

DAYAK IDENTITY ETHNIC CLASH IN PALANGKA RAYA

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ABSTRACT:

This study describes Dayak ethnic group is the majority ethnic resident of Palangka Raya city and most of Central Kalimantan area. As previously known, Dayak ethnicity is highly open in the matter of social interaction with different ethnic group. This is due to “*Huma Betang*” philosophy that the Dayak community adhered to. However, ethnic clashes due to intense and heterogenous inter-tribal interaction process cannot be avoided. For example, in the Dayak community, serving the best food they have is a form of respect towards guests (different ethnicity). Guests eating heartily together with host until none of the food left is an honor for Dayak people. Refusing the invitation to eat is a huge affront for them. However, different condition happens in the case of tradition, interaction, and courtesy of Javanese people. When they are offered invitation to eat, Javanese tends to consider refusing it. Even though they receive it, Javanese will behave as though they are forced to, by leaving a lot still in their plates to avoid presumption of being “*serakatan*” (avaricious). This paper would offer solution to minimize the occurrence of ethnic clashes and conflicts in Palangka Raya, as this city is a candidate for new governance capital city of Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). This effort is important so that ethnic conflicts that claimed a lot of lives won't be repeated, as trauma of Dayak-Madura ethnic conflict during 2000s still well-remembered among Dayak community.

Keywords: *Dayak identity, ethnicity, ethnic clash*

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of moving the capital city of Republic of Indonesia has lately become the topic of numerous talks. From light conversation in coffee stall, up to discussion forum of scholars. From senseless debate in various press or non-press medium, up to concrete acts taken by the government. From a mere issue, up to become a political commodity.

Disagreement over this issue are unavoidable. Some of the pro party assumes that Jakarta is no longer suitable as capital city, mainly because heavy burden of Jakarta due to urbanization, traffic jam, flood, and various

other social issues. However, cons party thinks that Jakarta is still suitable to become the capital city. The reason is that of minimal cost prepared by the government, as it is claimed to be more efficient to repair Jakarta compared to moving to and build a new capital city.

As disagreement occurred, the government took actions along with it. Several areas were reviewed and prepared to be the new capital city, including in Sumatera, Sulawesi, Papua, and Kalimantan. From numerous areas reviewed, it finally selected into a few cities, with Palangka Raya in Central Kalimantan as the strongest candidate.

Palangka Raya is chosen as candidate after a process of comprehensive reviewing.

From historical aspect (initial idea of Bung Karno), minimal natural disaster danger aspect (such as earthquake or volcano), also geopolitical safety aspect (right in the middle of Republic of Indonesia territory).

As previously known, Dayak ethnic group is the majority of resident ethnicity in Palangka Raya and most of Central Kalimantan (see BPS, 2010). This city has area of 2.400 km² with a total of 376.647 resident number and density of 92,067 people/km².

I. DAYAK AND ETHNICITY

1.1. Who is Dayak?

Local resident of Palangka Raya is Dayak ethnic group from parental tribe of Dayak Ngaju. The short distance of Dayak tribe to the river causes them to identify their self or their community with the river names [2]. According to Widen [3], the Dayak lived in extended family groups in longhouse or traditional house (*betang*) were they could develop and practice their customs and culture. A Dayak traditional house not only symbolised protections but also *belom bahadat* (to live together based on customary law), embodying, unity tolerance and solidarity.

The arrival of Malayan from Sumatera and Malacca pushed Dayak people who lived in shore to move back towards Kalimantan inland. Besides Malayan, Bugis and Javanese people were also arrived and took resident in the eastern and western shore of Kalimantan. In the western part of Kalimantan, Chinese people had also come to work at the mines.

In general, Dayak people believed in Kaharingan or Christianity. Dayak people who has embraced Islam calls themselves Malay and Bakumpay. In Palangka Raya, numerous Malayan people have assimilated to Dayak tribe, resulting in a new unique culture that can be found in either building architecture or their daily lives.

In addition to Malayan people, several experts thought that part of occupants living in the shoreline of Kalimantan were mixture of local resident (Dayak) and immigrant such as Chinese people who came as traders or workers. These Chinese people were often found in cities, for example Pangkalan Bun, Sukamara, and Nanga Bulik. In addition, assimilation also occurred between Dayak and Indian people who believed in Hinduism.

The divide of Malayan ethnicity in Kalimantan is hard to describe, as the term of Malayan tribe is only used in the definition of different religion, not in the definition of different origin/tribe. Even though so, there does a lot of the original Malayan who came from Riau and Malaka Peninsula. Mallincordt in Scharer (2013) explained that Malayan people living along the shore was partly descendant of Javanese people during Majapahit reign. This kind of distribution is often found in the shoreline. The occupant could be originated from nobleman in Sedulun river and Tarakan Malay [4].

Some theorized that Dayak people who has converted to Islam hesitant to call themselves Dayak because of shame and humble feeling. This feeling grew widely during unitarian and repressive Orde Baru period. To this date, Dayak was stereotyped as primitive, backward, live amidst the forest, uneducated, even thought to have a tail.

Author does not wholly agree to the previous notion. From some discussion personally conducted by author, it appeared that there are critical political and economic motives at the base of it. For example, Dayak people highly respects status of government officials (civil servant, police, military). A part of Dayak still thought that their offspring has yet to work properly or unemployed still unless they become government personnel. Due to this reason, a part of Central Kalimantan community tries to blur, or even leave their original ethnicity of Dayak. They wish to gain

privilege from their new identity to compete for the limited resources.

Due to the reason above, it become common to meet Dayak people who have Javanese name, such as Sugianto, Slamet, Sri Wahyuni, or Dayak who have Islamic name such as Muhammad, Ahmad Sujarwan, Abdul Yassir. This was due to notion of Javanese identity as sole representative of Indonesian identity which grew during period of Orde Baru reign. In other words, the Javanese name is believed to be able to help Dayak people to gain work in the government office as civil servant, army, and police.

1.2. What is ethnicity?

Ethnicity has different definition based on the language used to interpret it. First, the definition of ethnicity comes from Latin *ethnos*, to point out non-Greek groups who lived in the marginal area, foreign, and a bit barbaric [5]. According to Eriksen [6]; Haralambos & Holborn [7] *ethnos* means not have a religion. Ethnic was oftentimes used by European to call West Aboriginal people as uncivilized and not-religious people. In England up to the middle of 19th century, ethnic was applied as alternative of 'race'. Meanwhile in the Indonesian dictionary [8] ethnic is related to social group in social or cultural system that is defined to have certain mean or status due to heredity, *adat*, religion, language, or others.

According to sociological and anthropological point of view, ethnic group is commonly seen as cultural difference rather than physical one. Thus, by deriving it from that basic concept, social scientists had different point of view about ethnicity. Review of social politic aspect of ethnic is called ethnicity.

In the psychological review, a person is categorized as an ethnic when (a) a person is mentally prepared to do sacrifice in behalf of

her/his ethnic, or (b) a person is willing to join in a certain ethnic group and thought to be suitable and trusted by the other member of ethnic group [9]. Social scientist generally agreed that ethnicity was an important phenomenon in political review. They initially made an understanding of the existence of an ethnic group. Ethnic has a deepening review during its development. For example, ethnic was developed based on sense of belonging in the bond of a group [10], ethnic as a network of significant symbols [11], ethnic was composed of living choices of group called social construction [12].

Ethnicity is tightly related with the birth of democracy in the world at the start of 21st century [13]. The blooming of democracy process along with decentralization politic where central government give rights to local government to have political freedom and recognition in electing their own district head. Ethnicity become an emotional and profound bond which birthed the struggle of certain ethnic groups from the dominance of majority ethnic. Ethnicity is also related to each culture that feature unique character of the ethnic group, in which bond was formed between the member of group that known as primordialism. This make ethnic bond often manipulated and turned into tools by elite group in order to obtain source of power, mainly in area with heterogenous resident.

Based on Yang (2000) [14] the concept of ethnicity possessed a wide meaning, which was the defined as following:

"... ethnicity include ethnic group, membership, ethnic affiliation and ethnic identity. On the one hand, ethnicity is subjective since it is the product of the human mind and human sentiments. On the other hand, ethnicity is objective characteristics and constructed by social forces and power relation. It's is to a large extent independent of individuals desires. On balances, ethnicity is the outcome of subjective perception based on some objective

characteristics such as physical attributes, presumed ancestry, culture, or national origin”.

Handelman [15] separated three steps of development showed in the human cultural community, which were: first, ethnic category, the correlation of a person towards community was a rather loose bond and only a depiction of existing cultural difference between his/her group with the outside world. Second, ethnic network, in which orderly interaction had occurred between ethnic members and thus, resource distribution occurred within members of network. At the level of ethnic association, the members had developed shared interest and formed political organizations under collective statement. Third, at the level of ethnic community, the community had established a permanent territory and bound by their political organization such as seen in a nation state.

Schermerhorn completed this by stated that an ethnic group was a collective community that shared or depicted to share ancestry, had same historical experience in the past, and had cultural focus within one or several symbolic elements that stated its membership, such as family patterns, physical features, religion and believe alliances, dialect or language forms, tribal affiliations, nationalities, or combination of those properties which in the base was a form of bond between members as a group.

Fundamentally, an ethnic group possessed six properties as following: 1) has unique name which identified the essence of community, 2) has myth of shared ancestor, similar origin in a certain timeframe thus the group forms a fictive familial tie, 3) the group has shared historical memory or past memory such as heroes or certain occurrence, 4) the group has united cultural elements such as religion, rite, and language, 5) the group is bound to homeland, both as physical bond or

symbolic bond to ancestral land, 6) has shared solidarity feeling between its occupant.

According to Liliweri [16], ethnicity concept was a concept which explained by several factors, including:

1. Group status of a person based on inherited culture from previous generation. At this point, a condition is explained where everything is inherited by previous occurrences and has political properties within a ring of power.
2. Cultural values and norms that differs a member of group from other groups. Members of ethnic group commonly have a sense of realization of shared cultural values and norms, even make it into their cultural identity to separate themselves from other surrounding groups. This meant cultures or norms in society that must be conducted by heterogenous community at each interaction in social relationship. For example, the Betang cultural philosophy in the differentiating identity context.
3. Ethnic categorization based on affiliation, meaning that with a certain basis a group of people make affiliation to each other, even the basis is turned into an identity or identification of individuals to show that they are a part of certain ethnic group. Affiliation is viewed as a form of self-organization in an ethnic group conducted in a certain timeframe, thus it became a distinctive identity in another form.
4. Different from race, ethnicity was a process of exchange of inherited behavioral and cultural habits. At this point, the definition is not far different from 2nd point above, in which author imagined as exchange forms within social interaction.
5. Group identity based on shared language, culture, history, and geographic origin. This point is a form of differentiating affirmation as existence limit of an ethnic group.

6. Cultural share or exchange based on language, religion, and nationalism. Based on this consideration, ethnicity is always related to “excessive” believe that their own language, religion, and nationality are above language, religion, and nationality of others.

Author assumed that share or exchange mentioned above was not in the definition of limited primordial movements, but a form of social movements operated by certain actors in bringing ethnicity spirit as their basis of struggle.

From various explanation for definition of ethnicity above, it can be summed that ethnic is a group in community which possesses certain differences or characteristics between one group to the other. To affirm the difference of an ethnic group from the others, there are several generally emphasizing characteristics. Based on the previous definitions, author assumes these following characteristics:

1. Possessing their own ethnic name or label. It can be used to call for their self (recognition) or given by others. Usually a name or label is birthed as an adhered main name or can be used as a term.
2. Possessing an ethno-linguistic (language) and religion. Dayak ethnic group is a large ethnic, making selecting sub-ethnics (subtribes) cannot be avoided. This caused separation of sub-ethnic due to area or different daily activities based on their distance to the river. Similar with religion, before new religions were brought to Kalimantan island by traders, scientists, and colonialism-era administrators, most of the pre-colonialism occupants believed in animism.
3. Possessing a form of social strata. It is called social strata due to materialism nature, causing a depiction of social layering within the Dayak community in Central Kalimantan which is composed of

first, second, and third level of pyramid. Each level is highly different from the other.

4. Possessing a behavioral pattern. It is defined as situation or condition from which interaction forms performed by members of ethnic group, both within or with another ethnic group.
5. Having an ethnic institution/ establishment/ organization. It is defined as a vessel or place in where ethnic group organize themselves, either inwards or outwards of group, thus the ethnic group able to regulate their rights and duties. The organization/institute must exist on the base of inheritance from the previous generations.

Based on the elaboration of several factors about ethnicity concept above, it can be concluded that ethnicity is a forming of communities based on shared identity, culture, religion, history, and language, thus in deliberate realization making the community different from other communities. This is due to attributional recognition process given both by outsider or from within the community itself. In other word, elaboration related to social and political aspect of ethnic is called ethnicity.

1.3. Why Ethnic Clashes Occurr?

Inter-cultural clash is an inevitable occurrence because of different essence between humans. Despite that, these clashes won't ignite horizontal conflicts unless political and economic motives are involved. Political scientists thought that there had been no conflict with ethnic background, however conflicts occurred in Indonesia all this time were economic or political conflicts that rode on ethnic difference. Most of the conflicts happened in Indonesia were a form of competition over limited resources, such as stocks, power, and identity prides.

Formation of ethnic identity is a part of politic resources to compete in the interest group. Moving ethnic group within ethnicity is an effective act to move individuals in order to achieve collective goals. Every act can be seen to possess rational motivation as a basis to compete for limited resources, such as welfares, positions, political powers, or other limited resources.

According to Prabowo and Suparlan [17] in their article titled “*Ethnicity Issue and Spatial Layout in Indonesia*”, it was found that unavoidable cultural contact had occurred in Jakarta, Medan, and Lampung. Spatial consequence could be seen from the tendency of certain ethnic group to try maintained their cultural identity, both in urban or rural area. They concluded that no serious treatment towards ethnic groups, either local resident or arriving occupants, would affect negatively towards spatial layout of a city.

1.4. Anticipating Ethnic Clashes

As elaborated above, inter-cultural clashes are inevitable within a heterogenous community structure. Because of that, anticipative actions are required to avoid these clashes escalate into massive conflicts with ethnic background, moreover so if these clashes will be occurring in the new capital city of democratic Republic of Indonesia.

In the center of every conflict happened in Indonesia during all this time is the feeling of injustice, poverty, and adversity which in deliberate or not was related to the state. Thus, there are several points that can be done by each component to anticipate this, for example:

1. Independent and modern ethnic institutions

An ethnic institute should be independent and free of government's intervention due to its neutral position which is strategic for pressure group. It should be siding to

traditional community rather than corporation. Ethnic institute should not be dragged into the interest of power struggle within practical politics, such as election, etc.

A good ethnic institute should apply principals of modern organization, including being democratic, accommodative, transparent, and visionary. Even though it is not a profit-oriented organization, ethnic institute should always try to develop itself onwards.

2. Strengthening the role of solution-maker of ethnic institute.

In a modern community structure, ethnic institute does not only function as keeper and conserver of ancestor's culture. However, it must play role as a solution maker. It should be present to marginalized community who in need of justice.

Ethnic institute also needs to be given wider rights, such as in relation to resolve traditional conflict, governance of traditional land, and recognition over *adat* rights, even up to the publication of *adat* certification.

3. Building inter-ethnic harmonious forum

Inter-ethnic harmonious forum needs to be form as a vessel of discussion if cultural conflicts and clashes occurs as previously elaborated. Not only that, this forum can also become government's instrument to perform counseling towards growing and developing ethnic institutes.

Through this forum, government role can be maximized without intervening and dragging ethnic institutes into practical politic stage due to interest of a few local elites.

4. Supporting policy which grant privilege for host ethnic group

When Palangka Raya has officially announced as capital city, strategic policy in the form of special autonomous

constitution should be configured. At the minimum, it should regulate:

- a. The compulsion that public officials, either at level of governor, city mayor, or sub-district head, should be held by Dayak people.
- b. Sum ratio of government officials filled by Dayak people should be above 50%.
- c. Authorization rights over land are regulated that only Dayak people and others who have pass through acculturated process with Dayak people can own land.
- d. Main priority for Dayak people in accessing public service facility managed by the government.

II. CLOSING

The moving of capital city of Republic of Indonesia should be a good breakthrough. This well-meaning intention won't be useful if it remains as issue without concrete action from the government. In addition, strong support from the community is also critical for this plan to be realized.

This is hardly an easy effort. Readiness and alertness in addition to support from government and community is required. More over, the main issues are mutually profitable solidarity and cooperation, both for government and also local ethnic group, which in this case is Dayak ethnic.

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