Tin Mining and Political Territory of Lom Indigenous People in Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

Abstract—This article is about the process of political territory on Tin mining at Lom Indigenous People location and their responses from a political economy perspective. Based on the qualitative analysis and case study approach this article showed that the dynamics of political territory progression is dual informal political territory which operates from bottom to top. Informal political territory runs through contested economic activity in unconventional tin mining involving Lom people as owners or as miners in small-scale voluntarily and independently and they also cooperate with any ethics both as in capitals and in miners. The informal political on up level as a constancy involves elders authority of the community to centralize the controlling of tin mining, new territory, and land claim property which raising a group of delinquency. The informal territory political practice indicates the existence of economic rationality among Lom indigenous people.

Keywords—Indigenous, Rationality, Territoriality, Tin

I. INTRODUCTION

The process of territory among indigenous communities resources in Philippines, Argentina, and Ethiopia indicates capitalism in indigenous communities. Territorial space is allocated for development through investment in oil palm in Philippine [1], soybeans in Argentina [2], and large-scale agriculture in the highlands of Ethiopia [3]. In Indonesia, the territorial space phenomenon conducted by the state is allocated for mining concession permits [4] and oil palm plantations [5]. The territorialization of customary forests in the tin mining sector occurred in Bangka island, especially in Lom Indigenous Community, Bangka Belitung Islands province.

Territorialism has two views: Firstly, formal territory which is territorialism as a process created by the state to control people and their activities by making a line around geographical space, preventing certain people from entering the space, and allowing or prohibiting activities within the boundaries of the space [6]. Secondly, informal territory. Informal territory is an illustration of economic activities that arise through certain production practices involving labor, access to resources, and existing knowledge by combining legality and illegality aspects simultaneously which directed expose the authority of the state as the regulatory body of the production space [7]. These territorial processes run in the political economy of tin mining in the Lom indigenous Community.

Based on oral history, the Lom people control customary forests for generations and are used for farming since the Dutch pre-colonial, even without being equipped with land documents. Over time, problems began to emerge when the New Order came to power. The government through the Ministry of Social Affairs released a program for the isolated community in 1974. This program relocated Lom Indigenous Community from the remote forests to settlements in Air Abik sub-village, Gunung Muda Village, Belinyu District. The program aimed at releasing them isolated. After having relocated, the agrarian problem continues growing and leading to a plan on whether the alienated tribal project really aims to prosper the Lom people or even be used for certain interests that are bigger and more productive?

From the information above, the background of the New Order relocation program in the Lom area connected with PN Timah's efforts launched an exploration of tin-lead reserves in 1973 with production continuing to rise to over 6000 tons in early 1979 [8]. Onshore tin mining exploration also responded to the rampant smuggling of tin to Singapore. The smuggling of tin is also carried out by some people of Lom because it is difficult to access tin which is commonly found around customary forests. At that time, in addition to the tin company and its partners, it was strictly forbidden to mine tin with the threat of being charged and punished. As mining and smuggling activities increase, overlapping mining and forestry interests become inevitable. The use of agricultural land and plantations for the benefit of the local population, including the Lom people, is declared
prohibited as long as the area is designated for mining or if the tin found.

In 1998, there was a drastic change that began with a change in the regulation of the Minister of Industry and Trade Number 558/MPP/Kep/12/1998 concerning General Provisions in the Export Sector that did not contain tin as goods regulated and supervised by exports [9]. This decision made tin no longer a strategic commodity and the implication of tin then became free goods for anyone. This opportunity is used by Lom people to access tin illegally with claims of customary land property inherited by parents and ancestors. The social relations of the Lom people with lead gave rise to the political dynamics of their own territory which was interesting to study more deeply.

This study would like to analyze how political space territorialization of tin resources works and the response of Orang Lom from a political economy perspective. The purpose of this research is to prove the occurrence of the process of indigenous capitalism through informal politics of territories from the bottom and up (dual informal territories). This political mechanism helped shaping the Lom’s rational economic style during New Order and post-New Order histories.

II. METHODS

This research used the qualitative method with a case study approach. A case study in this research focused on history, the social economic relationship of tin mining, and the dynamics of the actors’ constancy in tin production. The term case means the social process is not discussed around the classical field, but in contemporary history where some actors still alive and needs time tracking. Based on period, this research was tracking the history of tin mining since Dutch colonialism, new order, and post new order (decentralization). The researchers tracked three related aspects; political land ownership (property), access to tin as a resource, and dynamics of territory among actors. The three aspects decided the economic rationality of Lom indigenous people.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Political Economy of Tin in Lom Indigenous Community

This research was conducted in Gunung Muda Village, Belinyu District, Bangka Regency, Bangka Belitung Islands Province. Geographically, the Lom people are living in two separated villages, they are in Air Abik sub-village, Gunung Muda Village and Pemak sub-Village, Gunung Pelawan Village, Belinyu District, Bangka Regency. Air Abik sub-village is the main village for the distribution of Lom people which is about 65 km from the district capital. Population demographics of Lom people are based on the results of a field survey [10], the population of Air Abik sub-village in 2014 was 630 people with the composition of adherents of the Lom 280 indigenous religion, 248 Islam, 87 Christians, 11 Konghuchu and 4 Buddhism. The Lom indigenous religion is dominant than others.

The remote area concept in this article does not only cover the spatial (geographical) meaning of a particular area [11] or in the relational meaning of ‘central’ and ‘peripheral’ relationships [12]. The remote area is perceived as an arena of meeting between development, economic growth, and a society that is imagined as primitive and communal that experiences land grabbing by involving new actors, new commodities, new ownership systems, and new capital accumulations [7]. The remote area is essentially a social relationship that is closely related to the process of production, power relations, commodification and capital accumulation of an entity’s resources.

There are two perspectives of Lom people area in Air Abik sub-village; Firstly, political perspective. Political perspectives are about to figure out the dynamics of Lom area which is decorated by the actors’ constancy in access and territory of the tin production space since the Dutch colonial until the New Order. Politically, the customary forest claimed by the Lom people as ancestral land has no legitimacy. The Dutch colonial government did not recognize the existence of customary forests in Bangka Belitung, and Singkep because the people of Bangka Belitung in the past were basically nomadic [13]. Dutch colonials restricted the access space of the people to the forest, including Lom people, by issuing forest control regulations in Bangka in 1933. Prohibition included harvesting wood for pillars of pepper plants from government forests and other forests and limiting access to logging in village forests for daily needs.

The practice of a ban on accessing forest resources for non-tin mining interests continued in the New Order because tin was considered as a state property. As a state ownership, not every person/group can access tin openly, including the Lom People. The customary forest claimed by the Lom people is one of the tin mining concessions owned by PN Timah (state mining) in the Belinyu Bangka region. As the oldest indigenous community in Bangka Belitung, Lom indigenous community in Mapur and in Air Abik transformed into an entity that always had a government and political territory which was arranged in such a way by traditional leaders/shamans [14]. This prohibition disturbs the authority of Lom traditional leaders over the geographical, economic, social and cultural space in Air Abik. Some traditional leaders use the authority to legitimize logging to support pepper plants and the need to build pundok (garden houses). Some other traditional leaders continue to refuse to log for any purpose in the name of natural sustainability.

Practices in the field, some of the Lom people exploit the authority and legitimacy of traditional leaders to illegally access tin by becoming illegal miners in collusion with illegal Chinese miners. Tin panning techniques in the water streams in Lom area were learned from Chinese. Wild miners in Lom area, sell the produce to Chinese ethnic then collect the tin and smuggle it to Singapore. In order to prevent illegal tin mining and smuggling of tin, PN Timah had coordinated with the miners by giving permission and supervision and the results were bought by the company [8].

In 1973 there was a study of tin prospecting in the Thirty and Bukit Limau Mountains in Jambi in collaboration with PN Timah with the Directorate of Geology. Research targets in the hinterland such as the highlands around the granite intrusion of the Thirty Mountains. The results of the initial
research concluded that there were indications of tin, but it was not economical enough [8]. This finding is a clue for tin exploration in inland areas that have granite intrusions in pre-tertiary rocks (quarsite, hornfels, slates) which are widely available on Bangka Island.

Secondly, economic perspective. Prohibition of accessing wood in state-owned forests, smuggling of tin which is difficult to anticipate, and attempts to clean up corruption in old tin companies, push policies for reorganization for development. In the tin mining sector, the reorganization took place in 1976 by changing the structure of the Indonesian PN Timah to Timah Ltd. Company (Persero). In the period 1982-1985, there was privatization with the entry of foreign and domestic private companies under employment contracts that were carried out per generation. PT Timah also entered into contracts with the private sector to conduct mining in less productive areas on the scale of small mines, and the production was handed over to the parent company. This mine is called the Contract of Work or Mine Works (TK) [15]. The contractors are mostly from China and half of the country's mining production comes from TK. Some of this production is smuggled into Singapore because of the high price difference.

The granting of permits and supervision of illegal tin miners through the TK scheme is an economic magnet for the population, especially the Chinese and the Lom people. For the Chinese, the opportunity to become a lead collector, buy the tin from the miners including the Lom people, and sell it to Timah Ltd. company strengthens economic domination. For some Lom people, the arrival of tin was welcomed enthusiastically as a way out for the continuation of community mining activities (limited scale) and considered a solution for poverty.

B. Dynamics of Political Territory

The PN Timah study concluded that inland areas, especially the hilly highlands with granite intrusion as targets for future tin exploration and the fact of smuggling tin sand from the interior of Lom, underlie the political process of the territory. Inland territorial politics Lom works through two patterns, namely: first, formal territory. Formal theory sees territorialism as formal control of the state over geographical space [6]. Territorial politics has been going on since Dutch colonialism in 1933 and has continued with Japan until the New Order. Lom's inland territories have one goal, namely to restrict access to tin as state property in various ways including the relocation program and the deployment of military forces.

The New Order policy was always oriented towards development. In the village context, it is known as the concept of village development. In the context of village development, a program of the settlement of isolated tribal peoples by the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has been carried out. The program's target is 75 Lom households from the forest to a new settlement in Air Abik sub-district. But it has not been one year, some Lom people have returned to the forest-inhabiting their garden huts. While others began to settle in new settlements by staying active in the gardens.

At a glance, this relocation program has an ideal goal to form the Lom indigenous community as a human development, regardless of the isolation and socio-cultural backwardness. But, politically, the interest behind the relocation program is to inhibit the rate of shifting cultivation of the Lom people who have made their fields within the boundaries of the tin mining company [14]. In addition, there are efforts to cripple the social-political order (power) of traditional leaders/shaman Lom who has long been respected and feared by others. With resettlement, there are two opportunities for the country, namely the opportunity to control the lives of the Lom people from the domination of traditional leaders/shamans and control of illegal tin mining and illegal logging in the interior of Lom.

Control over tin and wood resources is carried out through the deployment of military forces in the interior of Lom. As is true with other state mines, Timah Ltd Company uses the military to protect mining areas in the Lom customary forest, forbids local residents from having miners (tin panning devices) and tin mining, storing them at home even if only a little, and even smuggling them out of the island Bangka. Unofficial punishment in the form of physical violence such as the lifting of toenails and a shot of a rifle butt will be dropped. Official sentences in the form of prison sentences will be immediately dropped for those who violate the rules. This official and unofficial rule make people afraid to deal with officials such as the lead task force, police, and army.

The territorial process of tin resources in the interior of Lom takes place through three stages, namely: first, beginning with the state's claim to the forest/land that is not considered to belong to the individual/group as state property. Some of the customary forests claimed by the Lom people do not get formal legitimacy from the state and are included as state-owned forests. Second, the state then establishes forest boundaries that are declared as state property to emphasize territorial control of natural resources such as tin and wood. Through Timah Ltd. Company, the state closed down and forbade anyone from accessing the area along with tin and wood resources in it. Third, in order to strengthen and expand the arena of control over territory, the state launches a program by dividing forests into various functions based on scientific criteria such as protected forests, production forests, settlements, and so on. Lom customary forests are partly included in production forest areas, others are designated as other use areas, and new settlements. The territorial process by the state of the Lom customary forest contained in tin seeds and wood is actually a zoning effort on an area to regulate the types of activities permitted in each zone.

Second, informal territories. This territorial process took place with Timah Ltd company entering into a joint contract with the private sector through the Tambang Karya (known as TK) as the mechanism for mining activities in less productive areas, small mines, and the results must be submitted to Timah Ltd company. TK began operations in 1985 and its contractors were mostly Chinese [15]. The TK structure includes Timah Ltd company as the power of attorney who grants mining authority by issuing a power of
attorney to the private sector, cukong or the ethnic Chinese who own capital of TK owner, foreman as a technical representative of TK mining, and day laborers who have functional parts adapted to the technical needs of tin mining.

In TK tin mining practices in the 1990s, most of the ethnic Chinese acted as cukong as well as foremen. While the position of Lom people is mostly as daily laborers. The aspect of the closeness of social, cultural and economic relations makes the Lom people easily accepted as laborers by the cukong. Armed with an oral application, the Lom people were accepted to work with the cukong. The wages received amounted to Rp.2000 / kilo / kung by working in the mining (TK) from 07.00 to 14.00 (1 kung is as same as working for 8 hours a day). The Lom people work as guards and cleaners (a place to collect sand mixed with tin seeds), spray, separate and clean the sand and tin seeds, and then put the tin seeds into the sack.

As a day laborer. The Lom people feel that it is easy to get cash from wages that are received every week. In addition to basic wages, they also get benefits such as health benefits, holidays and bonuses. Some Lom people build good relationships with the cukong where he works. But on the other hand, discriminatory treatment is also often experienced. Their workplace is only about sakan. It is very difficult to move up the position of being a foreman because the foreman is always held by cukong or cukong trustees. This condition creates feelings of jealousy which then leads to cheating behavior. Some Lom people who work in kindergarten have stolen the cukong’s tin seeds by conspiring and stealing information on the location of the area containing tin seeds. After all, is obtained, he leaves work or resigns.

The issuance of changes in the regulation of the Minister of Trade and Industry No.146 of 1999 has changed the social economic relations of the Lom people. Politically, changes in the regulation of the Minister of Trade and Industry were then used as a basis by the Bangka Regent to issue Regional Regulation No. 21/2001 concerning the implementation of general mining in Bangka and Regional Regulation (Perda) No.2/2001 concerning the implementation of mining production around customary forests. Control of tin production is carried out through the cooperation of leasing six bulldozers from the tin barons of Chinese ethnicity for the needs of unconventional mining. These heavy equipment are loaned to unconventional miners from Lom People or other parties at a rental price of Rp.20,000/hour/day. In addition, Kadus also has the right to determine where the location is allowed and cannot be mined. Indigenous people or other ethnic groups who reject this agreement, are prohibited from unconventional mining activities. The heavy equipment rental used by Kadus as sub-district tactical funds (treatment/operation of indigenous people with a loan pattern) and personal interests mainly strengthen the ‘network’.

The ‘network’ is a group that is deliberately managed by Kadus to strengthen the authority base and outside its authority. This network consists of Kadus trusted people from both Lom People and outside Lom (transmigrants) who have a large capital. The task of these trusted people is to regulate the solar supply network, heavy equipment, labor, and new location surveys. The practice of elite domination in using authority to control territories and property claims marks the formation of informal territories from above. In another sense, these two practices are commensurate with what is referred to as a border-less formal area [4].
Informal territorial political tactics marked the emergence of rational Lom People. Economic rationality Lom people start from a change in mindset to get to know money. The Lom people’s contact with the ethnic Chinese in accessing tin has introduced the mechanism of applying for money as a universal exchange system. Wages received by Lom people from the results of working in a cukong-owned kindergarten become the beginning of the process of producing value through investment in labor, which then exchanges with other people through a mutually agreed abstract exchange rate. Second, lifestyle changes. The Lom contact with tin after the New Order has changed the traditional pattern of life from consumptive patterns. The money obtained from the tin is used to renovate houses, buy cars/motorbikes, cell phones, and other electronic devices such as televisions and satellite dishes.

The consumptive lifestyle becomes a new trend among the Lom indigenous people in Air Abik sub-district. Third, the spirit of competition. The encouragement of a consumptive lifestyle spurred the spirit to compete in accumulating ownership of land/land. The phenomenon of buying and selling land/locations for Unconventional mining activities continues to increase and becomes an indicator of one’s economic success. Who buys the most land/land for the new unconventional mining location, he is the winner. The dynamics of the Lom competition are a fact of territorial claims to the ongoing territorial process as one of the main pillars of capitalism that leads to inland dynamics [18].

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The political workings of the territory in the interior of the Lom people turned out to be beyond the reason of ordinary people's political thinking. He works through two different patterns, but has the same goal: rationalize the Lom People. The first pattern, through formal territory with the state as the main actor. These territories have worked since Dutch colonialism until post-New Order by limiting territory, access, and property in the form of forest / land with a set of policies and regulations, scientific research for expansion of tin ore exploration in the highlands, deployment of bureaucratic apparatus in settlement relocation programs, and deployment military apparatus to control tin and wood resources. This working method effective to paralyze the order of power of traditional leaders/shamans who are highly respected and adhered to. These territorial politics was responded to by the Lom and ethnic Chinese by conspiring in the illegal economic activities of tin sand mining.

The second pattern, through informal territory with the state and non-state as the dominant new actor. Non-state actors such as Lom people exploit changes in regulations from the central and regional governments related to tin commodities by being actively involved in tin mining activities after the New Order. An interesting finding from the Lom People’s association with lead is the operation of informal territory politics from below and informal territory from above. Informal political practice from below works through economic activities in unconventional mining (TI) involving Lom people as voluntary and free unconventional mining owners or workers, cross-ethnic cooperation in labor and capital, combining property claims over legitimate customary forests and illegal unconventional mining activities simultaneously. Informal territory politics from above works through the domination of traditional elite authorities to control access, territory, various actors, and property claims on tin resources in the same time and space.

The operation of informal territorial politics from above and from below has an impact on the formation of the economic rationality of the Lom people. The economic rationality of the Lom people was formed beginning with the introduction of money, consumer behavior that changed lifestyles, and the spirit of competing in the practice of buying and selling land for the expansion of unconventional mining locations. The practice of competition through buying and selling land is a manifestation of the spirit of indigenous community capitalism in the contemporary century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study is part of research funded by the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia through the 2018 Doctoral Dissertation Research scheme.

REFERENCES


