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## Changes in the Political Behavior of Towani Tolotang as a Minority Religious Group: *Fiqh Al-'Aqaliyyāt* Perspective

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### Abstract:

This article is aimed at explaining how the political behavior of Towani Tolotang, a minority religious group in Indonesia, unfolds by using *fiqh al-'aqaliyyāt* (Islamic jurisprudence of the minority) perspective. Accordingly, the current article discusses three aspects. *First*, the Towani Tolotang's political activities. This correlates with the group's position, which in terms of

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quantity is far fewer than the Muslim majority. *Second*, the national constitution's provision ensures the rights of each citizen to participate in various aspects of life, including political freedom regardless of their position and status. *Third*, the Muslim majority group's acceptance of the Towani Tolotang's political activities. The data analyzed in the research were collected by observing the daily life of the Towani Tolotang, interviewing some informants, and studying document as well as literature studies on relevant documents and literary sources. According to the data analyses, it was found that there are apparent changes in the political behavior of this particular minority group, which not only include the distribution of support given to various political parties but also the active engagement of the group's elites and followers in the general election wherein some of them have even become a member of the local level legislative body. The present article asserts that the Towani Tolotang is one of the minority groups in Indonesia that has acquired space to actively participate in politics, although occurring at the local level. This is not only due to the Muslim majority's acceptance, but the Towani Tolotang group's fraternization with Muslims as well.

**Keywords:**

Political Behavior Change; Minority Religious Group;  
Towani Tolotang; *Fiqh Al-'Aqaliyyât*

**Introduction**

Towani Tolotang is one of the religious minority groups in Indonesia that still exists to this day. Followers of Towani Tolotang currently reside in a number of locations in Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi Province. Officially, this group is affiliated with Hinduism, although their religious practices differ from the mainstream Hindu followers. Historically speaking, Towani Tolotang's presence in Sidenreng Rappang was triggered by their objection to the policy issued by the King of Wajo and Luwu, mandating Islam as the kingdom's religion at the time. The advent of the Towani Tolotang in the region occurred in 1606 after the Sidenreng kingdom also accepted Islam as the kingdom's official religion. The group's emergence led to a response made by the kingdom, which ultimately allowed them to reside in a region located

in the southern part of the kingdom. It was this appointment to their initial location of residence that resulted in the name Tolotang (people of the south) being attached to this group and recognized as such to this day. Towani Tolotang, etymological wise, means people originating from *Wani* (Towani), and people living in the south side (*Tolotang*). "To" in the Bugis language is similar to "tau", which means person/people. Since their first appearance in 1666, Towani Tolotang has been engaged in numerous events, including conflict with the majority group<sup>1</sup>.

Towani Tolotang has historically been banned from all forms of religious activity, resulting in a long silence. It has even been targeted for proselytizing, accusing them of being deviant. In many ways, the problems faced by minority groups like Towani Tolotang can be found in Indonesia, including the access they have to fight for their existence amidst various state policies less favorable to minority religious groups. During open access, especially to politics, Towani Tolotang has a reasonably open space to channel its aspirations despite various obstacles, including its position as an "Other" groups because they are non-Muslim and are in the middle of the majority group.<sup>2</sup>

Today, Towani Tolotang and Muslims live in an inseparable neighborhood patterned after religious differences. Towani Tolotang, in its religious affiliation, is part of Hinduism as a form of "Compliance" with state policies regarding religion. The choice made by (local) religious groups to affiliate with one of the recognized religions is considered an effort to maintain their survival amidst the religious regulations implemented in Indonesia. Such measure functions as a starting point for local religious groups, which have existed long before the "official" religions came to Indonesia, to come in direct contact with new religions although such contacts are often challenged by several tensions. This policy is emphasized through the Decree of the Director General of Religious Guidance of Hinduism

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<sup>1</sup> M. Atho Mudzhar, *Pendekatan Studi Islam dalam Teori dan Praktek* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Hasse Jubba, Mustaqim Pabbajah, Zaenuddin H. Prasodjo, et al., "The Future Relations between the Majority and Minority Religious Groups, Viewed from Indonesian Contemporary Perspective: A Case Study of the Coexistence of Muslims and the Towani Tolotang in Amparita, South Sulawesi," *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.16.2019.002>.

Bali and Buddhism No. 2 of 1966. Regarding quantity, Towani Tolotang is vastly different from the Muslim population. However, this minority religious group can coexist with and be accepted by the majority Muslim group. In everyday life, the two groups have no significant differences except for differences in religious traditions. Regarding social patterns, they even belong to the same ethnic group, Bugis. As communities that share the same ethnic roots, there is a direct ease in the process of adaptation because the use of language, for example, is relatively the same, namely using Bugis in daily communication in the social environment formed today.

Towani Tolotang's position as a minority religious group does not stop them from being active in practical politics. During the New Order era, Towani Tolotang supported and channeled their aspirations into Partai Golongan Karya (Party of Functional Groups) or Golkar Party. At that time, only three parties competed in political contestation in Indonesia: Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (The United Development Party) or PPP, Partai Golongan Karya (Party of Functional Groups) or Golkar Party, and Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (The Indonesian Democratic Party) or PDI. The winning party at the time was Golkar, followed by PPP, and the smallest vote-getter was PDI. The other two political parties, PPP and PDI, were not used to channel their support for several reasons. Towani Tolotang did not vote for PPP, an Islamic-based political party, because historically, the group was expelled from their village. After all, the ruler at the time embraced and made Islam the kingdom's religion.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, they did not vote for the PDI because the party does not have enough influence in Indonesia and even tends to be a complementary party participating in elections.

Towani Tolotang's first involvement in politics occurred in 1971. At that time, Towani Tolotang became a staunch supporter of Partai Golongan Karya (Party of Functional Groups) or Golkar party. This support manifested itself in the form of voting and lasted throughout the New Order era. Support for the Golkar party did not stop with the end of the New Order regime in 1998. This group's

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<sup>3</sup> Hasse Jubba, Mustaqim Pabbajah, Zainuddin H Prasodjo, et al., "The Future Relations between the Majority and Minority Religious Groups, Viewed from Indonesian Contemporary Perspective: A Case Study of the Coexistence of Muslims and the Towani Tolotang in Amparita, South Sulawesi," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 16, no. 1 (December 1, 2019): 13–23, <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.16.2019.002>.

support continued in the Reformation era. In the first election of the Reformation era, on June 7, 1999, one of the group's leaders, Launga Setti, was elected as a member of *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah* (Regional People's Representative Council) or DPRD from Sidenreng Rappang for the 1999-2004 period. Towani Tolotang's electoral success continued until the next general elections for regional legislative members in 2004-2009, 2009-2014, 2014-2019, and 2019-2024. Representatives of the Towani Tolotang group were elected the most in the 2014-2019 and 2019-2024 elections. In the 2014-2019 and 2019-2024 general elections, there were 3 people each elected from this group. This electability cannot be separated from the solidity of the group, also voters in the constituency are the mass base of Towani Tolotang. The commitment of religious minority groups to be active in politics is driven by internal conditions that are solid and easy to control.<sup>4</sup>

Towani Tolotang's support for the Golkar party continues to today but has undergone significant changes. It has joined political parties other than the Golkar party, such as the Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Greater Indonesia Movement Party) or Gerindra Party, Partai Demokrat (Democratic Party), Partai Nasional Demokrat (National Democratic Party) or Nasdem party, and Justice and Partai Keadilan dan Persatuan Indonesia (Unity Party of Indonesia) or PKPI party. These political parties are not only a channel for aspiration but also a means for Towani Tolotang elites to run as candidates for the Regional People's Representative Council. This engagement relates to a change in strategy in the context of broad socio-political life in Indonesia,<sup>5</sup> which many utilize to be actively involved in all matters of life, especially politics. Here it also appears that the participation of minority groups in politics is a correction to the domination of certain groups (the majority) that has occurred so far.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Alfiansyah Alfiansyah, "Perilaku Politik Towani Tolotang Di Amparita Kabupaten Sidenreng Rappang," *Etnosia: Jurnal Etnografi Indonesia* 3, no. 2 (2018): 184-99, <https://journal.unhas.ac.id/index.php/etnosia/article/view/4888>.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmad Suaedy, "The Muslim Minority Movement in Southmost Thailand: from the Periphery to the Centre," *Studia Islamika* 17, no. 1 (2010): 1-67, <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika/article/view/467/309>.

<sup>6</sup> Agus Machfud et.al Fauzi, "Partisipasi Politik Pemilih Pemula Etnis Minoritas Pasca Reformasi," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora* 11, no. 1 (2022): 188-97, <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JISH/article/view/41030>.

Studies that discuss the reasons why minority groups enter politics and the position of minority groups have been conducted by many experts. One of the reasons minority groups enter politics is for idealistic reasons, namely to channel their aspirations as citizens<sup>7</sup> and to legitimize their existence before the majority group. Minority groups entering politics also aim to build and strengthen networks, especially with the majority group. Another reason minority groups enter politics is the experience of discrimination that has been experienced, so they want to get out of this condition by entering politics<sup>8</sup>. The desire of minority groups to enter politics is also supported by the desire to vote based on racial similarities.<sup>9</sup> Researchers have widely discussed studies on the position of minority groups. These studies tend to position religious minority groups as weak, marginalized, oppressed, and passive, even categorized as heretical. Furthermore, the existence of religious minority groups is considered a trigger for conflict<sup>10</sup> that makes them need to be organized.<sup>11</sup> In contrast to previous studies which still see religious

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<sup>7</sup> Payerli Pasaribu, "The Role of Political Parties in Conducting Political Education," *Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan dan Sosial Politik* 5, no. 1 (2017): 5-59, <https://ojs.uma.ac.id/index.php/jppuma/article/view/1125/1139>.

<sup>8</sup> Kassra A.R. Oskooii, "Perceived Discrimination and Political Behavior," *British Journal of Political Science*, 50 no. 3 2020: 867-892. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123418000133>.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant and Erin Tolley, "Voting for One's Own: Racial Group Identification and Candidate Preferences," *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2017.1338970>.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Mahfud, "Membumikan Konsep Etika Islam Abdurrahman Wahid dalam Mengatasi Problematika Kelompok Minoritas di Indonesia," *Tafaqquh: Jurnal Penelitian dan Kajian Keislaman* 2, 2018; Cahyo Pamungkas, "Toleransi Beragama dalam Praktik Sosial: Studi Kasus Hubungan Mayoritas dan Minoritas Agama di Kabupaten Buleleng," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2014.9.2.285-316>; Yogi Zul Fadhli, "Kedudukan Kelompok Minoritas dalam Perspektif HAM dan Perlindungan Hukumnya di Indonesia," *Jurnal Konstitusi* 11, no. 2 (2014): 353-70, <https://jurnalkonstitusi.mkri.id/index.php/jk/article/view/1128>; Danang Risdiarto, "Perlindungan terhadap Kelompok Minoritas di Indonesia dalam Mewujudkan Keadilan dan Persamaan di Hadapan Hukum," *Jurnal RechtsVinding* 6, no. 1 (2017): 21-38, <https://rechtsvinding.bphn.go.id/ejournal/index.php/jrv/article/view/120>; Suprpto, "Membina Relasi Damai antara Mayoritas dan Minoritas: Telaah Kritis Atas Peran Negara Dan Umat Islam Dalam Mengembangkan Demokrasi Di Indonesia," *Analisis*, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Cojanu, "Cultural Diversity and the New Politics of Identity," *RSP*, 2016.

minority groups as those who have some limitations, this study sees and places minority groups as active, strong, empowered, and contributive groups that are even able to compete to become "winners", including in political contestation.

Minority groups, perceived by elites as inferior social groups based on specific characteristics, are often treated marginally. In<sup>12</sup> terms of quantity, they make up less than 50% of the population in an area. Minority status is also given to small groups of people with striking differences compared to larger group.<sup>13</sup> These differences include racial identity, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, political views, and sexual orientation. In general, minority groups find it challenging to be accepted by the majority, even by the government. Minority groups are also frequently associated, not with numbers, but with their lack of access and opportunities. In this case, being a minority is not determined by numbers alone, but by the given treatment that defines their (minority) status.<sup>14</sup>

Minorities concerning politics are the impact of strengthening identity politics rooted in primordialism. From here comes the term minority politics, which refers to political activities carried out by minority groups or less represented in a region's political life. Minority political representation will be created if the state, political parties, and majority groups can provide space for minority groups to move. However, this is not obtained, so it still places minority groups as marginalized parties. There are many attempts by the majority group to hamper the political interests of minorities<sup>15</sup> including by using violence. Minority politics can only be realized if minority groups participate in the political world in their domicile.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Yogi Zul Fadhli, "Kedudukan Kelompok Minoritas dalam Perspektif HAM dan Perlindungan Hukumnya di Indonesia," *Jurnal Konstitusi*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.31078/jk1128>.

<sup>13</sup> M. Imaduddin Nasution, "Demokrasi dan Politik Minoritas di Indonesia," *Politika: Jurnal Ilmu Politik* 4, no. 2 (2013): 313-35, <https://jurnal.dpr.go.id/index.php/politika/article/view/323>.

<sup>14</sup> Zul Fadhli, "Kedudukan Kelompok Minoritas dalam Perspektif HAM dan Perlindungan Hukumnya di Indonesia."

<sup>15</sup> Anand Dibyesh, "The Violence of Security: Hindu Nationalism and the Politics of Representing 'the Muslim' as a Danger," *Journal of International Affairs* 94, no. 379 (2005): 203-15, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/00358530500099076>.

<sup>16</sup> Nasution, "Demokrasi dan Politik Minoritas di Indonesia."

Over the past ten years, religious minorities such as Christians, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians, and local religious groups in Indonesia have gained adequate political space. This is evidenced by the involvement of elites or members of groups from local religions who are included in candidates for members of the regional people's representative council in general elections. For example, the involvement of Towani Tolotang in Sidenreng Rappang Regency since the 1999-2019 general election is not questioned. This can be said to be a form of affirmative politics towards religious minorities. Freedom in determining the political choices of religious minorities indicates that laws and regulations related to political practice are actually in accordance with Pancasila.<sup>17</sup> However, the practice of freedom of religious minorities in politics is still seriously challenged in terms of freedom to practice their religious beliefs and behavior.

Minority groups in making claims for equality face the same dilemma of asserting equality as a universal right of citizenship and preserving and defending the distinctiveness and differences of their group identities.<sup>18</sup> This context includes the political context where minority groups need strategies to survive. A survival strategy can be defined as a way a person or group uses to maintain their existence that is considered valuable, both materially and non-materially. From a sociological perspective, survival strategies are usually an option in threats that can at any time damage the values that become the wisdom of a community.<sup>19</sup> Survival strategies are often also considered as the ability of actors or groups to survive, which presupposes their ability to become agents (active actors) by carrying out various negotiations and resistance.

One of the strategies chosen by minority groups is to open themselves up to environmental changes, including how to be actively involved in politics. For example, the multi-party system in Indonesia

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<sup>17</sup> Yudi Latif, "The Religiosity, Nationality, and Sociality of Pancasila: Toward Pancasila through Soekarno's Way," *Studia Islamika* 25, no. 2 (2018): 207-245, <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika/article/view/7502>.

<sup>18</sup> Ann Goldberg, "Minority Rights, Honor, and Hate Speech Law in Post-Holocaust West Germany," *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, 2017, 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1743872117702822>.

<sup>19</sup> Aimie Sulaiman, "Memahami Teori Konstruksi Sosial Peter L. Berger," *Society* 4, no. 1 (2016): 15-22, <https://doi.org/10.33019/society.v4i1.32>.

opens opportunities for all community groups to be actively involved in politics, including actively joining political parties. For minority religious groups, in particular, involvement in practical politics is part of a series of ways to not only demonstrate their role but also as a medium to assert their existence in the majority group.<sup>20</sup> Political behavior is traditionally defined as activities with the intent and effect of influencing government action directly or indirectly other people to do something. Direct effects are seen by influencing the making or implementation of public policy, while indirect effects are seen by influencing the selection of people who make policy.

In political behavior, people will protect their interests by competing or exchanging interests with each other.<sup>21</sup> In this case, political behavior can also be seen as manipulating abnormal behavior to achieve specific interests.<sup>22</sup> In Marx's terms, political behavior is an expression of political attitudes or preferences<sup>23</sup> or is a complex interactive process that affects people's political behavior. In this case, people's political behavior plays a vital role in influencing political behavior and attitudes on various occasions, including at the local level.<sup>24</sup> The political behavior perspective comes from negotiation,

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<sup>20</sup> Jubba, H., Pabbajah, M., Prasodjo, Z. H., & Qodir, "The Future Relations between the Majority and Minority Religious Groups, Viewed from Indonesian Contemporary Perspective: A Case Study of the Coexistence of Muslims and the Towani Tolotang in Amparita, South Sulawesi," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 16, no. 2 (2019): 13-23, [https://www.ukm.my/ijit/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/IJIT-Vol-16-Dec-2019\\_2\\_13-23.pdf](https://www.ukm.my/ijit/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/IJIT-Vol-16-Dec-2019_2_13-23.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> L Bode, "Gateway Political Behaviors: The Frequency and Consequences of Low-Cost Political Engagement on Social Media," *Social Media + Society* 3, no. 4 (2017): 1-10, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2056305117743349>.

<sup>22</sup> Christina Ling-Hsing Chang, "The Political Behavior Intention in Information System Development from Mis Professionals' Perspective: a Study Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior," *International Journal of Innovation and Technology Management* 3, no. 4 (2006): 341-60, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1142/S0219877006000880>.

<sup>23</sup> P Marx, "Should We Study Political Behaviour as Rituals? Towards a General Micro Theory of Politics in Everyday Life," *Rationality and Society* 31, no. 1 (2019): 313-36, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/1043463119853543>.

<sup>24</sup> M. R Anderson, "Beyond Membership: a Sense of Community and Political Behavior," *Political Behavior* 31, no. 4 (2009): 603-27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40587301>.

bargaining, and the pursuit of power.<sup>25</sup> Political behavior is straightforward to find in today's contemporary era as a response to the dynamics of societal changes that occur rapidly and massively. Bode's research reports that political behavior is straightforward in various places, including social media, and has become capable of changing situations, especially those related to political thinking behavior.<sup>26</sup> The political behavior of minority religious groups shows an attitude of negotiating with their demographic environment and confirms an effort to build strength in a more tactical political environment. This behavior is one of the mechanisms to defend themselves from the threat of other forces outside their group.

The current article explains the changes in the Towani Tolotang's political behavior by using the Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) of the minority (*al-'aqaliyyāt*) perspective. In line with this, three critical issues are answered and presented exploratively and sequentially in this article. *First*, what activities do the Towani Tolotang engage in as a minority group? That question is related to the group's activism in politics at the regional level. *Second*, what is the regulatory climate regarding community political participation? In this case, are there policies that support the political activities of minority groups in Indonesia? The existence of minority religious groups often does not gain access, especially in political aspects, including channeling their aspirations and political participation. *Third*, what is the stance of the Muslim majority group on the activities of the Towani Tolotang? This question correlates with the presence of Towani Tolotang among the Muslim majority, where they continuously engage in mutual interactions with one another. The main focus of the article is point three, which examines how the Muslim majority provides opportunities in the form of acceptance and recognition to the Towani Tolotang group to actively engage in politics, in particular.

## Method

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<sup>25</sup> Dayan Mumin et.al, "Antecedents and Consequences of Political Behavior in New Product Development Teams," *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management* 59, no. 3 (2012): 470-82, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1109/TEM.2011.2166078>.

<sup>26</sup> L Bode, "Gateway Political Behaviors: the Frequency and Consequences of Low-Cost Political Engagement on Social Media."

This research was conducted in Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi, in 2014-2021. This period was chosen based on the organization of general elections in Indonesia, which were held in 2014 and 2019, as well as the thawing political climate at the local level. Data used as materials for analyses were obtained from observations, interviews, literature, and document studies. Observations were made in Amparita, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, where Towani Tolotang is well developed. Towani Tolotang coexists with Muslims as the majority group in this district. Interviews were limited, given that the data available through the literature study was sufficient to answer the main issues of this paper. As for the literature, it applies to literature highly relevant to the topic of minority studies and literature that discusses explicitly the dynamics of Towani Tolotang from the beginning, as shown by M. Atho Mudzhar<sup>27</sup> and Hasse Jubba,<sup>28</sup> who discuss the future of Towani Tolotang's relationship with Muslims in Sidenreng Rappang. Similarly, several documents were used, including documents regarding population obtained from the Population and Civil Registry Office (2015, 2017, 2019) and documents in the form of data on legislative candidates obtained from the Secretariat of the Regional House of Representatives of Sidenreng Rappang Regency and data from the Regional General Election Commission (KPUD) in 2014-2019 and 2019-2024.

The collected data were not only analyzed but interpreted as well. The interview excerpts presented here were paraphrased, resulting in a different sentence structure yet still retaining its substantial meanings. The data acquired from the various methods mentioned earlier were analyzed using the Islamic jurisprudence of minority perspective, particularly in analyzing Towani Tolotang's political behavior. This perspective emphasizes the stance or attitude of Muslims in providing space for minority groups to actively participate in various activities despite of their relatively nominal quantity and role. The context of the Islamic jurisprudence of minorities, initially, emerged as a result of the conditions of Muslim

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<sup>27</sup> Mudzhar, *Pendekatan Studi Islam dalam Teori dan Praktek*.

<sup>28</sup> Jubba, H., Pabbajah, M., Prasodjo, Z. H., & Qodir, "The Future Relations between the Majority and Minority Religious Groups, Viewed from Indonesian Contemporary Perspective: A Case Study of the Coexistence of Muslims and the Towani Tolotang in Amparita, South Sulawesi."

minorities in the West facing numerous challenges in practicing the teachings of Islam.<sup>29</sup> However, in the context of this study, the minority position is not assumed by Muslims, but by the Towani Tolotang (Hindu). The presence of Towani Tolotang amid the Muslim majority is a social phenomenon that can be seen as a practice of mutual recognition of one's existence despite of the differences in their belief and quantity. In this case, the Islamic jurisprudence of minority perspective can also be used to examine other minority groups aside from Muslims as they may be under similar conditions where they are fewer in quantity and under disempowered conditions.

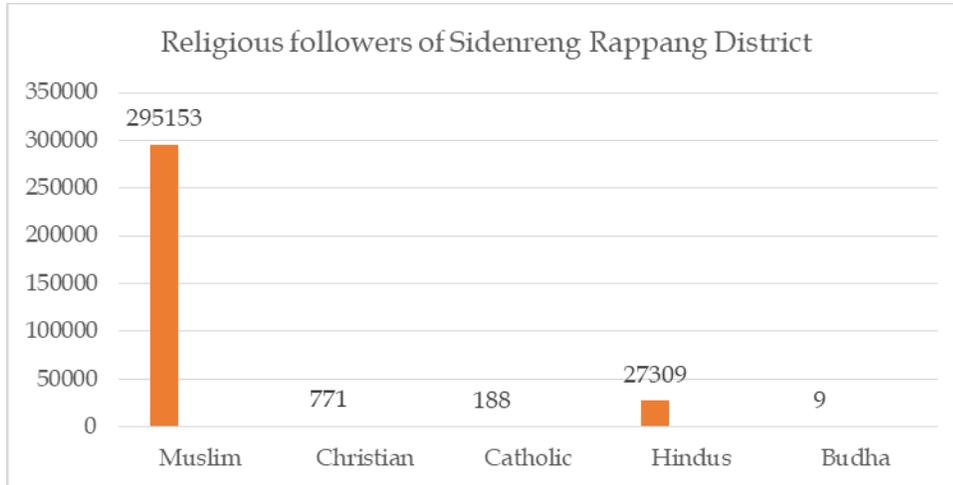
## **Result and Discussion**

### **Political Activities of Towani Tolotang**

Towani Tolotang is the second largest religious community after Muslims in Sidenreng Rappang District. This community is identified as Hindu as stated in the Decree of the Director General of Hinduism and Buddhism No. 2 of 1966, which was later refined through Decree No. 6 of 1966 on the religious status of Towani Tolotang. In the decree, it is stated that Tolotang (Towani) is part of Hinduism. Based on data from the Population and Civil Registration Office of Sidenreng Rappang Regency in 2023, out of a total population of 323.430 people, a total of 295.153 people (91,25%) embraced Islam, 27,309 people (8,44%) were Towani Tolotang, and 968 (0.29) were Christians, Catholics and Buddhists that spread across 11 sub-districts. An overview of the condition of the population based on religion in Sidenreng Rappang Regency can be seen in Figure 1.

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<sup>29</sup> Nurhayati, "Fikih Minoritas: Suatu Kajian Teoretis," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah*, no. 2 (2013): 193-199, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v13i2.932>.



**Figure 1.** Overview of Population by Religion in Sidenreng Rappang District

*Source:* Dinas Kependudukan dan Catatan Sipil Kabupaten Sidrap (Sidrap District Population and Civil Registration Office) 2023.

Based on Figure 1, the composition of the population by religion shows that Muslims are the majority, while Towani Tolotang (Hindu) is the second largest group. Other religions are very few.

Given the rather significant number of followers as illustrated in diagram 1, it serves as a substantial capital for promoting a legislative member candidate, even a regional head candidate, although at the regional level. In the 1999 general election, for example, one of Towani Tolotang's leaders, Launga Setti, was elected as a member of the DPRD of Sidenreng Rappang Regency for the 1999-2004 period. The success of some Towani Tolotang members in the general election is still ongoing until the general election of (regional) legislators in 2019-2024. The election also shows that in addition to the political representation of Towani Tolotang at the regional level, it also illustrates active political activity from time to time. In fact, in the 2013-2018 election for the Regent/Vice Regent of Sidenreng Rappang Regency, there was one Muslim-Towani Tolotang pair, Andi Faisal Ranggong-Sunarto, although they only received 14,714 votes. The involvement of Towani Tolotang elites in political

contestation at the local level shows a change in participation that is no longer limited to participation in the election of legislative members but also contesting the election of regional heads (regent/vice-regent).

In Sidenreng Rappang Regency, there are four *Daerah Pilihan* (*dapil* or electoral districts) or *Dapil*, in which three electoral districts have Towani Tolotang legislative candidates. Each electoral district consists of several sub-districts grouped by zone. Electoral District One consists of Panca Lautang, Tellu Limpoe, and Watang Pulu sub-districts, with 52,526 voters competing for 8 seats. Electoral District Two consists of Kulo, Baranti, and Panca Rijang sub-districts, with 60,488 voters competing for 9 seats. Electoral District Three covers Dua Pitue, Pitu Riase, and Pitu Riawa sub-districts, with 55,926 voters competing for 9 seats. Meanwhile, electoral district four consists of Maritengngae and Watang Sidenreng sub-districts competing for 9 seats with 55,969 voters.

In the 2014-2019 regional legislative elections, 14 legislative candidates from Towani Tolotang were registered as contestants and spread across 3 electoral districts representing different political parties. Information on Towani Tolotang legislative candidates and elected members can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Vote Acquisition of Candidates for Legislative Members of Sidenreng Rappang Regency 2014-2019 from Towani Tolotang

No	Name	Party	Electoral District	Vote Gain
1	Ir. Hamza Ismail	Gerindra	1	55
2	Paturusi	Partai Nasdem	1	1149
3	Laeke	PKPI	1	72
4	Silingeng	Partai Demokrat	1	630
5	Abd. Rahman L. S.I.P., M.S	Paertai Demokrat	2	397
6	Paleppang	Golkar	2	1404
7	Lannae *	Golkar	2	1839
8	B. Edi Slamet *	Golkar	3	1795
9	Lawedding	Golkar	3	1128
10	Lapanca	PKPI	3	626
11	Aziz Laise*	Gerindra	3	1101
12	Siska Ekawati Sunarto	Gerindra	3	28
13	Pasinringi S.H	Golkar	3	556
14	Rusna	PKPI	3	4
<b>Total Vote Count</b>				<b>10.784</b>

*Source:* Data processed by researchers from Komisi Pemilihan Umum (General Election Commission) or KPU Sidenreng Rappang, 2014.

Notes: (\*) elected

Three people from Towani Tolotang were elected from Partai Golongan Karya (Party of Functional Groups) or Golkar Party, namely Lannae and Edi Slamet. Meanwhile, Aziz Laise was elected with 1101 votes from the Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Greater Indonesia Movement Party) or Gerindra Party.

In the 2019-2024 period, according to data obtained from the 2019 Sidenreng Rappang Regency General Election Commission, 3 people from the Towani Tolotang group were elected as members of the regional legislature. They are Edi Slamet, Paleppang, and Sulaeman. Edi Slamet received 1,770 votes. He was elected from the Golkar Party delegation and was the highest vote-getter in the party. However, Edi Slamet did not complete his term of office at the

Sidenreng Rappang Regency DPRD. He was replaced through the Inter-Time Substitution (*Pergantian Antar Waktu/PAW*) mechanism because he died. Paleppang received 1828 votes. He is a delegate of the Golkar Party. Sulaeman was elected to represent Partai Persatuan Indonesia (Indonesian Unity Party) or Perindo Party with 803 votes.

In summary, the journey and election of Towani Tolotang citizens as members of the Sidenreng Rappang Regency DPRD can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Towani Tolotang Residents as Members of the Regional House of Representatives of Sidenreng Rappang Regency.

No	Name	The Period	Political Parties
1	Launga Setti	1999-2004	Golongan Karya
2	Edi Slamet	2004-2009	Golongan Karya
3	Mansyur	2004-2009	Golongan Karya
4	Lapanca	2009-2014	PKPI
5	Edi Slamet	2014-2019	Golongan Karya
6	Lannae	2014-2019	Golongan Karya
7	Aziz Laise	2014-2019	Gerindra
8	Edi Slamet	2019-2024	Golongan Karya
9	Paleppang	2019-2024	Golongan Karya
10	Sulaeman	2019-2024	Perindo

Source: Processed from various data, 2019.

### Constitutional Guarantee of Equal Rights of Citizens

In the Reformation era, fundamental changes occurred in Indonesian political life dynamics. The confinement of the New Order era has made minority groups, who were once silent, speak out and even get involved in various public affairs, especially politics. Minority religious groups such as Towani Tolotang, which used to have no place and were only complementary to the majority group, began to change their attitude. They have begun to be open to the majority group, limited to collaborative interests in various social activities such as business relations and political affairs. This activity is marked by the increasing number of Towani Tolotang people involved in politics, such as becoming candidates for DPRD in Sidenreng Rappang Regency. They are even distributed among

several political parties.<sup>30</sup> However, these parties are non-religious political parties.

The Constitution guarantees the political rights of every citizen. Every citizen has the same rights and obligations. There are no distinctions and differences in rights in all lifelines, especially in politics. Several regulations regulate this matter. The regulations that mention the rights of citizens can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Legal Basis for Citizens' Rights

Regulations	Contents	Description
The 1945 Constitution, Article 27, Paragraph 1	All citizens have the same position under the law and government and are obliged to uphold the law and government without exception	Every citizen has equal opportunities, treatment, and degrees in legal and political matters
The 1945 Constitution, Article 28G, Paragraph 1	Every person has the right to protection of himself, his family, honor, dignity, and property under his control, and has the right to a sense of security and protection from the threat of fear of doing or not doing something which is a human right.	The state is obliged to protect all forms of rights and provide a sense of security to all citizens without discrimination.
Law number 39, year 1999 concerning human rights, Article 43, Paragraph 1	Every citizen has the right to be elected and vote in general elections based on equal rights through voting a voice that is direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair is appropriate with the provisions of statutory regulations.	Being elected and voting is part of the rights of every citizen that must be enforced in accordance with the rules of applicable norms
Law number 12, year 2005 concerning Ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25 (b)	The Indonesian state recognizes and protects citizens from taking part in the implementation of public affairs, the right to vote and be elected, as well as the right to access public services.	The decision to be elected and vote in elections becomes a basic right of citizens that must be protected by the state. This right must also be respected by others.

Source: Processed from various laws and regulations.

The regulations mentioned in Table 3 place the rights of Indonesian citizens as one that must be given and obtained by

<sup>30</sup> Barisan, "Partisipasi Politik Kelompok Minoritas: Studi Towani Tolotang di Kabupaten Sidenreng Rappang" (Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 2015).

everyone. Every citizen has the same position, including in politics. Law No. 39/2005 on Human Rights contains several kinds of human rights, namely personal rights, property rights, political rights, rights of legal equality, social and cultural rights, and procedural rights. In this case, there is a guarantee regarding the ownership of the rights of every citizen to act and be active with equal opportunities, especially in political affairs.<sup>31</sup> Minority groups also have broad and equal access to other groups in all aspects of life.<sup>32</sup>

The openness of political space for every citizen is one form of opportunity for minority religious groups to continue to maintain their existence. Such regulatory support has a direct impact on the democratic climate in Indonesia, which all groups can also feel. However, the open democratic climate does not fully encourage Towani Tolotang to be politically active. Other factors, such as socio-economic status and regional public services, accommodate all interests. This is recognized by ST, a former member of the Sidenreng Rappang District People's Representative Council for the 2004-2009 period. He said:

*"Apart from the democratic climate that allows anyone and any group to get involved in politics, the economic drive is also one of the factors underlying a person to enter practical politics. There are many benefits to be gained. This area (Sidrap\_pen.) also caters to all groups, including Towani people, to be active in political parties. The system and society accept them because they have a fairly strong position in the area. "*  
(Interview, October 2019)

Political space for Towani Tolotang does not stand alone. In addition to state regulations that support the right of individuals and groups to engage in practical politics, Towani Tolotang's internal conditions also support their involvement in practical politics. This attitude can be understood on two different levels. First, Towani Tolotang openly competes with other groups, especially Muslims. The

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<sup>31</sup> Nasution, "Demokrasi dan Politik Minoritas di Indonesia."

<sup>32</sup> T Hertanto, H., Haryanto, S., & Maryanah, "Strategi Pemenuhan Hak Elektoral Kelompok Minoritas Suku Anak Dalam Sub-Etnis Orang Rimba oleh KPU Batanghari, Jambi, Indonesia," *JWP: Jurnal Wacana Politik* 6, no. 1 (2012): 84-94, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24198/jwp.v6i1.32262>.

behavior will affect Towani Tolotang's bargaining position on the one hand, which can be more substantial but can be a threat to the group on the other. These political activities may trigger rejection from the community, such as when Towani Tolotang first came to Sidenreng Rappang, where rejection occurred for its activities that differed from the local community. Secondly, what Towani Tolotang is currently doing by being active in politics is proof that the state constitution does provide space for all community groups to obtain their rights as citizens, including political rights.

### **Muslim Acceptance of the Towani Tolotang: An Implementation of Minority Jurisprudence**

Three crucial things have led to public acceptance of Towani Tolotang's existence and political activities. *The first* is the group's internal solidity. Towani Tolotang, in addition to being a religious group that firmly maintains ancestral traditions, is also a group that is known to be solid.<sup>33</sup> This solidity can be seen in every religious and social event where the involvement of its members is very high. This high involvement is also supported by the strong influence of the community elites, who until now have been positioned as crucial figures in many matters, including religious, social, and even political affairs. For example, the success of several Towani Tolotang members in gaining a position in the district parliament was due to the strong position of community key figures. In addition to being role models, they can also attract strong sympathy from the community, even outside Towani Tolotang. For instance, Towani Tolotang leaders, known as *Uwatta*, are committed to maintaining their ancestors' traditions by continuing to foster their relationship with the government and Muslims. They do not consider the presence of mosques in their residential areas as a problem since they believe that it is the right of their "Muslim brethren" to build and use the mosques to perform religious worship. This factor is one of the ways community leaderships maintains its legitimacy<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Alfiansyah Alfiansyah, "Perilaku Politik Towani Tolotang di Amparita Kabupaten Sidenreng Rappang," *ETNOSIA: Jurnal Etnografi Indonesia*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.31947/etnosia.v3i2.4888>.

<sup>34</sup> H Sanjaya, A., Biyoga, S., & Alunaza, "Pemimpin Minoritas dan Strategi Retorika Pathos dalam Kampanye: Analisis Isi Deskriptif Pesan Strategi Retorika dalam Facebook Kampanye Pemilihan Gubernur," *Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia* 6, no. 2

Such prominence is not only among Towani Tolotang internally but also among the wider community. Edy Slamet, elected in 2004-2009, 2014-2019, and 2019-2024, is a respected figure. He often mediates the problems faced by the people in his electoral area, namely Amparita and its surroundings. This was confirmed by one of the youth leaders, Nasri, as follows:

*The figure of B. Edy Slamet is often the mouthpiece and peacemaker in many problems in the community in his electoral area, especially those related to members of the Towani Tolotang community. B. Edy Slamet's presence in the Sidrap regional parliament represents the Towani Tolotang community because he can be a good facilitator in activities involving the Towani Tolotang community. (Interview, June 2018).*

This figurehead also gave birth to a shared commitment among Towani Tolotang always to be united. One basic principle the community holds reads: "*idi' tonagaha cedde na idi' tona melo massara-sarang?*" (Are we, clearly, a small group, going to separate?). This principle has consistently been reproduced by Towani Tolotang and passed down to their generations to instill solidity among them.

The group's solidity, supported by Towani Tolotang's openness to developments outside the community, has kept the group from becoming isolated. This attitude can be seen in Towani Tolotang's involvement in the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN). This alliance comprises local communities that have often been discriminated against by both the state and society regarding the status of their religious beliefs. For Towani Tolotang, joining an alliance like AMAN is a way to learn more about the outside world. *Uwa'* Sunarto, a Towani Tolotang leader, stated so:

*"By joining the AMAN organization, we can discuss with other indigenous communities to exchange information and guard policies so that they do not threaten the survival of indigenous peoples." (Interview, 2017)*

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(2017): 149-56,  
<https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1129&context=jkmi>.

The statement above shows that they do not close themselves off to the outside world, including information about state policies. The situation can be understood as an effort to build communication with other parties, including exchanging ideas about various problems. Another indication is their acceptance of modern technology products despite certain limitations, such as the use of vehicles, cell phones, and others. It can be said that they are not resistant to progress and change while maintaining their identity.

*The second* is openness to the majority group. Towani Tolotang's direct coexistence with Muslim groups has allowed for natural interaction. The physical contact that occurs always provides space for intensive communication. This has led to a more open way of life between the two groups. Cooperation between the two is evident at every religious event, such as celebrating Islamic holidays. For example, Eid al-Fitr is celebrated by the Muslim group providing food, and the Tolowani Tolotang group entertains guests (Muslims) visiting their homes. A village priest, LT (61), said:

*"There is no one else in this village. We are all the same. Those who do not come to the mosque to pray and do not fast during Ramadan are our brothers. They are also the same as us, believing in God even though they call it differently." (Interview, 2021).*

A young Muslim man, SL (28), who associates with Towani Tolotang's peers daily, confirmed the LT's statement. He said:

*"I have been hanging out with Tolotang friends for a long time. They have never offended my religion. I also never questioned their religion. We understand each other and understand each other. During Eid, many of them come to my house. I also often go to their house even after Eid. My friends also serve food like Muslims. I think there is no problem here. What they want to do is fine. They are the same as us. They have the same rights and obligations." (Interview, 2021).*

*The third* is cultural similarities. This is motivated by the ethnic similarity, namely Bugis. Although Bugis is identified with Islam,<sup>35</sup> in the reality of community life, not all Bugis people embrace Islam. This ethnic similarity is one of the essential aspects supporting Towani Tolotang's existence in Sidenreng Rappang.<sup>36</sup> In the Bugis tradition, there is a spirit that gives the highest respect to human dignity. Among these wisdoms are *sipakatauk* (humanizing human beings), *sipakalebbik* (mutual respect), and *sipakaingek* (reminding each other). These spirits guide the lives of the Bugis people, especially in their relationships, so they are organized into a group known as *To Ugik* or *Orang Bugis* (Bugis people). Functionally, the spirit of *kebugisan* is positioned as a binding container based on a common identity. In this context, differences in religion or belief are "marginalized", and similarities in Bugis identity are prioritized so that identities as both Towani Tolotang and Muslims merge into one container, namely *padaidik* (respecting one another), a frame that is firmly bound in the culture of Bugis.

The presence of Towani Tolotang and their political activities among the Muslim majority is not considered a cause for concern by the Muslims. The Muslim majority group even provides extensive opportunities for Towani Tolotang to actively engage in politics. The Muslim majority, given the obvious advantage they possess, still extends opportunities to the Towani Tolotang to engage, particularly, in politics, despite the fact that they are oppositions competing to collect more votes during general elections. The authors believe that this is driven by acceptance among the Muslims that they no longer see a difference of faith, but it is more about how competition ensues in an amenable manner without conflict. This is in line with Abū A'lā al-Mawdūdī argument as cited by Jamāluddīn 'Aṭīyyatu Muḥammad that, in principle, the majority pays much attention to the assimilation of the minority group into theirs.<sup>37</sup> The assumed identities that take place among the Muslims and Towani Tolotang can be observed from

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<sup>35</sup> Jubba, H., Pabbajah, M., Prasodjo, Z. H., & Qodir, "The Future Relations between the Majority and Minority Religious Groups, Viewed from Indonesian Contemporary Perspective: A Case Study of the Coexistence of Muslims and the Towani Tolotang in Amparita, South Sulawesi."

<sup>36</sup> Jubba, H., Pabbajah, M., Prasodjo, Z. H., & Qodir.

<sup>37</sup> Jamaluddin Athiyah Muhammad, *Fiqh Baru bagi Kaum Minoritas: HAM dan Supremasi Hukum sebagai Keniscayaan* (Bandung: MARJA, 2006).

two sides. On the one hand, the Muslim majority is willing and ready to accept diversity. On the other hand, the minority group is open to assimilating with the majority group. In this given context, there is an intersecting point between the two that leads them to co-exist and acknowledge one another.

The acceptance of the majority group by the minority group shows that the process of mutual acceptance is improving in the community. The majority group, in this case, Muslims, despite having many differences with the minority group, still provides appropriate protection, driven by cultural similarities in the form of common primordial identity, especially ethnicity. Morozov argues that the majority group, in seeking democratic legitimacy, consistently advances demands framed within the framework of minority protection.<sup>38</sup> In this context, equal rights are prioritized even though each group has many differences, yet they have the vigor to co-exist. In addition, identity politics is also a way for minority groups to appear in the political sphere due to various pressures. Therefore, for a better Indonesia, there needs to be cooperation and a balanced relationship between religious minorities and the majority in all matters, including practical politics.

## Conclusion

The political behavior of religious minority groups, as shown in this study, explains the social relationships built based on the awareness of equal rights. This study shows that the change in Towani Tolotang's political behavior cannot be separated from several things. *First*, active political engagement is motivated by internal solidity or cohesiveness that facilitates coordination to face political contestations like general elections. Their cohesiveness also supports this in following the direction of the group elite's choices and instructions. *Second*, the Indonesian constitution guarantees the fulfillment of every individual's right to participate in all aspects of life, including politics. Political rights are so guaranteed that the rights of minority groups receive proportional actualization space. *Third*, acceptance by the majority group (Muslims) who not only

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<sup>38</sup> Viacheslav Morozov, "New Nationalisms and Identity Politics: Minorities, Majorities and Universal Emancipation," *European Review* 29, no. 4 (2012): 434-44, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798720000484>.

acknowledge their presence but also provide room for the Towani Tolotang as a minority to actively engage and mutually compete in politics. This article merely observed the behavior of one religious minority group in Indonesia, making the study extremely limited. Future research is, undoubtedly, required by involving several religious minority groups in order to arrive at a pattern or trend, particularly one that correlates with their political activities, in which they are positioned as a minority group existing among the Muslim majority.

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