



NEGOTIATE THE DIVERSITY

A Study on the conservation of Local Cultural Wisdom in the Cohesion and Segregation of Society at Asahan Regency and Toba Samosir Regency

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Abstract. *Indonesian society, which is diverse and has diverse cultural backgrounds, clearly needs a frame of reference to hold on to the current national association. Therefore, traditional values that contain wisdom, equality, multiculturalism, and can be used as a common grip for all Indonesian people wherever they live, need to be explored and researched and then offered as a good alternative for the development of new and harmonious socio-religious life . Empirical facts show that one of the causes of conflict is the non-functioning of the values of local cultural wisdom. Therefore, local cultural wisdom is important to use in renegotiating conflicts. This awareness stimulates the implementation of various studies or studies on the wisdom of local ethnic cultures. Through studies or studies, it has been found and recognized local ethnic cultural wisdom that is used as an instrument in creating, maintaining, and strengthening harmony and preventing and resolving social conflicts that occur in the community. Because of that fact, pluralism in a broad sense is a reality that cannot be avoided. In the realm of political theory, experts try to find a system that is able to manage differences fairly and peacefully. While in the cultural sphere, interaction with others naturally will result in a synthesis of culture and social practice which is a fusion of cultural diversity that takes place in a conducive and open public space. Public space that is conducive and open to a variety of views, streams and culture that is embraced by citizens will provide an opportunity for the community to negotiate differences peacefully and fairly.*

Keywords: *The conservation of Local Cultural Wisdom, the Cohesion and Segregation of Society, Asahan Regency, Toba Samosir Regency*

INTRODUCTION

Asahan Regency and Tobasa Regency, like other regions in Indonesia, in terms of religion, beliefs, culture, and ethnicity, are one example of a quite diverse regency area. Even Indonesia and its territories, especially Asahan and Tobasa, according to Geertz, are so complex that they are complicated to determine their exact anatomy. This country

is not only multi-ethnic (Malay, Dayak, Kutai, Banjar, Makasar, Bugis, Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, Aceh, Minang, Flores, Bali, and so on), but also becomes a battlefield for various multi-ethnic and ideological influences (Indian, Chinese, Dutch, Portuguese, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, Christianity, Capitalism, Socialism and so on).¹

The demand for recognition of the existence and autonomy of local cultures, which is one of the fruits of the reform era, is a criticism of the concepts and strategies of cultural development in the past - both during the Old Order regime of Sukarno and Suharto's New Order called historians Taufik Abdullah as 'greedy state' period² which tends to be monolithic and central. Not only that, the development of national culture in the New Order era was seen by many as more the development of the dominance of Javanese culture, or Javanization, over the culture of other ethnic groups. Excessive use of Sanskrit terms in various political nomenclature as well as mentioning names of places and buildings, as well as names of awards, is a transparent indication of the efforts of 'Javanization', or at least the 'Java-centric' policies of the New Order government.

The attitude of enthusiasm and optimism towards the contribution of local cultural wisdom to social and religious life, immediately along with that appeared a number of problems and problems that surround the actualization of local cultural wisdom. In an effort to involve and present the values of local cultural wisdom, in practice, according to some circles, often in contact with the 'purity of religion'. Utilization of local cultural wisdom, often intersects with animism and dynamism and contains elements of shirk.

This, of course, if not managed and responded immediately, well, and professionally can actually be a source of conflict and new disharmony in religious social life. For this reason, initiatives and services towards professional and competent guidance and guidance by related parties, such as the government, academics,

¹Clifford Geertz, *Welt in Stuecken. Kultur und Politik am Ende des 20. Jabrhundertz* (Passagen-Verlag: Wien, 1996) yang dikutip F. Budi Hardiman, *Pengantar Belajar dari Politik Multikulturalisme*, dalam Will Kymlicka, *Kearifan Multikultural*, (Jakarta: Pustaka LP3ES Indonesia, 2002) p. Viii.

²Taufik Abdullah explain the 'greedy state' as 'a state that is dissatisfied only with political legitimacy and domination, and control of the economic system with all its appendages associated with the two strategic matters. 'Greedy state' makes itself the holder of discourse and meaning hegemony, determinants of the cultural paradigm style and the nation's collective memory. Taufik Abdullah, "National Integration, Globalization and Local Wisdom", *Indonesian Anthropology*, Pg. XXVI, No. 65, p. 132.

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institutions and religious and community leaders, constitute an urgent and urgent response. With the right response, it is expected that conflict and disharmony in the interaction of social and religious life of the community can be minimized, or even eliminated.

By starting with the statement above, to see how the diversity of local culture in the life of traditional society in the current influx of modernization, is it still surviving with its local culture, then the values of local cultural wisdom such as what can contribute to the realization of life social harmony that is harmonious, peaceful, tolerant, even though regulations have been applied in the village administration. Furthermore, how are the efforts, strategies and regulations carried out by religious leaders, the government, and the community in efforts to provide services and guidance as well as efforts to anticipate the impact (conflict and disharmony) in the application of local cultural wisdom to religious social life.

To find the answer, a study was conducted in the areas of Asahan and Toba Samosir regencies in North Sumatra, how the life of the people of Asahan and Tobasa regencies that still survived with their local culture, both in religious life and social life. Furthermore, it is also seen the roles, functions and efforts of local institutions and institutions in the effort to transmit local cultural wisdom and the formation of patterns and processes of religious social harmony that are harmonious, harmonious and peaceful among ethnic groups in Asahan and Tobasa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethnography of the Asahan and Toba Samosir Communities

Asahan and Tobasa are one of the Regencies in the Province of North Sumatra. The terms Asahan and Tobasa refer to a group of people who share the same cultural identification characteristics and claim to be residents who live in Asahan and Tobasa districts. There are still multiple studies about who the original ethnic Asahan and Tobasa are and how their origins are. The majority of reviewers, who based primarily on information available in documents since the Dutch colonial era, argued that as an ethnic group, the Asahan and Tobasa communities were only formed around the XVIII century, as a result of a process of mixing and acculturation among a number of ethnic groups in Asahan and Tobasa, both through marriage and trade. It can be said, in the population

configuration, Asahan and Tobasa have now been transformed into a melting-pot, super market, or - borrowing the term Big Hatley (cauldron),³ the meeting place of various ethnicities, religions, and cultures from various regions.

In general, the social construction of the Asahan and Tobasa communities, is almost the same as other developing regions in Indonesia, which are starting to be dominated by waves of modernism with a credo ideology of global neo-liberalism with its capitalistic, secularistic, and exploitative character. The new values brought about by modernization and globalization are felt to begin to dominate the Asahan social construction, especially in urban areas, and at the same time marginalize values that originate from local religion and culture. The strengthening of the ideology of neo-liberalism, coupled with the weakening of local religion and culture, has made the social construction of the Asahan and Tobasa communities increasingly unstable, vulnerable, and sensitive to conflicts that have the potential to destroy social order (social order).⁴

The people of Asahan and Toba Samosir regencies, based on ethnographic methodology, are in a culture area, a subculture of Malays and Bataks, culturally based on the traditions and customs of the East Sumatra Malay Community and Batak communities living in the Toba and Tapanuli areas. This is clearly seen in daily life in the Asahan and Toba Samosir communities such as the use of language, customs, philosophy of life, and kinship systems.

Asahan and Tobasa are pluralistic and multicultural district areas that are inhabited by residents of various ethnicities, cultures, languages, beliefs and religions. Therefore, in a multicultural atmosphere, the risk of conflict among the people is very large. An undeniable fact, a number of cases of conflict have occurred in several regions

³The term "Pandalungan" is derived from the term used by Hatley (1984) in his monograph entitled "Mapping Cultural Regions of Java". See Kusnadi, "Horseshoe Society, Cultural Construction and Political Violence", in the Journal of Humanities, Vol. II / No. 2 / July, Jember: Faculty of Letters, University of Jember, 2001, p. 2

⁴Some potential conflicts that are easy to read include the economic gap between the rich class (the have) and the poor class (not the have), structural violence that originates from the government's economic-political policies that are still in a common point of interest with market capitalism, strengthening identity politics between various ethnic groups, political battles by local elites who often use religion, the rise of religious radicalism movements that have begun to disturb the establishment of mainstream Islam, and various other potential conflicts. Among the potential conflicts that have occurred in Asahan, see, Sakti Ritonga, "Orientation of Cultural Values and Potential Conflicts of Toba Batak Muslims and Christians in North Sumatra: Case Study of the Asak District Elephant Sakti", Journal of Analysis, Volume XII, Number 2, December 2012

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in this region, even though on a relatively small scale and not prolonged so as not to cost lives and material. A number of conflicts that have occurred, each has its own genealogy and anatomy. Some are triggered due to differences in ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, mastery of economic access, and other issues. Most of these conflicts are horizontal involving groups of different ethnicities and most are triggered by tribal or religious sentiments.⁵

METHODOLOGY

This is an ethnographic study that focuses on the discussion of diversity that emerged in two districts, namely Asahan and Toba Samosir. In this study, the authors took action directly to the field for data collection and data collection. The author made in-depth observations about the dynamics of the people of Asahan Regency and Samosir Toba Regency. The observation is seen from all aspects, social, religious, customs and culture that are inherent and apply every day in life in the two districts of the community.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Utilization of Ethical-Ethnic Local Culture Wisdom in Asahan and Tobasa

The findings of this study show that the values and norms relating to social interaction - which are the wisdom of the local culture of ethnic Malays, Bataks and Javanese in Asahan and Tobasa - are more dominated by the internal arrangements of ethnic communities. However, in the gap of the locality nature of local cultural wisdom, it turns out that a number of values and norms are still found that pattern relationships between communities. These social values and norms include the development of a network of fraternity, maintenance of harmonious relationships between siblings, relatives or friends, prevention of conflicts in social and customary relations, and resolution of conflicts that occur.

A map of local cultural wisdom that is in contact with the rules, procedures, and habits around inter-community relations can be summarized in the following points:

⁵See Chuzaimah Batubara, "Faktor-faktor Pemicu dan Peredam Konflik Sosial di Kota Medan," dalam *Jurnal Penelitian Medan Agama*, ;4th edition December, 2005.

1. Local cultural wisdom which is oriented towards the expansion of the cultural domain of ethnic Malays and Bataks has two important levels:
2. Ethnocentric; in this context, the expansion of the fraternal domain is very thick with the rules of ethnic customs. This relates to the traditional Malay and Batak cultural paradigm which assumes that true brotherhood is brotherhood that has the same cultural system. Therefore, the spirit of the expansion of the domain of brotherhood is directed to be identical with each other, through a procession (ceremony) "withering" or "propagation". This concept is found in the tradition of "bergito" in the ethnic Malays, and "mangampu / mangain" customs, and "bulang-bulang" in the Batak ethnicity. This wisdom is very ethnocentric. This paradigm is identical with the philosophy of interculturalism which idealizes a melting pot of social systems by emphasizing the importance of minority groups to understand and adopt the culture of minority groups to adopt and understand the culture of the majority group. This illustrates that the awareness of plurality in ethnic Malays and Bataks is still dominated by local customary rules, a more exclusive picture of local cultural wisdom.
3. Cosmopolis; in addition to ethnocentric patterns, in the Malay and Batak traditions there are practices of extending the domain of brotherhood which extend beyond the ethnic community. Basically, this tradition arises because of wider interests, as well as the strengthening of ethnic identity on a more cosmopolitan scale, in accordance with the era. This awareness has long been pioneered by the Asahan and Tobasa Malay communities through Malay Nusantara interfaith networks and was later strengthened by the emergence of Malay institutions, such as MABMI (Indigenous Peoples of Indonesian Malay Culture), and IPMA (Asahan and Tobasa Malay Youth Association). The same thing is also found among the Batak indigenous communities, which was started by Sisingamangaraja X and then Sisingamangaraja XI and XII by building a network of cooperation with the Islamic sultanates in Aceh, Asahan and Tobasa, and Barus. Later this tradition was developed through the clan organization "clan" and the organization of the Batak churches (oikumene) with a fairly extensive network throughout the world.

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The wisdom of the local Javanese culture in Asahan and Tobasa in the expansion of the brotherhood domain is more emphasized on; (a) the spirit of equality of fate and the importance of social harmony. Your relationship can extend from geneological ties if there are factors that shape it. The philosophy of "single sack ship" is the essence of the pattern of forming new brothers for the Javanese community. From this philosophy, the concept of brothers for the Javanese community extends to neighbors (non-Javanese), friends from the village, colleagues, and so on; and (b) the child's little tradition, which basically arises from a belief system to solve a problem in the family. These factors include, among others, having no children with the intention of "getting children", being a medicine for children who are sick or tend to be naughty, and so on. Later, among Javanese ethnic groups, a new tradition emerged that was oriented towards strengthening Javanese brotherhood by building primordial organizations that covered a wide area, such as the Pujakesuma, the Javanese Society, and so on.

The maintenance of social relations among ethnic Malays, Bataks and Javanese is regulated in varied traditions. In principle, the three ethnic groups have the same enthusiasm to maintain the brotherhood that has been built through the principle of tolerance in applying various customs and habits. To prevent cultural conflicts from occurring, the Malay adopted the philosophy "Where land is on the ground, where the sky is upheld," the Batak adopted the philosophy "Si dapot solup do na ro" (guests must follow local customs and rules) and party traditions by providing "Parsubang dishes" for adherents of other religions, while Jwa applies the interests of social harmony above the interests of adat itself. Equally important in the Batak tradition, is the principle of brotherhood of Dalihan Na Tolu, where geneological relations (agnata) and marital relations (affina) become the main basis of brotherhood that can defeat other social relations parameters, such as religious differences. Furthermore, Javanese are very concerned with applying the concept of pinjungan and njurung.

Settlement of conflict problems (conflict resolution) among Malays, Bataks and Javanese may involve community leaders or local government. Traditions relating to conflict resolution are regulated by local customs or habits inherited from past traditions. In essence, the conflict resolution model for the Asahan and Tobasa ethnicities is implemented in a procession in which apologies and food are always required.

In the context of diversity, the people of Asahan and Tobasa can be categorized pluralist. In general, in a pluralist society that is prone to conflict, especially if triggered by religious problems, as happened in several places in Indonesia. It turned out that this did not happen in this region, even though the population was multi-ethnic and embraced different religions, the situation remained harmonious, peaceful and harmonious. Harmony is marked by the existence of harmony, compatibility, or not disputing and maintained patterns of interaction between various religious communities, by reflecting reciprocal relationships in the form of mutual acceptance, mutual trust, mutual respect and respect, and mutual understanding. The harmony of the people of Asahan and Tobasa Regency is shown by the awareness of the community in maintaining harmony in life, intensification of social interaction among citizens and conservation of local cultural wisdom.

The awareness of the people of Asahan and Tobasa Regency towards the harmony of life is caused by six factors, namely: the majority of the community members are present and strengthen family ties and kinship with each other; the source of its economy is mostly farmers / farm laborers, fishermen, and plantation employees, so that a solid community with good social solidarity is formed, and due to the existence of non-governmental organizations that are active in approaching if there is a difference of opinion so as not to cause conflict, factors the other is the existence of noble values that are still cultivated by the community in the form of local culture, for example, salvation, mutual cooperation, and cooperation, internal and inter-ethnic relations and religious communities are well established by means of adherents of one religion to give an appreciation of the experience of other religious adherents and the participation of religious and community leaders in shaping harmony is quite high, with an active role in holding various meetings through dialogue and discussion.

Intensive interaction of citizens in various meetings, both formal, informal and informal. Formal meetings take place at a time where there is an official meeting between ethnic and religious communities. Non-formal is a meeting in village institutions, such as: LMD, LKMD and a coordination meeting among village officials and other institutions, where the agenda is not to discuss the issue of harmony or harmony, but at that time they discussed social-religious issues of fellow citizens. In formal meetings

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occur everywhere, such as at work, on trips, at weddings and others. In social interaction, the important actors are leaders, both government figures, community leaders and religious leaders.

Salvation, mutual cooperation, cooperation, has become a hereditary tradition in Asahan and Tobasa. This form of wisdom can be organized in a pattern consistent with the ethnic customs and teachings of each religion. This salvation can be held to meet all people's needs, in connection with an event, for example: birth, marriage, building a house, moving house, death and so on. The mutual cooperation culture is also still a tradition that is conserved and preserved, both in helping a party or celebration, personal interests such as building a house or for public purposes such as repairing roads and irrigation. In running this cultural tradition, all citizens put aside ethnic and religious differences, prioritizing cultural interests. This shows how much they are interested in preserving their culture, so that they contribute to the formation of social harmony.

Finally, the results of this study support Mudler's opinion, that harmony means overcoming differences, cooperating, accepting one another, calm hearts and living in harmony. Likewise, according to Khalikin, the role of figures appears to be dominant in guiding, directing and providing solutions when differences of opinion occur that can disrupt harmony. Like Hurriyah's opinion, that plurality in the region was not only seen from a religious perspective, but also the internalization of cultural values has taken an important position in society through local culture. While Ashutosh Varshney, in his research on Hinduism and Islam in India, points to a meeting point about factors that can prevent conflict. Namely the existence of ties of cooperation in the form of associations (associational forms engagement) and the existence of daily living activities (everyday forms engagement).

CONCLUSION

The presence of local wisdom which is an important element in a culture, creates a psychological closeness, as intended by Izutsu, between the teachings of Islam and the adherents of Islam because Islam is understood through language that they really know. Thus, faith can occur in addition to having said the shahada and followed by tashdiq

involving local language / local cultural elements in understanding the pledge. From this, as many opportunities as possible for local culture to connect with Islam as a normative way to be practiced in various cultural practices based on the interpretation of these norms.

The development of local wisdom is a cultural reality that gave birth to a dialogue between Islam as an external element and the ethnic cultures of Asahan and Tobasa as local elements. Observing the development of Islamic teachings in Asahan and Tobasa that use local wisdom can be seen as inclusivism contained in Islam that does not kill local culture as long as the elements used do not conflict with the basic principles of Islamic theology and teachings.

Even this is related to the patterns of introduction of Islam in Asahan and Tobasa and then developed rapidly into a striking cultural movement that gives many marking contributions to the cultural identity of Asahan and Tobasa today. The importance of mainstreaming Islam that is appreciative and accommodating to local culture by considering:

The urgent need for the reinterpretation and re-actualization of meanings, symbols and religious teachings in Islam in a dialectical process with a diversity of local cultural wisdom. The reality of a pluralistic and pluralistic Indonesian society in various aspects of religious and cultural life demands the dynamics of Islam in the process of purely contextual Islamic earthing.

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