

ETHNIC AND COMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN WEST KALIMANTAN: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Introduction

The four province of West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, South Kalimantan and Central Kalimantan are situated on the island of Borneo. The island boasts what has been one of the largest rainforest in the world. Indigenous Dayaks constituted around forty per cent population of Kalimantan and settlers from the island of Madura under five per cent while remainders are constituted by Javanese, Burgis and other settlers¹. Kalimantan makes up some 30.37 per cent of the country's total land area accounts for only 5.49 per cent of the country's total population or with an average of 20 heads per sq km.

In West Kalimantan, the Dayaks are an indigenous people. The term Dayak is a collective and often confusing term for hundreds of groups on the island of Borneo related to one another by language or culture. It is the term that these groups and government use to define their ethnicity, so they are Dayaks as opposed, for example, to Malay, Javanese or Chinese. Most of Dayaks in West Kalimantan are sedentary Swidden (slash and burn) farmers who produce rice but continue drive a substantial part of their livelihood from rainforest products, including tree crops such as durian (a fruit) rubber and resin. They are predominantly Christian and Catholic Church in particularly provides strong institutional network in the area but also hold strong animist belief.

The Madurese (who are Muslims) first came in West Kalimantan in small numbers around the turn of century, with their number

increase in the 1930s and 1940s, when they are brought in as contract of indentured labour to clear forests and start up plantations. They have been arriving in considerably greater number from 1970s onwards. Many Madurese in urban areas work in cheap transport (river crossing ferries, pedicabs) and as coolies, drivers, stevedores, day labourers or petty traders, with Madurese women selling fruits and vegetables; in the countryside most are wetland rice farmers. They are stereotype throughout Indonesia as being coarse, violent and dishonest; many Dayaks say they do not feel safe involving with Madurese².

For the most part, the Madurese who came in West Kalimantan bring their old traditions and customs, such as carrying sharp weapons, murdering, stealing, robbing and forcing their will on others. In cities, for example, if a potential passenger does not want to ride on one of their pedicabs, water taxis or minivans, he is pulled, shoved, and threatened with a knife.

Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations

Before having discussion on ethnicity and ethnic relation, it is very important here to understand the term ethnic group and ethnicity. An ethnic group has a distinct cultural tradition that its own members identify with and that may or may not be recognized by others. An ethnic group need not necessarily be a numerical minority within a nation (although a term sometimes is used in that way). Many ethnic groups from sub-cultures usually possess a high degree of internal loyalty and adherence to a basic customs, maintaining a similarity in family pattern, religion and cultural values. They often possess distinctive folkways and mores; customs of dress, art, and ornamentation; moral codes and value systems; and patterns of recreation. There is usually something that the whole group is devoted to, such as a monarch, a religion, a language, or a territory. An ethnic group may or may not have

its own separate political unit³. Ethnicity and religious affiliations are sited in the inner most feeling of every single person. As such solidarity based on ethnicity and religion is trespassing national geographical boundaries.

According to Fredrik Barth, ethnicity is an individual phenomenon that emerges in social interaction, and it varies depending on the various kinds of interplay between individuals and groups with their natural and social environments. The environments include ethnic categories and cultural system of power that describe significant political, economic and social norms. All of these functions in interethnic relations, which in turn direct and establish norms and positions as defined and acknowledged by members of ethnic groups concerned, thus characterizing the environments.

Ethnic group is seen as a category of ascription as; it classifies a person in terms of his basic most general identity, presumptively by his origin and background. In this sense, ethnic group is seen as social category functioning as a set of reference system for identification in interethnic relations⁴.

Ethnic group and ethnic culture, especially religious culture or religious belief, are attached to an individual's ethnic identity of ethnicity and to the ethnic group. Ethnic mobilization and solidarity are collective self- reaffirmation that employs those two primordial factors for ethnic relations purposes. Every person develops a sense of belonging to a certain ethnic category and is aware of being partially determined by it, as are others belonging to the same origin and tradition of his ethnic community, and contrast to others of different ethnic communities.⁵

Local people such as Dayak perceive Javanese, Madurese and Sulawesian who settled in Kalimantan much later than the

Chinese, as non-bumiputra (migrants). In West Kalimantan Chinese are seen as bumiputra (native) most of the time as their ties with the Dayak and other local people (economically as well as culturally) are much stronger. This explains why the Dayak leaders were easily compelled to expel the Madurese when they found their behaviour inappropriate with their customs and sense of propriety⁶.

Defining Ethnic Conflict

According to Gillin and Gillin Conflict is the social process in which individuals or groups seek their ends by directly challenging the antagonist by violence or threat of violence . Conflicts are classified as Corporate and Personal. Corporate conflicts occur among the groups within society or between societies. Race riots, ethnic conflicts, communal upheavals, religious persecution, labour management conflict and war between nations are the example of corporate conflict⁷. According to sociologists, conflict is part of human life and can never be eliminated from the course of human history. Interpersonal, intra personal and inter-group conflicts are a constitutive part of human history. The variety of ones desires, and unfulfilled desires can bring about conflict. Different interpersonal opinions can also result conflict. Conflicts arise in the context of personal and human history. Unpleasant and bitter history indeed causes prolonged conflict and it can even create hate and hatred for generations⁸.

During the ethnic conflict, ethnicity becomes the major reference for identification. Ethnic conflict is basically a conflict to destroy each other's ethnicity through the acts of destroying ethnic attributes. Each side intends to destroy and eliminate the existence of each other. In ethnic conflict, ethnicity shifts from an individual phenomenon to an ethnic category. Ethnic attributes are targets of to be destroyed as they are seen as representing the

presence of the enemy. Such attributes include members of the opposing ethnic group, their property and their cultural traits.

History of Ethnic Conflicts/Clashes

According to Indonesian sources, the history of ethnic conflicts between Dayaks and Madurese go back as far as 1983, when many died in clashes in Pontianak, the capital of West Kalimantan.

The Madurese (Muslims) first came in West Kalimantan in 1930s, but the numbers increased during the 1970s. This was the result of Indonesian government's transmigration plan, which encouraged people to leave more populated islands such as Madura and Java for low populated islands such as Kalimantan. Little consideration was given to the indigenous Dayaks. As the rainforest was cut down and replaced by palm oil and coconut plantations, the indigenous tribes found themselves at the bottom of a complex hierarchy of different groups, unable to continue their traditional patterns of agriculture and slow to adapt new types of employment. The Christian Dayaks now share the low end of the economic ladder with Madurese. There are about 100,000 Madurese in various parts of Kalimantan and two million Dayaks from at least ten separate tribes⁹.

In 1968, Sani, a Dayak, who was head of Tolo sub-district, was stabbed by a Madurese in Anjungan, near capital city Pontianak. Since then the clashes between the two are onward without any solid solution. In 1977, a Madurese named Maskot stabbed a Dayak policeman named Robert Lonjeng to death in Singkawang, Sambas district. His death led to riots in Samalantan sub-district, about 180 kilometers north of Pontianak, in which more than five died and seventy two houses were destroyed. In 1979, a dispute over a debt led to an attack by three Madurese on a Dayak in village Bagak district Sambas. Two other Dayaks were almost

killed by a Madurese. The attack led to a large communal clash in Samalantan, in which fifteen Madurese and five Dayaks lost their lives and twenty nine houses were burned down, half of them Madurese and half Dayaks. The unofficial death toll ran into hundreds. Such clashes were seen in 1982, 1983 and 1993¹⁰.

Since 1963, based on the unofficial records disagreements, antagonism and conflicts between members of the ethnic community groups have taken place at least 12 times. Of these twelve conflicts, four were massive, bloody ones.

The 1967 conflict between Indonesian of Chinese descent and the Dayak community took place in the interior valley of West Kalimantan. Based on unofficial sources the above conflict was caused more by political factors, including indication of the involvement of the army in creating the conflicting. The Samalantan and Sanggau Ledo bloody conflicts took place between members of the Dayak and Madurese communities in 1979/1980 and in 1996/1997. Another eight smaller conflicts also occurred between the two communities between 1993 and 1995. Some recent, serious and damaging ethnic conflicts in Kalimantan are listed below:

1. The Malays against the Madurese migrants in Sambas, West Kalimantan (1996-1997)
2. The Dayaks against the Madurese migrants in Sambas, West Kalimantan (1999)
3. The Dayaks against the Madurese migrants in Central Kalimantan (2001)

**The Malays against the Madurese Migrants
In Sambas, West Kalimantan (1996-1997)**

In late 1996 and early 1997, communal violence between indigenous Dayaks and migrants (Madurese) from island of Madura, erupted in the province of West Kalimantan (on island of Borneo, which Indonesia shares with Malaysia). Dayaks waged a ritual war against Madurese communities, following a fight in Sangau Ledo, West Kalimantan between Madurese and Dayaks youth during which two Dayaks were stabbed. The Dayaks burned houses and killed Madurese. In some cases they severed the heads of their victims and ate their lives, in a rival of traditional Dayaks method of revenge. Human Rights Watch reported that around 500 people mostly Madurese were killed and about 20,000 were displaced. UNHCR noted, however, that the province still indeed harbors a potent threat of unrest due to simmering feud between the Dayaks and Madurese ¹¹.

As a result of April 1997 conflicts, the press reported that 3,054 homes had been destroyed and more than 15,000 people, almost all of them were Madurese, had been displaced. Those figures were probably low and as it were difficult to make an accurate count. Some Madurese returned to Madura, others move in with relative in other parts of West Kalimantan, some were housed in temporary barracks at army posts and in other holding centers. The districts of Sambas and Sanggau were the most affected, with respectively 5,000 and 3,122 known displaced, although again, the figures are almost certainly too low. An Australian paper quoted Transmigration Minister Siswono Yoduhusodo as saying that at least 20,000 Madurese remained in refugees camps and were too traumatized by the violence to go back to their homes¹².

**The Dayaks against the Madurese Migrants
in Sambas, West Kalimantan (1999)**

In March 1999, communal conflict erupted once again in the province of West Kalimantan. Indigenous Dayaks and local Malays carrying machetes, spears and guns attacked Madurese transmigrants (whom they blamed for the loss of jobs and tribal land) in the costal district of Sambas. The attackers burned homes, decapitated people, and revived the tradition of eating the organs of the vanquished.

Indonesia's former president Soeharto, began moving many Madurese from Madura to West Kalimantan in the 1960s to alleviate over population in Madura. Since then eight conflicts have been broken out between Madurese and Dayaks and one between Madurese and ethnic Chinese. But this one was the most bloody and damaging one, in which at least 200 Madurese were killed and some 35,000 (35% of Madurese population in West Kalimantan) fled to provincial capital Pontianak, and other nearby towns and also to Java island¹³.

Based on the 1997 records of Pemda Kodya Pontianak (the Pontianak City Government) there were a number of Indonesian ethnic group such as the Sundanese, Buginese, Javanese, Ambonese, Timorese, Papuan, Minangkabau, Malay, Batak, Acehnese, Banjarnese, Manadois, Butonese, Macasarese, Balinese, Torajan, and sasak in WK province. However they did not actually involve themselves directly or indirectly in the 12 conflicts that took place in WK province. Why were only members of certain community groups involved in the conflicts? This shows that inter community conflicts in WK were unique to the people of WK (Dayak and Madurese Majorities) and that the larger community is more open and does not merely hate members of all communities or ethnic groups.

**The Dayaks against the Madurese
Migrants in Central Kalimantan (2001)**

The recent conflicts sparked on 17th February 2001 in Sampit, when a house belonging to an indigenous Dayak was burnt down. According to local accounts gangs of migrants Madurese rode round Sampit in trucks shouting Death to the Dayaks . Hundreds of the Dayaks fled the town or sought refuge in churches. As the news of conflict spread, Dayaks returned to Sampit in force to take revenge. Six people were killed. The violence spread rapidly into neighbouring towns and villages and as far as Palangkaraya, the provincial capital, 220 km to the east. In the worst single incident during the violence more than 118 Madurese were killed by Dayaks in the villages of Parenggean on February 25, 2001¹⁴.

By March 2nd, the violence had subsided sufficiently for Vice-President Megawati to make a visit to a refugee camp in Sampit, followed on 8th March, by a brief visit to Sampit and Palangkaraya by the then president Wahid. Further violence followed Wahid's visit and up to six Dayak protesters were shot dead by police. On 22nd March there was more violence in and around the district capital of Kuala Kapuas, in which 17 people were reported dead and more homes and property burned. In April another round of house burnings was reported in Pangkalan Bun. According to local police, the violence was started by some 400 people arriving in trucks from the direction of Sampit who managed to evade police efforts to prevent them entering the town. They started burning Madurese houses, prompting a further out flux of refugees.

Four years after the earlier out break in 2001, there are still an estimated 40,000 Madurese refugees living in wretched conditions in temporary camps in west Kalimantan's provincial capital Pontianak.

Causes of Ethnic Conflicts in West Kalimantan

The ongoing slaughter can not be simplified as ethnic conflict between Dayak and Madurese, even less so as religious conflict. Rather the roots of this ethnic conflicts and violence were established a long time ago when the New Order government supported by international creditor agencies , jointly invested in these giants projects; also planting the roots of the ongoing conflict that characterizes the humanitarian situation in Indonesia in general.

A major cause of the conflict between indigenous Dayaks and migrants Madurese, and other ethnic conflicts in Indonesia has been the development that the Soeharto regime promoted over thirty years. Natural resources, including Kalimantan s forest and minerals were handed out as concessions for powerful business elite. The customary landowners, the indigenous Dayaks were systematically denied their land and resource rights, they have had no recourse to legal action to defend their rights since, under Indonesian law, forest belong to state.

Based on various researches, that have been conducted, there were at least six triggers and root causes, which produce the conflict in WK¹⁵ such as:

- Cultural differences;
- Unfair competition;
- Gangsterism and criminality;
- Very centralized policies of the central government;
- Uneven, unfair social- economic structure and competition, and
- The inability and powerlessness of the local apparatus

Cultural difference s arising in culturally plural society were a triggering factor, but that factor was not only the responsible for causing inter- community and inter ethnic conflicts in Kalimantan in general and West Kalimantan in particular.

Cultural difference arose because the Madurese new comers seemed more prone to practicing their original cultural value system called acarok- which tended to led violent actions by insulted parties, some times over trivial or unintended insults the Madurese saw themselves as morally obligated to avenge any threat to their self esteem. Or harm or sham committed against their families and friends (Alqadrie, 1987) this has led many observers to describe parts of or members of Madurese community in WK (especially males) as short-tempered , stubborn , very touchy about their honour and self- esteem , and having a tendency to settle such differences violently¹⁶.

Based on above research finding it could be said that the main causing factors interacting with each other to produce the inter-community conflicts were cultural factors, generally called cultural pluralism or multiculturalism, on the one hand and structural factors including security, law, economic and political ones, on other hand. Loss of ethnic identity on the one hand, and the birth of ethnic consciousness by the community members in the interior WK o the other, has created hatred towards the central government that is the personification of the political culture of the Javanese Sultanate instead of being directed towards Javanese people, the hatred was transferred to members of the Sambas Madurese community. The substitution of the hatred from Javanese with the Madurese community has been caused by cultural and habitual facts, such as:

- 1) Unlike of the members of Madurese community in the Sambas areas and in other interior areas of WK, members

of the Javanese ethnic groups are highly flexible in their social relations and have a very strong ability to conform to local culture and social conditions. They always settle problems through consultation and deliberation and never physically.

- 2) Unlike Javanese people, in general, members of the Madurese community in Sambas and other interior areas of WK (also in the interior areas CK) tend to carry arms wherever they go. This habit is usual for and disturbed to members of Dayak and Malay communities in these areas. They tend to get easily involved in violent actions and to quickly use their arms, sometimes over trivial or unintended problems.
- 3) Unlike Javanese people, a small number of Madurese community tend to deal with their socio-economic competitors physically or in other vulgar ways.
- 4) Unlike most other migrants, a small part of the Madurese community in WK used Gangsterism, criminality and other pressures to achieve their goals.

Faced with grassroots Dayak and Malay community who are lower class and almost uneducated, the substitution of hatred became easier and proceeded smoothly, and even was utilized by society leaders and political elite of the local community in WK and CK, for the pursuit of narrow economic and political interests.

The members of ethnic groups also have economic and political interests that are same as or different to those of other ethnic groups. This phenomenon, if it proceeds smoothly and contains win-win relationships, tends to result in cooperation,

accommodation and in-group or out group solidarity. When the economic and political interest of one of the parties and smooth working network and win-win relationship does not exist between them anymore, inter community conflicts tend to be unavoidable. Conflicts and hostility that tend to proceed broadly and deeply because they are the result of economic and political interests and have structural root causes, are neatly covered by cultural differences and pluralism¹⁷.

Besides, cultural factors, there were structural factors providing the conditions for inter community conflict to occur. The latter were shaped in unfair, unjust socio-economic and political competition and in the domination of certain ethnic groups against other groups in certain fields.

Except of these causes of ethnic and communal conflicts in WK, the other main cause is Transmigration Plan by the central government. The resettlement program started mainly because of Indonesia's swiftly growing population. The government started policy in 1950 that would relocate great number of people from the overpopulated islands to those with fewer. An estimated 1.5 million families have been moved since 1950, to less populated islands by the government the main areas for settling transmigrants are Kalimantan, Irian Java and Lampung. Kalimantan was chosen not only because of its low population density but also because of its natural resources¹⁸.

Transmigration, both government-sponsored and spontaneous, has greatly altered the population balance in the province of West Kalimantan. In 1980, about 1.4 per cent of the province populations consisted of transmigrants; by 1985, the proportion was up to 6 per cent. In Sanggau Ledo, where the 1996-1997 conflicts broke out, settlers made 15 per cent of the population by 1980 and the proportion is likely to have risen since. In 1994 alone,

an estimated 6,000 families or about 25, 000 persons migrated to West Kalimantan¹⁹.

Recommendations

On the basis of the facts and findings explored through this research papers, following suggestions can be put forward for making harmony and peace among the two ethnic groups (Dayaks and Madurese):

- Central Government must revise the transmigration plan and also revise the policies regarding to social and economic development in the area;
- as the rain forests is main source of livelihood of local people, hence government should find out alternate rather than giving these forest to the commercial companies, which are exploiting the local people;
- there is dire need of changing the negative attitudes of both ethnic groups with each others, particularly of young generation, for this purpose NGOs and civil society organizations can play important role through organizing interactive theatres and social mobilizations;
- social conflicts using ethnic and religious symbols must be quickly handled and a way out must be found that does not damage moral and social values;
- social dialogues should be launched between the leaders of the two groups;
- cultural activities should be enhanced and promoted by the government as well as civil society organizations for peace and tolerance in the area; and
- religious / traditional communities should critically reconsider their communal conceptions, particularly those traditions that can contribute to an inclusive and dynamic social ethics.

Conclusion

Conflicts are social and natural phenomena that have always existed in the live of every community, and they could not be abolished and avoidable. There fore what could be done is to manage them so that conflicts occurring between opposite social forces would not emerge in the form of violence and ethnic extermination, which eventually would produce disruption and national disintegration

Social facts in Indonesia usually have religious, ethnic and cultural dimensions. This may not be clear at first glance, but at one point or another in social developments, religious, ethnic and cultural dimensions come to the surface. Ethnic conflict in Indonesia is basically a conflict between local and migrant ethnic groups. In a plural society such as Indonesia, where ethnicity is everyday fact of life, ethnic competitions for resources and positions may create a kind of delicate equilibrium of groups.

The ethnic conflicts in West Kalimantan are result of wrong policies of the government such as transmigration plan, deforestation, and negligence of the indigenous people rights over forest and other mineral resources and to some extent to pay attention only the migrants people for settlement, that further made local people Dayak resent and frustrated.

Ethnicity and religious affiliations are sited in the inner most feeling of every single person. As such, solidarity based on ethnicity and religions are trespassing national geographical boundaries.

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