

When Maluku Ethnic Group Says: I am Indonesia

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Abstract— Being an Indonesian is a sociological endeavor to be constantly pursued. It takes a deliberate structural and cultural transformation that can keep a critical distance on sectarian issues manipulated to achieve a certain goal. Maluku is a part of the ethnic groups that helped with the birth of Indonesia, but in reality it is one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia. The research aims to examine the pattern of Maluku ethnic transformation in the concept of Indonesian nationalism and the fulfillment of Maluku ethnic's citizenship rights as a manifestation of Indonesian national identity in national development policies. Finding research data by conducting interviews and observations and adopting a qualitative design, the research describes the reality of Maluku ethnic in the trajectory of history since it was committed to being a part of Indonesia until present. The research results are expected to be used as a basis for formulating policies and reconstructing the vision of nationalism to bring true social justice to all Indonesian people, including the people of Maluku. In conclusion, the government should open the widest possible access for the fulfillment of Maluku ethnic's citizenship rights as a manifestation of Indonesia's national identity.

Keywords— maluku ethnic; indonesian identity

I. INTRODUCTION

The theme of the research, namely when the Maluku ethnic group said I am Indonesia, is important to be investigated for several fundamental reasons. First, Indonesia constitutes a plural society consisting of various tribes that combine and merge into one nation, Indonesia. The country famous for its unity in diversity is formed by varying ethnics and develops with different traditions and religious beliefs that give birth to divergent cultures. The structure of Indonesian society is characterized by two unique features. Horizontally, there is a diversity of ethnics, religions, traditions, and regionalisms. Vertically, there is a large gap between the upper and lower level societies. A harmonious life as necessitated by the ideology of Pancasila seems to have been eroded. "Meanwhile, this harmonious life is really necessary in maintaining the regional needs and integration of a plural society. However, this harmonious life has become very rare and unaffordable because of the mainstream culture that is more individualistic and hedonistic" [1].

Secondly, the ethnicity or local culture that Edward Said's orientalism perceives as exotic, marginal, mysterious, supernatural, enchanting, and inferior is modeled as an indigenous trait. Indigenous in a positive sense means ethnic

culture whose values and local wisdom have universal values. This reasoning explains why ethnicity is made an identity within the framework of a "nation-state". Sablok writes [2],

Ethnicity is a purposive mobilization strategy in civil society. It is the umbrella in which various groups affirm their identity, although generally they have different traditional symbols of race, religion, language, and costume. Ethnicity thus refers to group consciousness that is different from the consciousness of the nation-state (pp. 25-26).

Thirdly, history records that on Sunday, 19 Aug. 1945, Maluku Province, with its governor. J. Latuharhary, became the sixth out of the first eight provinces supporting the birth of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia as a step of managing the post-independence Indonesian government bureaucracy. Seventy-two years is the age of this province, but in reality its development is not aligned with its mature age. Maluku is a border area of the country. The development of border areas is tightly linked to the national development mission, especially to ensure the integrity and sovereignty of the territory and national security defense and to improve the welfare of the people in the border areas that seem to be neglected.

A number of researchers have conducted research in Maluku, including Pamungkas who found a relationship between cultural elements, especially religion and ethnicity, and political competition by drawing upon social identity theory [3]. However, there has been no research that emphasizes the issue of ethnicity in the psychocultural narrative of Maluku identity politics in an effort to strengthen Indonesia's national identity. Many studies have been carried out on ethnicity, but there were only a few examining the existence of Maluku ethnic in the framework of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia which expects equal distribution of social justice. Therefore, this research article contributes a scientific study of how national development policies can stabilize the turmoil caused by the rise of modern ethnicity that demands citizenship rights as part of the Indonesia's national identity.

This research with a qualitative approach is beneficial in providing an overview of the realization of national development policies to narrow the widening gaps in order to realize social justice for all Indonesians. The results of this study are beneficial for the government to evaluate

development policies in Maluku in the concept of island provinces.

II. METHOD

The design of this research is descriptive qualitative using phenomenological approach. "The main concept in phenomenology is meaning as an important content arising from the experience of human consciousness. Identification of the essential qualities of the experience of consciousness is done in depth and thoroughly" [4]. Phenomenology lets reality reveal itself naturally in order to explore the deepest consciousness of one's experience. Furthermore, Hosten [5] explain:

Phenomenological approach is used to expose social reality naturally in the form of social phenomena. Social phenomenon, according to Shutz, is meant to formulate social science that is capable of interpreting and explaining human actions and thoughts by describing the basic structure of each reality, that science is always experiential.

Phenomenology believes that reality is the result of social construction and it is also the result of sharing the experience of interacting between one person and another.

The research, taking place in Ambon as the capital city of Maluku Province, produced research data obtained through in-depth interviews with informants and direct observations. Observation of phenomena and information gathering were done using the simultaneous interview procedure. The informants of this research included, among others: a) Representatives of Maluku Provincial Government; b) Community figures; c) Local artists/humanists; d) Maluku community; and e) Members of the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia of Maluku Province. This research used purposive sampling technique, so that the size of the sample was determined by the consideration of information gathering. As the number of phenomena inherent to the subjects under study increased, the number of subjects continued to grow until no new information was found or data saturation was achieved. "The researchers were engaged in sustained and ongoing experience with the participants" [6]. The collected data were then analyzed qualitatively with a phenomenological approach departing from facts or empirical information to build interpretation in the forms of impressions, opinions, or theoretical views. The collected data were then analyzed descriptive-qualitatively.

III. DISCUSSION

A. *Patterns of transformation of Maluku ethnicity in relation to Indonesian nationalism*

From the beginning, the social life in Indonesia has been contextualized as a public space of plurality. Darmaputera E [7], write:

The diversity and unity of Indonesia is both a reality and problem. Any discussion of Indonesia that ignores either one of these dimensions will certainly not bring fruitful results. *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in

Diversity) also means that the danger of integration is not impossible. Integration is the most fundamental problem for Indonesian society, for it assumes plurality and heterogeneity (p. 40).

Diversity is Indonesia's destiny. Ethnicity is one of the factors of Indonesia's diversity. Empirically, the state becomes very strong and centralistic and pushes ethnicity to the periphery. Ethnicity is seen only as subordination in the perspective of integration. The dominance of centralized nation-building has caused the problem of social diversity to be neglected, and it is even considered a barrier to social and national integration. In relation to ethnic identity in national identity, Sabhlok [8] write that,

Identity is defined as a concept that implies a psychological sense of self, a feeling of belonging to a group (physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually). Ethnic identity and national identity can coexist as totally separate concepts, but ethnic identity must be included under national identity.

How can a country be less concerned with ethnicity? Walter Connor responded by arguing that political science was dominated by the modernization paradigm in which ethnicity was depicted as a remnant of tradition and is inevitably declining in significance as cultural rationality and national integration develop [9]. Hence, so long as political change is understood as a transition to modernity, ethnicity will tend to be a temporal aspect of politics; on the other hand, the manipulation of states against ethnicity is common.

The statement of Maluku ethnic's stance to unite and become part of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is proof of its nationalism amidst the internal upheaval. The ethnic is called to be grounded together in an independent state named Indonesia. Ernest Renan defines nationalism as the soul, the spiritual principle arising from the past glory, which is a historical aspect, and the will to live together (*le desir de vivre ensemble*) in the present time that is an aspect of solidarity, in form and magnitude that still uses the heritage of the past, both for the present and the future. Renan's theory asserts that the basis of nationalism that is necessary for the establishment of a nation is a shared will so that all regions of one country will have influence in the world community.

The old question that is often heard: To what extent do the people of Maluku feel the joy of being part of the state of Indonesia? This question is similar to that of: when the Moluccans say I am Indonesia, what does the Indonesian state do for Maluku? The attention of the Indonesian government for Maluku depends on who is in charge. It is realized that government's attention is closely related to political considerations, especially the number of political constituents. Politically, Maluku has a very small number of constituents which have implications for state policies that tend to be used to meet the needs of regions with a larger number of political constituents. The attention of the government of President Joko Widodo to Maluku cannot be denied, especially when compared to the previous governments', but the feeling of injustice lingers because of the fact that Maluku experiences political treatment and government culture built with a continental perspective.

The demands of the Moluccans to be part of the national government reflect the thoughts and the turmoil of the grass root representing most societies, including the political elite, only that due to their public ethics, the political elite cannot express this desire openly, although in fact they share the same desire. Being fair to differences is a multicultural idea that is not easy to be applied in the reality of Indonesian diversity. It is necessary to think together about establishing a mechanism of unity in diversity to facilitate the reality of diversity that is known as the plural society management concept of encouraging togetherness and unity without negating differences (at the same time being Moluccans and Indonesian).

Maluku society's perception of its position within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia expresses its attitude as form of soft resistance. The soft resistance takes the form of rejection to the excessive interference of outsiders as can be seen in everyday life, all of which are clearly recorded in Maluku's psycho-cultural narrative. The book titled *Mati Ketawa Cara Rusia (Laughing to Death the Russian Way)* contains jokes that explain how society reacts to totalitarian political systems. The resistance is delivered in the form of funny stories. The Moluccans do not revolt because of their commitment to the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, but in their daily life there are implied expressions in their conversations of being deliberately marginalized, causing them to be in a dilemmatic position. On the one hand, they cannot rebel, but on the other hand they cannot accept the current situation. This is the general psychological condition of the Moluccans, which is reflected in the national political contests or national recruitments of public officials. The desire of the grass root of Maluku to be represented at the national level is part of their expression of being marginalized so far.

B. The Fulfillment of Ethnic Maluku Citizenship Rights as the Embodiment of Indonesian National Identity in National Development Policy

The hope of the Moluccans to return to the sea has begun to be realized in the era of President Joko Widodo. However, the gap is still visible. The local governments of Maluku in each regency/city have not been fully innovative in developing the potentials of their regions, whereas the central government has given its full attention to Maluku. There is no synergy between cities, regencies, and provinces to create a joint development program. This becomes an obstacle in the optimal management of the local potentials. Actually, this is a good opportunity for the Moluccans to exploit the concept of President Joko Widodo's Nawa Cita (the national development plans), one of which has been proven through the construction of the sea toll to Maluku and Papua. Maluku has maritime potentials, but the question remains open regarding to what extent Maluku can be innovative in the maritime field and how innovative can Maluku be in the field of tourism. Innovation is important to boost the policy made by President Joko Widodo in his Nawa Cita program. A synergy of all elements of society including academics is needed in relation to the concept of regional development of Maluku that should be directed towards the islands.

Masela Block will be a new front area, a new front porch for Indonesia. Maluku has a very weak bargaining position because its government is often more oriented towards small fund projects. There will be massive changes geographically, demographically, sociologically, psychologically and even religiously, considering Masela belongs to an international scale with an estimated lifetime range of hundreds of years and is the largest in the world. The government is right to build Masela block gas processing plant onshore with the intention of empowering local people, but the problem is on the readiness of local governments. Meanwhile, migrants have flocked to this place and there are chances for social frictions to occur. By default, international corporations/companies cannot avoid the strengthening of the local community today because of the adverse impact on the development of their shares. In essence, the local government and the people of Maluku should be better prepared to welcome Masela, given the geographic condition of Maluku as an archipelago.

There has always been a dichotomy of the advanced western Indonesia and the lagging-behind eastern Indonesia. There is a phrase that says, "People say our land is paradise, rich in resources, beautiful like a strand of emerald wrapped around the equator. However, in this eastern part of the nirvana, the abundant life springs easily turn into tears" [10]. The beautiful dream of independence as a golden bridge to an independent, civilized, united, sovereign, just, and prosperous nation easily turns into a nightmare. The manifestation of a just and prosperous society is intercepted by the rampant greed of predatory capitalism. People's prosperity is set aside by individual prosperity, widening social inequality, away from the ideals of social justice. Humanity that should lead to self-reliance, autonomy, and true brother/sisterhood, is paralyzed by individualism, materialism and hedonism, the greed of hoarding, and the craze to gain status and power.

Indonesia belongs to all children of this nation, from Sabang to Merauke, from Timor to Talaud. No one should feel marginalized in a country nicknamed a thousand islands, as written by Suryadi K,

Thoughts about the wholeness and prosperity of Indonesia usually grow from the elite and then spread to influential groups, before they become everyone's beliefs. The national anthem of "Indonesia Raya" expanded into three stanzas has become determination and aspiration, which must be realized in deeds that prioritize unifying views, educate the soul and body as a prerequisite of Indonesian renaissance, have holistic and comprehensive view of Indonesia, and maintain and manage all resources, not only for a handful of people, but to ensure the safety of all the people. A holy promise of people's awakening; people who do not only become the masters of their country, but are also entitled to enjoy the grace of God from every inch of the land on which they step. A holy promise from a great nation not to give birth to a dwarf generation [11].

President Joko Widodo has tried to encourage more development in eastern Indonesia to minimize subjective perceptions. It is hoped that the attempts will succeed because

otherwise experience has shown that turmoil and upheavals will be unavoidable in the regions. Improvements in the national public policies that have been continuously made by the government of Joko Widodo have been assessed to be a right move by several sources. The improvements are indeed felt to be slow because of the already huge gap between the west and the east. Certain groups in the central government have not opened their mind to clearly see the vision of nationalism so that there are tremendous political negotiations and interests in the government agendas, including some of the unfulfilled demands of Maluku. There is room for improvement, but there are also many political issues to be solved that require re-clarification of the national vision. The development policy appropriate for Maluku should be derived from development politics with clear ideas; otherwise, this development will make everyone the same when we actually are different (*bhinneka tunggal ika*).

IV. CONCLUSION

Maluku needs a clear vision of nationalism from the Indonesian government. Social justice as stated in Pancasila has been long neglected. Therefore, to build Maluku requires reviewing the vision of nationalism and all development policies and mechanisms in order to touch the essence of social justice. There are four ways to resolve the issue of identity sentiment and turn it into an effective and productive potential for future development of the nation, namely: 1) cultural reconstruction in a new national perspective; 2) a clear vision of the government; 3) restoration of justice issues; and 4) public ethics on a cultural basis that allows the Moluccans to sit together on the same level, on the same consciousness, to see that their identity is important in terms of social justice. Reconstructing the vision of nationalism in the perspective of public ethics and on the basis of local genius becomes imperative so that people recognize the need for common ground morality and common values that govern social life on

a cultural basis. On the other hand, the administration of President Joko Widodo era has attempted, through its Nawa Cita program, to narrow the gap that has been widened as a legacy of the previous governments. It is realized that it takes a long time to close the gap, but the efforts deserve appreciation because the government's commitment that has begun to materialize is the real proof of the government's consistency in realizing social justice for every child of the nation on every inch of land in Indonesia.

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