

Social Colloidalty in the Framework of Diversity

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ABSTRACT

Maluku, following the 1999 conflict, exhibits a unique pattern of segregative citizen relations. This pattern significantly impacts the social system, which tends to sustain communal sentiments rooted in identity markers such as religion and ethnicity. However, certain areas, particularly at the village or state level, demonstrate citizen relationships that transcend communal identity boundaries. Tamiouw State serves as a prominent example. This study aims to analyze the relationships and interactions between actors as well as the social structure and work system of Tamiouw State/Village within the framework of diversity. To achieve this, the study adopts Berger and Luckmann's theory of the social construction of reality as its primary theoretical framework. Utilizing qualitative research with a constructivist approach, data collection methods include observation, interviews, snowball sampling, and documentation studies. The researchers conduct the data analysis using a flow data analysis model. The findings reveal that the concept of "siblings" (Wali Waa) functions as a social glue, fostering citizenship relations among various societal actors, including customary leaders, government officials, religious figures, and youth groups. This concept forms the foundation of a robust social system built on shared principles, norms, and ideologies. This study interprets this phenomenon as an instance of social colloidalty.

KEYWORDS: colloidalty, harmony, diversity

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country rich in diversity, encompassing various religions, ethnicities, cultures, and tribes, which significantly enrich its cultural heritage. This diversity represents a valuable resource and asset. However, if not managed properly, it also has the potential to lead to conflict. The communal conflict in Ambon in 1999, which involved clashes between two groups with different religious identities, serves as a poignant example of the vulnerability inherent in diversity. Religion is a fundamental aspect of human existence (Sastrapatedja, M., 1983:38). This situation often places individuals in debates about absolute truths, with attempts to assert existence through subjective truth claims.

Such perspectives influence the characteristics of religious adherents, shaping their identities according to their respective faiths. This process, to some extent, facilitates conflicts and acts of terror between groups or communities that contest differing

claims to truth. In Indonesia, these circumstances have prompted efforts from various parties to promote and improve harmony both within and between religious communities. This aligns with the vision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which is “Realizing a Religiously Obedient, Harmonious, Intelligent, Independent, and Prosperous Indonesian Society,” with the central mission of enhancing the quality of interfaith harmony.

In addition to government initiatives to improve interreligious harmony, society plays a crucial role in maintaining peaceful coexistence. Religious values embedded in each faith promote harmony among religious communities by encouraging adherents to love peace, foster cooperation, adopt tolerance, and respect other religions. These teachings form the foundation for building social relationships among diverse groups and communities. Harmony is a universal value present in every religion. Furthermore, awareness among religious communities is essential to nurturing tolerance in religious life. Such tolerance fosters mutual respect and appreciation, contributing to tranquility and peace. It can observe the expression of tolerance in religion through attitudes of acceptance toward other groups, the creation of spaces for interfaith dialogue, and mutual respect for the religious practices of different faiths (Kartanegara, 2005:210).

One of the regions where the community demonstrates strong, cohesive relationships and high tolerance for differences in religion and ethnicity is the Tamilouw state, located in the Amahai District, Central Maluku Regency, Maluku. Despite the region's highly diverse demographic in terms of religion and ethnicity, communal conflicts stemming from identity differences are rare. The religiously motivated conflict that spread across almost all of Maluku and North Maluku on January 19, 1999, did not impact the Tamilouw state, which successfully maintained its unity. People of all religions and ethnicities continued to live in harmony and peace.

The Tamilouw community, particularly in small Tamilouw (Yalohatan), comprises a multi-religious population (Islam, Protestant Christianity, and Catholicism) and a diverse range of ethnicities (Javanese, Bugis, Makassar, Buton, Madura, Flores, Saparua, Kei, Kailolo, Pelauw, and Tulehu). Despite this diversity, social relations within the community remain harmonious, with no conflicts arising. The community actively fosters relations and cooperation as essential components of its identity. An analysis of the 1999 conflict, which serves as a pivotal reference, reveals the stability of social relations across three distinct periods: prior to the conflict, during the conflict, and after the conflict. This stability is characterized by strong, close, and cohesive interactions among key actors, with the social structure remaining unaffected by the rapidly spreading conflict. In the aftermath of the Maluku conflict, the people of the Tamilouw community continue to prioritize communal living and harmony, viewing each other as siblings. Cooperation and communication among various religious communities and their institutions continue seamlessly.

Studying and describing this condition is highly engaging. The study aims to provide an overview of the strong, solid, and deep social relationships or interactions within the Tamilouw community, which serve as the pillars for fostering harmony among religious groups. This harmony is expected to offer valuable lessons for the development of interfaith harmony in regions across Indonesia and beyond. The plurality of Tamilouw society, particularly in terms of religion and ethnicity, does not

create issues for interreligious harmony. Therefore, comprehending the underlying strength of the social reality this multi-religious and multi-ethnic community in Tamilow experiences is crucial, as it enables them to effectively navigate and respond to the social conflict in Maluku in 1999. The researcher's assumption is that the Tamilow community's strong, solid, and deep social relationships and interactions, combined with the effective roles of key actors and social structures, foster social cohesion. Based on this, the researcher has formulated the following problem focus: "How do the depth and closeness of relationships within the Tamilow community contribute to achieving social harmony in the context of diversity?"

Theoretical building:

This study focused on the depth or cohesion of relationships and interactions within the Tamilow State community in the context of diversity, with the aim of achieving social harmony. Theories that helped with this research include Berger and Luckmann's theory of social reality construction, as well as Bourdieu's theory of habitus and the role of actors.

Berger & Luckmann's concept of social reality construction is based on three key terms: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. According to them, externalization, objectivation, and internalization are dialectical processes that occur simultaneously. This implies that the externalization process extracts something, presenting it as an external entity, while the internalization process integrates the external element back into the individual, thereby transforming it into their subjective reality. The processes of externalization and objectivation also form our understanding of what is considered objective reality. Social products shape individuals, ensuring that their knowledge and social identity align with the institutional roles they fulfill (Berger & Luckmann, 2013:176).

Berger & Luckmann emphasize actions and interactions in the social construction of reality, where individuals continuously create a collectively owned and subjectively experienced reality (cf. Poloma, 2004:301). Berger & Luckmann view society as a product of humans, and humans as a product of society (Poloma, 2013:302).

Bourdieu's concept of a cultural battle also sheds light on the social construction of reality. In this sense, habit refers to the mental or cognitive structures that actors use to navigate their social lives. Habitus describes a series of tendencies that prompt social actors to act and react in specific ways. It is a product of history, shaped by past legacies that influence existing structures. As a historical product, habitus creates both individual and collective actions, aligning with the patterns established by history. In Bourdieu's view, the social conditions of life in society involve a reciprocal relationship between agents (actors) and the structures they inhabit. This relationship is causal, as structures can influence the agents, and the agents can, in turn, influence the structures (Bourdieu, 2010:15-22).

2. Materials and Methods

The goal of this research is to comprehend how actors' roles and ethnic-national identities shape social and cultural reality, which can act as a unifying factor within

the multi-religious community in TAMILUW, SERAM ISLAND, MALUKU. Therefore, the constructivist paradigm, which seeks to achieve consensus or at least a negotiation agenda on various issues and topics, forms the theoretical foundation of this research (Lincoln in Denzin & Lincoln, 2009:162). A qualitative research approach was employed because it enables a deeper understanding (*verstehen*) of the processes, meanings, and outcomes of cohesive relationships in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society, with the goal of fostering harmony in TAMILUW, SERAM ISLAND, and MALUKU.

This research was conducted in the Greater TAMILUW and Small TAMILUW areas, Amahai District, Central Maluku Regency, Maluku Province. The data collected pertain to the actors, structures, and multi-religious, multi-ethnic society of TAMILUW. Key informants in this study included traditional leaders, religious leaders, government officials, indigenous people, and migrants. Data were gathered using techniques such as observation, interviews, snowball sampling, and document analysis. Data validity was ensured through the use of source and method triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:604-606). The data analysis followed the flow analysis model (Miles & Huberman, 2007:15-20).

3. Research and Discussion

Understanding colloidalilty:

Many terminologies can be used to describe the social reality that is both plurals defined by a social structure formed through the diversity of subsystems with different patterns, forms, and characteristics and united, where various subsystems undergo blending. Ogburn and Nimkof (1960) refer to this phenomenon as integration, which they define as a bond based on norms and consensus in which members of society complement each other. Hendropuspito (1989) defines integration as the process of bringing together various elements of society into a single unit.

In addition, social science traditions also acknowledge the concept of social cohesion as an effort to understand associative social processes. Social cohesion encompasses a sense of belonging, social trust, reciprocal coordination (generalized reciprocity and cooperation), and social harmony (Harpham, Grant, & Thomas, 2002). Tracing its conceptual roots, this notion departs from Durkheim's distinction between two forms of solidarity: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity is characterized by a society with high collective awareness, shared beliefs, ideals, and moral commitments, where individuals carry out similar activities and share responsibilities. In contrast, organic solidarity emerges from a division of labor, leading to specialization in social relations that are interdependent (Ritzer & Goodman, 2008).

In this context, the author seeks to adopt terminology from the natural sciences to explain the reality of plurality. The term "colloid," derived from the Greek word "kolia" meaning "glue," refers to a mixture of two or more substances that are heterogeneous but contain dispersed particles large enough to experience the Tyndall effect (scattering of light). Although colloids appear homogeneous when viewed directly, they are, in fact, heterogeneous (Hayati et al., 2014; Nivaldo, 2010). In simpler terms, while various elements may unite in a single entity, this unification

does not negate the reality of their differences.

Actualization of the role of strategic actors:

One cannot separate the roles and functions of the social actors and structures in place from the harmony, interfaith, and interethnic unity within the Tamilouw community on Seram Island, Maluku. Oliver Richmond refers to this as “peace formation” and “local infrastructure for peace” (Richmond, 2013). In peacebuilding approaches, the concept of locality serves as the basis for peace formation. The concept of “local” encompasses various actors, individuals, and local resources or human resources, serving as the foundation for social articulation (Richmond, 2013). In Tamilouw, several strategic actors play a vital role in knitting together social relationships among community members, such as customary leaders, religious leaders, government officials, and youth leaders, each with distinct roles and functions. These actors build relationships and interactions both among and between themselves. The relationships and interactions among actors in the Tamilouw community are broad and complex, influenced by various aspects, such as culture, religion, government, and other matters concerning youth and security issues. As discussed in Berger and Luckmann's concept of society, the presence of “mutuality” in the relationships between actors indicates an ordered pattern of relationships, viewed as a system of interaction (compare Karman, 2015:17).

Although each actor has different areas and boundaries of agreed-upon duties, in practice, these actors interact, cooperate, and support each other in carrying out their respective roles to maintain stability, social harmony, and peaceful coexistence. For example, Islamic religious leaders carry out their roles in connection with religious activities such as Friday sermons at the mosque and Islamic holiday celebrations (Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Prophet Muhammad's Birthday); Protestant and Catholic Christians are involved in weekly church services and the guidance of their congregations, as well as celebrating religious holidays (Christmas, Easter, Good Friday, Holy Communion, etc.). Customary leaders and government actors collaborate to oversee the implementation of these holiday celebrations, even extending to pre-celebration activities such as walking competitions, cooking contests, and soccer games. Meanwhile, youth leaders play a role in ensuring security during mosque prayers and church services. Additionally, all actors, including Islamic and indigenous religious leaders, are involved in the celebration of Christmas or Easter for the Christian community.

This reality forms various models of civic relationships that are solid and have a significant impact on civic social resilience, which Varshney (2001) refers to as associational forms of civic engagement. These are characterized by formal bonds such as business associations, professional organizations, sports groups, trade unions, and others. Additionally, routine interactions across identities, groups, and classes, such as mutual visiting, meal sharing, festival participation, and other regular activities, mark everyday forms of civic engagement. In the context of Tamilouw, there are numerous identity groups, both ethnic and religious. Nevertheless, integration processes routinely occur through the civic bonds formed from various collective activities, whether incidental (festivals, Thanksgiving events, religious activities, and others) or daily.

These patterns shape the civic social structure, playing an important role in creating social harmony. The relationships between customary leaders, religious leaders, government officials, and youth leaders, where each actor relinquishes their subjectivity (passions, desires, goals), collectively form a new reality (joint decisions) that lies outside of themselves (structure). Joint decisions are those agreed upon through deliberation involving various community representatives. The entire community, including the Tamilow community, socializes the results of this deliberation to implement them at the structural level (customary structure, religious structure, government structure, and youth structure). This situation inevitably raises questions about decision-making patterns in the context of diversity or pluralism, yet it maintains sensitivity to the principle of equality by prioritizing accommodative steps that consider the interests of everyone.

The description of the pluralistic facts of the Tamilow people, combined with efforts to maintain social relationships among community members, explains the creation of a social security system that strongly supports civic social integrity. This system, as Lewis Coser (1956) refers to, acts as a safety valve, a key prerequisite for social stability and cohesion. Social structures and actors operationalize norms, values, worldviews, or social agreements to realize the safety valve. The Tamilow people rely on local knowledge, Wali Waa, as a foundational principle or shared worldview, to activate their safety valve. This translates to “people who live as siblings.” The Tamilow people activate this worldview without making distinctions between the strong and weak, the large and small, or the majority and minority. It becomes the foundation of inspiration in every decision-making process while maintaining sensitivity to the reality of diversity. Despite cultural and religious differences, everyone participates in making various strategic decisions that significantly impact the organization. The “Big House,” also known as the Baileo, collectively discusses and agrees upon these decisions.

Umlouito Siwataun as the knot of solidarity of the Tamilow people:

Integrity refers to a state where the cosmological polarities align in a balanced and harmonious way. It doesn't mean that social boundaries are lessened just because of where someone lives; genealogical relationships aren't just ways of passing on information that block out other cultures; and the roles of people who are part of the structure (institutional) don't automatically help the indigenous community as the majority group. The foundation of the strength of integrity within the Tamilow people rests in the strength of customary law; in other words, customs bind all elements of the Tamilow people's social life.

The strength of the customs that bind the Tamilow people is known as “Umlouito Siwataun,” which etymologically means “gathering together and protecting everyone,” regardless of their differences, to live in unity under the customary law of the Tamilow people. Umlouito Siwataun strengthens social relations among the Tamilow people and serves as the binding identity or self-identity of the Tamilow community as an indigenous society, living within the same ancestral land (territory). Togetherness forms a new reality through shared learning, a dialectical process that integrates three critical moments: externalization, objectivation, and internalization.

Externalization refers to the process of self-expression in building a life order or

adapting oneself to the environment. The history and experiences of the community's ancestors, interpreted and understood based on their local knowledge, shape Umlouito Siwataun. Subsequently, this process establishes a social order that surpasses subjective characteristics, a phenomenon known as objectivation.

The process of institutionalizing the social life order is known as the moment of objectivation. Thus, the Tamilouw people create Umlouito Siwataun as a new intersubjective reality, aiming to foster social harmony amidst diversity (ethnicity, clans, religion, customary law, and culture). This process necessarily involves the roles and functions of strategic actors who, in its development, integrate into the same structure.

When compared to the other two moments, namely externalization and internalization, Umlouito Siwataun, a dialectical process that takes place during the moment of objectivation, exhibits a highly dominant nature. The moment of objectivation imbues principles and value systems through processes of "refraction" and "cultivation," and serves as the first step in the institutionalization process, which explains its dominance. This process plays a critical role in controlling and regulating individual behavior (compare Berger & Luckmann, 1991:75-78). Moreover, Umlouito Siwataun carries the deepest meaning of "gathering together," which refers to deliberation and consensus. "Gathering together," or deliberation and consensus, represents the highest structure in decision-making, influencing the behavior and actions of the entire Tamilouw community (moment of objectivation).

The ongoing moment of objectivation, which is highly dominant in Tamilouw society, gives rise to normative principles and values that govern community life. The entire Tamilouw community studies these general and universally applicable principles and values, which transcend social boundaries, to maintain the stability of community life.

Individuals re-learn general values or objective realities through the process of internalization, incorporating them into their lives. This process pertains to an individual's self-identification within objective reality. To reach this stage, individuals continuously interact and socialize with their social and cultural environment. Ultimately, this process results in the formation of the Tamilouw community, which is recognized as one unified entity with a shared identity, namely as the "Tamilouw People."

Social colloidity based on Tamilouw country citizenship:

The Tamilouw people maintain and preserve harmony and social cohesion in their community life, demonstrating to the world, particularly the Maluku community, that differences in various aspects of life, such as religion, ethnicity, race, and culture, do not necessarily impede the formation of social harmony. The concept of "wholeness of life" manifests how these differences actually contribute to social harmony within the Tamilouw community. This concept is the outcome of a construct that arises from a dialectical process involving the interaction of externalization, objectivation, and internalization.

The wholeness of life within the Tamilouw community, as it has developed to date, is based on shared knowledge and understanding, particularly the principle of living as "siblings" (wali waa). The cultural inheritance, continuously passed down through

generations, includes local knowledge about living as siblings (*wali waa*). The logical consequence of living as siblings (*wali waa*) is that it becomes a shared responsibility for all individuals within the Tamilouw region both the indigenous Tamilouw people and newcomers to uphold and preserve the values embedded in the meaning of living as siblings (*wali waa*). Therefore, it can be affirmed that the principle of living as siblings (*wali waa*) serves as a binding force, linking every individual within the community and making them an inseparable part of it. Actions taken by individuals to sustain the wholeness of life for the continuity of social harmony include: (a) implementing local knowledge through actions that preserve and maintain wholeness for the continuation of social harmony (externalization); and (b) managing diversity while reinforcing tolerance and inclusive behaviors (tolerance).

The concept of living as “siblings” (*wali waa*) reflects a deeply rooted and strong relationship among the members of the Tamilouw community. This relationship involves the roles and functions of various actors within a systematically structured system of work. The Tamilouw community understands “social colloidity” as a robust relational bond between actors (such as customary leaders, government officials, religious leaders, and youth leaders), borrowing the concept of “colloid” from the exact sciences (chemistry), which refers to a mixture where strong bonds make the components difficult to separate. This bond is firm, protected, and grounded in shared principles, norms, and ideologies, particularly the concept of “siblings” (*Wali Waa*).

The Tamilouw community's actors form social colloidity, or relational closeness, through a process that coalesces shared motives, desires, and collective aspirations into common goals aimed at fostering social harmony. The closeness between these actors is characterized by bonds that are enduring, protective, and resilient against external threats. The fusion of social variables such as belief systems (religion), ethnicity, gender, and social status into a unified whole distinguishes social cohesion, or “social colloid,” making it challenging to segregate (filter) based on particular social identities. This social colloidity leads to the formation of a patterned social structure free from political influences, with the main objective of improving the social order within a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. The community's approach to managing diversity and reinforcing tolerance (mutual respect) reflects this structure, which serves as a foundation for strengthening the community's identity and promoting social harmony.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the strong connections among strategic actors and the deeply rooted social structure in the community play a pivotal role in establishing a social order that significantly contributes to social harmony. The community manages its diversity through the regulation of social relationships and the model of civic ties, fostering a collective sense of “unity” known as social colloidity. Social colloidity is a phenomenon that transforms diversity into a critical factor for integration, fostering strong relational bonds between customary leaders, government officials, religious leaders, and youth leaders. These relationships are binding, stable, and safeguarded, founded on shared principles, norms, and ideologies that collectively embody the concept of “siblings” (*Wali Waa*).

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