



THE REALITY OF IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE PLURALISM DIMENSION OF WEST PASAMAN SOCIETY

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| Received: 04.09.2023 | Accepted: 06.09.2023 | Published: 07.09.2023

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Abstract

This research examines the issue of identity politics in West Pasaman, West Sumatra. The West Pasaman community is a plural society consisting of various ethnicities, religions and cultures. So far they have been able to coexist with the spirit of pluralism and tolerance. The existence of regional autonomy which contains regulations regarding the election of regional heads has given rise to identity politics in the plural society of West Pasaman. Beside that, identity politics could also be seen in regional autonomy policies which target adherents of certain religions. The prominence of ethnic, cultural and religious identities is a serious problem in a pluralistic society. This is because it could lead to truth claims and the assumption that groups with the same identity are better than other groups. Therefore, this study aims to explore the pluralism of West Pasaman society and the identity politics contained therein. This research is a qualitative research with data collection methods in the form of observation, in-depth interviews, FGD and literature study. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using the theory of pluralism and identity politics. The results of this research showed that there are religious, ethnic and cultural identity politics in the plural society of West Pasaman. This identity politics is generally carried out in the context of electing regional heads and DPRD members for the benefit of winning certain groups.

Keywords: Identity Politics, Pluralism, West Pasaman, regional autonomy

I. INTRODUCTION

After the New Era (*orde baru*) government stepped down, regional governments were able to carry out regional divisions in the form of regional autonomy. Regional autonomy is the granting of full responsibility and authority to regional governments with supervision from the central government. This authority sometimes unknowingly makes local government full of discriminatory rules. This could lead to new problems in the midst of a very pluralistic Indonesia. As if the only people who are allowed to live in a pluralistic society are the majority community which is characterized by a regional identity attached to it. One of the regional government policy products, Law Number 23 of 2014, is the opening for the existence of the ethnic majority. Over time, this is what gave birth to identity politics.

Recently, it seems that diversity has been harmed in the name of identity politics. The issue of identity politics that occurs in

Indonesia is supported by local government administrators which lead to discrimination against certain groups. This is what happened in West Pasaman, where a regional spirit began to emerge by raising the issue of indigenous people and immigrants. Furthermore, the historical roots and religious culture of the people of West Pasaman also influenced the birth of local government policies that directed towards certain religious groups. One of them is the Regional Regulation regarding the obligation for female students in elementary, middle and high schools to students and employees to wear the headscarf. Regional Regulations that give rise to this ambiguous meaning are also evident in the requirement to be proficient in reading and writing the Koran for students and teaching staff, while not all academics in West Sumatra are Muslim.

The West Pasaman area is an example where the society is quite plural. The pluralism of West Pasaman could be seen from the people, which consist of Minangkabau, Mandailing, Batak, Javanese and other ethnicities (Undri, 2018). This also shows that

not all West Pasaman people embrace Islam. The emergence of identity politics in West Pasaman is increasingly strengthened in the regional head election system (Pilkada) as a product of regional autonomy. Identity politics is often used as a tool by local political elites to gain power by playing with their ethnic issues (Riyadi et al, 2018).

Departing from the description above, this research briefly attempts to answer several problems related to the pluralism of West Pasaman society and the forms of identity politics that occur in the pluralism of West Pasaman society.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative research with analytic descriptive method. In the analytical descriptive method, a description and analysis was made of the forms of pluralism in the West Pasaman society and the identity politics contained therein. Data collection techniques used were observation, in-depth interviews, FGDs and literature study. West Pasaman was deliberately chosen as the research location because of its heterogeneous and representative society in describing the conditions of pluralism and identity politics contained therein.

Observations were carried out directly and indirectly. In direct observation, researchers become part of a society that experiences identity politics. Indirect observations were carried out secretly without being directly involved in the West Pasaman community which experienced identity politics. Apart from observation, data collection was also carried out using in-depth interviews. Researchers chose key informants who understood how to explain diversity and identity politics in West Pasaman. Some of the informants were community leaders, government figures and religious figures. Next, researchers also conducted FGD (Focus Group Discussion) with related parties. Furthermore, data collection is done by literature study. The literature used is local government policy texts, online news, or studies on the threat of identity politics that have been carried out by previous researchers. This data could be used as a reference in support of coming from the results of observations, interviews and FGDs.

The data that has been collected is then processed using data reduction stages (selecting data relevant to the research theme), transcribing the results of the interviews and FGDs, and abstracting the data so that it is ready for analysis. The data that has been abstracted is then analyzed using the framework of pluralism and identity politics. In the last stage was drawn regarding the pluralism of the West Pasaman community and the forms of identity politics contained therein.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. West Pasaman Society Pluralism

Pluralism basically told about the ideology which believes that social reality occurs from many substances and stands independently (Chomsah, 2012: 43). Pluralism comes from the word plural which means diverse. At the social level, this diversity takes the form of ethnicity, culture, religion, language and race. Pluralism means how the differences in this diversity could coexist in harmony while maintaining their respective uniqueness. The West Pasaman area is a plural area. They are consisted from many ethnic such as Minangkabau, Mandailing, Javanese, Batak and Nias. These ethnicities also give rise to diversity in the fields of religion and culture. The following describes the condition of a plural society in West Pasaman.

1. Ethnic Diversity

In 2023 West Pasaman is inhabited by around 441,773 people. A number of residents of West Pasaman consist of various ethnicities. Ethnicity or also called ethnicity is a group of people who are bound by the awareness of the existence of the same identity, this identity could be in the form of a culture with a certain style or language similarity (Koentjaraningrat, 2005: 215). Based on the results of an interview with Mr. Suharjo Lubis (chairman of West Pasaman FKUB), the majority of ethnicities in West Pasaman are dominated by Minangkabau with a percentage of around 50%, Mandailing 30%, the rest are Javanese, Batak and Nias ethnicities. Each of these ethnic groups is almost spread throughout the West Pasaman region. However, there are some areas that are dominated by certain ethnic groups.

Javanese ethnicity dominates in Jorong Tongar, Nagari Aia Gadang, Pasaman District. In addition, this ethnicity also dominates in Baru Village. Furthermore, the Batak (non-Muslim) ethnic group dominates in Nagari Jambak, Pasaman District. The Muslim Mandailing ethnicity is synonymous with the northern area of West Pasaman, including the districts of Gunung Tuleh, Sungai Aur, Lembah Melintang (Nagari Ujung Gading) and Balingka City. Meanwhile, the Minangkabau ethnicity dominates in every region other than those mentioned above. Besides that, there are also Nias ethnic groups (the majority of whom are Catholics) who live in the PT plantation area, Anam Koto, as workers.

From the description above it appears that West Pasaman is the most ethnically plural area compared to other regions in West Sumatra. The plural ethnicity of the people of West Pasaman is caused by various factors. Mandailing and Minang ethnic interactions have occurred since the 19th century when gold traders from Rao (Minang) bartered with Mandailing at Natal Harbor (Doblin, 1992). Furthermore, during the paderi war, Tunaku Imam Bonjol brought many ethnic Mandailings to Pasaman in order to spread Islam and provide land for new livelihoods (Siratni, 2019: 207). The arrival of the Mandailing ethnic group became even more massive when West Pasaman was led by Busrah Lubis from the Mandailing ethnic group. Meanwhile, the arrival of ethnic Javanese to West Pasaman was due to a transmigration program by the government for a population equalization program. Besides that, many of them also migrated from Suriname to West Pasaman. At the beginning of their arrival, many ethnic Javanese were rejected by the Minang community because they were afraid of fighting over empty land (Undri, 2018: 1197 - 1199). As time went by, West Pasaman was visited by ethnic groups from Batak and Nias for their livelihood needs as workers in plantation companies.

2. Religious Diversity

Each ethnic group in West Pasaman has its own religion and beliefs. Several religions found in West Pasaman Regency include Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism. Reporting from data from the West Pasaman Ministry of Religion, the number of Muslims is around 269,168 people, Protestants 200 people and Catholics 65 people¹. In addition to these religions there is also Christianity. The religion of Islam is generally embraced by ethnic Minangkabau, Mandailing and Javanese. This is what causes Islam to become the majority religion in West Pasaman because the population of these three ethnicities also dominates.

¹ <https://sumbar.kemendagri.go.id/v2/post/3516/yusufsutanmudo>

This religious diversity is related to the construction of places of worship. As an area where the majority of the population is Muslim, many mosques or prayer rooms have been built in West Pasaman. For example, in Nagari Kinali there are more than 100 places of worship consisting of mosques, langgars and prayer rooms. Currently the regional government of West Pasaman also has a Quran recitation program so that many tahfiz houses have been built in various areas to support the program. Furthermore, in West Pasaman there are also many Islamic boarding schools and formal schools. The number of Islamic boarding schools in West Pasaman is among the most numerous compared to other regions in West Sumatra.

Besides Islamic religion that is embraced by the Minangkabau, Mandailing and Javanese ethnicities, in West Pasaman there are also Christians, Catholics and Protestants. These non-Muslim religions are mostly embraced by the Batak and Nias ethnic groups. In West Pasaman there are about six churches consisting of the Mahakarya Kudus family Catholic Church in Luhak Nan Duo District, HKBP Jambak Church in Pasaman District. Furthermore, there is the Ophir GPDI Church, St. John Ophir Catholic Church, the Western Indonesian Protestant Church (GPIB) Patmos Ophir and the Pentecostal Church in Indonesia Ophir.

In addition to houses of worship to support religious activities, in West Pasaman there are also formal educational institutions that support these non-Muslim religious groups, it's just that the number is not more than schools based on Islam. Some examples of non-Muslim schools in West Pasaman include SD S Keluarga Kudus which is located in Simpang Tiga, Koto Baru, Luhak Nan Duo District and SKB Pasaman Barat which is located in Kinali, Pasaman Barat. These schools are filled with ethnic Batak and Nias who adhere to Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism.

3. Cultural Diversity

One marker between ethnic groups is a cultural unit. According to Koentjaraningrat (2005) culture is the whole system of ideas, actions and works possessed by humans by learning. There are seven universal elements of culture, namely language systems, knowledge systems, systems of social organization and kinship, technology, economy/livelihoods, belief systems, and the arts. These cultural elements will become the characteristics of each ethnic group and make them different from one another.

Each ethnic group in West Pasaman has a different language. Minangkabau ethnicity has Minang language. Javanese ethnicity has Javanese language. The Mandailing, Batak and Nias ethnic groups generally do not have significant language differences. They both use the Batak language because they come from the same cultural roots. The cultural element that differentiates between the three ethnicities is more about belief/religion. Although both come from North Sumatra, the Mandailing ethnicity is all Muslim, while the Batak and Nias ethnicities are predominantly Catholic, Christian and Protestant. The dominant languages in West Pasaman are Minang language and Mandailing language.

Each ethnic group has a personality that becomes a distinctive character. Usually this character is also a cultural marker for each existing ethnicity. The Javanese in West Pasaman have a gentle character. While the Batak ethnicity is known to have a tough character. They usually speak using a high tone and intonation. However, that does not mean that they are rude people. This makes

West Pasaman often stereotyped as an area with a violent society when compared to other areas of West Sumatra.

Nadya, a teacher at Al Kahfi IT Middle School, West Pasaman, expressed her experience looking after ethnic Batak students in the dormitory, as follows:

"Friction between students who live in dormitories is a different culture. If there are quite number of those from the north (Batak) in one dormitory, they will create a force because of their loud voice and large body. This has an impact on students from Minang and Javanese ethnicity".

B. Identity Politics in the Pluralism Dimension of West Pasaman Society

Identity is a marker attached to a person or group of people. These markers could be in the form of similarities or differences between ourselves and others. According to Derida (1992) identity is a dialogic process of signifying and sharing similarities with others. This identity could be personal as well as collective. At a collective level, identity usually refers to the terms *us* and *you*, *us* and *them*. *We* and *us* refer to each member of the same group, while *you* and *they* refer to people outside the group. This is in line with what Jenkins (2008: 18) stated that identity refers to efforts to differentiate a person or group of people from people outside their group. Several things that are used as markers of identity in community groups are ethnicity, language, religion and culture.

In subsequent developments, this identity was often used for certain political interests. Politics could be a tool or method used by someone to achieve their goals. This method is used in various forms. There are ways that go against the norm so that politics is considered cruel. Politics like this are also experienced by the people in West Pasaman. The plural identity of community groups in West Pasaman is often used for the political interests of certain groups.

Identity that is used for political purposes or politicized identity is also known as identity politics. According to Morowitz (1988) identity politics is the provision of a very firm line to determine who will be included and who will be rejected. In this case groups with the same identity will be included, while groups with different identities will be excluded, even eliminated because they are considered different. Groups with the same identity are considered friends, while groups that are expelled will become enemies.

Identity politics is political action to promote the interests and power struggles of group members because they have the same identity or characteristics, whether based on race, ethnicity, gender, or religion (Buchari, 2014: 20). In West Pasaman, identity politics often emerges during the election of candidates for people's representatives, both those who sit in the regional government and DPRD. Identity politicization is deliberately played to shape images and influence people's thinking. At the practical level, identity politics is used as a manipulation tool to achieve goals and fulfill their interests.

The identity politics that is rife in West Pasaman is motivated by regional autonomy. Regional autonomy gives rise to policies and regulations that refer to certain ethnic and religious groups. This is because in a regional autonomy system, the government has the authority to regulate its own region. Siagian (2007: 10) stated that autonomy is independence to manage one's own household. A similar definition was also expressed by Sumaryadi (2005: 39) who stated that regional autonomy is basically related to legal self-

sufficiency where the government stands alone and is under its own rules.

The West Pasaman regional autonomy product which refers to a particular identity group is the *Sharia* Regional Regulation. There are two main factors that cause West Pasaman (West Sumatra as a whole) to give birth to religious products, namely customs and political interests. Traditionally, the people of West Pasaman have a life philosophy of "*adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah*" which means that everything must be based on customs whose foundation is religious norms. Meanwhile, political interest factors are still related to customs. The legality of customs that breathe sharia is exploited by political elites in political parties and regional head elections. From here, political actors together with traditional leaders have attempted to initiate sharia regional regulations in order to build a strong religious image in West Pasaman. The image that is created is of a political elite that continues to strongly adhere to Minang customs in accordance with Islamic law. *Sharia* regional regulations could be used by political elites to promote the religious identity of each prospective leader. In this case, religious identity is an important value in politics in West Pasaman. Apart from religion, other identities that are often politicized in the election of regional heads and members of the West Pasaman DPRD are ethnicity and culture.

a. The Politics of Religious Identity

Religion and politics are related because religion attached to an ethnicity could be used as political capital. Ethnic groups with the same religious identity are used as a source of votes and support. In the view of the people of West Pasaman, what is said with native people (urangasa) are those who are Muslim. So until now the people of West Pasaman are synonymous with Islam and Islam is synonymous with West Pasaman. Initially, the Islamic religious identity was only attached to the Minang community as an indigenous community, but later the Islamic identity of the West Pasaman community was also attached to the Mandailing and Javanese communities.

The history of the West Pasaman government from its inception until now has always been led by people who are Muslims. Even though they come from different ethnicities, the elected leadership candidates are Muslim. The reluctance of the people of West Pasaman to elect a non-Muslim leader is also influenced by the philosophy of life of the traditional Minang people, *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*. Besides that, historically West Pasaman has also been an area for the development of Islam in West Sumatra. In West Pasaman many Muslim religious figures were born who were influential to the national level. West Pasaman was even known as a warehouse for scholars. These scholars do a lot of coaching in the field of education and preaching. Until now in West Pasaman many Islamic educational institutions have been built, both in the form of halaqah (surau) and in the form of madrasas. West Pasaman is a district in West Sumatra where there are many Islamic boarding schools.

This deep-rooted Islamic breath could not be separated from the Minang community or immigrant communities in West Pasaman. In the political field, the space for non-Islamic religions is very limited in West Pasaman. That is why until now there has been no leader of the West Pasaman regional government who is not Muslim. The people of West Pasaman, who are predominantly Muslim, firmly state that they do not want to be led by someone

who is not Muslim and that non-Muslims should not become leaders in West Pasaman.

Mr. Suharjo Lubis as chairman of the West Pasaman FKUB revealed that:

"Nowadays it has become a fixed price in West Pasaman if Muslims are to become regents and deputy regents. We don't want to choose non-Islamists."

The statement above is in line with the results of the FGD at the Nagari Aia Gadang office, West Pasaman. Several Informants mentioned that it is very unlikely that non-Muslim political elites will be elected as leaders in West Pasaman. There are many rumors of fear spreading that their leader is not a Muslim. They were afraid that this leader would be more flexible in inviting and increasing their number in Pasaman. In addition, having non-Islamic leaders sitting on government benches will make it easier for them to get what they want, including the legality of church establishments. It is feared that this will eliminate the roots of West Pasaman Islamic identity.

In an FGD at the Nagari Aia Gadang office in August 2023, Syafar (a KPU member) made the following statement:

"In our area, people who are not Muslim should not be in government. If they get a place, it is feared that what they want will be easily obtained. So we try to ensure that they don't end up on the council bench."

Until now the diversity of religions in West Pasaman has not led to real conflict. In public services there is no discrimination and neither is social relations. However, the existence of these non-Muslims must not undermine the *sharia* that has existed for a long time in West Pasaman. They anticipate the existence of policies that are considered to have the potential to contradict Islamic customs and religious law. For this reason, people do not agree if there is a leader whose identity is not a Muslim.

In the FGD at the Aia Gadang Pasaman Barat Nagari Office, the nagari guardian revealed that:

"In general, Pasaman is a Muslim religion. Indeed, there are people in West Pasaman who have other religions. If there are foreign religions that want to advance, it will make it easier for them to add places of worship and bring their people into government. We hope that this West Pasaman is one religion in accordance with the *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*. The origin of the West Pasaman people must be Muslim. So a lot of outsiders come in, is it because of transmigration and so on, if they are allowed to develop, then the *adat basandi syarak syarak basandi Kitabullah* will be disrupted"

The religious condition of the Pasaman people above could be utilized in the politics of regional head elections. During the campaign period, the political elite along with their parties and success teams will highlight their Islamic identity. The religious identity of wearing a white peci every day is one thing that is highlighted to attract the attention of the people of West Pasaman. Furthermore, they will show their Islamic identity through work programs. This work program is very important because society will judge whether these political elites support Islamic law or not.

In an interview conducted with Mr. Suharjo Lubis as chairman of FKUB West Pasaman stated that:

"We look at the programs and their interactions in society. Because West Pasaman is an area that is strong in religion, those who excel

as regents are still those who are strong in religion. And that could be seen from the programs and daily life."

The regional head who currently serves in West Pasaman has several work programs that are close to the daily lives of the Muslim community, namely tahfiz Koran and Maghrib reciting the Koran. This program is a priority program for the West Pasaman regional government. This program is one of the efforts to preserve Islamic symbols in West Pasaman which has been carried out since ancient times. This work program was welcomed by all levels of society and traditional leaders. This is also what makes this program live strong because of the support from traditional leaders / nagari guardians. Any prospective leader who carries a daily program like this will certainly find it easy to gain sympathy from the majority of society.

This religious identity could become strong in West Pasaman inseparable from the regional autonomy policy. Regional autonomy provides freedom for each regional government to manage its own regional household. There are no obstacles for the West Pasaman regional government to create work programs and regulations that have a specific religious theme because West Pasaman is much steeped in Islamic life. The proof is that several Sharia regional regulations and religious work programs have not been rejected by the people of West Pasaman. Even minority communities could also adapt to this policy. This is one of the causes of the strengthening of religious identity (Islam) in the plural society of West Pasaman. The existence of other religions is not so developed in West Pasaman.

West Pasaman was once led by a figure whose religious identity was different from the majority. Unfortunately this leadership did not last long. The reason is because it does not have a work program that supports the majority religion, so it does not have closeness to the people of West Pasaman. Religious identity is a weak point by political opponents. In the end, every political party has almost no leadership candidates who come from outside the Islamic faith because of the strong religious identity in West Pasaman.

That's how religious identity politics works in West Pasaman. In fact, this religious identity politics does not only occur in West Pasaman, but in other areas of Indonesia where people have the majority religion. As stated by Maarif, in Indonesia identity politics is usually related to ethnicity, religion, ideology and local interests which are represented by political elites in their own ways of expressing it (Maarif, 2012: 55).

b. The Politics of Ethnic and Cultural Identity

Another identity that is often politicized for political purposes is ethnicity. The people of West Pasaman are indeed very diverse in ethnicity. In West Pasaman there are Minang, Mandailing, Javanese, Batak, and Nias tribes. In the world of West Pasaman regional government, there is the fact that the elected regional leaders always come from the Mandailing tribe which is paired with the Javanese tribe. During the three regional head elections, twice were won by candidates from the Mandailing ethnicity and once from the Minangkabau ethnicity. According to Salim (2022), the emergence of ethnic identity politics in Indonesia could be seen in the process of regional head elections (pilkada), especially in regions with heterogeneous communities.

The first regional election in West Pasaman was held in 2005. Here there were four pairs running for office. The first and fourth pair of

candidates both come from Minang ethnicity. The second pair of candidates comes from Mandailing and Javanese ethnicities. The third prospective partner comes from the Minang and Mandailing ethnic groups. The composition of the regional head candidates pairs in this first regional election shows that the ethnicities that are advancing to the government stage are quite diverse. Almost the three major ethnic groups in West Pasaman have representatives and the majority are from the Minangkabau ethnic group as hosts. However, in the first period of the regional elections, the candidates pair with the most votes was the candidates pair from the Mandailing and ethnic groups.

This victory certainly gave rise to feelings of dissatisfaction among the Minang ethnic group. From here, ethnic identity politics began to emerge in West Pasaman. Political elites play the issue of local sons massively. This is because the Minang ethnic group feels excluded from other ethnic groups, even though the Minang ethnic group is the original population and the majority in West Pasaman. Minang people become spectators when their house is led by other people who come from outside. For this reason, in the second election period a political issue arose which required West Pasaman to be led by an ethnic Minang regional head as a native of West Pasaman. According to Chandakirana (1989) identity politics is usually used by leaders as political rhetoric with the title "we" as the original person they want.

Mr. Suharjo Lubis as a member of the West Pasaman community who has participated in the local election process stated that: "Second period, go up, Minang people, the representatives are also Minang people. This is where there may be identity politics. Their success team said: West Pasaman is Minang people, we are the Minang majority here. Why is a Mandailing person the regent, why is a Javanese person the deputy regent? Now is the time for Minang people to rule. We must rule in our own land."

The identity politics efforts carried out by the success team for regional head candidates from the Minang ethnic group included targeting the customs and habits of the Mandailing ethnic group. The Mandailing ethnic group in West Pasaman comes from North Sumatra. Even though their ethnicity and beliefs are different from other Batak ethnic groups, they have similarities in several cultural elements. One of them is the culture of chewing betel (betel quid). The concoction used in betel leaves consists of betel leaves, lime, gambier, tobacco and areca nut. All of these ingredients are then chewed together. After chewing for a while, this concoction will cause the mouth and saliva to turn red. The issue raised by this activity is that the office environment will become dirty with the betel concoction, so that ethnic Mandailings may not be re-elected as regional heads.

Mr. Suharjo Lubis, who directly experienced the regional election period, expressed the following:

"He said that if the Mandailing people sat down, we would see that there were lots of betel nut skins scattered around the regent's office."

In identity politics, cultures that are not the same as the group will not be considered part of that ethnicity. In the end, all Minang ethnic groups will unite their voices not to elect regional head candidates from the Mandailing ethnic group. This was proven to work with the election of the original Minangkabau pair in the second regional election in West Pasaman.

This "our people" rhetoric continues to roll on the election of candidates for DPRD members. The community will see

prospective leaders who come from their area. While in some areas in West Pasaman there are certain ethnic groups that dominate. The selection of candidates who are native to the region will of course re-elevate certain ethnicities that are dominant in their area. This is also supported by the distribution of principal funds (pokir). The election of local members of the council will expedite infrastructure development in the region. For example, the current regional head is an ethnic Mandailing from Ujung Gading. Currently development in Ujung Gading is faster than other areas in West Pasaman. According to the local community, if they elect a leader could candidate who is native to their region, their communications with the center could run smoothly.

The mayor of the village in the FGD at the Wali Nagari Aia Gadang Pasaman Barat Office stated that:

"Why do we prefer regional sons because if we don't have representatives at the top, development will stagnate. Five years ago there were two people where we sat in the center so that the construction went smoothly. While these two years have not hampered development. So for this year we are trying to have our people sitting at the top. So for outsiders we try not to be selected. Why reject candidates from outside so that our citizens are in the DPRD, so that it is easier for us to convey our aspirations to them. So we apply identity politics so that there are representatives in the DPRD."

Furthermore, tribal identity is always played out in every political contestation. Initially, the Minang ethnic group, as the majority ethnic group, was portrayed as the host who had the most right to lead West Pasaman. However, other ethnicities have also played out their tribal identities over time. Javanese ethnicity as an ethnic group whose number is less than Minang and Mandailing ethnic groups has always managed to occupy positions in government as deputy regional heads. This is because they have a common identity which brings them to solidarity. Historical similarities, life experiences, feelings of shared destiny, influence social relations within the group's identity. As revealed by Bart (1998) that ethnicity is a combination of cultural elements, customs, culture, origins, beliefs of individuals or groups. This similarity ultimately gave birth to the Javanese ethnic community as a source of votes in the regional elections.

The Mandailing ethnicity, although not the majority community and indigenous people, is still able to win this political contestation because it is related to religious identity. All ethnic Mandailings in West Pasaman are Muslim. Ethnicity which is used as identity politics continues to develop to the issue of religious identity. Moreover, in the view of the Minang people of West Pasaman, what Minang people say is that they are Muslim. So until now Minang is synonymous with Islam and Islam is synonymous with Minang. Therefore, the existence of the Mandailing ethnic group, which is entirely Muslim, is well received by the Minang ethnic group itself.

Buchari (2014 : 30) states that ethnic identity politics is reflected in efforts to include ethnic values in government or regional regulations. The emergence of ethnic identity politics in Indonesian regions could be seen in regional head elections (Pilkada), especially in plural regions. The West Pasaman election process above is an example. The emergence of identity politics in this local area (Pasaman Barat) is inseparable from the regulations and policies made by the government. one of which is Law Number 32 of 2004 which was revised to become Law Number 23 of 2014

plus Government Regulation Number 6 of 2005 concerning the election, ratification and dismissal of regional heads and their deputies. The impact of this law is that there are direct local elections in the context of carrying out regional autonomy policies. The implementation of regional autonomy often gives rise to identity politics by raising the issue of local people to gain support in regional leader governmental elections (Asrinaldi, 2018: 67).

IV. CONCLUSION

West Pasaman society is a plural society. There are many ethnicities and religions in West Pasaman. The majority ethnicity is the Minangkaabu ethnicity as the indigenous people. Next there are Javanese, Mandailing and other Batak ethnicities. This ethnic diversity gives rise to religious and cultural diversity. Currently there are approximately four religions in West Pasaman, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism. This plurality gave birth to the majority groups and minority groups. The majority group is ethnic Minangkabau who are Muslim, followed by ethnic Mandailing (Islam), Javanese (Islam). Meanwhile, other ethnicities become minorities, especially those who are not Muslim.

Conditions like this are exploited by local political elites to achieve their goals. The identity of diversity is politicized in such a way that identity politics is born. The identity politics that emerged in West Pasaman in the contestation for the election of regional heads and DPRD members were religious, ethnic and cultural identities. Religious identity politics was born in the form of selecting potential leaders who must be Muslim and have work programs that reflect their daily lives which are close to Islam. Ethnic identity politics, among other things, arises from the issue of having to choose potential leaders who are sons of the region and/or other ethnic groups who are Muslim. The existence of a regional autonomy policy which gives each regional government the freedom to regulate its own household (including the government system and regional head elections) means that identity politics is increasingly emerging in West Pasaman. In the future, identity politics could not be ignored because it has the potential for the birth of new conflicts within each identity group. Therefore, it is hoped that this identity conflict must be minimized because it could threaten the harmonization of pluralism in West Pasaman.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is the result of research funded by the Beginner Lecturer Research grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. For this reason, I would like to thank the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology and the Institute for Research and Community Service, the Padang Panjang Indonesian Institute of the Arts, which have facilitated the smooth running of this research process. Thanks also go to the people of West Pasaman (especially the informants) who are willing to help so that the data collection process can

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