

Political Strategy of Indigenous Community of Towani Tolotang in Local Politics in Amparita, South Sulawesi

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Abstract

The article explains the strategy of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community (Adat) in using its capitals in the political field. The Towani Tolotang community is one of the minority groups in Indonesia that has been discriminated by otherness such as State and Islamic group. But, during the political change of Indonesia, Towani Tolotang community has been survived in maintaining its existence and has always a representation in the local legislative assembly. By using Pierre Bourdieu's concept about capital, the article concludes that in maintaining its existence, the community conducts two strategies, namely; Firstly, internally, the community practices a conservation strategy to strengthen a system of belief into the community, so-called orthodoxy through a series of practices in their daily life. Secondly, externally, the community practices the strategy of coexistence politics as a way to transform its power in the political field. Both are practiced by the community in politics fields simultaneously in order to survive from otherness like the pressure of the State and Islamic group in Amparita.

Keywords: Political, Strategy, Indigenous Community, Towani Tolotang, Local Politics, Amparita, South Sulawesi

Introduction

Culture (ethnicity) is one of the important factors influencing the process of contemporary politics. In Indonesia, the cultural influence can be seen in the rise of primordial sentiment in elections, government bureaucracy and institution, and daily political practices. The relation between culture and politics is not only a specific phenomenon in the certain country like Indonesia but also in different parts of the world. Some great political thinkers such as Francis Fukuyama, Lawrence Harrison, Samuel Huntington and Robert Putnam, revealed that in this 21st-century culture has shaped the current political and economic behavior of society (Harrison & Huntington, 2000). In line with Clifford Geertz (2007), a researcher of Indonesian political anthropologists, who also explained that a country's politics essentially reflects the design of the culture. In the development of democracy in the reform era, the relationship between politics and culture has shaped "hybrid democracy".

Nowadays, the link between politics and culture seems in a variety of significant expression patterns of movement, mobilization, activism, and protest (Henley & Davidson, 2008). It can be seen not only as local phenomena but also as global phenomena. These phenomena indirectly indicate a new transformation and meaning to culture (ethnicity). In Indonesia political context, it is marked by resurgence for the struggle of indigenous communities' demand in many areas. For that, this article is not only to explain the political strategy of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community in the local political field, but also it is intended to show the relationship between culture and politics as well as to show the rise of culture (ethnicity) in local politics, especially after the collapse of the New Order regime. In this article, the term of culture is identic with ethnicity, that refers to Adat (Van Klinken, 2003).

Indigenous community of Towani Tolotang is one of the indigenous communities (Adat) that has been marginalized and repressed by the state. The case of the indigenous community represents Indonesia local political situation. The community is interesting to be examined for several reasons; first, the Towani Tolotang is an Adat that has always had representation in the local legislative assembly. It has been occurred since the first New Order election until the recent election in the reform era, in 2014. Second, this community is a minority group in the regency of Sidrap dwelled by the majority Islamic group. Third, in the regency of Sidrap, they are a migrant community derived from the kingdom of Wajo, which is currently called Wajo regency.

As a result of Islamization, in 1666 this community migrated to the Sidenreng Rapang kingdom (Sidrap district) led by I Pabbere and I Goliga for disagreeing with the new belief offered by King Wajo at that time, La Sangkuru Arung Matoa IV. Consequently, Wani society (To-wani) decided to get out of the territory of the Kingdom of Wajo. Fourth, the community is under constant pressure and threats not only through the state but also the Islamic groups, especially the DI/TII group led by Kahar Muzakkar. Fifth, Amparita is one of the areas of Sidrap Regency which is currently inhabited by the majority of Towani Tolotang indigenous community. This area is a center of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community for all local practices. In various situations above faced, the community has survived to this day.

In history, Adat is actually an old state whose existence has first existed rather than the existence of the state (nation-state). Likewise, the domination of indigenous community (Adat) firstly has existed before the state was formed. Adat is said to be an old state because it represents a traditional community life order based on local values. This social order in the modern view is considered obsolete and is not contextual with the development of modern society. While the nation-state is a representation of a modern state which is more advanced and developed. In the concept of this modern state, the order of society life is no longer tied to a primordial identity, but to a broader public identity. In other words, the construction of this modern state seeks to replace traditional bonds with public ties based on citizenship identity.

Since the existence of the Indonesian state, especially during the New Order period, the existence of indigenous communities was not so well recognized. The Indigenous Community was only seen as a display of the regime of power for the ceremonial activities of the state (Jones, 2015). According to Jones, many New Order government regulations had put Adat only as a staged art and there were no protection and recognition for their existence.

Moreover, the Adat was even considered an excluded group (*kelompok terpinggirkan*). The lack of recognition of indigenous communities implies that the state has oppressed them.

As revealed by Hegel that misrecognition is an oppression (Anderson, 2009). In addition, the Adat communities were often labeled as part of a communist that should be suppressed by the New Order regime (Ramstedt, 2004). Thus, since the existence of the state as well as the existence of Islamization in South Sulawesi has caused Towani Tolotang indigenous community always to be under pressure and intimidation. In effect, this has brought many victims for Towani Tolotang adherents. However, until now, this community still shows its existence not only in the socio-cultural field but also into the political field.

The collapse of the New Order regime in 1998 became a new stage of the development of indigenous communities in Indonesia. In this era, Adat experienced a resurgence, especially in the local political field. This resurgence is indicated by several studies conducted by some researchers, for example, the study conducted by Gerry van Klinken (2008) on "*Return of The Sultans: The Communitarian Turn in Local Politics*", explains the existence of the Sultan-driven political movement at the beginning of the Reformation era. Adat, in this case, became the basis for the birth of the political movement. Other studies view Adat as a trigger for social change from local development projects, as Tania Murray Li (2000) did on "*Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot*" in Central Sulawesi, and study conducted by Nova Bayo (2009) on "*State Neglect, Church Decline, and Ascendant Adat: The Power Contestation in Adonara, Eastern Flores*".

In contrast to Bayu Dardias's study of "*Yogyakarta in Decentralized Indonesia: Integrating Traditional Institutions in Democratic Transitions*" (Kurniadi, 2009), Adat is viewed as part of politics of local administration. According to Henley and Davidson (2008), Adat resurgence in politics takes place in almost all parts of Indonesia, including in South Sulawesi (Tyson, 2010). At this point, the design of local political developments has been heavily influenced by a cultural factor (ethnicity).

In the case of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community, cultural factor (ethnicity) is explained not only to design the daily practice but also the political practices of the Towani Tolotang Indigenous community. In Sidrap regency, the Towani Tolotang adherents are scattered in several sub-districts, but the most of them are centered in Amparita, in the sub-district of Tellu Limpoe. Formally, the adherents can be identified through the religious identity of Hindu. Based on data from BPS (Statistic Center Board) of Sidrap regency in 2013, their number based on the religion of Hindu is as many as 26,699 people and the majority are in the sub-district of Tellu Limpoe as many as 10,154 people.

In Amparita, they are as many as 1917 people. Most of them work as farmers. In Sidrap Regency, the adherents have spread in several sub-districts such as Kanyuara, Otting, Pajalele, Kadidi, Tanru Teddong, Mojong, Lainungang, and Arawa. Amparita is an area that becomes the center of all activities of the Indigenous community of Towani Tolotang. Currently, this indigenous community not only has a large following spread across Sidrap Regency but also the existence has become an important political force in Sidrap Regency.

Methodology

The research method used in this article is a case study. The article was conducted in Amparita, Sidrap Regency, South Sulawesi. The case is an indigenous community called by Towani Tolotang. The type of data is secondary and primary data gathered through kinds of literature and interviews.

In data analysis, this article uses the concept of Pierre Bourdieu about capital, especially social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital. Economic capital is not used because in this study it is not a significant factor. Capital for Bourdieu (as cited in Anheier, Gerhards, & Romo, 1995), is a generalized resource that can assume monetary and non-monetary forms as well as tangible and intangible forms and can be accumulated, transformed, and reproduced. Capital is an important element to determine the continuity of a community group. In Bourdieu thought, social capital is the number of resources, actual or virtual, gathered to an individual or group because it has a durable network of reciprocal relations of introduction and a slightly more institutionalized recognition (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Through social capital, people are connected and working together with each other (Bourdieu, 2011), while cultural capital is manifested into three forms, namely embodied form, objectified form and institutionalized form (Grenfell, 2008). Cultural capital encourages people to the formation of awareness and understanding of the existence of dissonance.

Lastly, symbolic capital is the most important capital of the whole capital. The symbolic capital ownership is characterized by the legitimacy and compliance to the owner of symbolic capital. Overall, the concepts of capital from Bourdieu's thought were used to track how the Towani Tolotang Indigenous community survive in Amparita.

Results and Discussion

The strategy of Conservation: Reproducing Adat Power

Cultural Capital: Local Knowledge

Towani Tolotang indigenous community is the oldest indigenous community of belief in South Sulawesi. According to Uwa Sunarto, the community of beliefs is the original Bugis community that has existed long before the Islamization occurred in South Sulawesi. In the belief system of Towani Tolotang, they believe that Dewata Sauwae is God who created the universe. Dewata Sauwae itself means a single God, who is an immortal spiritual entity. This belief is also known among other traditional Bugis-Makassar faiths as God, the creator of everything, especially before the Islamization of 1605 in South Sulawesi (Pelras, 1996). In their cosmological belief, Dewata Sauwae is the highest entity that then creates the seven layers in the upper world (*Bottinglangi*'), the seven layers in the lower world (*Buri'liung*), and the seven layers in the middle-world (*Ale Kawa*) and their creatures respectively. These layers and creatures are a reflection of the order of the macrocosm and the microcosm that must constantly harmonize through the sacred nature of a value or value system that underlies the beliefs of a society inherited and maintained from generation to generation.

Besides, the community also believes in a representative of God who teaches God's teachings known as La Panaungi in Towani Tolotang's belief. La Panaungi is like a prophet who delivers God's message to the human being. This traditional belief in Towani Tolotang society is thick with animism and dynamism. The belief system is the basic foundation of Towani Tolotang people's life. According to Clifford Geertz (1983), such a belief system is a local knowledge

that is the basis of the values and principles of life of a local community [18]. Local knowledge is the knowledge of local communities that become "guiding ideas" for local people who derive from cosmology that form a set of values and belief. The peak of these values and beliefs is centered on the peak reality known as Dewata Sauwae, a God of Towani Tolotang. These values and beliefs become the foundation that governs how the human life should be lived.

Local Repertoire of Reasoning

Local knowledge derived from cosmology in the belief of Towani Tolotang shapes a series of practices and forms of belief that are manifested in daily community life. Those are a form of conserving the value system as well as transforming value to the next generation. Some of these practices and forms of belief are, among others; the practice of rituals, reproduction of myths, and charismatic leadership. These practices and forms of belief are a reportoir showing the workings of adat power.

In the traditional society such as Towani Tolotang, myth is an indigenous essential institution for reproducing adat power. According to Malinowski (1984), the myth is not a deadly product sequence that survives as a weak narrative but is a living force that produces new phenomena and manifests magic through new expressions. Adherents of Towani Tolotang also believe in the existence of life after death or the doomsday, which they call *Lino Paimeng*, as the day of vengeance. For those who live in a world of obedience to the rules of belief and their leaders (*Uwatta* and *Uwa*) will be placed in *Lipu Bonga*, a kind of paradise for Muslims. *Lipu Bonga* becomes the goal of the achievement of the Towani Tolotang people, it can only be achieved through adherence to the teachings and obedience to the Adat leaders as a descendant of La Panaungi (*to-manurung*). According to the teachings of Towani Tolotang, the one who violates the teaching of Towani Tolotang will experience (Rusli, 2012); 1). *De' nita deceng ri lino* means not happy in world, 2). *Ri lino paimeng, ro sessai ro onrong passessang* means in the doomsday they will be tortured, and 3). *De' naettu ro lino paimeng* means they cannot arrive in doomsday [20]. This is the most severe torment for adherent who have sinful weight. In addition, there are local stories relating their beliefs especially about their ancestors such as La Panungi, I Pabbere and I Goliga whom hereditary convey the teachings of the Dewata Sauwae. They are the ancestors who are God's representatives in the world.

In addition, Towani Tolotang indigenous community has several rituals that are always performed in the certain moment such as *Mappenre Nanre*, *Sipulung*, and *Tudang Sipulung*. *Tudang Sipulung* is the largest ritual practice that is always celebrated by adherents of Towani Tolotang in every year. *Tudang Sipulung* is a feast day or a great day for all Towani Tolotang adherents. At the moment, most of them will certainly back to Amparita. These rituals are a local repertoire that also shows the operation of Adat power.

Likewise, with the presence of *passeng* (message of ancestors) in Towani Tolotang indigenous community, it is usually used by Adat leaders to teach and to socialize the teaching of Towani Tolotang to children of the community. Through *passeng*, the leaders transform values and principles of Towani Tolotang to the next generation.

Lastly, in Towani Tolotang, the leaders have the main role. They are the representative of God in the world. In other words, they are the personification of God in a world where God's

language and teachings are taught to its adherents. These traditional leaders are the owner and user of symbolic capital (Geertz, 1983). They are known as a charismatic, authoritative and well-informed personality. In Buginese beliefs in general, leaders in a region always associate with the myth of '*Tomanurung*', a heavenly man believed to possess a remarkable ability to manifest a disorder in a chaotic society (Sofyan, 2013). In addition, they have characteristics such as *makkiade* (understand adat), *macca* and *panrita* (intelligent and have ability), *mapesse* (social sensitivity), *to warani* (brave). Therefore, they are the reference center for everything that happens in the Towani Tolotang community. Indigenous leaders are figures in maintaining and teaching of Towani Tolotang. Various local institutions such as myths, rituals and local leadership in Towani Tolotang indigenous community function to conserve their local beliefs.

The strategy of Coexistence; Gaining Power in Political Field Social Capital; Golkar Party and PHDI

Towani Tolotang indigenous community built its relationship with the Golkar party for the first time since the beginning of the New Order in around 1969. The relation with the Golkar Party came when Towani Tolotang indigenous community was facing various pressures from the Islamic group and the New Order regime. The Islamic group, led by Kahar Muzakkar, was a DI/TII group that broke local belief groups. Likewise, with the New Order regime through military force, conducted an erupting operation against this Towani Tolotang indigenous community. It happened because Towani Tolotang adherents who still adhered to local beliefs were considered part of the communist. Due to the New Order Government issued the Presidential Decree No. 1 of 1965 on the prevention of misuse and blasphemy of religion in the Soekarno era, which was later converted into Law no. 5 of 1969 in the Soeharto era which contained official religious restrictions. The state recognized only five official religions, namely, Islam, Catholic Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Outside of those religions was considered part of communism. Under these various pressures, the Golkar Party plays an important role in protecting and defending the Tolotang Towani community. Therefore, the Towani Tolotang indigenous community is very close to the Golkar party until recent time.

Golkar Party was the ruling party in the New Order era. The Party did not regard itself as a political party but rather referred to as a working group (*golongan kekaryaan*). It was to erase the political stigma of Golkar Party as the machine of New Order power. This party is better known as a party of government that dominates the party system, which is often called "a hegemony party system". The good relationship between the Towani Tolotang community and the Golkar Party seems to the support of this community in every moment of the election from the New Order era to the post-New Order era. In addition, some elites of the indigenous community of Towani Tolotang become the core organizer of the Golkar Party's regional stewardship (DPD), both as chairman of the DPD and treasurer. This position allows for strong support from the Towani Tolotang indigenous community to the Golkar party.

Meanwhile, the relation between Towani Tolotang and PHDI is the result of negotiation between the state and the community. This community was pressured to choose one of the five official religions of the state. On the basis of various considerations, Towani Tolotang community chose to join Hinduism. With the official religious identity, the Towani Tolotang community eventually joined the Hindu organizational organization known as the Hindu Dharma Indonesia Association (PHDI). In the regency of Sidrap, some of the Towani Tolotang

elites became its administrators. The joining of this community to PHDI has at least provided security guarantees as well as a space of religious expression in the country's politics. In the political field, PHDI membership becomes a bridge in seeking social and religious support, especially in an effort to avoid stigmatization of their community.

Political Opportunity: The emergence of Locality

Since the close relationship between the Towani Tolotang indigenous community and the Golkar Party in the New Order era has been started since at the time the political space for Towani Tolotang community has been opened in the political field. However, although Golkar was backing them up, the position of the community was only a tool of the New Order regime. The freedom of these communities only to the extent allowed and in accordance with the interests of the regime. In other words, in the era of the authoritarian regime of the New Order, there was no democratic space and freedom that allowed these indigenous communities to get protection and security for their rights.

The condition had changed since the fall of the New Order regime. The political dynamics of Indonesia has changed significantly. The political pendulum changed from authoritarianism to democracy. These changes were marked by the amendment of the 1945 Constitution and the presence of a massive decentralization policy.

The collapse of the New Order regime, according to Cornelis Lay (2012) marks some changes namely; first, the massive installation of democratic institutions into the political system through the presence of new regulations and designs of Indonesian political institutions such as changes in the political system, elections and party; second, massive power dispersion, especially at the local political level and third, the existence of political liberalization, which marks the birth of freedom of the press and the recognition of civil and political rights. This is particularly related to the emergence of new politics phenomena at the local level, especially in developing countries (Harris, Stokke, & Törnquist, 2005). On a political scale, this era is a witness to a phenomenon called *de-statisation*, namely the reduction of state authority for market liberalization and *de-nationalization*, namely the reconfiguration of state power through regionalization and localization (Harris et.al, 2005). The massive reform era has triggered the birth of new exceptions and forms at both national and local levels. In this context, the identity of the nation, ethnic, and other primordial sentiments usually have more references. Thus, political changes at both the national and international levels indirectly have opened up opportunities for local communities to assert and fight for their existence. In 2017 under Joko Widodo, the government has issued a regulation that recognizes and protects local beliefs. It is a step forward for Adat transformation in local politics.

Transforming Capital; Political Representation

Since the first election in the New Order of 1972 until now, Towani Tolotang indigenous community always has representation in the legislature. The representation of the Indigenous community does not only take place at the regency level but also at the provincial level. The change of the regime from the New Order to the Reformation did not remove the representation of this community within the legislature. Indeed, the New Order's authoritarian regime certainly had a different influence on the existence and strategy of the Towani Tolotang community compared to the democratic Reform era. The differences in

these two administration periodizations have a major impact on the strategy of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community, especially in the effort to maintain its existence.

In the political arena, Towani Tolong indigenous community has effective social capital in this arena, namely Golkar party and PHDI. However, these two types of social capital can be differentiated in terms of utilization, Golkar transforms Adat power into state power institution, namely legislative institution, while PHDI transforms Adat power into the political legality of the state - politics of recognition. Both types of capital are mutually reinforcing the basis of the symbolic power of Adat in the local political field. These social capitals have been invested since the New Order regime in power up to the current era of Reformasi.

Through the Golkar party and PHDI as social capital, the Towani Tolotang indigenous community operates a coexistence strategy, namely the politics of cooperation with the institutions of the regime of power. Golkar and PHDI, in this case, are institutions that represent state power. The power of these institutions is utilized by the indigenous community and it is reproduced continually to strengthen the base of Adat power. In other words, Adat uses these institutions while faced otherness, as a stronghold of pressure conducted by the state and Islamic groups.

By utilizing social capital through the Golkar party network, the Towani Tolotang indigenous community has succeeded in placing its representation in the legislative - politics of representation, it has occurred since the first election of the New Order regime held until the recent legislative election in 2014. Interestingly, the representation of Towani Tolotang at every election moment is never empty in the legislature. This political achievement cannot be separated from the efforts of some elites of Towani Tolotang in utilizing the Golkar Party as a political vehicle. In the management of the Golkar party, some elites of Towani Tolotang become Golkar party officials at the regency level (DPD Golkar). Uwa Sunarto is one of the elite Tolotang who became vice chairman of DPD Golkar in Sidrap regency. Golkar itself in the provincial level of South Sulawesi and Sidrap regency is still one of the strongest party since its establishment until now. This can be seen from the Golkar party's vote reaching 884,841 votes or 20.09% in the 2014 legislative election (General Election Commission, 2014). At the national level, Golkar is still a party with a large number of votes, in 2004 was the winning party, while 2009 and 2014 were in the second position.

Noted, there are some political elites of Towani Tolotang who managed to become a representative in the legislature. In 1978, Tolotang people sat up to the high of the Provincial Legislature (DPRD), Uwa Tobotiu. In 2004, Uwa La Unga (incumbent election 1992) and Edi Slamet (Uwa Eja) were elected representatives of Tolotang in local legislative. Then in the 2009 election, there were two seats (La Panca and Rukiyah are two people managed to sit in the legislative seat Sidenreng Rappang district period 2009-2014) occupied by Towani Tolotang. Until now, some of the elite Tolotang are still members and administrators of Golkar Party Sidrap and who represent the people in Sidrap DPRD, such as Uwa Eja (Edy Slamet) and Uwa Lanae from Golkar Party period (2014-2019).

Although, the era of reform has opened up opportunities for the Towani Tolotang community elites to seek alternative parties as a consequence of the changing social setting of democratic development and post-reform decentralization. This was seen in the 2009 election where some figures of Towani Tolotang joined the Democratic Party and in elections of 2014, some

of them joined with Gerindra as an alternative of political vehicles. one of the Towani Tolotang figures promoted by the Gerindra party, Asis Lise, has voted as a member of the legislature member. Likewise, in 2013, Uwa Sunarto Ngate took a step as a candidate for Vice Regent to accompany A Faisal Ranggong as a candidate for Regent in the election period 2013-2018. At this point, local leaders as symbolic capitalists are not only Adat elites but also political elites. Consequently, the Towani Tolotang indigenous community as adherents and citizens interpret the Adat as a dominative institution because it has a cultural and political legitimacy as well.

Conclusion

Shortly, in Indonesian political change, the Towani Tolotang Indigenous community has maintained its existence till now. The success is due to the ability of the Towani Tolotang indigenous community in utilizing its capitals optimally. The utilization of these capitals seems in two strategies operated so far, namely conservation strategies to strengthen indigenous orthodoxy (inward looking) in other to protect their belief and create obedience of adherents, and coexistence strategies for transforming Adat's power in the local political field (outward looking). The latter strategy puts the Towani Tolotang's elites in local legislative assembly. Both strategies are operated simultaneously in the social-cultural and political fields in reproducing Adat's power.

Thus, the phenomenon of the Towani Tolotang Indigenous community in local political change becomes one of the evidence that indicates a resurgence of indigenous community or culture. In this regard, Adat is no longer understood only as custom, art, and belief, but adat is a political cause, that is political power to be free from the pressure and discrimination of otherness like the state or the Islamic group. In the context of Indonesian politics, the rise of Adat in local politics is also a portrait of the strong relations between politics and culture, especially in Indonesia. Thus, culture becomes one of the important factors to explain how Indonesian politics is practiced, especially in contemporary local politics.

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