



Constructing Harmony as the Collective Conscience of the Donggala Community, Central Sulawesi

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INFO ARTICLE

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Keywords:

collective conscience;
cultural harmony;
donggala community;
tolerance.

ABSTRACT

Social and system as a fundamental building blocks of individuals in society become important elements of the cohesion and harmony of citizens. Social construction is contained in the creation of a harmonious order of society, upholding kinship relations inherited from predecessors, then metamorphosing into a collective conscience, a joint agreement of citizens, then processed into the basic values of citizenship. Donggala Regency, part of the Central Sulawesi region, has so far integrated its society based on the rules of tolerance between migrants and local communities, which they pass down from generation to generation to their children and grandchildren. The strong approach of cultural tolerance among all tribes in the area positions Donggala as a harmonious, safe, and peaceful area. Various social upheavals are not visible in social interactions in society. Donggala's cultural heritage from various tribes (migrants and natives) is integrated into social life while binding its people as a system. Such conditions make Donggala harmoniously integrated; its residents dynamize themselves based on cultural heritage and build social relations based on historical traditions supported by strong individual unity, so that they are integrated into a citizenship system where tolerance becomes their social communication.



INTRODUCTION

Donggala is one of the regencies in Central Sulawesi, serving as a buffer zone and directly bordering Palu, the provincial capital. The topography of Donggala is diverse, consisting of plains, hills, and mountains. Its capital city is Donggala. The prominent mountainous areas around it have led the government to propose mountain removal and coastal reclamation projects to expand the city's area. This topographical condition reflects a variety of ecological systems with significant natural resource potential. Environmental-based management in an area, as per Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, grants local governments extensive authority to regulate their regions. Effective management and planning require an integrated, structured, and community-based approach. Without these elements working together, experience has shown that development programs struggle to meet targets, often resulting in social upheavals when projects reach the community. One reason for this is that programs are often seen as ahistorical, with minimal attention to community needs and involvement. Residents may also feel excluded, leading to a lack of responsibility for the situation.

Institutional strengthening programs that focus solely on formality rather than substance can lead to social fragmentation. Similarly, policy-makers may face social unrest, such as conflicts and horizontal violence. Strengthening community harmony, besides reinforcing internal social bases (Hardiman, 2004), requires political regulations that allow residents to participate directly in collective activities, a concept known as strengthening civil society bases. This condition is crucial for establishing a socio-historical context of kinship and tolerance. According to Simmel (1964), society is a form of association necessary for synthesizing all human needs, contents, and processes into a cohesive unit. Awareness and active participation are considered urgent as integral parts of the evolving social structure (Raho, 2021).

Social reform leads us to an endless perspective of freedom. Individuals have the authority to appreciate their social situation, granting them both the power and responsibility to build kinship based on their region's historical context. The conflict in Central Sulawesi at the end of 1999 and into the 2000s, exemplified by the violence in Poso, demonstrates this. Initially, Poso's culture of tolerance allowed Muslims and Christians to coexist peacefully. However, from 2000-2005, conflicts erupted, escalating quickly and affecting nearly all areas, especially Poso City, the coastal, and interior regions close to the regency capital. The resulting violence left a long-lasting trauma.

Social theorist Ibn Khaldun (1962) noted a significant correlation between religion and power. If violence occurs within the power structure, it accelerates the state's collapse (Khalwani, 2019). Poso's history has made it a potential hotspot for violence. Religious and ethnic segregation, especially in rural and coastal areas, facilitates ethnic and religious group consolidation. Conflicts based on ethnicity and religion reduce the potential for internal community consolidation, making internal conflicts a means to strengthen group existence (Coser, 1956).

Donggala, with its heterogeneous society, is characterized by ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity. Despite significant economic and political differences, violence is rare. The community exhibits strong tolerance and understanding, with good kinship ties across different religions and cultures. In contrast, Poso's high ethnic and religious competition, despite interfaith and interethnic marriages, sees strong group consolidation based on religion, especially among leaders. Donggala's residents are unified by their cultural awareness as Donggalans, and conflicts based on religion or social aspects are not culturally significant. Social institutions and informal organizations function as safety valves, creating collective awareness for peaceful living (Silva, 1986).

In Donggala's urban society, during religious holidays, such as Idul Fitri, celebrations include ethnic and religious diversity, with interfaith visits and shared activities across different communities. Communication in daily interactions often involves Bahasa Indonesia as well as Bugis and Kaili languages, even among other ethnic groups. This cultural integration allows Donggalans to maintain strong resilience and prevent violence. According to Lewis A. Coser (1956), this situation represents a strong in-group structure.



Emile Durkheim (1964) viewed social facts as emerging not from individuals but from external societal pressures that compel adherence to inherited values. Habermas, a post-World War I German philosopher, emphasized intersubjectivity through language as a symbol of social interaction. Communication serves as a tool for integrating individuals into society and developing social regulations. Language and communication are crucial for bridging individual integration into a cohesive society, balancing social and systemic models. Donggala is a culturally rich region, also known as an old city. It was once part of an administrative division with Palu. The city features an iconic port, a historical landmark with bustling trade from Sulawesi Central to Java. This historical significance highlights Donggala's role as a trade center and a location where Palu and surrounding areas sent their high school students for further education.

METHOD

This article is based on qualitative research. The qualitative data collection involved two groups of data providers. First, general informants who provided information about the research object and were involved in the events being studied. Second, informants who provided details about the events related to their involvement in the events. All informants met the predetermined criteria. This qualitative research produced descriptive data in the form of written or verbal accounts from informants or observed behaviors. Qualitative research focuses on processes and meanings, emphasizing the construction of the essence of reality and the close relationship between the researcher and the research object (Fadli, 2021). The research was conducted in Donggala Regency, Central Sulawesi, over a period of three months, from May to July 2024, using primary data through in-depth interviews with informants, while secondary data focused on literature reviews. The researcher positioned themselves as the primary instrument in the research to ensure the sensitivity and objectivity of primary data collection. A total of eight informants were involved, although not all interview results are presented in this article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conflict-Sensitive Regulation

Donggala is one of the earliest established regencies in Central Sulawesi Province. Currently, its territory has been divided into Sigi Regency, Parigi Moutong Regency, and Palu City. The separation of these regions has resulted in more efficient management, as well as improvements in infrastructure, economic growth, population growth, education, and socio-cultural development. Various advancements experienced by these separated regions, including Donggala, have been driving factors for the creation of independent regencies. The northern region of Donggala (known as the Western Coast) also aspires to separate and become an independent regency. Although there are several alternatives, such as strengthening sea transport and establishing representative offices in the Western Coast, the potential for self-separation remains. HA, a bureaucrat in Donggala City, stated:

"Donggala is quite a large and circular area. The lack of sea transport or bridges connecting Donggala Banawa to the Western Coast or vice versa forces us to take a detour through Palu. From an efficiency standpoint, it's somewhat difficult, but the solution is not just to create a new regency in the Western Coast. There are many alternatives, one of which is providing affordable sea transport."

HA also suggested that several public-related agencies or government institutions could establish representatives in Northern Donggala, particularly those directly related to agriculture and trade. This would enhance the efficiency of government administration and make it easier and faster to reach the community.



According to him, if services are inefficient, slow, and complicated, both the community and the government will feel the impact, increasing the potential for conflicts between the government and citizens.

Geographically, Donggala Regency borders Tolitoli Regency to the north, West Sulawesi Province and Sigi Regency, as well as Palu City to the south, Makassar Strait and West Sulawesi Province to the west, and Sigi Regency and Parigi Moutong Regency to the east. Donggala Regency, with its capital in Banawa, consists of 16 districts and 167 villages/sub-districts. Its area spans 5,126.59 km², or 8.32 percent of the total area of Central Sulawesi (BPS Kabupaten Donggala, 2024). The percentage of Donggala's area is considered quite adequate, given that Central Sulawesi has 12 regencies and 1 city. If distributed equally among all regencies and cities, the result would be $100\% \div 13 = 7.69$. This figure indicates that Donggala Regency has an area almost equal to other regencies in Central Sulawesi. From a management and bureaucratic service perspective, Donggala experiences inefficiency, although all its regions can be accessed by land travel. When considering the area size and power distribution in relation to government positions and public roles, Donggala Regency holds significant potential for conflict.

The abundant natural resources in Donggala have attracted many economic actors to invest in the region. Consequently, this has led to the creation of job opportunities and a reduction in unemployment, but it has also caused a shift in the types of jobs from agriculture to mining and plantation work. Another impact has been changes in social relationships among the community. Violence is likely to occur, especially when mining and plantation activities face land issues, such as overlapping land between community areas and mining zones, potential conflicts between communities, and between residents and mining operators (owners). This phenomenon concerns Donggala's elites, who understand that various permits issued by the government, such as for mining, should be reviewed and inventoried, especially regarding overlapping areas of protected forests, land tenure rights, and community land, as these can lead to conflicts in society. AW, a sports figure in Donggala who closely observes the area's cultural patterns and behaviors, said, *"The potential for violence is present in the outskirts of the regency, especially where massive mining activities occur. The conflict is not between ethnic groups, but rather among themselves, such as between Bugis and Kaili communities, due to overlapping land interests, where local communities and companies face off."*

The ethnic groups in Donggala, especially in the regency's capital and surrounding areas, include the Kaili ethnic group and migrants. The latter have lived in Donggala for generations, coexisting harmoniously amidst the population's diversity. Although this pluralism has not yet resulted in violent clashes among residents, it is necessary to have conflict-sensitive bureaucratic regulations, particularly government policies involving civilian interests. The strong ethnic integration is one factor contributing to their harmony, but it is still important to understand it as a potential source of conflict that could erupt into violence at any time. The potential for conflict primarily arises in the outskirts of the regency, rather than from inter-ethnic relations. One of the causes is government regulation related to mining companies and local communities, especially agricultural land. Ambiguous bureaucratic policies, particularly concerning village boundaries or agrarian issues, and disputes over the regency capital, such as those occurring in Balaesang Tanjung District between Malei Village and Ketong Village, are examples of these issues.

Such conflicts arise because the latter village was designated as the district capital. Community leaders in Ketong believe that this decision was not based on the historical conditions of Balaesang Tanjung. Residents of Ketong feel they are more deserving of this designation, given the area's history as the oldest village in the region, which is closely tied to the adat (customary law) and culture of Balaesang.



The conflict between the two villages related to the designation of the district capital did not end on the "Gray Saturday." When the residents of Ketong came peacefully to Malei on that Saturday morning, the role of women was crucial in preventing violence from occurring. The incident of Gray Saturday first emerged as a form of violence there. An area that had previously been safe and tranquil, far from the clamor of political, economic, and cultural interests, was disrupted by the issuance of government regulations regarding the district capital designation. The conflict did not solely result from the actions of the residents. The establishment of regulations had led to horizontal violence because the government had not understood the historical and traditional conditions of the community. The bureaucratic decision-making was considered conflict-insensitive.

An interesting aspect related to the efficiency of regency management is that, during the Gray Saturday incident, the number of security personnel was very minimal. Additional security forces arrived several hours after the incident, partly due to the approximately 2-hour travel time from Tambu Village, the capital of Balaesang Regency at that time, to Malei Village. The vastness of Donggala Regency, as understood by HA, requires management supported by transportation infrastructure. He further stated:

"Donggala is very large, with abundant natural resources that must be well managed to ensure the welfare of its people. Poor management of natural resources impacts the residents. The vast area of Donggala is not yet matched by transportation infrastructure development. Some parts are categorized as inefficient management, which can be understood from this perspective, so the government is expected to address several aspects that are still not optimal."

The future challenge for efficient government management is improving road infrastructure, especially sea transport, to connect Donggala Banawa with Northern Donggala (Western Coast). Similarly, road infrastructure should be extended to remote areas, allowing Western Coast residents to easily reach the regency capital. Additionally, efficient bureaucratic management directly affects the implementation of conflict-sensitive governance.

Regarding government management, community involvement, especially by local leaders and religious figures, has a significant impact on the utilization of rural natural resources, helping to achieve program targets. To meet the various requirements for rural development programs, the involvement of all community elements is necessary, so participation and budget management are maximized by the residents. Coordination schemes between agencies at the most basic levels must be consolidated and coordinated to minimize grassroots friction. Similarly, regulatory interpretations need to be constrained with a focus on conflict sensitivity clauses to meet and address the interests of the residents based on their needs, traditions, and history.

The success of government programs relies on its consolidation with the community. In villages like Ponggerang in Dampelas District and Labuan Village in Labuan District, residents have been caught in the swirl of conflicts resulting from the slow pace of bureaucratic decision-making regarding regulations and their impact on village governance structures. Often, the root of the problem lies with two institutional actors: the village head and the Village Consultative Body (BPD), who confront each other over issues that should be resolved through deliberation. Village governance mechanisms and rules can serve as guidelines for lower-level government implementation. However, village development and welfare programs are often claimed by BPD officials, benefiting the village head and their group, while the broader community remains untouched by these programs. In reality, Law No. 6 of 2014 on Village Government positions the village head and BPD as mutual partners to oversee village development (Jamaluddin, 2019; Nursamsir et al., 2024).



The effects of conflicts among village elites impact bureaucratic consolidation, leading to significant obstacles in implementing programs decided through village deliberations and planning meetings (musrembang) at the district and regency levels. These obstacles are not only due to external factors, such as residents' responses, but also internal factors, such as weak inter-personal communication within the bureaucracy. Issues like rural democratization stagnate, with conflicts stemming from delayed regulations on the appointment of elected village heads, resulting in prolonged disputes that are counterproductive, escalating into broader conflicts, and eventually forming interest-based groups (Averus & Alfina, 2020; Kushadajani & Permana, 2020; Suyatno, 2016). HA describes this segregation of support as follows:

"Conflicts among village elite groups have widespread effects in rural areas. Both the community and village bureaucracy are not well consolidated, while programs that have been planned are likely to face obstacles. This can be regulated through regulations; if the budget does not allow the higher-level government to create rules for borrowing village assets such as farmland, livestock, and others, then it should be managed by the village head with specific agreements. Such regulations are considered conflict mitigation within the framework of village governance. Otherwise, conflicts among officials could occur and even spread to the community. On the other hand, misappropriation of village funds is also a potential issue."

Many instances of government administration are ineffective, leading to increased opportunities for violence. Binary opposition among communities drives further divisions, while social elites consolidate their power to compete for political influence. This phenomenon results in two important outcomes. First, bureaucratic work faces personal impediments due to ineffective communication among officeholders. According to Edward III, communication is a crucial element in policy implementation (Edward III, 1980). Poor communication inevitably hampers service delivery to residents. Second, community groups become segregated based on differing interests, and the cultural and historical awareness of the community is forgotten (Christie, 1998). They emerge from a single socio-cultural entity integrated into the village society. The primary task of residents is to maintain the village's cultural system in its ideal form, adhering to historical and long-established value agreements. Collective conscience becomes a significant cost for residents who have long upheld their social values. The rural social structure evolves towards a single mechanism scheme, positioning cultural entities as essential elements in rural development. For example, regulations might include involving adat leaders in empowerment program design. Conflicting parties, under the banner of adat and tradition, are encouraged by cultural leaders to build communication and work together to develop the village. Preventing early violence is achieved not through repressive measures, such as deploying security forces, but through agreement on shared values, using traditional approaches (Haba, 2010).

The relationship between regency bureaucracies (Palu City and Donggala Regency) also fluctuates depending on the political situation in the two areas. Historical conditions significantly influence this relationship. Before becoming independent, Palu City was part of Donggala Regency, and some regency assets were located in Palu. Upon separation from Donggala, Palu was designated as the capital of Central Sulawesi Province. The city experienced significant development, including increased traffic of goods and people. In anticipation, the Palu City Government built a modern port (Pantoloan) in the area bordering Donggala Regency. Its strategic location, being at a provincial crossroads and as the provincial capital, has made Pantoloan Port very busy. Consequently, the distribution of goods and people has shifted to this new port, weakening the



function of Donggala Port, which had long operated and introduced Donggala across the archipelago, becoming an icon of the regency. The historical relationship between Palu and Donggala has led to potential latent conflicts. AW, a youth leader from Donggala, said:

“Educational activities, sea ports, governance, and trade for the Donggala, Palu, Sigi, and Parigi regions are centered here. Previously, people associated Central Sulawesi with Donggala. Many children from Palu and surrounding areas attended high school in Donggala. This area has a long history, which aligns with the history of Central Sulawesi. Since 1950, Palu officially became independent and benefited from government regulations. Palu has developed rapidly, partly due to the significant migration of various ethnic groups settling there. People’s orientation has shifted to Palu, resulting in Donggala being 'forgotten.' Some areas have become dormant, with almost no activity, including the port, and Pantoloan has shifted to Palu. Many of Donggala’s assets in Palu are being sought by the city government, whereas ideally, they should help Donggala advance as they once did, assisting in Palu’s formation and independence. Recruitment of civil servants has also become a complicated issue, as most civil servants in Donggala’s government agencies are from Palu. The conflict is not yet apparent, but it might emerge in the future as more Donggala residents seek to become civil servants.”

Building Conflict Regulation Through Tolerance

Donggala has traditionally integrated its community based on ancestral norms passed down through generations. The strong cultural approach among the various ethnic groups in the region has made Donggala a safe area for both living and investment. However, the vast mineral resources and extensive land hold the potential for conflict. Despite high heterogeneity, social tensions have not been evident, partly due to the area’s natural beauty which attracts tourism investment. Yet, the opportunities for investment in sectors such as tourism, plantations, and mining could displace lower-income communities if not regulated with clear policies that protect communal rights while accommodating investment.

The rapid social mobility in Donggala Regency, including the perceived harmonious relationships among some residents, is crucial for economic growth, especially in tourism, plantations, and mining. On the other hand, it contributes to social disintegration. Regulations often fail to balance the rights of both parties. AW states that ideally, government regulations should strengthen social harmony, but in Donggala, the government frequently issues counterproductive policies. He explains:

“Almost all areas of Donggala that border other regions have unclear boundaries, which affects social conditions, especially in areas bordering other villages or regencies. Fortunately, our community has strong kinship ties, otherwise, we might face conflicts like other regencies. In South Banawa, issues of ethnicity, religion, and family may arise or be highlighted, but thankfully, the community integrates well and remains indifferent to these issues. For example, ethnic Chinese in Donggala rarely use cars when traveling around Donggala and its surroundings; they usually greet familiar pedestrians, fostering harmonious relations among residents. They avoid luxurious lifestyles to prevent gossip. Citra Store, owned by an ethnic Chinese Donggala resident, donates qurban annually to the Donggala Grand Mosque. Such harmony should be maximized and maintained, not solely left to the community; the government must also build and regulate these relationships. In villages with unclear boundaries or those bordering other regencies, disharmony could spread from peripheral villages to the capital. There are many examples, like Poso, which was once harmonious and pluralistic but eventually faced conflict.”



Regarding the mitigation and resolution of boundary disputes in Donggala Regency, HA believes that addressing these issues promptly is crucial to prevent prolonged problems. He suggests using technology to facilitate this process:

“I believe the Donggala Regency Government knows where potential conflicts exist. What needs to be done now is to anticipate them with long-term, sustainable programs involving the community directly. Short-term solutions only address immediate issues but do not achieve long-term goals. Long-term approaches allow for continuous evaluation. A pressing issue is handling village and regency boundaries with neighboring areas. This must be resolved quickly to prevent unrest. One alternative is to use satellite remote sensing technology to determine boundaries, involving relevant government bodies and the community in decision-making. Although it is expensive due to the technology and multiple stakeholders, it should be done once rather than repeatedly.”

One notable boundary conflict occurred between Donggala Regency and North Mamuju Regency in West Sulawesi Province. This conflict arose from regulations related to regional boundary adjustments based on the Minister of Home Affairs Decree No. 52 of 1991. Conflicts emerged during the establishment of boundary markers, with minimal involvement from residents. Administrative boundaries are regulated by the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 76 of 2012 on Regional Boundary Determination (Yuwono et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

The potential for conflict leading to violence needs to be prevented from an early stage, as violence can occur at any time when various factors interact. Conflict potential, such as village boundary disputes, agrarian issues related to overlapping land ownership and the tenurial rights of indigenous communities, mining cases, and other issues, must be managed through two schemes. First, the issuance of regulations on boundary determination and the rights of indigenous communities and residents. Second, the involvement of traditional institutions in community welfare programs.

The people of Donggala Regency have a well-established and long-standing consolidation, supported by their social structure and institutions, which are deeply integrated within the community. Similarly, internal community consolidation remains solid. In Donggala City, people appreciate interethnic relations. For example, every year, animal sacrifices are made during Eid al-Adha to maintain the spirit of tolerance. Many wealthy individuals do not flaunt their wealth to preserve social relationships. These phenomena illustrate how the cultural structure of tolerance has become a shared value among the residents. Outside Donggala City, some indigenous people welcome and assist some migrant individuals in cultivating indigenous-owned land through mutually beneficial agreements, and migrants are accepted as an integral part of the indigenous population.

At the bureaucratic level, competition among government officials occurs in some rural areas. However, the cultural awareness of the groups inspires residents to maintain personal communication among the community, between bureaucratic officials, and between bureaucrats and residents. The rural bureaucracy continues to work optimally in service tasks, while residents work and participate in achieving village welfare. The community manages conflict mitigation schemes through a spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding. Violent conflict arises when the government issues regulations governing village governance mechanisms and mining or plantation investments without considering the residents' historical context or when these regulations lack conflict sensitivity.



Regarding village boundaries, it is important to consider the history of each area when determining boundaries; similar considerations should apply to natural resource management. Conflicts arise alongside the entry of plantation and mining companies, as communities believe these companies develop operational systems without respecting local history and culture. Anticipation lies in recruitment patterns prioritizing local residents. Such conditions could potentially trigger horizontal friction (conflict between communities). Although environmental impact analysis (EIA) considerations emphasize the importance of individual rights and community tenurial systems being included in investment policies, government regulations do not clearly assert these points, even though rules and legal standards should be based on regulations.

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