

THE MEANING OF KARAENG AT THE DEMOCRACY PARTY IN JENEPONTO REGENCY

A. Tri Arwina Dheafati¹, Muh. Ridwan Said Ahmad², Hasruddin Nur³, Najamuddin⁴, Jumadi⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Pascasarjana Universitas Negeri Makassar

Email: 240002301005@student.unm.ac.id, m.ridwan.said.ahmad@unm.ac.id, hasruddin.nur@unm.ac.id,
najamuddin@unm.ac.id, jumadi@unm.ac.id

Received : 20 September 2025

Published : 24 November 2025

Revised : 10 October 2025

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.54443/morfai.v5i6.4492>

Accepted : 13 November 2025

Link Publish : <https://radjapublika.com/index.php/MORFAI/article/view/4492>

Abstract

This study aims to: 1) To analyze the meaning of the title Karaeng in Jeneponto Regency. 2) To analyze how the Karaeng title affects social structure and leadership. 3) To analyze how the social order with the title of Karaeng in the Regional Elections in Jeneponto. The approach used is descriptive with a qualitative type of research. Data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. informants, namely 15 people using purposive sampling techniques, with informant criteria including Figures / Traditional Stakeholders; a person with the title of Karaeng; The general public who do not have a karaeng title; local youth leaders/activists; Government officials in the field of culture and politics; Political actor with the title karaeng. Data analysis techniques are data condensation, data modeling and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that: a) The title of karaeng in Jeneponto Regency has a deep philosophical meaning, rooted in royal traditions passed down through generations and reflects the values of honor, wisdom, and social responsibility as a symbol of community identity and status. This title is not only a status symbol, but also a marker of social identity that distinguishes a person's position in society. The values inherited in the title reflect the Jeneponto people's outlook on leadership, exemplary behavior, and interpersonal relationships based on respect and justice. b) In the social structure, holders of the karaeng title remain respected and influential, both in formal leadership such as government and non-formal in traditional and social environments, and serve as role models in maintaining community harmony. c) The meaning of the karaeng title in the regional elections in Jeneponto is seen from its still strong role in shaping the direction of community political support. This title is a symbol of trust and social influence that is able to mobilize community loyalty, even though now society is starting to judge prospective leaders not only by their titles, but also by their personal abilities and integrity in leadership.

Keywords: *Meaning, Karaeng Title, Democracy Party*

INTRODUCTION

The title karaeng is a traditional honorific title that originated from the Bugis-Makassar community in South Sulawesi. Generally, this title is awarded to someone who holds an important position, such as a descendant of nobility, traditional leaders, or respected community leaders. The word "Karaeng" basically describes the high social status and prestige possessed by a person in his social environment. In local traditions, the holder of this title is usually considered to have a moral responsibility to maintain traditional values, lead, and be a role model for the community. Although the current karaeng title is not always related to political power or official positions, its meaning is still appreciated as a symbol of cultural heritage and nobility identity inherent in the Bugis-Makassar community.

Rusli & Subair (2022, p. 390) The title Karaeng is one of the noble titles used by the people of Makassar in South Sulawesi. In general, this title is given to someone who comes from a noble or royal lineage, and was once used to refer to the leader or ruler of a region. In the life of traditional people, the title of Karaeng not only indicates high social status, but also becomes a symbol of honor and leadership. People who hold this title are usually respected because they are considered to have a noble lineage and important roles in the history or structure of local customs. Although currently the political power of the title holder is not as strong as it used to be, the use of the Karaeng title is still preserved as part of the cultural heritage and identity of the noble family. In the local political order, the Karaeng title has an important role as a symbol of leadership legitimacy and authority in the Bugis-Makassar community. Since the traditional royal period, Karaeng has not only been a noble title, but also an identity that shows

power and political authority. Figures with this title are often mediators in conflicts, decision-makers, and leaders in customary government affairs. Ulfanisa (2023, p. 52) In modern political developments, the existence of Karaeng still has an influence, especially in areas that still uphold traditional values and traditions. This influence is often seen in local political processes, such as the election of regional heads, where descendants or figures with the title Karaeng are considered to have stronger charisma, trust, and social support. This shows that the Karaeng title is not only a cultural heritage, but also a social capital that is able to strengthen a person's political position in society.

The Karaeng title, which is historically a symbol in the people of Jeneponto regency, does not just store historical value or past greatness. Fajrianti (2020, p. 90) In the midst of rapid social change, this degree actually shows the ability to survive and transform in the social life landscape of the Jeneponto community. In many ways, Karaeng has undergone an expansion of meaning: from a symbol of noble descent to a complex and often reproduced social identity through power relations, social networks, and collective recognition. This uniqueness is why it is important that Karaeng is not only a traditional relic, but has now become a social tool whose meaning continues to be negotiated by the community (Syarif, 2021) In the social life of the people of Jeneponto, the title Karaeng is often not only attached because of genealogical factors, but also because of its symbolic capacity as a representation of authority, moral maturity, and even informal leadership. Interestingly, the Karaeng labeling process in the current era often emerges from the bottom of the community's recognition of someone who is considered to meet the values of *assitinaja* (wisdom), *alapancaji* (justice), and *apammula tau* (exemplary). This means that the title of Karaeng has moved from an elitist space to a more open social arena, where legitimacy is not only determined by blood, but by social roles and reputation. This is where the shift in meaning can be seen from Karaeng as a feudal heritage to Karaeng as a social figure who lives in a dynamic social space.

In the social life of the people of Jeneponto today, the meaning of the title Karaeng can be seen in the way the community pays respect and trust to local figures who are considered to have great authority and contribution, even though they are not from noble lineages. Ningsih, F.W (2018, p. 28) For example, a community leader who has long mediated conflicts between residents, is a reference in customary deliberations, and is active in social activities is often called or referred to as Karaeng by local residents. The pinning of the title did not come from formal institutions or noble family lineage, but grew out of a collective recognition of the example and social influence he built. In such a situation, the title Karaeng becomes a symbol of social appreciation that is given informally, but has great moral and symbolic weight. This shows that the title of Karaeng is no longer solely about blood or inheritance, but about the social position gained through trust and devotion in people's lives.

The social life of people with the title Karaeng in Jeneponto today is in a space that is not entirely comfortable. They are respected, but at the same time supervised. Winata (2017, p. 9) On the one hand, the title of Karaeng gives them an honorable position in their social structure, they are often used as conflict mediators, ethical references, and voice bearers in traditional forums. But on the other hand, they no longer live in a time when authority is only enough to be inherited; Now, they must continue to prove themselves worthy of the title through concrete actions. This creates its own social pressure: they are expected to be role models in social life, even though they are also ordinary human beings who face the complexities of modern life. Something interesting and rarely discussed, is that people with the title Karaeng are now often transitional figures they live between two worlds, a customary world full of symbolic rules and a modern world that demands openness and social justice. Haslindah & Latief (2022, p. 232) In social interactions, a Karaeng is often positioned as a "guardian of harmony" in the community. For example, if there are problems between families or villages, Karaeng is often asked to be present not because of his formal power, but because of the moral legitimacy that they are considered to still have. Their presence brings a cool feeling often enough with advice or even just a certain gesture, the atmosphere can change to calm. However, what is rarely realized is that this position makes their social life very limiting. They are not free to express their opinions frontally in public spaces, as what they convey is often considered to represent the traditional voice or the pride of the community. Even on social media, many Karaeng limit themselves or refrain from participating in digital debates for fear of "losing authority". So in a world that demands openness and speed of response, they are required to be slow and thoughtful in a subtle but burdensome form of "politics of honor."

Interestingly, the social life of Karaeng is also highly dependent on their ability to maintain an informal network called *Kalabbiri* or respect-based social relations. Haboddin, M (2023, p. 8) They cannot just rely on title symbols; They must be present socially to mourn, escort the bride, donate during the harvest, disaster occurs, or simply attend small gatherings between residents. This creates a distinctive form of leadership: not structural, but cultural. They do not lead through rules, but through presence. Here we see that the social life of Karaeng is not about the luxury of status, but about symbolic work that is continuously maintained through relationships and the sacrifice of time and emotions. Nengsi, R & Natsir, A (2023, p. 7) This condition gives rise to a new social phenomenon that has not been widely studied, namely the emergence of social Karaengs, namely individuals who do not have formal titles, but carry out their roles and are respected as a Karaeng deserve because of their consistency

in maintaining social values and relationships. This phenomenon shows that the social life of people with the title Karaeng is in the process of desacralization as well as recontextualization. This means that the title is no longer exclusive to descendants, but can be born from community recognition based on the values shown. Thus, Karaeng's social life today is not only about maintaining honor, but also about how they navigate their identity in an ever-changing world, while still maintaining a bond of values with a society that expects a lot from their figure.

In the implementation of the Regional Elections in Jeneponto, the existence of Karaeng still has a considerable influence in determining the political direction of the community. The Karaeng title is not only interpreted as a cultural identity or social position, but also often a factor that strengthens a candidate's political attractiveness. This is related to the public's respect for the descendants of nobles which is still high to this day. . Hastira., *et al* (2025, p. 110) The presence of a prospective leader with the title Karaeng is often considered to bring legitimacy and prestige of its own, so that it is easier to be accepted by the public. This phenomenon shows that local traditions and old social structures still play an important role in the dynamics of regional head elections in Jeneponto. The Karaeng competed in the local political arena with capital on three bases: economic (land ownership and salt business), political (kinship networks and distribution of projects or positions), and cultural (people's respect for the nobility).

In fact, in the 2018 Regional Elections, all candidate pairs are known to come from the Karaeng circle, which shows their dominance in local political contests. In the 2024 Regional Elections, the political situation in Jeneponto is heating up quite seriously. Bawaslu noted that eight polling stations require re-voting (PSU) due to violations such as double voter registration and identity abuse. The atmosphere heated up even more when the masses of supporters of one of the candidates tried to stop the vote recapitulation by storming the KPU's logistics warehouse, although in the end the conditions could still be controlled. This phenomenon shows that traditional values and social strengthening by the Karaeng title still have a strong impact on the political dynamics of the Jeneponto Regional Election both in terms of influence on voters and the atmosphere of conflict in the election process.

The social structure of people with the title Karaeng in Jeneponto did not simply place them at the top of the social status ladder, but formed a kind of "middle room" that brought together traditional values with modern social dynamics. Syawal I (2023, p. 552) They are in a symbolic position as guardians of ancestral heritage values, but are also expected to be able to respond to the demands of the changing times. This is where the uniqueness of the social structure of a Karaeng lies not only because of their lineage, but also because of their ability to carry out social functions that bridge between indigenous peoples and the state, between ordinary citizens and formal elites, between the old and the new. Their leadership does not work through a command system as in the bureaucracy, but rather through symbolic influences and cultural beliefs that are rooted in social relations.

Karaeng became a central figure in a social structure based on recognition, not domination. Haboddin, M (2023, p. 5) The Karaeng title creates its own social layer that is flexible but strategic. They are not always in the formal circle of power, but can access and influence various local socio-political networks through a sipakatau (mutual respect) based approach. In fact, in some cases, Karaeng is able to become cultural mediation actors, namely those who take care of the honor of tradition while embracing the logic of modernization, such as education, economy, and local policies. The leadership of a Karaeng is not built on contracts, but on long-term trust and the ability to maintain harmony. Syarifuddin (2024, p. 269) In Jeneponto society, a Karaeng is respected not because he is in power, but because he is able to take care of social networks in a way that is not threatening, but calming.

More interestingly, the social structure that surrounds Karaeng does not work vertically, but laterally. It can be interpreted that the social structure in the title of Karaeng does not run like a staircase that is tiered from top to bottom, but rather spreads to the side. Armin & Badaruddin (2022, p. 155) Karaeng is not always in the highest position, but is actually in the middle of society as a liaison between social groups. In this case, the way they lead is more of a personal relationship, rather than based on official power or a transaction of interests. Their role arises from how much public trust they have as moral role models and guardians of harmony. Karaeng is not only a traditional symbol, but also a person who is really active in maintaining social balance by showing a firm, honest attitude, and understanding the customs and character of their community. This makes their leadership style different from most leaders today who do not rely on official positions or popularity, but lead by example and local values that continue to be proven in daily life.

Therefore, the current social structure and leadership of Karaeng can be called a combination of noble cultural heritage and democratic social values. Pratama, G (2020, h, 7) They are not only relying on lineage, but are also required to continue to prove that they deserve respect in a society that is now more critical and open. This is what makes the discussion of Karaeng so important: because it shows how tradition can survive, adapt, and still have an important role in the life of modern society without losing the cultural roots on which it is based. However, what caught the writer's attention regarding the Karaeng title was that the Karaeng title was previously only owned by nobles or descendants of kings in Jeneponto. In fact, currently the title of Karaeng in Jeneponto has changed quite a

lot. Now, the person called Karaeng was not always from noble descent. This title is more often used as a form of greeting or respect for someone who is considered old, respected, or has authority in society. This means that Karaeng is no longer just about blood or genealogy, but also about social roles and how a person is perceived by the people around him. This change shows that society has opened up the meaning of the title to be wider. Karaeng does not only belong to the royal family, but can be used by the general public as a form of appreciation for figures who are considered meritorious or respected. For example, someone who is active in traditional activities, has influence in the community, or is a role model, can be called Karaeng even though he is not a nobleman. This makes the title of Karaeng live not only in the official power structure, but also in the daily life of the community both in traditional meetings, chats in the market, and on social media. Something interesting to research related to the Meaning of Karaeng Title in Jeneponto so that later it can become a literacy study that is of concern to the wider community and especially to the people of Jeneponto itself. So, being able to be aware of the true meaning of the title Karaeng and also be able to know that cultural heritage is not just a symbol. That way, the title Karaeng can still maintain its meaning (aristocratic title) and remain in its position or attached to people who are known to have noble lineages.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that seeks to provide a deep understanding of the meaning of the Karaeng title in the context of the democratic party in Jeneponto Regency. Through this approach, researchers try to describe and interpret social reality based on the views, experiences, and meanings of informants without the aim of making statistical generalizations. The research population includes all parties who have involvement and understanding of the existence and use of the Karaeng title in the social and political environment of the Jeneponto community, such as traditional stakeholders, individuals with Karaeng titles, local political actors, elements of local government, youth leaders, and the general public. The research sample is determined by the purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of informants who are considered to have relevant and in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon being studied so that they can provide the information needed by the researcher.

Data collection was carried out through three main methods, namely observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation is used to see social conditions and cultural practices related to Karaeng titles in the community. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, views, and interpretations of informants about the meaning and socio-political role of the Karaeng title in the democratic party. Meanwhile, documentation is used to obtain supporting data through official records, customary archives, photos, news, and other relevant written documents. The collected data is analyzed through three stages, namely data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data condensation is done by simplifying, selecting, and grouping important information from all field findings. The presentation of data is carried out by arranging information into thematic patterns and categories so that it is easy to understand. Conclusions are drawn by looking for the relationship of meaning and socio-cultural patterns regarding the Karaeng title, then verification is carried out to ensure the validity of information through data examination techniques such as member checks so that the conclusions produced are more credible and can be scientifically accounted for.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Meaning of the Philosophy of Karaeng in Jeneponto Regency

Based on the results obtained in Bangkala and West Bangkala, it was obtained that the karaeng title in Jeneponto Regency is not only understood as an aristocratic identity, but is more interpreted as a symbol of dignity and social respect. Informants associate this title with moral values, responsibility, and the ability to maintain good relations with society. A person called karaeng is considered to have advantages in terms of authority, speech, and ability to be a role model. This means that this title is not solely inherited, but also has a social burden that requires its owner to remain discreet in society.

In addition, the meaning of the title karaeng continues to undergo adjustment to evolving social conditions. In the past, karaeng was more identified with traditional power, but now some people see it as a symbol of honor that must be accompanied by popular attitudes and social skills. Some informants emphasized that this title is only considered meaningful if the person who holds it is able to maintain behavior, because otherwise, the public can lose respect. From this, it can be seen that the philosophy of karaeng titles now rests not only on status, but also on character values and social responsibilities that must be held by the owner.

History and Origin of the Title Karaeng

The title karaeng emerged based on the story of the legend of Banrimanurung or To Manurung which means a figure whose origin is unknown and is considered a saint from heaven who came to organize human life through customs. The people of Bangkala sub-district believe that Banrimanurung was the one who brought the descendants

of Karaeng after marrying a descendant of Bangswan, namely Karaeng Paurang. Then from there was born his lineage which made the community have what kind of karaeng leadership standards were, he was known as Pasir Dg. Mangasa who was then inaugurated through a traditional procession and obtained the title of Karaeng Labbua Tali Bannangna. The title Karaeng Labbua Tali Bannangna itself has the meaning of connecting or raising and tying the rope which is intended to be silaturahmi. Karaeng Labbua Tali Bannangna has been trusted to be a leader in Bangkala through political and customary leadership. The community remembers him through his wise, firm, and authoritative character, but always humble and close to his community. This is the basis for how the community describes the figure with the title of karaeng in his attitude. Karaeng Labbua Tali Bannangna upholds Siri' Na Pacce which until now has become the foundation of unity in the community.

The origin of the karaeng title is in fact an oral heritage or story that continues to be passed down from generation to generation in society and is traditional and cultural. From the hereditary story, the community then saw the karaeng title as a symbol of honor for people who were considered to have noble lineages or had an important role in maintaining social balance in their area, including in Bangkala which is known to have its own historical path in terms of inheriting titles. Over time, the meaning of the title karaeng developed following the social changes that occurred in Jeneponto. According to the informant, the existence of this title is still maintained because it is considered part of a cultural identity that reflects the family's origins and pride. Although times have changed, ancestral stories about karaeng figures in the royal period and even during the colonial period are still the basis of symbolic legitimacy for the families that defend this title. However, currently the title karaeng is no longer only associated with descendants, but is also appreciated for its historical value as a trace of the socio-cultural journey of the Jeneponto people from the royal period to the modern era.

Abubakar's (2019) research on public perception of the karaeng symbol in Maero Village shows that the karaeng title is not just an honorary designation, but is understood as a cultural identity that is firmly attached to the social structure of the Jeneponto community. In Abubakar's findings, the community considers karaeng as a symbol of authority and the descendants of nobles who have a relationship with local history. This is in line with the results of the author's research, where several speakers explained that the title of karaeng has historical roots related to hereditary stories, such as the story of Banrimanurung and the character of Karaeng Labbua Tali Bannangna which is often referred to as part of the background of the formation of the social structure of the nobility in the Bangkala area and its surroundings. This similarity shows that the meaning of the title karaeng does depart from historical constructions and local beliefs that have been inherited orally from generation to generation.

The history and origin of the title karaeng, if we look at it using George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism, becomes relevant because the title of karaeng is understood not only as a customary designation, but as a social symbol formed through the process of interaction between individuals in society. Mead emphasized that meaning is born from the process of communication and the exchange of meaning in the social environment. This is in line with the results of the author's research, where the people of Jeneponto see the title karaeng as a symbol of honor, leadership, and wisdom, because they grew up in an environment that placed the figure of karaeng as a role model. This means that the meaning of the title does not come by itself, but is formed through experience, family influence, and daily interaction between the character with the title of karaeng and the community. Respect for the title of karaeng persists because of the process of recognizing symbols that continue to be repeated from generation to generation, both through ancestral stories, the story of Karaeng Labbua Tali Bannangna, and direct experience of seeing the social role of karaeng in customary, political, and community life. Thus, the theory of symbolic interactionism helps to explain how people not only understand the title of karaeng as a historical heritage, but also as a symbolic identity that continues to live on in social practices and power relations in Jeneponto.

Symbolism and Social Identity

Symbolism in the social context refers to the meaning that society gives to a particular title, sign, or attribute, while social identity relates to the way a person is recognized and recognized in his or her social group. In the culture of the Jeneponto people, the title karaeng is not only a marker of status, but also a symbol of honor attached to the values of leadership, noble descent, and moral responsibility to the community. This title serves as a representation of ideal figures in a social structure that still upholds customs and respect for influential figures. The title of karaeng forms a strong social identity because the owner is often placed as a role model in people's lives, both in traditional and social affairs. This status creates a symbolic distance that pays respect, but at the same time builds expectations for the title holder to be able to maintain authority and show wisdom. Thus, the title of karaeng is not only a hereditary title inheritance, but also plays a role in building a person's image and social influence. This shows that the symbols and identities contained in the karaeng title still have relevance in the social structure of Jeneponto society, even though modern life continues to bring changes in perspective. In a social view, karaeng title holders are often placed as figures who are considered to understand customs, maintain social harmony, and become a reference in decision-

making at the community level. Through this symbol, the Jeneponto people show how the title of karaeng has been inherent as part of a collective identity that affirms the connection between lineages, customs, and respect for ancestral values. Until now, the title karaeng remains relevant because it is able to adapt to modern social dynamics without losing its basic meaning. Although society is now more critical in judging a person not only by his title, respect for karaeng is maintained because the title is still seen as a representation of closeness to the local culture and a symbol of social trust. This is evident in the socio-political context, where community support often still looks at the cultural background and closeness of the social relations of the degree holders. Thus, the title of karaeng survives not only because of hereditary factors, but also because of its ability to reflect a cultural identity that is alive and continues to be recognized in the social structure of Jeneponto society.

Based on the above understanding, the results are in line with the Research of Nengsih & Natsir (2021) on "Perceptions of Karaeng Titles and Religious Behavior in Tolo Village, Kelara District, Jeneponto Regency". In the study, it was explained that the existence of the karaeng title is still considered to have a significant social influence on people's lives, including in terms of religious behavior. This shows that the title of karaeng is not only a cultural attribute, but also part of the structure of meaning that guides the social and religious attitudes of the community. This relevance strengthens the understanding that the symbolism and social identity contained in the karaeng title still have an important position in the life of the Jeneponto community, both in the context of customary, social, and spirituality. This is also in line with George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism, where the title karaeng becomes a symbol that people understand through collective experiences, conversations, respect, and daily treatment. When a person is called or recognized as a karaeng, he or she not only receives the title formally, but also takes on the social role inherent in that symbol. This identity is formed through social recognition that takes place continuously in daily interactions. In this process, society gives a certain meaning to a person who holds the title of karaeng, so that the status becomes part of the way the individual is seen and positioned in the social environment. Thus, according to Mead's theory, the karaeng title serves as an interactive symbol that forms self-identity and directs social action, both from the title holder and the society with which he interacts.

The Influence of Karaeng Titles on Social Structures in Formal and Non-Formal Leadership

Based on the results obtained, the karaeng title has a considerable influence on the formation of social structures in Jeneponto Regency. The community still puts the owner of the title in a more respected position because it is considered to have noble descent and a moral responsibility in maintaining traditional values. This title also forms a hierarchical pattern of social relations, where people indirectly adjust their attitudes and behaviors towards people with the title of karaeng. This shows that the social system in Jeneponto is still influenced by traditional views that value hereditary status and a symbol of honor in community life. The karaeng title also plays a role in shaping the leadership pattern in Jeneponto. A person who holds this title is often considered more appropriate to be a role model because he has authority, a guarded speech, and the ability to mediate community problems. Its influence is not only seen in the cultural realm, but also in the field of government and social society, where figures with the title of karaeng are often trusted to lead or mediate in conflicts. Thus, it can be said that the title of karaeng is not only a traditional heritage, but also a symbol of social legitimacy that is still relevant in the local leadership system to this day.

Social Position of Karaeng Title Holders

Social position can be understood as a person's position in the structure of society that determines his or her role, rights, and social obligations. In the context of Jeneponto society, social position is not only determined by economic or educational factors, but also by noble titles such as karaeng. This title became a symbol of honor that signified that the owner had a noble lineage and an important role in safeguarding local cultural values. Therefore, a karaeng often gets a respectable place in society because he is considered to have wisdom, manners, and the ability to lead or set an example. In daily life, the social position of karaeng title holders is still seen through the way society treats them with respect and reluctance. The title is not only a marker of status, but also a social identity that is strongly embedded in the interaction of the people of Jeneponto. Karaeng title holders are often used as references in various customary, social, and political affairs, because they are considered to have high moral influence and authority. This shows that the social system in Jeneponto, especially in Bangkala and West Bangkala districts, still maintains traditional values, where social status based on heredity still has an important meaning in shaping social relations and community structures. Social position can be understood as a person's position in the social order that determines the role, responsibility, and appreciation he receives from the surrounding environment. In the context of the people of Bangkala and West Bangkala, the title of karaeng is not just a symbol of nobility, this title puts the owner in a more respectable position because he is considered to have noble descent, smooth speech, and wisdom in acting. These values are still a reference for the community in assessing a person's social status, so karaeng is often

considered more appropriate to be a role model in social and traditional life. Based on the views of the community revealed in the interview, the karaeng title still has a big influence on the level of respect. People tend to show a reluctant and respectful attitude towards someone with the title of karaeng, especially in traditional activities or joint decisions. They consider leaders who have these degrees to be more authoritative and understand the local cultural order compared to those without titles. However, some also argue that the value of true leadership still depends on one's attitude and abilities, not solely on one's title. Nevertheless, in general, the title of karaeng is still a factor that differentiates the way people treat and judge leaders in Jeneponto, showing that tradition and respect for social status remain alive in the midst of changing times.

If you look deeper at the social structure of the Jeneponto community, karaeng title holders still occupy positions that are considered honorable and influential. They are seen as role models who have closeness to traditional values and become a symbol of honor for their families and regions. However, in its development, the meaning and role of this title began to change. Related to the research conducted by Ningsih (2018) in his research on "Shifting the Role of Karaeng in the Community in Empoang Village, Binamu District". The position of karaeng, which was once very dominant in determining the social direction and leadership of the community, is now beginning to adjust to the dynamics of the times. This happens because of the influence of education, modernization, and changes in people's perspective on social status which is no longer solely determined by lineage, but also by personal ability and integrity.

However, the results of this study show that respect for karaeng title holders has not completely disappeared. Some people still consider that a person with a karaeng title has advantages in terms of language, behavior, and proximity to local culture. They are considered to understand more traditional values and have a wise attitude in social interaction. This finding is in line with the results of the author's research where the views of the people of Bangkala and West Bangkala show that the title of karaeng still has an influence in determining the way a person is treated and respected, especially in customary and social affairs. Thus, despite the shift in functions and roles, the social position of karaeng title holders still has a strong symbolic meaning as a marker of identity, honor, and cultural heritage of the Jeneponto community.

In the context of Michel Foucault's theory of power relations, the social position of karaeng title holders in Jeneponto can be understood as a form of power that is not always formal, but present in the network of daily social relations. The title of karaeng gives symbolic legitimacy that makes the owner have an influence in determining the direction of attitudes, behaviors, and even decisions of the surrounding community. The power in question does not only arise because of the structural position, but also because of the social acceptance of the community that still respects traditional values and lineages. In other words, the title of karaeng serves as a symbolic instrument that creates a delicate power relationship between the title holder and the society that honors it, so that their authority is still recognized even if it is not always formally established.

However, in line with Foucault's view that power is dynamic and dispersed, the social role of karaeng title holders in the present is no longer as absolute as in the past. Based on findings in the field, the people of Bangkala and West Bangkala began to show independence in determining their social and political attitudes, although they still respected karaeng figures. This shows that the power relationship between karaeng and society has shifted to a more balanced relationship, where respect is no longer solely due to status, but also because of real actions and contributions to society. Thus, Foucault's theory helps to understand how power in the context of local cultures such as karaeng does not disappear, but transforms into a more subtle and contextual form of social influence.

Influence in Formal and Non-Formal Leadership

Formal leadership is a form of leadership that is officially recognized by a government structure or organization, such as village heads, sub-district heads, or public officials who have authority based on applicable rules. Meanwhile, non-formal leadership arises naturally in society without the foundation of official office, usually formed out of influence, charisma, or respect for someone who is perceived to have more wisdom and experience. These two forms of leadership often intersect in the social life of the Jeneponto community, especially when it comes to the figure who holds the title of karaeng. Based on the results obtained by the author, the karaeng title still has a strong influence in leadership, both in the formal and non-formal realms in Jeneponto. In the context of formal leadership, this degree is often a plus for someone who wants to occupy public office. The community still sees karaeng as a symbol of authority and descendants who deserve to lead. This makes it easier for prospective leaders who have these degrees to gain public trust. Meanwhile, in non-formal leadership, karaeng is still respected as a social role model who is considered to have the ability to mediate community problems, maintain harmony, and set an example in daily social life. However, that influence is no longer absolute. The author's findings show that the people of Bangkala and West Bangkala Districts have begun to judge leaders not only by their title, but also by their abilities and personal integrity. Even so, the presence of a karaeng is still considered important because it carries

traditional values and symbols of togetherness that are part of the identity of the community. In some situations, karaeng even acts as a bridge between the community and the government, showing that despite changes in the social structure, the values of honor-based leadership and tradition are still alive in the community of Jeneponto. Abubakar's (2019) research on "Public Perception of Karaeng Symbols in Maero Village, Bontoramba District, Jeneponto Regency" has strong relevance to this research, especially in looking at how the karaeng title plays a role in shaping the trust and legitimacy of leadership in the community. In his research, Abubakar showed that the karaeng title is not only a symbol of social status, but also a marker of morality, authority, and social responsibility that is still recognized today. This is in line with the findings of the author in this study which shows that the people of Bangkala and West Bangkala still view the figure of karaeng as a figure who has leadership values, both in the context of formal government and in daily social life.

In addition, Abubakar's (2019) research also strengthens the view that the influence of karaeng is not only symbolic, but also operational in social and political practices. In some regions, the community tends to give greater support to prospective leaders with the title of karaeng because they are considered to have cultural legitimacy that is difficult to replace. However, the results of this study also show a shift in mindset among people who are now starting to judge leaders based on performance and social closeness, not just because of lineage. Thus, Abubakar's research is the basis that enriches this analysis that the karaeng symbol still has a strong social and political value, but is now carried out with a more dynamic and contextual form of leadership. In relation to George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism, this degree not only indicates social status, but also becomes a marker of the identity and behavior expected of a person who holds it. The people of Bangkala and West Bangkala Districts form their views and attitudes towards leaders with the title of karaeng through repeated communication processes and social experiences, so that the meaning of karaeng continues to be preserved in daily life. In the context of formal leadership, this degree is often a factor influencing public trust, as it is considered to represent a lineage that has moral responsibility and traditional leadership values. Meanwhile, in the non-formal realm, the karaeng degree creates harmonious social relations between leaders and the community through the value of respect and social solidarity that is still upheld.

Meanwhile, when viewed through Michel Foucault's theory of power relations, the title karaeng reflects a form of power that is not always seen directly, but works through social structures, cultures, and local knowledge. The power possessed by karaeng does not only come from formal positions, but also from social legitimacy formed through history and customary values. In the context of leadership in Bangkala and West Bangkala Districts, this power is seen in how the community respects and follows the directions of a karaeng, even when they do not hold a government position. However, this power is now beginning to transform along with the development of a more rational and open mindset of modern society. Thus, Foucault's theory helps to explain that the influence of karaeng in formal and non-formal leadership is not only a cultural heritage, but also a practice of power that lives and continues to adapt to today's social dynamics.

The Meaning of Karaeng Titles in the Regional Elections in Jeneponto Regency

Based on the results obtained, the meaning of the karaeng title in the regional elections in Jeneponto Regency still has an important position in shaping the direction of political support for the community. This title is considered a symbol of trust, honor, and social closeness between leaders and citizens. The community tends to give high appreciation to prospective leaders with karaeng titles, because they are considered to have wise leadership traits and understand local cultural values. The support of a karaeng for a certain candidate is able to influence people's choices, especially in rural areas that still uphold the kinship system and the tradition of respect for traditional leaders.

In addition, the results of the study also show that the karaeng title is often used as social capital and a symbol of political legitimacy. The support of a karaeng not only strengthens the image of the prospective leader, but also plays a role in building a solid social network during the campaign period. Even so, the people of Jeneponto are now starting to show a more rational change in perspective. They no longer fully judge candidates based on their noble titles, but also consider the candidate's abilities, integrity, and track record. This shows that the meaning of the title karaeng in the regional elections is no longer solely a status symbol, but has transformed into a social value that goes hand in hand with the increasingly mature political awareness of the community.

The Role of Karaeng in Political Dynamics

Political dynamics can be understood as a process of change, interaction, and shifting of power that occurs in society in determining the direction and form of power. In local contexts such as in Bangkala and West Bangkala Districts of Jeneponto Regency, this dynamic often involves traditional leaders and influential communities, one of which is the karaeng who have an important social and symbolic position. The karaeng title not only represents social status, but also a sign of moral legitimacy that is able to influence the way society assesses and supports prospective

leaders. In every political moment, especially during the regional elections, the figure of karaeng is often a role model and driver of support because the public still sees them as figures who have authority, responsibility, and closeness to the people. The role of karaeng in Jeneponto's political dynamics can be seen through its ability to maintain a balance between customary interests, power, and social harmony. Although sometimes political support from various karaeng can give rise to differences of views in society, their role is often a mediator when there is friction between supporters. After the political process was over, many karaeng returned to play the role of social glue, inviting the community to maintain brotherhood and accept the election results with open arms. This shows that the role of karaeng is not only limited to the campaign or election period, but also continues to maintain social stability and the values of togetherness in the midst of the life of the people of Jeneponto.

Political dynamics basically describe how the political powers, influences, and views of society move and change over time. In Jeneponto Regency, this dynamic is very felt in every election implementation, especially because there is still a big role of figures with karaeng titles in the community. In the author's findings, people show a tendency to trust and choose prospective leaders who have a relationship with a character with a karaeng title, because they are considered to have traditional leadership values such as wisdom, responsibility, and the ability to maintain social harmony. However, on the other hand, there is also a new view among the public that is more rational in making choices, taking into account the candidate's track record, performance, and proximity to the people, not just because of his title. The involvement of karaeng figures in the regional elections in Jeneponto has proven to be quite significant and is often one of the factors that determine the direction of political support for the community. Open support from a karaeng is often considered a "social blessing" that strengthens a certain candidate's position in the eyes of voters, so that the karaeng title can function as a strong political capital. In practice, the social network owned by the karaeng is able to mobilize community support through kinship and emotional closeness. However, this power is no longer as completely dominant as it was in the past. The public is now starting to assess more objectively, where the role of karaeng is still respected as a director, but not the only determining factor for a candidate's victory. This means that the influence of karaeng in local politics is still strong, but it now runs side by side with modern democratic values that emphasize the ability, integrity, and public trust in prospective leaders.

This finding is in line with the results of Ningsih's (2018) research which explains the shift in the role of karaeng in the lives of the people of Jeneponto. The study highlights that if in the past karaeng had a dominant position in determining the social and political direction of society, now that influence has begun to transform into more symbolic and moral. Although the influence of karaeng is still felt in the election process, especially through social networks and traditional values that are maintained, people now have greater freedom in making their political choices. This shows a balance between traditional values and modern mindsets, where karaeng is still respected as a role model and guardian of culture, but people's political decisions are no longer entirely dependent on these figures. This shift shows that the people of Jeneponto are in the process of socio-political adaptation that still respects their cultural roots, but is also open to more participatory democratic values. If associated with Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism, the title karaeng can be understood as the result of the process of social interaction that forms a common meaning in society. In the context of the regional elections, this title is a symbol that strengthens the political identity of the candidate and his supporters, because the public judges the karaeng figure not only from his political ability, but also from the social and cultural values attached to him.

Meanwhile, when viewed from the perspective of Michel Foucault's theory of power relations, the title karaeng functions as a form of symbolic power that operates through social recognition and cultural structures. In the regional elections in Jeneponto, the karaeng were able to play a strategic role as a liaison between the political elite and the grassroots community. Through their social influence and power network, karaeng can direct public opinion, shape perceptions, and even determine the direction of political support. However, this form of power is not coercive, but runs through public recognition and trust. Thus, the influence of karaeng in the political dynamics of Jeneponto reflects how social symbols and cultural power work subtly but effectively in maintaining social and political positions in the midst of changing times.

Social Dynamics During the Election

Social dynamics during the regional elections are changes in interactions, behaviors, and patterns of relationships between members of the community that arise due to political contestation. In this situation, people are not only involved as voters, but also participate in building opinions, solidarity, and even divisions based on political choices. These dynamics reflect how social structures and cultural values interact with political interests, thus creating a social atmosphere full of negotiations of meaning and power. In the Regional Elections in Jeneponto Regency, karaeng title holders play an important role in shaping social dynamics during the regional elections. Their presence is not only seen as a symbol of honor, but also as a figure who has a great influence in moving society. The karaeng often become the mediator, director, or even the main supporter of a particular candidate because they have

an emotional and social closeness to the citizens. This makes the community more easily influenced by the attitudes and political choices of the karaeng. In the author's findings, the title of karaeng is a factor that strengthens a person's political legitimacy, because the public tends to judge that a figure with this status has the capacity and authority to become a leader who is worthy of trust. These figures with the title of karaeng are often social role models so that they are able to direct the political choices of the people around them. Their presence forms a kind of strong social network, where political support is not only based on the candidate's program or vision, but also on loyalty to a particular karaeng figure. This causes people to tend to follow the directions or political views conveyed by the karaeng, especially in areas that still hold fast to the value of kinship and respect for traditional social status. As a result, the influence of karaeng is often a determining factor in consolidating political support, and is even able to significantly change the direction of public choice.

However, the strength of these influences also gives rise to complex social dynamics. In Bangkala and West Bangkala Districts, the community can be divided due to differences in support arising from karaeng groups that support different candidates. This social fragmentation shows that honorary symbols such as the karaeng title not only play a role in strengthening solidarity, but can also be a source of political competition at the local level. Even so, after the regional elections are over, the community usually returns to place the karaeng as respected figures regardless of their political affiliation. Their role was then more directed towards efforts to maintain social harmony and restore relations between citizens that had been tense during the period of political contestation. Thus, the influence of the karaeng title in the regional elections is not only seen during the campaign period, but also in the process of social reconciliation after the election is over.

Abubakar's (2019) research on "Public Perception of Karaeng Symbols in Maero Village, Bontoramba District, Jeneponto Regency" strengthens the findings of this study which highlights the social dynamics and influence of karaeng titles in the context of regional elections in Jeneponto. In his research, Abubakar explained that the karaeng symbol not only has cultural and historical value, but also functions as a representation of social status that has a great influence on people's views and behavior. This is in line with the conditions in Bangkala and West Bangkala Districts, where people still place the title of karaeng as a sign of honor that deserves to be respected and followed. This status provides social legitimacy for the karaeng to play a role in various aspects of people's lives, including in the political realm such as regional elections.

Furthermore, Abubakar's research also shows that the karaeng symbol influences the interaction patterns and social stratification of the community, which is also seen in this study. In Bangkala, the karaeng title is an important factor in determining the pattern of political support of the community, because the social influence inherent in the holder of the degree is often taken into consideration in determining political choices. This shows that in the social system of the Jeneponto community, traditional status such as karaeng still plays a significant role in shaping the social hierarchy and the direction of local political dynamics. Thus, the results of this study are in line with Abubakar's view that the karaeng symbol is not only part of cultural heritage, but also a social instrument that is still actively shaping the pattern of relationships and power in today's society.

In relation to Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism, the social dynamics during the election in Jeneponto can be understood as the result of the process of symbolic interaction between the community and the holders of karaeng titles. Mead emphasized that social meaning is formed through mutually agreed interactions and symbols, so that the karaeng title becomes a symbol that contains the value of honor, authority, and trust. In political situations such as regional elections, this symbol creates a reciprocal relationship between karaeng and the community, where the community provides support not only because of the candidate's policies, but because of the social meaning inherent in the title. The support that emerges is a reflection of cultural values that have been internalized, where traditional social status is still considered relevant in determining the direction of local politics.

Meanwhile, Michel Foucault's theory of power relations helps explain how the title of karaeng functions as an instrument of power that shapes and directs the social behavior of society in a political context. Power in Foucault's view lies not only in formal positions, but also in the symbols, status, and social relations inherent in the individual. In this case, the karaeng have a position that allows them to influence the political views of the community through their social networks and symbols of cultural authority. These influences are often not coercive, but run subtly through public trust, respect, and loyalty to karaeng figures. Thus, the social dynamics during the regional elections in Jeneponto show a combination of symbolic meaning and power relations that work simultaneously in shaping the pattern of political support of the community.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the research that has been carried out, it can be concluded that the karaeng title in Jeneponto Regency has a deep philosophical meaning and is still very influential in the social life of the community. Historically, the title of karaeng has its roots in the royal tradition system that has been passed down from generation

to generation, containing the values of honor, wisdom, and social responsibility. This title is not only a status symbol, but also a marker of social identity that distinguishes a person's position in society. The values attached to the title reflect the Jeneponto people's view of life about leadership, example, and human relations based on respect and justice. The karaeng degree also has a strong influence on the social structure and leadership pattern in Jeneponto. Holders of this title still receive high respect, both in formal environments such as government and in non-formal realms such as indigenous and social communities. The existence of karaeng is often a link between the community and the government, as well as a moral role model in maintaining social harmony. In the political arena, especially during the regional elections, the meaning of the title karaeng in the regional elections in Jeneponto can be seen from its still strong role in shaping the direction of political support for the community. This title is a symbol of trust and social influence that is able to mobilize citizens' loyalty, although now the public is starting to judge prospective leaders not only from their titles. This shows that the meaning of the title karaeng in the regional elections is no longer solely a status symbol, but has transformed into a social value that goes hand in hand with the increasingly mature political awareness of the community.

REFERENCES

- Abubakar, Z. (2019). Public Perception of the Karaeng Symbol in Maero Village, Bontoramba District, Jeneponto Regency (Doctoral dissertation, Postgraduate).
- Armin, M. A., & Badaruddin, M. S. (2022). Deconstruction of the Leadership Concept of Karaeng Pattingalloang in the Drama Karaeng Pattingalloang by Fahmi Syariff. *Journal of Cultural Sciences*, 10(1), 151-162.
- Chimezie, U. R. (2022). New media technology and its application to broadcasting: A mini-ethnographic study. *Open Access Library Journal*, 9(8), 1-13.
- Djati, W. R. (2014). Revivalism of the power of familiism in Democracy: political dynasties at the local level. *Society: Journal of Sociology*, 18(2), 72-100.
- Derung, T. N. (2017). Symbolic interactionism in social life. *SAPA: Journal of Catechetical and Pastoral*, 2(1), 118-131.
- Detik.com. (2024, December 5). Supporters of the Jeneponto Regional Election candidate had gone berserk asking for the recapitulation to be stopped. Second. <https://www.detik.com/sulsel/pilkada/d-7676447/pendukung-paslon-pilkada-jeneponto-sempat-ngamuk-minta-rekapitulasi-disetop>
- Effendy, O. U. (2003). Science, theory and philosophy of communication. Bandung: Citra Aditya Bakti, 200.
- Efendi, E., Fadila, F., Tariq, K., Pratama, T., & Azmi, W. (2024). Symbolic and Practical Interactionism. *Da'watuna: Journal of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting*, 4(3), 1088-1095.
- Fajrianti, N. (2020). THE BACKGROUND OF THE GRANTING OF THE TITLE OF NOBILITY IN THE NOVEL DJARINA BY ATTE SHENYLIA (REVIEW OF LITERARY SOCIOLOGY).
- Haslinda, H., & Latief, S. A. W. (2022). Cultural Values of Sipakatau, Sipakainga, Sipakalabirik in the Film "Anak Karaeng" (Study of Cultural Sociology). *Journal of Conception*, 11(2), 233-241.
- Pratama, G. (2020). Political dynasties in the election of the head of Banrimanurung village, west bangkala district, jeneponto regency (Doctoral dissertation, Hasanuddin University).
- Rusli, R., & Subair, M. (2022, April). Karaeng Pattingalloang and the Advancement of Makassar in Seventeenth Century (1636–1654). In 9th Asbam International Conference (Archaeology, History, & Culture In The Nature of Malay)(ASBAM 2021) (pp. 389-396). Atlantis Press.
- Romdona, S., Junista, S. S., & Gunawan, A. (2025). DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES: OBSERVATION, INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES. *JISOSEPOL: Journal of Socio-Economic and Political Sciences*, 3(1), 39-47.
- Saadah, M., Prasetyo, Y. C., & Rahmayati, G. T. (2022). Strategies in maintaining the validity of data in qualitative research. *Al-'Adad: Journal of Mathematics*, 1(2), 54-64.
- Siregar, N. S. S. (2012). A study of symbolic interactionism. *Perspectives*, 1(2), 100-110.
- Sugiyono. (2019). *Qualitative, Quantitative, and R&D Research Methods*.
- Suhartono, E., & Nur, H. (2021). The Role of Indigenous Elites in the 2018 Pinrang Regency Regional Elections. *Phinisi Integration Review*, 4(1).
- Sudaryono. (2018). *Research Methodology*. Depok: Rajawali Press.
- Syarif, A. A., (2021). *MAKASSAR, U. A. KARAENG HELD IN JENEPONTO REGENCY*.
- Syawal, I. (2023). From Onderafdeeling to the formation of Jeneponto Regency (1909-1959). *Moderation: Journal of Social Science Studies*, 4(1), 1-18.

THE MEANING OF KARAENG AT THE DEMOCRACY PARTY IN JENEPONTO REGENCY

A. Tri Arwina Dheafati **et al**

Thabroni, G. (2021). Research Instruments: Definition, Criteria & Types (Complete Explanation). Retrieved from Serupa. Id: [https://serupa. Id/research instruments](https://serupa.id/research-instruments).

Ulfanisa, N. (2023). ELITE POWER IN THE POLITICS OF PUNAGAYA VILLAGE, BANGKALA DISTRICT, JENESPON REGENCY = THE ROLE OF ELITES IN THE PUNAGAYA VILLAGE HEAD ELECTION, BANGKALA DISTRICT (Doctoral dissertation, Hasanuddin University).

Zanki, H. A. (2020). Psychological and Social Theory of Education (Theory of Symbolic Interaction). *Scolae: Journal of Pedagogy*, 3(2).