Here, the actual practice of clientelism has begun to take place because someone as volunteer recruitment much more based on personal ties such as friendship, kinship or other relationship.

Patterns of patronage which is generally done by the newly candidates, competing for the first time in the legislative elections is club goods pattern. While the incumbent candidates use pork barrel pattern in the form of distribution of development programs using aspirations funds or social grants scheme as well as through the provision of a variety of licensing in economic field. The ability of candidates to channel public funds to the constituency be used as a measure of success for a capital gain sympathy and public support. Here, the relationship becomes a means to foster the loyalty of constituents who have received assistance from the program as well as used to form the network nodes through the creation of new brokers in the local community which then serves as a volunteer and also be a candidate for different levels of legislative office. The presence of these nodes broaden political network that can be used to garner support from other areas outside the existing mass base.

An important note that can not be ignored from the dynamics of the 2014 Legislative Election is the issue of electoral system that is considered to weaken the party and strengthen pragmatism in voting. Transactional politics through a variety practices of money politics both are revealed or not revealed is a consequence of the choice of electoral system that is handed over entirely to the selection mechanism in an open figure. On the other side, the public has not fully familiar with the candidates who will be their representatives. As a result, what happens is the pragmatism that emerged in the form of the practice of vote buying, whether made directly from the candidates to voters or that made among candidates. Conflict between candidates becomes an additional problem that arises during the recapitulation of vote counting.

The rise of political pragmatism is supposed to be the reflection of the performance of the party. When the capacity to manage resources decline, the party will have delegitimation and no longer rooted in people's everyday lives. On the other hand, the increasingly liberal political practice will bring individualism character that sees the existence of formal institutions is no longer important because individuals could solve their own problems or use market mechanisms to provide their needs. Distrust towards representative institutions will continue to increase which eventually led to the weakening of civic consciousness. People will act like individuals in the market system, rather than as citizens who are fully aware of their political rights and duties in a public sphere. When this happens, the political pragmatism will get worse. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the election system and the mechanism within the framework to strengthen the role of political parties as institutions of representative democracy. Awareness of the importance of communication and establish a relationship with the community is necessary to rearrange power relations between politicians and constituents, especially in order to transform the political networks, no longer characterized by clientelism character but with equality which allows people to organizely manage their capacity.

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