POLITIKA
Jurnal Ilmu Politik

# The Hegemony of Uken-Toa Socio-Politics in the Regional Head Elections in Aceh Tengah

**Muhsin Efendi¹, Hasan Basri², Alzikri Fahkrurraji³, Yusmika Indah⁴**

¹,²,³ Prodi Ilmu Administrasi Negara, Universitas Gajah Putih, Indonesia
⁴ Prodi Ilmu Tata Niaga, Politeknik Negeri Lhokseumawe, Indonesia

**Abstract:**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the hegemony of Uken-Toa socio-politics in the regional head elections in Central Aceh. In addition, this study also attempted to determine the factors that cause the occurrence of Uken-Toa socio-politics in every election held in Central Aceh. In this study, the researchers focused on the topics of local politics, identity politics, regional elections, and socio-politics. The type of this study was phenomenological and ethnographical research by describing the patterns of values, behavior, beliefs, language, reality, and experiences undergone by individuals. Moreover, the data were collected through interviews, observations, and literature review. Results of this study indicated that the influence of Uken-Toa socio-politics will be always present during the regional head elections in Central Aceh. This means that competition between community groups is unavoidable in the Gayo people. In addition, this practice, which proces actors who represent Belah-Uken and those who represent Belah Toa, greatly affects the victory of the candidates in every regional head election held in Central Aceh. This kind of political practice even has occurred from the past until the current era. Moreover, it has an impact on the system of governance run by the elected regional heads, in this case, the regent and deputy regent of Central Aceh. In other words, this practice indicates how massive a socio-political power is in the local political order of Central Aceh as a political instrument. This Uken-Toa socio-political power in the Gayo community has been formed with long historical, cultural, and political dynamics. This political practice presents the competition between political actors from Belah Uken and Belah Toa, which are influenced by the values of Uken and Toa's lives. Through this study, the researchers recommend to political elites and the public to avoid Uken-Toa socio-politics to create political harmony and a stable government system. In addition, it is to provide opportunities for other political actors not affiliated with those groups.

---

**Correspondence:**
Prodi Ilmu Administrasi Negara, Gajah Putih University, Jalan Takengon-Pegasing, Belang Bebangka No. 120 Aceh. Indonesian 24552.
Email: hasangayo15@gmail.com

## Introduction

In line with the times, political practices always experience rapid development, in which democracy is defined as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. In essence, democracy in various countries has become the dominant political system. Democratic practices can be described as democracy or transcendental democracy if citizens can translate them into demonstrations by clarifying their interests for the common welfare mission (Teredi, 2021, p. 166).

Increased community participation in the life of the state and nation should be channeled through a way that prioritizes the principles of openness and equal rights in a state that adheres to a democratic system, democracy through election activities requires citizens to be involved in voting. Without efforts to involve the community, elections will only become a formality of democracy (Mulyadi, 2019).

The Gayo community in Central Aceh is part of the Republic of Indonesia. Culturally, the Gayo community adheres to the philosophical values of Gayo customs, which are applied in their everyday life. The system and culture of the Gayo community principally contain the aspects of religion, science, values, norms, rules, politics, and law, which are used as the basis for their behavior.

Apart from that, regional head elections (Indonesian: Pemilihan Kepala Daerah (PILKADA) is equated as a party to celebrate democracy for the people of Central Aceh. In this region, those contested are not only representatives from national parties but also those from local political parties in Aceh, a collaboration between local and national parties, and independent figures who have fulfilled the requirements for their candidacy.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the hegemoni of Uken-Toa socio-politics in the regional head elections in Central Aceh, in which this political practice always triggers a power struggle. The fight of the group Uken - Toa, influenced every Central Aceh election. Uken and Toa people are the issues that arise in every Central Aceh election. Uken Doctrine - Toa is already very strong in individual members of the community, who are even politicized and political tools in every election. Conflict management is even used as a kind of strengthening the sentiment of competition between Uken - Toa. Uken- Toa can give birth to negative influence in Central Aceh elections. The Uken-Toa competition sentiment only strengthens conflicts between supporters in the election (Irmansyah, 2019).

The presence of a socio-political boundary between Uken and Toa groups strengthens local political competition in every election held in Central Aceh since the first implementation of democratic elections until the present day. Historically, socially, and politically, the competition between these Uken and Toa groups has greatly influenced the contestations during every regional head election held in Central Aceh. Admittedly, this Uken-Toa socio-politics is a strong identity politics,

making it an issue that comes to the fore in every regional head election in Central Aceh. This socio-politics do not even only occur at the time of the regional election but also have occurred in community life and governance organizational structure of Central Aceh. the practice of this clan can be found in some regions of Gayo Lut, especially Kebayakan District (Uken) and Bebesen (Toa). The clan that exists in the Gayo Lut community is called the Clan (Belah).

**Tabel 1.1**

Distribution Belah (Clan) Uken and Toa in Central Aceh District

| No | Kecamatan | Belah Klan |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Linge | Uken |
| 2. | Bintang | Uken |
| 3. | Kebayakan | Uken |
| 4. | Lut Tawar | Uken dan Toa |
| 5. | Pegasing | Toa dan Uken |
| 6. | Bebesen | Toa |
| 7. | Silih Nara | Toa dan Uken |
| 8. | Ketol | Toa dan Uken |
| 9. | Kute Panang | Toa |
| 10. | Celala | Toa dan Uken |
| 11. | Rusip Antara | Toa dan Uken |
| 12. | Bies | Toa dan Uken |
| 13. | Atu Lintang | Uken dan Toa |
| 14. | Jagong Jeget | Uken dan Toa |

*Source*: Processed Researchers and (Ibrahim, 1986)

The doctrine of Uken-Toa socio-politics is strongly attached to the people of Central Aceh. Moreover, this condition is always politicized in every regional head election in Central Aceh. Therefore, it often strengthens the competitive sentiment of Uken-Toa socio-politics, which may give birth to a very negative influence in the regional head elections in Central Aceh. Factually, socio-political competition only strengthens the conflict between communities in every regional head election in Central Aceh.

Every regional head election in Central Aceh always involves 2 major groups from the Gayo community. It makes the implementation of the regional head elections in Central Aceh very interesting due to primordialism in competition. This happens not because of ethnicity or religion but because of the competition between two sub-ethnics of the Gayo community, in which they are the majority population in Central Aceh. These sub-ethnics of the Gayo community in Central Aceh are more of a clan. In the Gayo language, it is called belah. In every regional head election, issues related to this belah always appear in the Gayo community in Central Aceh.

Therefore, the values of democracy in the regional head elections in Central Aceh to realize prosperity for the community are hampered. For this reason, the existence of Uken-Toa socio-politics is related to the politics in Central Aceh. As a

result, in every regional head election in Central Aceh, the wave of Uken-Toa socio-politics will always occur from the past until the current era.

Studies that have been carried out on the Uken-Toa problem only focus on the clan group (belah, in Gayo language), specifically concerning the contestation and alliances between belah or clans, such as those conducted by (Setyantoro, 2017) and (Irmansyah, 2019). Those studies examine the issue of Uken-Toa identity politics which separates two large groups of Gayo people in Central Aceh. Results of those studies indicate that the politics of Uken and Toa groups may influence the implementation of the regional head elections. However, the 2017 regional head election has united two political actors from Uken and Toa groups to become the winners in the election. Although these studies have described the existence of this political practice, they have not fully studied the causes of the presence of Uken-Toa socio-politics. Historically, Uken-Toa socio-politics has existed and been going on before Indonesian independence. Uken-Toa socio-politics always occurs when the regional head elections are about to be held. These political conflicts and disputes continue to the current era, in which this Uken-Toa socio-politics greatly affects the leadership condition at the executive level and structures within the government of Central Aceh.

In this study, the researchers applied qualitative research with phenomenological and ethnographic approaches. For their definition, ethnography describes and interprets the same pattern found in values, behavior, beliefs, and language, while phenomenology describes and interprets the reality and experiences undergone by individuals (Creswell, 2014). Primary data in this study were collected through observation and interviews with informants. Meanwhile, secondary data were works of literature and documents regarding identity politics, regional head elections, and Uken-Toa socio-politics. The applied data collection techniques were observation, interviews, and document studies, while the data analysis technique was the descriptive analysis method.

## Local Politics: Identity in Regional Head Elections and History of Uken-Toa in the Gayo Community

One of the functions of local politics is that the community together with local government officials and regional legislators jointly make demands to the central government to improve the condition of their region (Bailusy, 2000, p. 3). In Indonesia, local politics shows a negative image because the rulers gain power within the totalitarian framework of customary law (Agustino, 2009, p. 19).

Identity politics refers to the political mechanism of organizing identity, both in political identity and social identity, as a source and means of politics (Zahrotunnimah, 2018, p. 92). Political identity includes nationality and citizenship, which may determine the position of individuals in a community through a sense of belonging. At

the same time, it marks the position of other subjects in a sense of otherness (Harahap, 2014, p. 803).

A regional head election is a party to celebrate democracy, in which people elect their regional heads and their representatives proposed by political parties. Since the enactment of Indonesia's Law No. 23/2014 concerning Regional Government, regional heads are elected directly by the people through the election of the regional head and deputy regional head or called a direct regional head election (Indonesian: Pemilihan Kepala Daerah Langsung (PILKADA Langsung) (Gaffar, 2012, p. 44).

The Gayo highlands are part of a mountain chain that crosses the island of Sumatra (Melalatao, 1983, p. 23). The Gayo people are divided into many sub-ethnics. Gayo Deret is Gayo people domiciled in Gayo Lues Regency. Gayo Alas is Gayo people who live in regencies located in the southeast part of Aceh. Gayo Kalul are Gayo people who live in Aceh Tamiang Regency. Furthermore, Gayo Serbejadi is Gayo people who live in Serbejadi, East Aceh. Based on close family groups, the Gayo Lut people are divided into some subdivisions (belah) (Setyantoro, 2017, p. 8).

Among the Gayo people, there are important factors that drive their lives. Those factors are often referred to as divisions (belah) or clans (Ibrahim & Pinan, 2010). Belah is a combination of several groups from their kinship ties, hereditary ties, comrades, or immigrants who inhabit the same place. The acknowledgment concerning the acceptance of new members can be carried out through marriage, making them a new member in the belah. Belah is an identity that is attached to the Gayo community.

In every social action, the Gayo people are guided by the sentence "ukum urum edet, song zet urum sifet." It means that law and custom are like substances that are difficult to separate. It indicates that the actions taken must be related to the interests of the community, family, or the Gayo people by considering the cultural values of the Gayo people.

For the Gayo people, the unity of belah and the values of the Gayo culture have been embedded in the life of the Gayo community which is reflected in the proverbs "mewen sara tamunen" (settling in one place), "beluh sara loloten" (go together in one goal and direction), "sara kekemelen" (one self-respect), and "tulung beret bebantu" (support each other in all work). For these reasons, the Gayo people are not allowed to marry a person from the same belah (clan). If other groups of belah broke and violate the agreement or disturb an honor of a belah, the family group of that belah must support, defend, and give sanctions based on the norms, religion, and cultural values of the Gayo community (Ibrahim & Pinan, 2010, p. 94).

## Uken-Toa Socio-Politics in the Gayo Community

Ethnicity is interrelated with identity. In this case, identity politics is defined as the use of collective identity (e.g., religious, ethnic, cultural, or gender identity) to increase group beliefs and give them political power, which then becomes a consideration in the political arena (Wiarda, 2014 in Masykuri & Ramadlan, 2021). The

Gayo people group themselves on an emotional level. The social relations of the Gayo community have differences from other ethnic groups. For being part of the Gayo people, they must apply to Gayo cultural norms and values and cannot violate them by acting within the group or outside the group, which is more or less determined by the family or belah ties (Melalatao, 1983).

Gayo people in their social life have a moiety system, which is the division of community groups into several sub-groups. Those sub-groups are divided into two large groups that have power or can be referred to as "paroh-masyarakat." The members of "paroh-masyarakat" live side by side so that there is competition in traditional norms. In addition, it is impossible to carry out exogamy customs in "paroh-masyarakat." The presence of moiety gives the Gayo community a dynamic character. It also affects the dynamics of the life of the Gayo community towards education, economy, art, culture, and others (Melalatao, 1983, p. 13).

Open access to information is more important than others and changes the association, thinking, and way of getting along in the Gayo community, especially those who are from Belah Cik (Toa) who used to be relatively closed. It is different from Uken group which is more friendly and easy to talk to. It can be seen in the daily interactions of the Gayo community between Toa and Uken, in which there is rarely physical conflict between the two groups (Uken and Toa) until the present day. Even if it occurs, it is only in political contestation during the regional head elections from year to year.

The concept of belah causes the presence of Uken-Toa. For example, the area of Gayo Lut is inhibited by several belah groups that develop as identities in the daily life of the Gayo community. This occurs in the interaction and communication in the life of the Gayo people. It is good to see the influence of Dutch colonialism on the Gayo area, which led to the creation of a hierarchical system of ethnic politics in the Gayo community, which later developed the split-bamboo politics that formed the politicization of Uken-Toa identity (Bowen, 1993).

**Table 1.2**
**Periods of Conflict between Uken and Toa**

| Events | Time | Year |
|---|---|---|
| Before the presence of the Republic of Indonesia and local kingdoms in Gayo | Dutch colonial period | 1560 – 1902 |
| The power of Belah Toa and Belah Uken during the colonial period | Colonialism | 1902 – 1945 |
| The collapse of customs that causes conflicts between Belah Uken and Belah Toa in socio-political behavior in the control of power | Independence era - Reform era | 1945 – present |

*Source*: (Irmansyah, 2019, p. 87)

The conflict that occurred between Toa and Uken long before the arrival of the invaders indeed had happened, which was caused by problems based on power and territory called ethnodemography and ethnopolitics. This conflict can be resolved by a party who is called kejurun. Kejurun is a close person from the representative of the Linge kingdom (King Linge), who are invited to mediate those two groups when disputes and conflicts occur in the Gayo community.

## Polarization of the Spread of Uken-Toa Politics

There are differences in the dialects of the language used by the people from Gayo Lut, Gayo Deret, Gayo Kalul, and Gayo Serbejadi. However, in substance, the Gayo language is the main language used by the people. Of the four traditional areas, there is one area inhibited by a clan group, namely Gayo Lut. In daily interactions, the Gayo Lut people are popular with the term urang-urang, in which Uken and Toa are given two very broad areas. The terms Uken and Toa are names for local Gayo people and immigrant Gayo people, which in political occasions are always reproduced as a symbolic force in fighting for power. Local Gayo people are considered to represent people from the Uken area, while Gayo immigrants are people from the Toa area or are referred to as Batak descendants.

At this time, those who have ever inhabited the Uken area, which is located on the east side (e.g., Lut Tawar, Bintang, Linge, and Kebayakan), are scattered in several other districts. Meanwhile, Toa has a majority of the population living in the west of Central Aceh Regency, such as Bebeben, Silih Nara, Pegasing, Ketol, and Rusip. These two areas on the map of Central Aceh Regency are partly located in the downtown of Central Aceh Regency. Those are differences between the two belah or sub-ethics that inhabit the area of Central Aceh.

Clan (Belah) Toa's socio-political actors include pragmatism, traditionalism, and loyalty. Meanwhile, the socio-political influences of Clan (Belah) Uken include realism, modernism, and royalty. This was conveyed by the gayo community leaders as in this excerpt;

> "...Actually, the hallmark of Belah Uken is that they are forthright and candid, in their politics, they are more realistic and inclusive. Unlike Belah Toa, they tend to be pragmatic and exclusive. Indeed, after the reform, there was a kind of leadership shift that was dominantly represented by bureaucrats as regional heads. The impression of a bureaucrat looks formal and exclusive".

The practice of power that unites actors who divide Uken and Toa is a form of identity political practice to fight for power in the local political arena. Practice on behalf of identity politics is a form of existence carried out by political actors to gain power and defend it. This kind of practice implies that every actor should understand the historical events and cultural identity of every actor (Irmansyah, 2019; Setyantoro, 2017).

## The Hegemony of Uken-Toa Socio-Politics in Regional Head Elections

Each group of society is influenced by various local political cultures. Political culture is a social description of the social structure that has certain cultural systems and values. Moreover, political culture can have a role in determining the political culture even for the pesantren community. Three factors that determine political culture in a community are political socialization, orientation, and leadership patterns. (Pamungkas, 2016, p. 166).

Uken-Toa is a name for local Gayo people and immigrant Gayo people who have the same political opportunity and are always used as reproductions of symbolic power in fighting for local power. The correlation of regional distribution between Uken and Toa indicates the existence of the political structure of Uken and Toa, which is spread to several places and regions. Gayo identity politics and the political picture of Uken and Toa occur in Gayo Lut areas, such as Bener Meriag and Central Aceh Regencies. The competition occurs only in the context of the event of a party celebrating democracy, such as regional head elections and legislative elections.

With a significant change to the current general election system in Indonesia, it has an impact on the great desire of the public to participate in Indonesian politics, both on a national and local scale. This system directly gives the right to vote on candidates according to the wishes of the community. This provides the possibility of a change in voting style. When the public is given the right to choose one pair of candidates, fanaticism and personal sentiments will occur towards the figures or candidates that will determine and color the behavior of voters. It provides direct community involvement which causes the wider role of ethnicity in the political process in local communities.

By considering the future improvement, local politics in the corridor of social capital in Indonesia is something abstract or difficult to achieve in the current era. The difficulty of realizing local policies in social capital is caused by the existence of two dominant visions, namely (1) optimistic goal about the future of local policies by considering local policies to be decentralized and (2) pessimistic view of the future of local politics in Indonesia by looking at local politics from micro cases at the local level. Furthermore, local politics in a society is often identified with democracy and decentralization. Moreover, concerning whether democratic and decentralized or not, local politics will always be the same (Sudirman, 2012, p. 5). Local political actors in this discussion are those who hold official political positions or who struggle to occupy official political positions, such as DPRD members or political candidates for the general election and regional head elections (Rozak, Kartini, Sri, & Djuyandi, 2020, p. 69).

Indonesians have had 30 years of experience with autocratic government and are used to having the central government monopolize power. The abrupt shift to the autonomous local government came as a complete surprise, as building a

democratized government was much more difficult and complex. Skepticism about local government reform ideas and capacities reached a peak in the first two years after implementation (Pratikno, 2005 in Arjon, 2018).

The problem is that candidates from these regions have become very popular issues in the regional election process. Those candidates are trying to find a partner from the ethnic group that makes up the majority in the area. What we can see with the emergence of ethnic issues in the regional head elections is a phenomenon in which our society tends to choose the top candidates from their group and often put aside the problems, vision, mission, and the quality of the candidates (Hasbullah, 2011: 179). Indonesia is attracted to "world norms", while other currents actually strengthen ethnic groups and even generate ethnic nationalism. According to Nashir, the arrival of global culture has caused an increase in awareness of the importance of local and regional culture. With the current existence of direct democracy, regional head elections as parties for celebrating democracy have become a tradition to determine regional heads which are carried out in local communities (Firdaus, 2012, p. 5). Contrary to a democratic political system that protects the rights of candidates in the regional head elections, the practice of dynastic politics has led to the phenomenon of nominating regional heads in several areas controlled by a handful of people who are still from the same family (Fitriyah, 2020).

At the same time, ethnic politics will provide tools to the public directly to realize the nation's psycho-cultural power. The stages of ethnic politicization in more detail are (1) making citizens aware of the relevance of policies to the welfare of ethnic culture and vice versa, (2) raising citizens' concern about its importance to their group, (3) mobilizing awareness of ethnic groups, and (4) involving them actively and directly in political activities based on the perceptions, interests, and feelings of the group (Hasbullah, 2011: 180). Local politics makes ethnic relations play an important role. In addition, it makes local politics become a potential cultural symbol and a source of strength for political action (Haboddin, 2012). The practice of local politics has large campaign costs managed by these local political actors to finance political, economic, and social costs. Meanwhile, the cultural model at stake refers to the identity politics of Uken and Toa as local political campaign practices propagated by local political elements by participating in regional head elections. In the political arena, Aceh has specificity in the party system by providing space for the existence of local parties and independent candidates (Syahputra & Baiduri, 2018).

For the Gayo community, every regional head election in Central Aceh is an important momentum in channeling political rights and choices. They hope that the future of the region rests on the shoulders of the elected candidates, who are directly elected by the Gayo community themselves. In every regional head election in Central Aceh, the problem is not in the competition between tribes or ethnicities because the model of the journey for each regional head election is almost the same for every

election that takes place in Central Aceh. The problem that arises is the competition between sub-ethnicity, belah, or kuru groups in the Gayo community in Central Aceh. The Gayo community has an attachment to a moiety in regional head elections. This has occurred from the past until the present day. Along the times, there are still issues that are raised related to the Uken-Toa social ties. Concerning pairs of candidates competing in the regional head elections, local and national parties as bearers will try to match candidate pairs with a composition of Uken and Toa representation. The local political elites position themselves as actors. The existence of these political actors is influenced by the structure. However, the structure essentially limits the role of the local political elite. If the state wants to work that way, then the rules should be enforced to limit or curb the space for local political elites (Haryanto, 2009).

The Gayo community is very aware that several candidates or pairs who fight in the regional head elections are a representation of moiety that they hold firmly (Setyantoro, 2017, p. 21). They have a social strength, namely belah or clan, which represents a very strong kinship bond. At present, the Gayo community understands that their solidarity manifested in the form of "alang tulung berbantu" (helping each other) works in every regional head election. Solidarity in local politics is evident from the tendency to offer political choices to family members to run for elections in every regional head election (Rusnaedy & Purwaningsih, 2018).

At each regional head election, the representation of alang tulung (helping each other) is manifested in voting for family or relatives who are carried by local and national parties as a running couple in the regional head elections. Having feelings and the same fate, needing each other, helping each other, and sharing in the power of their respective groups make each member of the community bond together as a group unit. They do not want their group to be lower than other groups, which makes them still uphold the dignity of their group (Setyantoro, 2017, p. 20). Moreover, kinship politics is considered to hijack democracy (Fokatea & Mas'udi, 2020).

In each regional head election, it shows that the local political process in Gayo often intersects with the relationship between Uken-Toa which is propagated by the competing political actors. Uken-Toa politics lives and develops at the elite level, not at the grassroots level. It is as quoted from an interview with Mr. Joni MN. As a member of the Gayo traditional assembly, he said "In any contestation for the regional head election in Central Aceh, of course, the candidate must realistically prepare that economic capital is an important thing because the campaign requires a fairly large cost." For this reason, the regional head elections become a momentum for all regional head candidates, success teams, and political parties to attract support from the community by throwing issues that become the needs of the community so that, in the future, they will act as a solution provider to the developing issues (Pora, Qodir, & Purwaningsih, 2021). In this case, candidates for regional heads must try to be able to raise capital to be ready to compete. In addition, they must also understand that

support from the parties is the vehicle that leads them to be able to fight in the elections of Central Aceh. However, the collaboration between Uken and Toa is the key to winning the regional head election.

The grouping of the community is based on the Uken-Toa in the Gayo community which is propagated by political actors. The upheaval of Uken-Toa sentiment is always reproduced to influence the psychology of voters at the grassroots. In addition, transactional politics that is put forward by political actors is an inseparable part of the direct election pattern adopted in Indonesia. A political actor who was directly involved in participating in two regional head elections stated that to be able to win the battle, the key is the political party carrying the candidate and good political costs, consisting of funding and electability in the community at large. In other words, the political capital that must be owned by the actor is in the form of support from the political party and the economic capital (i.e., the large amount of finance owned by the actor and used for financing political campaigns). Apart from that, other supporting capitals are social capital and religious or spiritual capital (Setyantoro, 2017, p. 24).

Regional head elections as parties for celebrating democracy and local political events are a stage for electing a regional head and showing a drama at the same time. The problem is that the people who are the rightful owners of democratic political sovereignty do not need a dramaturgy to position themselves only as passive spectators. The elections must be fair. In addition, the formation of the principle of justice is meant not only in the absence of favoritism but also in the condition that the organizing party must be fair. Here, the word "fair" means to be fair in treating the people as holders of sovereignty (Akbar, 2017).

Local politics emerge based on personal and group awareness to combine particular identities in the form of relations to primordial religious and ethnic identities (Nasrudin, 2019). In every regional head election in Central Aceh, the Gayo community places a high priority on the dignity of each group in their choice. They have traditional taboos that should not be disturbed by other parties or other groups. These traditional taboos are still held until the present day to maintain self-esteem. This sometimes causes excessive fanaticism among certain groups of the Gayo community (Setyantoro, 2017).

The results of a study conducted by Bowen (1993) through the ethnographic approach to the Gayo people, in general, show that Uken-Toa is not the basic principle of the actual Gayo community. This can be seen from the contestation in the election of regional heads, in which collaboration is currently taking place, namely the regent is from Uken and the deputy regent is from Toa. Therefore, the conflict that often occurs is latent. This latent conflict is a hidden and invisible conflict that has the potential to emerge at some points in the future. In this case, what is meant by latent conflict is a conflict rooted in a problem that exists but its expression or manifestation into behavior has not yet surfaced (Irmansyah, 2019, p. 94).

Historically, the dispute between Uken and Toa has occurred before the arrival of the Dutch in Indonesia. This was due to ethnodemographic and ethnopolitical issues (based on territory and royal power). At the time, this dispute was handled by a certain party pointed out to reconcile the two sides so that nothing untoward happens. The concerned party was the kejurun. Kejurun was the right hand or representative of the Linge kingdom (King Linge), whose job was to handle that kind of problem. Therefore, conflicts did not occur in society at that time. In addition, kejurun also handled the management of community areas.

The majority of Gayo people are farmers and traditional fishermen who live on the edge of Lake Laut Tawar, Takengon. After the arrival of the Dutch in 1904, the Uken-Toa conflict became an economic conflict. When viewed from the development phase, the conflict between Uken and Toa occurred in three phases: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence. In the pre-colonial period, the Uken-Toa competition ethnodemographically and ethnopolitically could be identified through the distribution of its population which was divided into two forms, namely centrifugal (spreading) and centripetal (centralized).

Uken adopts a centrifugal system, while Toa adheres to a centripetal system. Practically, the centrifugal pattern adopted by the Uken community who migrated to other areas will make their regional identity disappear, thus making them adopt a new regional identity. Meanwhile, the centripetal pattern adopted by the Toa community tends to be centralized, which is to return to the center of their civilization, namely Bebesen. In the colonial phase, there were only two naming areas, namely Kebayakan and Bebesen villages, or referred to as the Little Republic. During colonialism, the Dutch formed the city of Takengon as the center for community activities and government. Based on its location, Takengon is a city that separates Kebayakan and Bebesen. Kebayakan is the representation of Uken, while Bebesen is the representation of Toa. Although there is a division of Uken and Toa or Kebayaken and Bebesen, the tribe that lives in these areas is one, namely the Gayo people.

After independence or reform, the dominance of Uken in the center of government shifted and was controlled by Toa. The politics of decentralization opened up opportunities for Toa to fight for power in the government. In this reformation period, the sentiment of urang-urang (Uken-Toa) in the Gayo community strengthened. Facts show that when Toa came to power, the group sentiment was stronger and united because of interests. The political pattern of Toa-centris is very obvious, especially when political actors from this group are elected as regional heads from year to year.

When the elected political actor is from Uken, there was a dispute between the support groups. Therefore, at that time, the political actors from Toa collaborated with the political actors from Uken to secure various power interests. This means that the dispute is in favor of Uken's side. In the time following, in the regional election, Toa's power was replaced by Uken.

Basically, in the practice of local politics, the capital run by political actors is social, economic, and political capital. The capital at stake is related to the identity of Uken and Toa to carry out political campaigns that are propagated by political actors during the implementation of regional head elections. The facts show that the local political process in Gayo often intersects with relations between Uken-Toa which are propagated by those political actors who are competing.

In the context of democracy both at the local level, the role of local politics has a role as the basis for achieving power. the goal is that each individual in making choices is based on identifying ethnic similarities but divided into sub-ethnics between Uken and Toa. Politics in the local order in seizing political power is in practice considered successful, several studies show that the role of Uken and Toa as jargon in influencing voters is the most important part of political contestation, and the use of Uken and Toa as a basis for a power struggle (Yandra, 2010).

The impact of the involvement of Uken and Tao's socio-political role in the political aspect of society, namely the occurrence of divisions or disintegration between the same ethnicity and being easily used as a political tool by power seekers so that the ethics in the struggle for power where the jargon is Uken and Toa sub-ethnics will emerge sects or community groupings based on their respective sub-ethnics.

Implementing the Pilkada in Central Aceh has not succeeded in eradicating the feudal culture in society which should be avoided to create Gayo ethnic harmony itself. The use of ethnic groups as the basis for voting significantly affects the election of regional heads, meaning that the influence of leaders from ethnic groups becomes the protector of the community's choice or the basis of the community in providing support (Basri, Efendi, Surya, Ashwad, & Zunafriesma, 2022).

## Uken-Toa Political Actors in Regional Head Elections

The election of regional heads requires high political costs that must be incurred by the competing actors. Not to mention, the situation on the ground has been segregated into interest group units that carry their respective group interests. The grouping is conducted by the Uken and Toa communities of the Gayo people who are propagated by local political actors. The upheaval of the sentiment of Uken-Toa is always reproduced to influence the psychology of voters at the grassroots.

In addition, transactional politics that is put forward by political actors is an inseparable part of the direct election pattern adopted in Indonesia. An actor who was directly involved in participating in two regional head elections stated that to be able to win the battle, the key is the political party carrying the candidate and good political costs, consisting of funding and electability in the community at large. In other words, the political capital that must be owned by the actor is in the form of support from the

supporting political party and the economic capital (i.e., the large amount of finance owned by the actor and used for financing political campaigns). Apart from that, other supporting capitals are social capital and religious or spiritual capital.

The role played by political actors is divided into three patterns. First, every political actor must approach his constituents through religion. Religion becomes an arena and a space for dialogue to influence voters before elections are held. Unquestionably, in the history of Uken and Toa, religion has a very important role. Therefore, religion becomes political marketing that can attract sympathy and support for voting. Second, the fighting actors who represent the Uken and Toa regions tend to propagate sentiments of urang-urang in the voting community. Third, every actor who competes must attempt to collaborate Uken and Toa groups. If the candidate for regent is from the Uken group, then the candidate for deputy regent must be from the Toa group. By doing so, it can represent all voters in Central Aceh. This phenomenon is carried out year by year since the first implementation of democratic elections in Central Aceh.

This political practice brings together the political actors from Belah Uken and Belah Toa to accumulate capital as a power base in political contestation at the local level, which is dominantly playing economic, social, political, and symbolic capital. The Uken political actors who represent Belah Uken have social and economic capital. Meanwhile, the Toa political actors who represent Belah Toa tend to dominate political, cultural, and symbolic capital.

Another strength that is no less important is the ownership of social capital, which is Uken-Toa political actors who are directly involved in various organizations at the district and rural levels and fill the highest positions in religious organizations and institutions. Those Uken-Toa political actors play a full role in winning the regional head elections.

The possession of political, economic, social, and symbolic capital also has an important role in influencing voter confidence, especially actors who are descendants of Umara and former GAM combatants. The last capital is the cultural capital owned by Uken political actors, which is dominated by people having an undergraduate degree. By using the power of this symbolic capital, the sentiment of Belah also occurs, which is reproduced by those political actors to influence voters. Likewise, actors from Belah Toa highly take benefit from the ownership of capital at the district to rural levels, which is evenly distributed.

For researchers, there are five forms of propositions in finding patterns of Uken-Toa political practice with the form of roles that are played by political actors at every level both in the district and in the countryside levels during every election event in Central Aceh. First, the capital at stake is always supported by the political, economic, social, and religious arenas. Second, in the political arena, the dominant capital is the

political and economic capital. Third, in the economic arena, the capital at stake is social capital. Fourth, in the religious arena, the capital at stake is the economic capital. Fifth, in various arenas, each capital plays a role in supporting the existence of political actors.

However, the political practice of Belah is vaguely integrated into the social structure of society. If tracing the practice of identity-based politics of Belah, we can identify it through two phenomena. First, politically, Belah Cik (Belah Toa) is the representation of the people living in the Toa area (downstream), adheres to a political system based on interests. In this case, the interest is the cooperation between political actors. In other words, if they have the same interests, they tend to unite. Contrary, if they do not have the same interests, they are prone to splitting. In general, the Toa group unites based on their interests not due to belah. Meanwhile, Belah Uken, which is a representation of the people who live in the Uken area (upstream), adheres to a united family policy because of belah. This means that actors who appear based on belah tend to be affiliated to the belah where they live.

This difference was exploited by political actors who represented the two belah groups in the local political contestation in Gayo Lut. The practice of identity-based politics through the sentiments of belah grows and develops, which is built on momentary political interests. The practice that occurs by popularizing the term Belah (urang-urang in the Gayo Lut community) is part of the political strategy played by the political actors because the sentiment of urang-urang is built through a political process and it is difficult to eliminate at the democratic level. It is due to the problem that this growing sentiment of belah is a political practice built by certain political actors to kill the character of political opponents (political rivalry) in the fight for regional head elections.

Of the 6 candidates for regent/deputy regent, two candidates came from Uken and the other four candidates came from Toa. Some are candidates who are promoted by national political parties and local political parties. In addition, some went through an independent path. By seeing the unbalanced composition, the winner is "already certain" from Uken. This is because, of course, the votes from the Toa group are split and divided, not only to the four candidates but also to the two candidates who have voters in the Toa area.

The existence of the Uken-Toa political phenomenon is a response that comes as a result of the current decentralization politics. However, long before the presence of a modern political system based on democracy, sentiments about groups, cultures, and religions were already taking place in various parts of the world. Racist treatment, for example, is a practice that prioritizes hate propaganda and considers their group superior and superpowered.

In Gayo Lut, the incident regarding the sentiment of urang-urang that was popularized during the regional head election was full of propaganda in the name of the superiority and glory of actors seeking influence in the lower classes of society. Therefore, the propaganda about urang-urang in the Gayo people is part of the capital owned by political actors and was popularized through the practice of identity politics. Propaganda regarding the politics of belah (mu-urang-urang) is a form of symbolic capital owned by each political actor for the sake of achieving power. It is because the symbolic capital is in the actor, including the level of influence in society, popularity, and blood relations.

The decentralization political policy that has been implemented also has implications for local political practices in the Gayo community, particularly the strengthening of local identity, namely the division of Uken and Toa within the Gayo community. The dynamics of local politics that unite Uken and Toa are just a game of political actors. The identity of Uken-Toa was created only as an attempt to kill the personalities of political opponents through the formation of areas set, grown, and developed in the Gayo Lut community. Representatives from each Belah Uken and Belah Toa were considered the most effective in influencing the community at the village level to elect a candidate for the regional head.

The challenge for political actors in the power struggle only applies to the elite. The practical model uses urang-urang (community) propaganda, especially between Uken and Toa in village communities. The Uken group adheres to a centrifugal system, while the Toa group follows a centripetal system. Therefore, they all are theocratic (based on Islamic teachings), following customs, culture, and education system according to Islam.

Uken-Toa identity politics is included in the Associative Processing Politics category which is depicted in the form of latent conflict and open conflict. This is categorized and polarized as habitus Uken and habitus Toa. (1) Habitus Uken is characterized as (a) royal, (b) realism, and (c) modernism. The forms of its political behavior include motivating, funding, loyal, and speaking bluntly. Furthermore, they have an attitude showing direct facts. In addition, they are lost kinship on the surface. However, in essence, they remain united and accept the developments that occur & tend to follow new developments. (2) Habitus Toa is characterized as (a) pragmatism, (b) traditionalism, and (c) loyalty. The forms of its political behavior include (a) always communicating using parables and images, showing politeness, respecting or glorifying people who come and are met in the field, and having solid cooperation, (b) preferring public figures from the same kinship in the implementation of politics, and (c) being faithful in keeping the secrets of the candidates promoted.

Another phenomenon shows the contestation of political practice and the calculation of the roles played by political actors down to the district level to the village community. There are two patterns used in economic, religious, and political approaches. First, it is the economic role through money politics that is given to the

support team, political elites, and voters. This money politics is supported by several supporters with business backgrounds, contractors, and people who have an interest in determining regional heads. Second, it is the religious approach by visiting places of worship and providing religious assistance.

In general, it is almost the same as the national political elite. In influencing voters, political actors provide the needs of the community group. For example, farmer groups, of course, are those given agricultural tools with great hope that these community groups choose them in the regional head elections. From those two patterns, the political actors from Belah Uken dominantly use economic capital as a political succession strategy. Meanwhile, the political actors from Belah Toa dominantly use economic and political capital through a spiritual approach as a strategy in facing political battles.

Uken-Toa socio-politics has both latent and potential natures. When every political contestation will be carried out, it will become the dominant force during this democratic event. In socio-politics, Uken and Toa focus on different aspects and implement a different style of leadership that becomes the dominant political force for them. Political practice by bringing together the actors of Belah Uken and Belah Toa generates social life practices that influence the behavior of Uken and Toa political actors.

Habitus is an important factor for political actors to decide, identify, and evaluate the social reality of the local community. In other words, habits are intermediaries for actors in the political field. A study conducted by Irmansyah shows that the habits of the political actors from Belah Uken and Belah Toa are visible in the political arena. The habits of political actors from Belah Toa tend to be pragmatism, traditionalism, and loyalty. Meanwhile, the habits of political actors from Belah Uken tend to realism, modernism, and royalty (Irmansyah, 2019, p. 97).

## Characteristics of the Values of Uken-Toa Socio-Politics

Uken-Toa socio-politics is included in the Associative Processing Politics category which is depicted in the form of latent conflict and open conflict. This is categorized and polarized into Uken's social values and Toa's social values. The values of Uken's socio-politics are (a) royal, (b) realism, and (c) modernism. The forms of its political behavior include (a) motivating, funding, loyal, and speaking bluntly, (b) having an attitude showing direct facts, lost kinship on the surface but remaining united essentially, and (c) accepting the developments that occur and tend to follow new developments.

The values of Toa's socio-politics are (a) pragmatism, (b) traditionalism, and (c) loyalty. The forms of its political behavior include (a) always communicating using parables and images, showing politeness, respecting or glorifying people who come

and are met in the field, and having solid cooperation, (b) preferring public figures from the same kinship in the implementation of politics, and (c) being faithful in keeping the secrets of the candidates promoted.

Based on the characteristics of the social values aforementioned, the assumption that emerges in the community is a stereotype developed in the northern area of Tanoh Gayo, in which Uken considers Toa old-fashioned and tacky, while Toa considers Uken ambitious. Indonesia's Law No. 32/2004 concerning Regional Government, which was revised into Indonesia's Law No. 23/2014, are laws in Indonesia that started new changes that can be seen in the direct election of regional heads. These changes led to the activity of local politics in maintaining the dignity of democratic values (Irmansyah, 2019, p. 137).

## Uken-Toa politics: Cause and Effect for the Gayo Community

The conflict that continues to develop between the two dominant Uken and Toa has occurred since before the Dutch colonization in Indonesia. To date, the competitive relationship of Uken-Toa has become an active competition for gaining profit and power. Since the beginning of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia in 1954, conflicts and competition between Uken and Toa have continued to this day. When elections are about to be held, the competition of Uken and Toa has begun, starting from the political elites to the ordinary Gayo people.

This dispute is then still being propagated as a historical event that makes the Gayo Lut community divided into 2 big clans, namely Uken and Toa. There are four unique characteristics when compared to other regions in Indonesia, which can be found in the distribution of clan groups. First, Gayo people, who are a minority group in Aceh province, refuse to be called Acehnese (Aceh people) even though they live in the Aceh region because the Gayo people have a different history, language, and culture. Second, groups based on different identities in the struggle for power in the local political arena are always used as tools of political legitimacy by political actors to fight for the seat of the regional head. Third, the political actors in power in Gayo have a voice in the form of Gayo's secession from the province of Aceh by establishing the new province, called Aceh Leuser Antara. However, this is just a proposal, not yet materialized. Fourth, historical events that split the Gayo Lut community into two identities (i.e., Uken and Toa) are often narrated as a symbolic power through the sentiment of urang-urang (identity awareness) which is popularized by political actors to gain power (Irmansyah, 2019, p. 124).

The Socio-political Uken complies with the centrifugal system and Toa adheres to the centrifugal system, and both are traditional theocracy, culture, and educational systems all based on belief in religion. and the politics of Uken Toa's identity fall under the category of Political Processing Association, which includes the forms of Habitus Uken and Habitus Toa.

The social-political process of Uken Toa in this context, conducted in the election contest of the regional head of the Central Aceh district, is still in the category of political forms of conflict which are instrumental processes that are still within the framework; the establishment, unification, and maintenance of social structures or can be categorized as sociative or positive processes, not dissociative or negative processes.

Conflict can set and maintain boundaries between two or more groups. The conflict arising in this political process is a form of latent conflict and without open conflict. The Uken form adheres to the centrifugal system and Toa adheres to the centrifugal system so that everything is theocratic (based on Islamic teachings), customs, culture, and educational system are all based on the beliefs owned by the Gayo ethnic group.

## Conclusion

Uken-Toa socio-politics always takes part in every regional head election in Central Aceh. This kind of socio-politics has become a political instrument for political actors who want to fight in the elections. This method is always used by elites from both Uken and Toa groups. The distribution of the Uken-Toa community is based on customs, which distinguishes the Toa political actors that adopt a centripetal system (loyal, traditional, and pragmatic) with the Uken political actors that adopt a centrifugal system (modern, loyal, and realist).

The socio-political practice of Uken and Toa is politics that brings together two groups of people who live side by side and maintain harmony among the community. The socio-political roles of Belah Uken and Belah Toa may bring the dynamics of political competition that occurs in society, which is taken advantage of by political actors or political elites. This kind of socio-political practice should be avoided by political actors from both sides. The Uken-Toa politics have an impact on the electoral bases of the two groups in terms of development and the position of governance organizational structure of Central Aceh.

## Acknowledgment

## Funding

## Bibliography

Agustino, Leo. (2009). Pilkada dan Dinamika Politik Lokal. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar

Akbar, I. (2017). Pilkada Serentak dan Geliat Dinamika Politik Dan Pemerintahan Lokal Indonesia. CosmoGov, 2(1), 95. https://doi.org/10.24198/cosmogov.v2i1.11852

Arjon, S. S. (2018). Religious Sentiments In Local Politics. Jurnal Politik, 3(2), 171 https://doi.org/10.7454/jp.v3i2.123

Bailusy, M. K. (2000). Dinamika Politik Lokal. Simposium Internasional Jurnal Antropologi Indonesia I, 401–412

Basri, H., Efendi, M., Surya, A., Ashwad, H., & Zunafriesma, Nanda. (2022). Uken – Toa's Political Identity and Political Representation in the Pilkada of Central Aceh Aceh Province, Indonesia. In Proceedings of the 6th Batusangkar International Conference, BIC 2021, 11 - 12 October, 2021, Batusangkar-West Sumatra, Indonesia (p. 30). Padang: EAI. https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.11-10-2021.2319520

Bowen, J. R. (1993). A modernist muslim poetic: Irony and social critique in Gayo Islamic verse. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 52(3), 629-646.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research Design : Pendekatan Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan Mixed. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar

Firdaus, S. (2012). Dinamika Politik Lokal Menjelang Pemilukada Kota Tasikmalaya. Jurnal Ilmu Politik Dan Pemerintahan, (1). Retrieved from http://jurnal.unsil.ac.id/index.php/jipp/article/viewFile/SF/1371

Fitriyah, F. (2020). Partai Politik, Rekrutmen Politik dan Pembentukan Dinasti Politik pada Pemilihan Kepala Daerah (Pilkada). Politika: Jurnal Ilmu Politik, 11(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.14710/politika.11.1.2020.1-17

Fokatea, F. A., & Mas'udi, W. (2020). Konsolidasi Elit Dalam Membentuk Kekuasaan Politik Lokal Keluarga Mus di Kabupaten Kepulauan Sula. Journal of Governance and Social Policy, 1(2), 70–85. https://doi.org/10.24815/gaspol.v1i2.18530

Gaffar, J. M. (2012). Demokrasi Konstitusional : Praktik Ketatanegaraan Indonesia setelah Perubahan UUD 1945. Jakarta: Konstitusi Press

Haboddin, M. (2012). Menguatnya Politik Identitas Di Ranah Lokal. Journal of Government and Politics, 3(1), 109–126. https://doi.org/10.18196/jgp.2012.0007

Harahap, Ramadhani F. (2014). Konflik dan Politik Identitas in Konflik dan Politik Identitas (Politik Identitas Berbasis Agama), 801–813.

Haryanto. (2009). Elit Politik Lokal dalam Perubahan Sistem Politik. Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik, 13(November), 131–148.

Hasbullah. (2011). Agama dan Etnisitas di Pentas Politik Lokal. Jurnal Ushuluddin, XVII(32), 170–182.

Ibrahim, M. I., & Pinan, A. R. H. A. (2010). Syari'at dan Adat Istiadat. Takengon: Yayasan Maqamam Mahmuda.

Irmansyah. (2019). Politik Identitas Uken Toa dalam Pemilihan Kepala Daerah Tahun 2017 di Kabupaten Aceh Tengah. Sumatra Utara.

Masykuri, R., & Ramadlan, M. F. S. (2021). Analisis Manifestasi Segregasi Politik Pelabelan dan Polarisasi diantara Kelompok Islam Sepanjang 2014-2019. Politika: Jurnal Ilmu Politik, 12(1), 68–87. https://doi.org/10.14710/politika.12.1.2021.68-87

Melalatao, J. (1983). Pseude Moiety Gayo; Satu Analisa Tentang Hubungan Sosial menurut Kebudayaan Gayo. Universitas Indonesia

Mulyadi, M. (2019). Membangun Demokrasi Dengan Partisipasi Masyarakat dalam Memilih Pada Pemilu 2019. Puslit, IX(09), 13–18.

Nasrudin, J. (2019). Politik Identitas dan Representasi Politik. Hanifiya: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama, 1, 34–47. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004

Pamungkas, Kanthi. (2016). Masyarakat Pesantren Asrama Perguruan Islam, XI(2), 131–144.

Pora, S., Qodir, Z., & Purwaningsih, T. (2021). Menangkal Politik Identitas: Analisis Kemenangan HT-Zadi pada Pemilihan Bupati Kepulauan Sula Tahun 2015. JIIP: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pemerintahan, 6(1), 18–34. https://doi.org/10.14710/jiip.v6i1.8965

Rozak, A., Kartini, Sri, K., & Djuyandi, Y. (2020). Strategi Survivalitas Warga dan Politik Survivalitas Aktor Politik pada Konflik Pertambangan. Politika: Jurnal Ilmu Politik, 11(1), 53–75. https://doi.org/10.14710/politika.11.1.2020.53-75

Rusnaedy, Z., & Purwaningsih, T. (2018). Keluarga Politik Yasin Limpo Pada Pemilihan Kepala Daerah di Kabupaten Gowa Tahun 2015. Jurnal Politik, 3(2). https://doi.org/10.7454/jp.v3i2.116

Setyantoro, S. A. (2017). Central Aceh Regional Election in 2017: Between Contestation and Alliance Inter-Belah. In Seminar Series in Humanities and Social Sciences

Sudirman. (2012). Dinamika Politik Lokal dalam Social Capital (Modal Sosial). Academica, 4(1), 741–840. Retrieved from http://jurnal.untad.ac.id/jurnal/index.php/academica/article/view/2267

Syahputra, I., & Baiduri, R. (2018). Eksistensi Partai Politik Lokal Pada Era Otonomi Khusus Aceh. Jurnal Antropologi Sumatera, 16(1), 1–6.

Teredi, E. L. (2021). Strategi Gerakan Politik Keterlibatan: Tiga Pola Kerja Politik Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN). Politika: Jurnal Ilmu Politik, 12(1), 158–173. https://doi.org/10.14710/politika.12.1.2021.158-173

Yandra, A. (2010). Politik Etnisitas Dalam Pemilukada, 1–34.

Zahrotunnimah. (2018). Sejarah Politik Identitas dan Nasionalisme i Indonesia. Buletin "Adalah" Buletin Hukum & Keadilan, 2(10b), 78–101.

## About the Authors

**Muhsin Efendi** is a lecturer in the Administration Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Gajah Putih University. He has a research area in the theme of public policy, public services, government policies, and local political elections.

**Hasan Basri** is a lecturer in the Administration Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Gajah Putih University. He has a research area in the themes of political parties, regional head elections, local politics, and the study of politics and government policies.

**Alzikri Fakhrurraji** is a lecturer in the Administration Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Gajah Putih University. He has a research area in the theme of management and public policy.

**Yusmika Indah** is a lecturer in Prodi Tata Niaga, Politeknik Negeri Lhokseumawe.