

## Politics of Religious Identity in General Elections Regional Head of Sigi District, Central Sulawesi Province

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### Abstract

The aim of this research is to look at the politics of religious affiliation in Sigi Regency's direct regional head elections in 2010 and 2015. The majority of adherents of faith, namely the Muslim and Protestant Christian communities, are represented in the political reality of the community in Sigi Regency. In the elections for the Regent and Deputy Regent of Sigi Regency, the opportunity for population allocation based on the two faiths has become a political instrument to take power. During two cycles of direct regional head elections in Sigi Regency, the state of population characteristics of religious affiliation trends became electoral consumption by political elites. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. According to research, religious affiliation is a fair concern in winning provincial head elections in 2010 and 2015, as well as a way of political balance representing the two religions' cultures.

**Keywords:** Politics, Religious Identity, General Elections, Regional Heads, Political Representation

### Introduction

Indonesia is an excellent example of a great modern society in which authoritarian creativity has flourished in the guise of highly praised electoral democracy (Mietzner, 2020). In order to maintain political stability, it is critical to investigate the differences between identity politics in Indonesia in order to draw a common thread from existing differences. Indonesia has demonstrated that unity can be maintained from independence to the present day as a country with diverse backgrounds (Y. S. Lestari, 2018). On the one hand, Indonesia's cultural diversity has the potential to create a large national community, but it also has the potential to be a divider and a source of lateral tensions, even in democracy (Nego & Enim, 2020). During the Srivijaya and Majapahit periods, history shows that the ancestors of the Indonesian nation had achieved their zenith and were on their way to become a prosperous country in the world. This means that our forefathers were effective in overcoming different challenges of distinction and in turning diversity's potential into strength in order to achieve change and excellence (Hamid, 2018). We Indonesians no longer address problems and challenges based on the national, cultural, or religious identities of each ethnic, cultural, or religious group, but rather on the basis of Pancasila, which ensures that all Indonesians and all cultures in Indonesia, whether majority or minority,

respect and support each other in their integrity as Indonesians (Magnis-suseno, n.d.).

Identity politics is a mode of organizing around common identities as places of injustice that emerged from many national political revolutions in the second half of the twentieth century (Hess, 2019). As two alternate motivations for social activity, identity and curiosity are often juxtaposed (Kuhn, 2019). Identity politics is seen as a poor political activity in Indonesia, according to different surveys, because it tries to embrace or exclude certain individuals or social classes depending on their identities. This is expressed in people's refusal to elect a representative or unite with other communities of distinct origins, as well as other socio-political tensions focused on identity distinctions (Kunci, 2021). The rise of identity contestation is a result of using identity in the political arena (Faraidiany & Kusmanto, 2019). The overburdened notion of 'identity politics' traditionally refers to the common sense of injustice by certain classes of people, whether defined by gender, class, political standing, sexuality, ethnicity, race, or other characteristics that serve as the foundation for group politics (Ilmonen, 2019).

Behind its strong and straightforward identity declarations and implicit unity, identity politics hides extreme rivalry and transition (Todd, 2018). Identity politics is still a common election tactic among the upper crust, and winning a vote from the majority is still a pipe dream for politicians (Politik et al., 2019). However, when the democratic party is confronted with horizontal tensions that result in regional fragmentation, this structure often becomes a challenge (Santoso, 2019). Nationalists use their performative organization to blame others, pay careful attention to emotional signals, and are skilled at eliciting emotional reactions through cause themes (Abdel-Fadil, 2017). They can involve distinctions based on nationality, race, ethnicity, background, profession, gender, religion, and other factors, with different categorizations gaining prominence in various political, economic, and cultural contexts (Grossman & Helpman, 2020).

Identity politics are used by populism as part of a political strategy to win elections, especially general elections (Ardipandanto, 2020). Elections for Governors, Regents, and Mayors, referred to as Regional Head Elections (RHE), are the exercise of people's sovereignty in Provinces, Regencies, and Cities to directly and democratically elect Regional Heads (D. Lestari, 2019). The right to vote in general elections is the only political right that the voters do have. After that, all of the people's civil privileges are passed to political parties (Ali, 2020). The timing of regional head polls, on the other hand, became a catalyst for bringing together different political interests and institutions that were concentrating in the midst of the continuing crisis. These political preferences can be touchy subjects, or they can be used by other couples to win more votes (Daulay et al., 2019).

Most urban political elites used an identity politics tactic during the district head polls (Of et al., 2019). In this way, contemporary identity politics relies on a conceptualization of identity focused on descriptive features including colour, gender, and faith. As a result, it marks a major shift away from class-based politics, in which political strife is fueled by economic problems like redistribution and government scale (Noury & Roland, 2020). The politicization of mutual identities or feelings of 'connectedness,' which are the primary basis for the glue of group collectivity, is at the heart of identity politics (Abdullah, 2017). Political issues of Ethnicity, Religion, Race, and Intergroups (ERRI) have emerged as a major issue in regional head elections (Triantoro, 2017). The politics of religious identity is the most influential (Arsyad & Asdar A.B.,

2019) in Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi Province.

The character of the people of Sigi Regency, which has two religious majority adherents of other faiths, is the political choice of the population in electing candidates based on religious affiliation. A population of about 136,148 Muslims, or 62.90 percent of the population, and 80,809 Protestant Christians, or 36.90 percent, follow these faiths. Meanwhile, Catholics account for 1,839 people (0.84 percent), Hindus for 125 people (0.06 percent), and Buddhists for 84 people (0.04 percent) of the total population of 224,214 people in Sigi Regency. With this in view, it's no surprise that we have such pronounced political divides (Berry et al., 2019). The disparate outcomes of the two crises shape a mystery that lends credence to the explanation (Börzel & Risse, 2018).

As a result, the Sigi Regency community's population is focused on religious affiliation, as if the community is forming loyalty and cultural political agreement. Whereas, in the direct district head elections in 2015, candidates for regional head of Sigi Regency should be nominated depending on the number of religious adherents. Religious followers of a higher population are crowned regents, while others of the following order are named deputy regents. This social fact serves as a reminder that two candidates with the identities of two separate faiths, namely Islam and Christianity, will win direct provincial head elections by merging their identities. Since these meanings and images are constantly repeated in the public domain, this prevalent discourse emerges (Yennie Lindgren & Lindgren, 2017).

This composition can be seen in the direct regional head elections in 2010 which consisted of six pairs, namely Aswadin Randa Lembah (Islam) –Livingstone Sango (Christian), Rizali Djaelangara (Islam) –Ajub Darawia (Christian), Anwar Ponulele (Islam) –Fredy Lody Djaru (Christian), Helmy Zaenong (Christian) –Anwar (Islam), Sulmin Tenggo (Islam) –Elisa Subainda (Christian) and Ridwan Yalidjama (Islam) –Edison Kindangen (Islam). The election of the regional head in Sigi Regency in 2010 was decided by the Aswadin Randa Lembah (Islam) and Livingstone Sango (Christian) pair as Regent and Deputy Regent of Sigi for the 2010–2015 period at the Sigi Regency General Election Commissions (GEC) plenary meeting. Furthermore, the religious identities of regional head candidates in the simultaneous direct regional head elections held in Sigi Regency on December 9 2015, namely Mohamad Irwan Lapatta (Islam) -Paulina (Christian), Nurzain Djaelangara (Islam) -Ajub Willem Darawia (Christian), H. Moh.Agus Rahmat (Islam) – Wardha (Islam), and Husen Habibu (Islam) – Enos Pasaua (Christian).

However, joint requests from government can only be made if the government has a working idea of the kind of collectivity it is dealing with (Acton, 2018). It has been difficult for this country to break free from its religious identity due to its long history. As a result, it is difficult to establish a dichotomy of faith and citizenship, both in terms of national and state life as well as everyday social interactions (Muthohirin, 2019). According to this viewpoint, religion is mostly concerned with moral claims and an interpretation of the proper social order. Religion is thought to be more 'normative thick' and static than race (Valbjørn, 2019). As a result, it is critical to place faith and the state in an optimal position such that general elections run smoothly and do not undermine the country's democratic spirit (Saputro, 2019).

The basic premise is to campaign for a figure to run for regional head of Sigi Regency in a direct

election focused on religious affiliation. What matters more than winning the fight is the efficiency of the leader (representation). By electing a candidate based on religious affiliation, the supportive party of fellow religious beliefs feels mentally and politically represented by their vote. As a result of this social fact, the researchers are interested in learning more about the religious identity politics in Sigi Regency

## Methods

Identity politics becomes a challenge or a "sexy" subject worthy of more study and analysis (Fautanu et al., 2020). This essay focuses on identification since, although it is critical, it has received little coverage (Kaasik-Krogerus, 2020). Field analysis is used in this method of study (field research).

In field studies, researchers speak with and observe the individuals they are studying on an individual basis (Process & Civilization, 2020) via the use of observation techniques and in-depth interviews, as well as Focus Group Discussion (FGD), relevant information in the form of comments, attitudes, and activities will be evaluated as a relevant unit of information focused on this research sample. Although the interviews were semi-structured, I often let the dialogue and story emerge naturally (Rudwick, 2018). This thesis uses a qualitative methodology including a case study approach, as well as literature reviews and the most recent evidence gathered from multiple exploratory social elements (Hasbullah, 2021). The method is to interpret the context of the data gathered by paying attention to and documenting as many facets of the case under investigation at the moment as possible (Ahsan et al., 2020). As a result, this analysis method is descriptive (Pasinringi et al., 2020).

This research, edits data and information to parties who are trustworthy, neutral, and have high integrity. The categories of resource persons and informants who are appropriate and competent in providing data, facts, and information include: Members of the Sigi Regional People's Representative Council (RPRC), Village Heads, Sub-District Heads, Regional Head Election Committee (HEC); Political Party Cadres and Regional Head Candidate Success Team; Print media Newspapers and press figures; Commissioner of GEC Sigi and Secretary of Kesbangpol Sigi; and community leaders of the Muslim Religion and Protestant Christian communities. This research took place in Sigi Regency. Information retrieval both quantitative and qualitative data in the main cantons of both Muslim and Christian communities in Sigi Biromaru and Marawola districts as the base of the Islamic community, Kulawi district and Pipikoro district as the basis for Protestant Christian citizens.

## Results and Discussion

Sigi Regency is one of Central Sulawesi Province's administrative districts, situated not far from Palu, the capital city. Pipikoro, Kulawi Selatan, Kulawi, Lindu, Nokilalaki, Palolo, Gumbasa, Dolo Selatan, Dolo Barat, Tanambulava, Dolo, Sigi Biromaru, Marawola, Marawola Barat, and Kinovaro are the nine districts that make up the Sigi Regency. The population of Sigi Regency is 226,876 inhabitants, divided into 9 sub-districts. Sigi Biromaru sub-district, with a population of 45,218 people, is the most heavily inhabited, followed by Palolo sub-district, with 28,888 people, and West Marawola sub-district, with 6,734 people.

Mapping the population of Sigi Regency based on religious identity shows that the Muslim population inhabits almost all sub-districts and residents who are Protestant Christians also live in all sub-districts. Meanwhile, Buddhism and Hinduism are only scattered in Palolo sub-district, Sigi Biromaru sub-district and followers of Catholicism mostly live in Sigi Biromaru sub-district, which amounts to 1,528 people. Description of the number of residents who are Muslim in Sigi Biromaru sub- district with a total of 38,712 people and Marawola district with a total of 21,012 inhabitants. Meanwhile, the Protestant Christian population is in Palolo sub-district with a total of 16,070 people and Kulawi sub-district reaching 11,638 inhabitants. For more details, see table 01 as follows:

Table 1. Composition Per District Population of Sigi Regency Based on Religion

No	Districts	Islam	Christian Protestant	Catholic	Hindu	Buddha
1.	Pipikoro	17	8137	-	-	-
2.	Kulawi Selatan	1766	7069	-	-	-
3.	Kulawi	3120	11.638	20	-	-
4.	Lindu	885	3985	-	-	-
5.	Nokilalaki	2060	3807	-	-	-
6.	Palolo	12.440	16.070	18	11	10
7.	Gumbasa	6751	5233	196	-	-
8.	Dolo Selatan	13362	1701	-	-	1
9.	Dolo Barat	10908	2202	1	-	1
10.	Tanambulava	8041	136	26	-	-
11.	Dolo	18679	2781	-	10	-
12.	Sigi Biromaru	38712	4321	1528	79	48
13.	Marawola	21012	770	-	67	41
14.	Marawola Barat	84	6571	-	-	-
15.	Kinovara	6717	3162	-	-	-
	Amount	144.554	77.583	1809	167	101

Source: BPS Sigi Regency 2013

In the 2015 provincial head elections in Sigi Regency, the rationality of religious identity politics was shown by the allocation of population based on the concentration of Muslim and Protestant Christian groups. The distribution of the population of Sigi Regency who are Muslims and Protestant Christians domiciled in 9 districts. The distribution is relatively uneven, namely the Muslim population is more concentrated in Sigi Biromaru sub-district with 38,712 people and in Marawola sub-district totaling 21012 people, but the minority of Protestant Christians in Pipikoro District is only 17 people and West Marawola is 84 people. Meanwhile, the majority of residents are Protestant Christians in Palolo sub-district with a total of 16,070 people and in Kulawi sub-district totaling 11,638 people, but minority Protestant Christians in Tanambulava sub-district number 136. Meanwhile, the Catholic religion is more concentrated in the Sigi Biromaru sub-district, totaling 1,528 people, more in collaboration with members of the Christian Protestant faith. In the election of candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent of Sigi Regency for the 2015–

2020 term, Hindus and Buddhists demonstrate more autonomous voter attitudes and actions that are not bound to both Islamic and Protestant Christian identities. They can also arouse an urge to glorify people accused of being oppressed (Marchlewska et al., 2018). For the distribution of population based on religious identity in Sigi Regency, it can be seen on the map of the Sigi Regency area below:

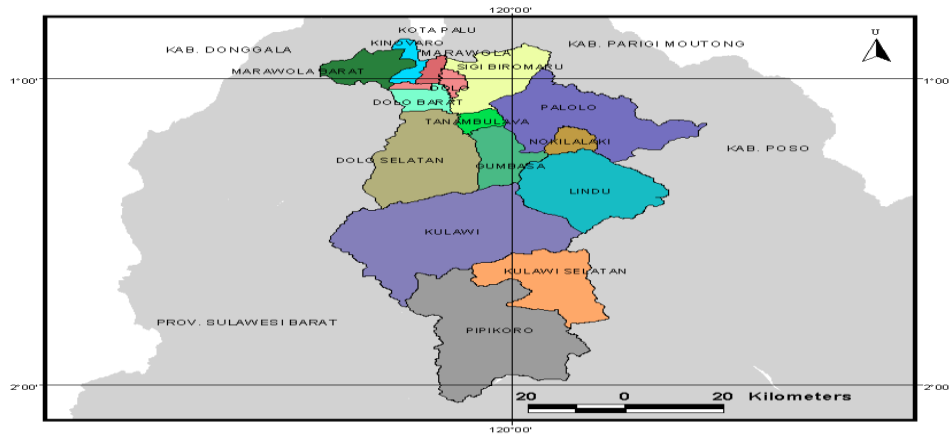


Figure 1. Map of the Sigi Regency Area

The characteristics of the people of Sigi Regency have various ethnicities and religions, but the majority of the adherents of the community consist of two religions, namely Islam and Protestant Christianity. The composition of the two religions ranges from 62.17% Muslim and 36.90% Protestant Christianity. The communities of different religions can be mapped that most of the Muslim communities live in the Gumbasa sub-district, Dolo Selatan sub-district, Dolo Barat sub-district, Tanambulava sub-district, Dolo sub-district, Sigi Biromaru sub-district, Marawola sub-district and Kinovaro sub-district. Meanwhile, Protestant Christian communities generally occupy the areas of Pipikoro sub-district, Kulawi Selatan sub-district, Kulawi sub-district, Lindu sub-district, Nokilalaki sub-district, Palolo sub-district and West Marawola sub-district.

The segmentation of the people of Sigi Regency based on two religions which have a majority adherent is a reference for quantifying the potential support of a figure to appear in direct regional head elections in Sigi Regency both in 2010 and 2015 which just took place simultaneously on December 9. The rationalization and reality of the political community in Sigi Regency that people choose candidates, one of the factors causing it is religious identity. This clearly demonstrates that almost all candidates who are nominated, whether by the public or by political parties, are paired based on their religious beliefs. Muslim regent candidates are nominated, while Christian Protestant candidates are nominated as Deputy Regents. In a representative approach (representation) with the composition of candidate nominations based on the number of religious adherents, it is a natural representation that is difficult to change people's minds, ideologies and political behavior to shift to other options based on views that are different from their religious beliefs. The phenomenon of regional head elections (Regent and

Deputy Regent) in Sigi Regency based on religious identity is a cultural solidarity that wants a balance in political and bureaucratic positions.

One of the Kulawi community leaders, considered that the competition between candidates for regional head of Sigi Regency in the 2015 elections based on religious identity, namely Islam and Protestant Christianity, was a satisfaction. Because Christians feel represented at the top of the executive office. The community feels this is a political balance for the people in Sigi Regency. The composition of the religious community in Sigi Regency can be seen in the following table

Table 2. Composition of Society Based on Religious Identity in Sigi Regency

Religion	Amount	Percent (%)
Islam	144.554	62,17
Christian Protestant	77.583	36,90
Catholic	1809	0,84
Hindu	167	0,06
Buddha	101	0,04

Source: BPS Sigi Regency, 2013

Political office and public office are two aspects of the political balance that are often considered. Religious identity is a characteristic rationality of society that must be balanced, in addition to political composition dependent on history, such as race and territory. It avoids a monopoly of a particular community group based on religious, ethnic, or regional identity with this composition. Political equilibrium can thus be accommodated not only in the form of provincial head polls, but also in the allocation of strategic roles within the bureaucracy. Several strategic bureaucratic posts were held by Protestant Christian leaders and other non-Muslim faiths during the elections for provincial heads of Sigi Regency in 2010 and 2015. This political reality represents the standard of local democracy in Sigi Regency since the direct regional head election was held, as there is a political leader expressing desires focused on religious identity classes. Political representation is much too complicated and consisting of difficult-to-define components. Political representation entails more than just leaders and the groups they support (Issn, 2022).

Political representation is a balancing between rights and responsibilities as individuals based on religious, national, and cultural origin. The right of any person to receive state facilities and services regardless of racial, national, or cultural identities will help society escape conflict dynamics. The community is satisfied with the rights and obligations obtained from the State, such as the right to become a Regent and Deputy Regent, the right to become a member of the RPRC, the right to become a Village Head through general elections on the basis of religious identity. Gaining power through religious identity is not something taboo but is the reality of political society in Sigi Regency. Thus, the material of the state and culture, namely Bhinneka Tugal Ika, numerous religion, ethnic, and cultural features unified in the system of the Indonesian nation and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (USRI), where every person has the same rule and the ability to get a political role and bureaucracy, is reflected by political representatives.

The following table depicts the reality of religious identity politics in Sigi Regency during direct



regional head elections in 2010 and parallel regional head elections in 2015. Candidates for regional head candidates (Regent and Deputy Regent) are matched with religious distinctions, including Muslim figures and Protestant Christian figures.

Table 3. Composition of Candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent based on Identity Religion in the 2015 Direct Regional Head Election in Sigi Regency

No	Candidate / Position Name	Religion	The Bearers Party
1.	Moh.Irwan Lapata (Regent) Paulina (Deputy Regent)	Islam Christian	Gerindra, PAN and Golkar
2.	Nurzain Djaelangara (Regent) Ajub Willem Darawia (DeputyRegent)	Islam Christian	Nasdem, Demokrat, PKPI
3.	H. Husen Habibu (Regent) Enos Pasaua (Deputy Regent)	Islam Christian	Hanura and PKB
4.	Moh.Agus Rahmat (Regent) Wardha (Deputy Regent)	Islam Islam	PDIP and PBB

Source: General Election Commission of Sigi Regency, 2016

Despite the fact that some candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent have the same religious affiliation as those who run in the direct regional head elections in 2010, namely Ridwan Yalidjama and Edison Kindangen, and the parallel regional head elections in 2015, namely Moh Agus Rahmat and Wardha, they received votes in the last category. This means that their vote tally in the direct regional head elections in Sigi Regency is insignificant. As a result, political assessments should be based on the logic of the characteristics and characteristics of the group, and the element of religious affiliation is crucial in deciding the win in direct regional head elections in Sigi Regency. This reflects the political balance in building the consolidation of local democracy in Sigi Regency and other districts such as Poso Regency and North Morowali Regency.

Since this is the channeling of the desires of community associations founded on the same religious ideology, the religious affiliation factor cannot be ignored. People's aspirations are distributed differently as religious identity associations are formed on the grounds of harmony and religious freedom. Religion is one of the pluralistic identities adopted by this nation to build a more aspirational democracy. Therefore, with such polarization, religious identity is a way to gain power and public office. In such a context, in politics it is mentioned as a political balance and obtaining political and economic opportunities in a propotional manner. With the politics of balance, it can overcome the tyranny of the majority by certain community groups.

In the 2015 provincial head elections in Sigi Regency, religious affiliation was crucial in gaining power. The state of political complexities in Sigi Regency is clearly shown by Kalukubula community leaders, who show that the Regent and Deputy Regent candidates must be natives who understand the challenges that the citizens of Sigi face. There are several sub-districts that are majority Muslim and some sub-districts are majority Christian, this must be in pairs. Because in Sigi Regency, religion is a political tool under the domain of the election of the Regent and Deputy Regent to achieve its goals. As in the election of the Regent and Deputy Regent which



had just happened, Irwan Lapatta and Paulina were elected. All of these are representatives of Islam and Christianity.

## Conclusion

True religious identity as a political tool is not from a negative perspective, but rather in a representative context, where all religious, ethnic and cultural community groups have equal and proportional access to political and bureaucratic positions. Political resources then have quite an effect on the level of public policy both at the executive and legislative levels (RPRC). Proportional public policies can provide access for every religion and ethnicity to get the right to manage economic resources both at the regional and at the village and sub-district levels in Sigi Regency. The politics of religious identity in the simultaneous regional head elections in Sigi Regency in 2015 gave birth to a balance politics in gaining access to political and bureaucratic positions in the regional government and RPRC of Sigi Regency. Direct regional head elections with the participation of the public to participate in the politics of voting constitute a political representation based on religious identity. Theoretically, it is in voter behavior that people vote based on solidarity relations between religions, ethnicities, cultures, and regional origins. Therefore, the candidate pairs for regional head of Sigi Regency in the 2015 regional head elections are an objective condition of the characteristics and patterns of people who embrace the majority religion, namely Islam and Protestant Christianity. In such political conditions, people feel that their political rights are inspired based on religious solidarity.

The religious identity factor for figures nominated for Regent and Deputy Regent gives a political meaning of balance to get the right to be elected and to elect leaders based on religion. Regent and Deputy Regent candidates with different religious identities are an agreement by the community to win the regional head election in Sigi Regency. By accommodating candidates based on religious identity, political communication and socio-cultural relations can be well maintained and preserved. The unity and integrity of the nation's children in Sigi Regency is more solid because the political and economic balance takes place in an accommodative manner based on the religious identity of the community. The politics of religious identity in Sigi Regency is not only in the direct regional head elections in 2010 and 2015, but the legislative general elections (DPRD) of Sigi Regency in 2014 and the previous year were representative politics based on religious identity. This political reality, constitutionally provides equal rights and obligations to every citizen to gain access to the positions of Regent and Deputy Regent as well as strategic positions in the local government bureaucracy in Sigi Regency.

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