



***Bugis* ethnic perception towards urgency of political decentralization and district autonomy in South Sulawesi, Indonesia**

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Abstract

Bugis ethnic is one of the ethnics in Indonesia and it is the major ethnic in South Sulawesi province. Political decentralization and district autonomy that is carried out in South Sulawesi aims to establish harmony and national unity in a condition of diverse community (pluralism) including creating equal development through the people's empowerment. The research applies qualitative method through in-depth interview with key informants from formal (Bupati and bureaucrats) and non-formal (politicians, religious leaders, traditional leaders and intellectuals) elite figures. Results of the research found that majority of *Bugis* ethnic have a revisionist style of thinking instead of conservative/orthodox and pragmatic. Revisionist means the *Bugis* ethnic views power decentralization and broader authority as possible actions to be carried out smoothly in a district by observing the local values and local wisdom. Also, changes in political decentralization model that is based on local wisdom values can be carried out in stages along with the spirit of national unity and joint development for community's prosperity.

Keywords: *bugis* ethnic, decentralization, social harmony, local wisdoms, inequality between districts

1. Introduction

South Sulawesi is one of the provinces in Indonesia that consists of diverse ethnics such as *Bugis*, *Makassar*, *Mandar*, and *Toraja*. *Bugis* ethnic is one of the biggest ethnic in South Sulawesi and the *Bugis* people have spread all over Indonesia and neighbouring countries such as Malaysia. This is due to the sea voyages that they venture on. In addition, the sea voyages eventually cause them to generally settle in coastal areas. This research discusses about the formal local *Bugis* elites or the local government (*bupati* and bureaucrats) and non-formal local elites such as political community and public community perceptions towards urgency of political decentralization and district autonomy. Examples of political community are People's Representative Council and party officials while examples of public community are religious leaders, traditional leaders/nobles and intellectual figures/academician. Question towards *Bugis* elite as informants only focus on: (i) local elite perception towards the meaning of diversity (*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*) on harmony and national unity in decentralization era, (ii) local elite perception towards the meaning of central and local government relationship, and (iii) local elite perception towards political decentralization agenda and district autonomy policy.

2. Research Methodology

This research uses qualitative approach specifically interview method towards *Bugis* ethnic figures/elites. *Bugis* ethnic figures composed of formal (politicians, bureaucrats, academicians) and non-formal (religious leaders, traditional leaders, intellectuals and businessman) elements. In-depth interview is carried out on informants or samples that could represent real life situation. Therefore, the determination of samples in this qualitative research is based on reality or social phenomenon that has special and complex attribute (Sugiono, 2009; Creswell, 2018) ^[3].

Before determining the key informants, the researcher firstly categorized the *Bugis* ethnic community population in South Sulawesi to filter the most accurate samples to be key informant subjects involved in this in-depth interview. In this context as mentioned by Moleong (1994) ^[6], the most important step in qualitative research is to determine the information resources of the key informant. Then, the key informant is determined by using purpose sampling technique. After that, interview is carried out from April until July 2017 by considering the informants' time availability. The population criteria are as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Bugis Elite Informants (Local) in South Sulawesi

	Local Elites (population)	Key Informants (samples)
	Political Community	❖ Parliamentary members (legislative) ❖ Leaders of Political Parties
Bugis Elites	Public Community	❖ Religious Leaders (<i>Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)</i> , Indonesian Ulema Council, Preparatory Committee for Upholding Islamic Law) ❖ Traditional leaders/Nobles (<i>Puang, Arung</i>) ❖ Intellectual Figures
	Local Government	❖ <i>Bupati/Bupati's</i> Representatives ❖ Bureaucrats: Regional Secretary/ <i>Satuan Kerja Perangkat Daerah (SKPD)</i> ❖ Village Head/ <i>Lurah</i>

Source: Results of data modification 2018

3. Discussion

This section will discuss that, (i) Bugis Elite Perception towards Urgency of Political Decentralization in South Sulawesi, (ii) towards the Meaning of Diversity (*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*) in Forming Harmony and National Unity, (iii) towards the Meaning of Relationship between Central and Local Government, and (iv) towards Political Decentralization Agenda and District Autonomy Policy

3.1 Bugis Elite Perception towards Urgency of Political Decentralization in South Sulawesi

Perception can be inferred as knowing through facts, images, numbers, and examples. Immanuel Kant explained about perception in Roskin (2016) [7] with “Perception without conception is blind, conception without perception is empty”. According to Sparringga (1998) [11] and Anwar (2009) [1] based on conceptual theory, Bugis ethnic perception can be categorized into four patterns. First, is oppositions, which means a group of elite actors that desire fast, radical and fundamental changes in political decentralization and district autonomy model. Secondly, is revisionist; a group of local elite actors that believe changes in political decentralization and district autonomy must be carried out in stages to prevent turbulence that could endanger the political stability and political world. Thirdly, is conservative or orthodox; a group of local elite actors that oppose every change in political decentralization and district autonomy model that is advancing towards competitive democracy. The final group is pragmatic; a group of local elite actors that are not concern about political decentralization and district autonomy that will be formed as long as they are political economy interests are protected.

This article will mention that Bugis ethnic perception towards urgency of political decentralization in *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* concept, central and districts relationship concept, and meaning of political decentralization concept.

3.2 Bugis Elite Perception towards the Meaning of Diversity (*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*) in Forming Harmony and National Unity

The majority of people Bugis elite assumed that the principle of diversity since new order era until reformation era had been sacrificed for national integration and economic development. They assumed that *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* had been redefined differently from its original meaning and purpose. Results from interview with religious leaders/leaders of Nahdlatul Ulama: NU, Basir Syam had provided further understanding of national unity as a political and cultural

concept. Unity is hope and ethnic diversity is reality. *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* emphasized diversity in unity and not only unity. Simply put, the local ethnics are still able to express their values, traditions and confidence through the provision of space for freedom of speech. In accordance with the opinion of Andi Nurhidayati (Faction Leader of United Development Party of the people's Representative Council in South Sulawesi), since the new regime order until reformation order, unity has been defined as similar to decentralization even though the desired unity is a unity that is formed in the spirit of diversity (*Bhineka*). However, unity emerges from community’s consensus of different ethnic groups and not from people of higher authority. Moreover, there are a few Bugis elites that understand the definition and implementation of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* as a political slogan. They regard *Tunggal Ika* as representation of national unity that is simply a patron-client culture and Jakarta’s hegemony towards local community. The state practice and bureaucracy culture are submitted as illustration of inclination towards principal practices that are mostly traditional and patron-client culture basis.

As for A. M. Rusli who is a social and political lecturer, he mentioned that unity is a mere patron-client traditional culture. This is a serious problem that is faced regarding national unity. Bureaucracy has been developed according to the value of patron-client culture. For instance, requesting for guidance from the higher authority in every decision making instead of operating according to rational bureaucracy that mirrors the design of modern bureaucracy (Weber, 1978) [16]. Meanwhile, Muliadi who is a social and political lecturer from Hasanuddin University believes that the past and the still develop unity is rooted from the idea of Supomo's “integral-ism”. The state has adopted Supomo's integral-ism to establish the meaning of unity. Integralistic country focuses on family concept; in a family there must be a father (Bapak) and a son (Anak). In the family concept, the father (State) is always respected and is always true while the Son (Community) must respect the father and follows his every order.

Many local elites have voiced out their dissatisfaction towards the situation that they view as waiving the local rights from Indonesia's politics. One of the common issues is related to definition regarding national interest and equality in social justice since the new order until the reformation era.

Since the beginning of new regime order until now, importance of economic development is defined as the only valid interest that gives more benefits to the conglomerates/entrepreneur compared to local interest and

Bugis ethnic. The resistance from the local community towards the administration's way in regard to compensation is always labelled as anti-development. For instance, the people were intimidated and their lands were given a cheap price during the land acquisition from Losari and Centre Point of Indonesia's (CPI) coast in Lae-Lae Island. The government in South Sulawesi province consistently sacrifices and belittles the local community's social justice in the name of development interests (Interview with Hidayat Nahwi Rasul, public figure in South Sulawesi).

One of the local elites warns that the practice of unity ideology that has provided a place for pluralism may cause a huge threat towards national unity. He viewed unity as an important issue and relevant with Indonesia's national-ism, but he refuses the unity's definition that is currently implemented. Central government and even local government must treat local culture in a more respective way.

Unity does not mean that Bugis ethnic is treated as second class ethnic when compared to Java ethnic as Bugis ethnic also have their own honour, pride and culture. For example, Mattulada (1995) ^[5] mentioned that siri' na' pesse (pride and empathy) values in Bugis culture must be preserved as work ethic. In order to uphold unity, there must be equality between Bugis ethnic and Java ethnic as well as ending the perception that other ethnics are a threat. It must be understood that every ethnics are national assets that can contribute to Indonesia's pluralism (Interview with Basir Syam, Leaders of Nahdatul Ulama; NU).

Nevertheless, some of the *Bugis* people think that ethnic diversity is one of the factors that can trigger disintegration of Indonesian nation vertically or horizontally as there are thousands of islands, hundreds of ethnics, traditions, and cultures as well as various religions and believes. From diversity point of view, Indonesia is a complex society. Many problems have occurred due to diversity such as separatism that is driven by district sentiment (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia and Permesta's rebellion) and religious sentiment (Darul Islam/Islamic Armed Forces of Indonesia's rebellion). Hence, unity is important for Indonesian nation. District egotism and ethnicity must be integrated with the spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* in order to preserve Indonesia's unity. Citizens of Indonesia are fortunate because even though they are of different ethnicity and religion, they have a strong spirit of unity such as harmony between religious communities. The spirit of unity must be nurtured and preserved for the success and harmony of the people's beloved state (Interview with Fashar Pajalangi, Bupati Bone).

Responses from the aforementioned local elites show that the perceptions towards the slogan *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* are diverse. One side priorities unity while one side priorities diversity. This means that the local elites yearn for fair balance between desire for unity and desire for diversity. Hence, diversity must be safeguarded to strengthen unity.

3.3 Bugis Ethnic Perception towards the Meaning of Relationship between Central and Local Government

As long as central practices centralization approach in which everything is concerning central and Java ethnic generally, issues regarding national unity will always occur. Over

centralization is a serious issue related to unity. It should be known that Indonesia is not only Jakarta or Java, but it is an integral part of Indonesian nation from Sabang until Merauke and from Miangas until Rote.

Local elite Sawedi Muhammad who is a lecturer of Faculty of Social and Political Sciences in Hasanuddin University stated that the local government focus is not on local community. It means that the local government does not represent local interest, instead it is central policy oriented. Nonetheless, the local government should not be blamed for its action as it is the suitable reaction from the structure; the pattern of bureaucratic power that is present in the new regime order is Jakarta centre. There is inequality between central and district as there are policies that are discriminant, the one who will gain benefit is central (Jakarta) and the one who will gain loss is the district. This is portrayed through industrial strategy policy that is a city basis with a large scale development that ignores the rural areas. This also includes economic growth that ignores development distribution aspect that gives more benefit to the bureaucrats and its elements as well as conglomerates that form political and economic oligarchy. The bureaucrats use state authority for their personal gain and family wealth accumulation. In the end, national income concentrated on fewer people.

Next, one of the informants explained that there is imbalance in economy that it is hoped, policy related to fiscal decentralization exists. The informant explained: "South Sulawesi is filled with natural resources such as *Pangkep* and *Maros* districts as cement producers and West *Luwu* as nickel producer. However, the people living around the location of the cement factory and nickel mines are still poor farmers due to the profits are mainly given to central (Jakarta) compared to the people living in the districts (local tax). Then, the profits returned to the districts in the form of imbalance fund which are General Allocation Fund and Special Allocation Fund, autonomy fund and other districts income. This discrepancy causes social and economic jealousy among local citizens that would lead to disintegration of the nation and social harmony. At this point, district autonomy is important especially in terms of a fair balance between central and district finance (Interview with Tommy F. Yulianto, *Bupati* Bulukumba representative).

Economic injustice that is enveloped with support issue is similar to an ice mountain in which it is mostly hidden (latent) instead of visible. The issues behind all the visible problems would never be known. Nonetheless, the matter of concern is the corrupt social-political system for a pluralist community such as in South Sulawesi. When economic injustice issues emerge along with ethnic and religion issues, then a more serious problem that could ruin South Sulawesi community's social harmony would occur. If unfair economic equality still withhold and is not solved wisely, then the community will not be surprised if in the upcoming future Indonesia is predicted to break apart. This is the same as past occurrences especially in South Sulawesi during the emergence of separatist such as the rebellion of Permesta and Darul Islam/Islamic Armed Forces of Indonesia due to district dissatisfaction towards central in which they have the impression of being ignored in the economic and political world. Nevertheless, local elites that are highly related to the

government confess that there is a problem, but they do not waver from the problem as they believe that national unity is stronger under the reformation order than the new order.

District autonomy must not have dichotomy between west and east region, and between Java and outside Java. Moreover, cases by cases must be investigated based on local characters until the dichotomy disappears in district development. It is understandable if Jakarta is more developed compared to other districts as Jakarta is the country's gateway or the country's capital city that has its own priority as central of authority, bureaucracy, government administration, and finance compared to other province. Besides, Jakarta has built rail roads, bridges, railway, and industrialization centres since the Dutch's colonization and not to mention, it has many skilled workforce with the migration of citizens from districts to Jakarta.

In conclusion, various local elite responses showed that reformation regime is more unite compared to new order regime and this situation has created patriotism spirit for the unity of Indonesia, "developing Indonesia from the periphery: from district for Indonesia" by implementing development in stages from districts to districts. However, other Bugis elites perceived that there is fault in the governance of local community development as it is generally centrally developed only in Jakarta.

3.4 Bugis Ethnic Perception towards Political Decentralization Agenda and District Autonomy Policy

Results of the Bugis local elites' perceptions towards centralization, decentralization and district autonomy have been gathered through the interview and they are as follows:

Sawedi Muhammad mentioned that the overall authority delegation process in the context of decentralization does not provide implication as the balance of the district finance reformation through bigger portion distribution to the districts for management of finance potential is not followed. Instead, bigger income sources are managed by central and smaller income sources are managed by districts. District autonomy is a political dynamic; local governments are given the authority to decide the best action for local community in South Sulawesi and centralization is defined as political stagnation. Centralism is blamed because to the fact that as mentioned by the Bugis elite, South Sulawesi is rich with natural resources, but its people are still poor. This fact is supported by poverty data that published by Statistics Indonesia in which the number of poor citizens increase from 787, 670 people (2013) to 864, 300 people (2014) to 864, 510 people in 2015 (Statistics Indonesia, 2016).

A few criticisms from local elites such as from interview with Ali Armunanto who is a local cultural observer, mentioned that Jakarta is not aware of local needs and central government (Jakarta) is too afraid of broader district autonomy that could cause disintegration similar to past occurrences in South Sulawesi. These criticisms are supported by the result of an interview with Mulyadi (Bugis culture observer) that deemed authoritarianism and oligarchy as the cause of power centralization. Hence, it cannot be avoided that the nation's administration is still centralist. The systems operate hand in hand. As a result, central dominates every life aspect of the citizens in the districts.

Moreover, interview with Aswar Hassan who is the leader of Preparatory Committee for Upholding Islamic Law mentioned that central government must only be involved in security defence, monetary and international relationship affair. The rest must be in the hands of district authority. Therefore, central and district relationship becomes fairer if the federation concept is not accepted. According to Roskin (2016) ^[7], government system with a unitary state (unitarianism) has strict controls over local authority and their life compared to federal system. This differs from local politician perception Andi Nurhidayati that is a member of United Development Party and people's Representative Council who mentioned that broader autonomy must be evaluated as every district have their own characteristics with different natural resources. For example, Jeneponto and Makassar district have different natural resources and district income. This means that the central government must protect the districts' interests that are weak in terms of natural resources and income.

Thus, the handover of authority must first be given to districts and not province. Province should play the role of coordinator, but not directly governs the districts. This is due to visible problems or activities that occur when dealing with community exist at the district level. Hence, it can be concluded that the authority given to provinces is in the form of re-centralization. The confusions are not to be repeated (Interview with local elite politicians Andi Fashar Pajalangi, Bupati Bone).

Nevertheless, Andi Muhsin, Lurah Galung Soppeng in South Sulawesi Province has a different perspective in which he said that the current district autonomy is good. The idea of a broader political decentralization and district autonomy will disturb unity and harmony when the districts demand for broader autonomy from the central. To date, the people's have tasted development such as electricity in every corner of the country. Hence, the current administration system must be upheld because the idea of broad decentralization and district autonomy is not suitable with the spirit of unity.

However, an explicit view emphasizing on broader decentralization and district autonomy should not change a united nation to become a federal nation. Interview with local elite politicians, Andi Fashar Pajalangi, *Bupati Bone*: "Bigger and broader autonomy would not cause Indonesia to break apart or become federal. Although broader decentralization and autonomy is promoted in districts, a united country must still be upheld". Thus, decentralization must be executed in stages or little by little. Indonesia's unity must not be sacrificed for political decentralization and district autonomy policy or any other reasons.

Cultural/humanist figure Andi Promal explained that the political decentralization and district autonomy agendas/motivations are: First, limitation of central government authority to prevent absolute power and despotic inclination; equal distribution of (centripetal) authority/management administration is required that spreads from districts to the countryside. Second, a fair and equal economic growth that spreads to the countryside. Third, the function of administration management is to serve the people all over Indonesia so that it is in an optimal condition.

Intellectual figure Sukri Tamma who is a lecturer in

Hasanuddin University explained that implementation of political decentralization and district autonomy in Indonesia was effectively applied in Indonesia since 1st January 2001. In line with that statement, valued learning process was provided especially in the essence of democratic development condition, togetherness, equitable justice, and district diversity in unity with the support by the government to grow and develop initial initiatives (district and community) towards society's welfare. Fundamental principle of political decentralization and district autonomy in administration framework of local government's concept is: delegation of authority, income distribution, power, diversity in unity, local independent, and district capacity expansion.

The second view is represented by the respondents who are more sympathetic towards federalism and non-explicitly support changes from a united system to federal system. United system is not a terrible idea as long as there is a fundamental freedom that is given to districts to execute local administration based on their own concepts. Local expression will have the opportunity to speak without worrying it would disturb national unity and the united nation would still make it possible for society's pluralism throughout the presence of district's autonomy (Interview result with elite local politicians Tommy A. Yulianto, representative of Bupati Bulukumba).

Based on the responses mentioned earlier, district autonomy must be implemented. Most subjects stated that broader autonomy must be executed until the local government can be released from the involvement of other institutions. Central government will only be involved in national defence and security issue, monetary issue, and international affairs. This version of autonomy is similar to a federation basis country. Its supporters are also not concern about being called federalist group.

Although not all *Bugis* elites clarify the level of autonomy that must be granted, some of them indicate that the district government level must be given bigger priority instead of the province government level. Based on their perceptions towards political decentralization and district autonomy policies, a revisionist style district must be formed by focusing on places that contain distinct problem. Furthermore, execution of administration and decision making directly interact with low level community at the district level. The *Bugis* elites proposed that the province administration coordinate but it does not manage the districts that are as practiced during the New Order. The reason decentralization is being directed to districts level is because district level only covers a region and small relative citizens that would never cause separatism issue to occur as separatism is feared to have potential threat towards unity by the ruler in central government.

However, not all *Bugis* elites are enthusiastic about the idea of bigger political decentralization towards districts. A small fraction of the *Bugis* elites repel the idea. They claimed that political decentralization will create problems instead of solving problems and it will ruin the spirit of national unity. According to their opinions, the feeling of being a big family of Indonesia that is represented by the idea of unity and harmony will be threatened. In other words, political decentralization itself is the opposite of national unity spirit under the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, with the

jargon "*NKRI harga mati*" or undisputed Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

4. Conclusions

Results from interview with the *Bugis* elites whether the formal elites or the non-formal elites showed that there are differences in opinions regarding urgency of political decentralization and district autonomy policy that is carried out in Indonesia particularly in South Sulawesi. For local elites that are politicians and bureaucrats, they support decentralization and district autonomy but there must be balance in power and authority between central and districts, and between province and districts. As for non-formal local elites, they viewed bigger authority towards districts (centripetal attribute) and not towards central government (Jakarta) that is centrifugal. In other words, natural resources and finance are managed by districts with the basis of a united nation that appreciates ethnic diversity.

Thus among the *Bugis* elite actors, there are differences in perspectives in response to the political reformation discourse especially political decentralization and district autonomy policy in South Sulawesi. It can be concluded for example: Most *Bugis* local elites have revisionist style responses that want changes in stages towards decentralization and district autonomy model. A bigger and broader level of authority must be given to districts in stages to accelerate the welfare of the society that is based on the values of local wisdom. Only a small fraction of the *Bugis* elites have a conservative or orthodox opinion. *Bugis* elites that are inclined towards conservative/orthodox opinion choose national stability in order to protect unity in diversity, in which they view the current decentralization is adequate in managing the community's life. As for pragmatic local elites, they think only of their own protected interest specifically economic interest. They are not concern about the way decentralization and district autonomy is given to districts government from the central government.

Based on the three perceptions, it can be concluded that *Bugis* elites in South Sulawesi still view unity in diversity as important matter in order to protect national stability in Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. The current decentralization and district autonomy must be carried out smoothly based on the community's local values and local wisdom's including the need to balance the relationship between central and districts that is fair and equitable.

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