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ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND THE CHANGING COMMUNITY STRUCTURE WITHIN FAKFAK SOCIETY IN PAPUA

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ABSTRACT

Through in-depth research using an ethnographic method, this article seeks to show what changes are taking place in the Fakfak community regarding culture, religion, and composition. This research aims to fill the research gap from previous studies by looking at how religion has rapidly changed the structure of society (both in terms of identity and population demographics) even though they come from the same kinship in a nuclear family. This article found that religion has become society's primary agent of change, with positive and negative connotations. However, at the same time, the community has a local knowledge called "toromit wat istery" which is used as an unbreakable bond due to clashes between religions. This unity in diversity is a fundamental value that the community must observe. As an implication, these changes in the Fakfak community serve as an example of the resilience of local values in the face of the clash of global values that must be protected and maintained as the primary source of national resilience.

Keywords: Changing Community Structure; Fakfak Society; Local knowledge

INTRODUCTION

The arrival of Islam to the Fakfak Regency's Patipi Bay Community provides insight into the spread of Islam in the Indonesian Archipelago and to Papua,

and the only example of the occurrence of the separation of inter-religious areas of power that is manifested in a kinship agreement between *Ade* (younger sibling) and *Kaka* (elder sibling). *Ade*, in the context of religion, transformed into Islam and in the context of geography, controlled the coastal areas, while *Kaka* turned into Christianity and controlled the Mountainous area. The transformation of kinship and identity, as in the Patipi community, has similarly occurred in the Dayak community in Kalimantan, which underwent an identity shift because of the decision to embrace religion. Those who choose Islam as their religion receive a new Malay identity, while those who adopt Christianity receive Dayak as their primary identity (Mauneti, 2004; Nugraha, 2018). Expression, change, and separation in society due to religion prove what Abdullah (2019) argues: religion is born in an erratic and frenzy manner. It has implications for losing silent space, low credibility, and weakening religion's connection power (Abdullah, 2019).

Religious encounters between Islam, Christianity, and other religions and the communities in the Indonesian Archipelago have been widely studied but tend to focus on three aspects: its historical aspect (Sapriillah, 2011; Yakub, 2017), subjugation (Handoko, 2009, 2017; Sianipar et al., 2020), and assimilation between religion and culture in society (Haryanto, 2013, 2014; Indah Permata Sari, 2020; Mursyid, 2009; Muryana, 2018). Yamin (2011, 2019, 2020) illustrates how the interaction process between Islam and the Dani Community in the Central Highlands of Papua has added a new color to Islam in Indonesia. Jubba (2019) recounted the story of the subjugation of the Towani Tolotang people by religion and state in South Sulawesi, and Zainal (2015) reviewed how Katoba has become a symbol of the integration of Islam with the Muna people's culture. This research shows another reality that previous studies have not covered, the direct implication of the presence of religion in the community, the existence of divisions, and the formation of clear boundaries in society because of religion by labeling each group with a new identity as a marker of the existence of such division.

This research is based on the argument that three main factors drive community structure and identity changes due to religious reasons. *First*, the exclusive nature of religion has forced people to create boundaries between themselves even though they come from the same kinship. *Second*, the lack of religious literacy about the danger of community division, because religion is understood by its followers, will have implications for strengthening the desire to highlight the religion that each group embraces. *Third*, strengthening and weakening state (government) intervention reinforces the separation of society in the name of religion. These three religion-related factors create

division and potential disharmony in society.

Generally, the separation of society is a natural phenomenon (Abdullah, 2003; Muryana, 2018; Pabbajah et al., 2019; Wekke, 2013), but it would be unusual if the separation is driven by religious factors and occurs only in one specific family in one community. This unusual social reality occurred in Patipi Bay, Fakfak Regency, West Papua Province, so this area was selected as the focus of this research for three reasons. *First*, Patipi Bay maintains various stories about the history of interactions between new religions and local communities, which has produced a distinctive religious tradition (Amin, 2020; Haris, 2016; Mene, 2017; Saprillah, 2011). *Second*, in the Patipi Bay community, the context of *Ade* (Islam/coastal area) and *Kaka* (Christian/inland area) continues to be revived by the community through various economic, political, and sociocultural activities as well as oral traditions that continue to be passed through generations. *Third*, the implications of the existence of separation due to religion, even though they are in the same kinship, has caused several incidents of conflict which, although they can be quickly resolved, has undoubtedly become a pseudo phenomenon that may be triggered at any time, considering that every religion continues to thrive in its spirit of expansion.

Brotherhood and separation due to religion among Patipi Bay's citizens can be explained through qualitative research that draws on primary and secondary data by covering processes that occur directly in the community that can be observed and confirmed on-site through direct observation and interviews. This research involved religious, traditional, and community leaders and local historians specializing in Patipi Bay's history, rituals, religious traditions, and cultural practices. The research was first carried out by collecting secondary data through various religious references previously written by several researchers, as well as tracing the history of Islam in the community, widely known as one of the areas that Ibn Batuta visited on his international voyage. The second step was to conduct direct research in the community by visiting the research site and observing and interviewing key figures. The interviews and observations were recorded using a recorder, photographs, and a journal, the main basis for interpreting field findings.

The data analysis process was carried out in three stages. *First* was data reduction, a process of organizing data in a more systematic form, especially thematically. The *second* step was data display to present research findings in table and graph form and excerpts from interviews with informants. The third and final was data verification to conclude the confluence of data with concepts and theories used in this study. Descriptive and interpretive data

analysis techniques then supported these three stages of analysis. The data description served as the basis for interpretation by following the trends and contexts that accompany the reality under study, as Field Clifford Geertz (1992) shows. The stages and analysis techniques are expected to lead this research to findings and conclusions that explain why brotherhood and separation co-occur among the Patipi Bay people.

FAKFAK SOCIETY AS A RESEARCH SPACE

Fakfak Regency is located in Indonesia's West Papua Province. The journey to this district begins in Sorong, a transit airport where all travelers visiting Fakfak Regency by air must stop. The journey takes approximately 60 minutes by air on a twin outer aircraft with a jet engine and double propeller. Fakfak Regency consists of 17 sub-districts, 142 villages, and seven urban villages spread over mountainous and coastal areas. Most of Fakfak residents are nutmeg farmers and fishermen. In some districts and villages, electricity is only supported by a limited number of generators from each family, which can only be turned on at 19.00 – 00.00 Central Indonesian Time Zone. It is thus very expensive. Some areas do not have electricity at all, such as Ugar village in the Kokas district, which has become an eco-tourism destination. In addition, several villages also lack communication infrastructure.

The majority religion in Fakfak is Muslim. However, there are two districts whose residents are generally Protestant Christians. The majority of the population uses Indonesian as their daily language, especially in terms of inter-ethnic communication, but in local villages we can find residents using local languages, such as Mbaham, Iha, Arguni, and Karas. The indigenous tribes that inhabit the Fakfak district are the Mbaham, Mata, and Iha tribes. The indigenous tribes live side-by-side with migrant ethnic groups originating from Sulawesi Field (Akmal & Muslim, 2019), Maluku Field (Haris, 2016), and Java Field (Paisal, 2018).

Economic growth in Fakfak Regency has been quite good, although, in some sectors, economic performance still needs to be improved, taking into account the challenges and available opportunities. One of the widely-used macro performance indicators for the economic sector is the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP). To support the GRDP of Fakfak Regency there are nine production units covering nine business fields: agriculture, mining & quarrying, manufacturing industry, electricity, and clean water, construction, trade, hotels and restaurants, transportation and communication, finance, rental and service companies, and other service establishments.

Based on 2022 population data obtained from the Central Bureau of Statistics of Fakfak Regency, the population of Fakfak Regency is 85,817, comprising 43,963 men and 41,854 women. The total population is dominated by residents in Pariwari District with 23,729 people or 27.65%. Meanwhile, the district with the lowest population is Mbahamdandara, 1,016 people or 1.18%.

RELIGIOUS EXCLUSIVISM

Contextually, the people of Fakfak in Patipi Bay generally follow two official government-recognized religions, Christianity and Islam. However, in daily life, they hold several rituals based on ancestral traditions that they continue to practice (Amin, 2020; Wekke, 2013), especially regarding matters relating to the fulfillment of the necessities of life and the sacredness or holiness of a particular location. An informant reported straightforwardly how people overcome a natural constraint by holding a ritual of respecting the owner of a certain place believed to have supernatural powers. He said:

“Karena air itu mau kering ka makanya dong kasih air taparop, kasih biar lancar. Kopi yang ditaruh di batu par kasih sanang dorang, kasih dorang minum, katong sama-sama minum kopi. Karena katong tara lihat, jadi katong bicara saja, a ini kamong pu tembakau, sirih, pinang.”

[invisible creatures have blocked the discharge of water from its source, so people give offerings in the form of coffee, tobacco, areca nut and betel leaves, which are placed in a spot where water does not flow while saying the words; this is the tobacco, areca nut and betel leaves that we offer. So, the water (afterward) flows smoothly”]

However, by looking at the composition of the villages, residents are constructed based on their religion, some villages are labeled as Islamic others villages that are labeled Christian. This labeling also aligns with the population composition, which is a religious majority. The construction of villages and districts in Fak-Fak that are divided based on religion are inseparable from the role of the state, customs, and religion, either generically or differentially, as reported by Gramci in Saptono (1999) who emphasizes the effort to construct society is one of the strategies in hegemony. In the context of the state, the omission of community grouping based on religion is a form of neglect in creating a heterogeneous and non-sectarian society. Meanwhile, in the context of custom and religion, there has been an effort to perpetuate regional dominance in the name of certain customs and religions, which will limit the capacity of the community to face global conflicts that rely on the principles of

practicality, accuracy, and tend to have unified perspectives (Humaedi, 2014).

The construction of a rigidly structured Fak-Fak community based on the religion they follow provides an important marker for the people in the Fak-fak district, which signifies that the community is not in a good state. Several socio-political events that occur in the community, which then intersect directly, show that the division of society based on religion has provided an entry point for conflicts that can occur at any time. August 2019's Tambaruni market burning incident in Fak-fak city is an example. The incident was followed by several conflicts or riots, which were seen in demonstrations triggered by the racist treatment of the Papuans in Surabaya. This case began with a protest by indigenous people against migrants, then turned into two big groups, polarizing the society into people supporting the Unitary State of Indonesia (NKRI / Islam) and those in favor of Free Papua (Christianity).

CHANGES IN IDENTITY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The selection and change of identity is a process, as Mauneti, (2004) argues that the dynamic nature seen in the construction of cultural identities is evident in many cases in Indonesia. In the same light, Hall (1990) maintains that identity is more transparent and unproblematic than we think. Identity may be regarded as something authentic, representing a new cultural practice. We should think of identity as an imperfect production, always in the making and always legalized in it, not outside of it. Within this framework, cultural identity can be seen as a collective sequence of one's truth, hidden from so many others, more superficial and artificially self-repressing, in which people with historical and ancestral ties are generally held.

Cultural identity reflects the shared historical experience and the sharing of cultural codes that have been provided to us, as an individual (with the same cultural background) with a stable, unchanging experience and a continuous frame of reference and meaning, under the shifting division of our actual history. This unity underlines all the others, more than superficial differences. In Hall's framework of thought above, we can witness it in the Balinese people, as Nordholt (2002) found that if a Balinese is asked who he is, he may start by saying he wants to explain his *linggih* by mentioning his lineage. The Balinese identify themselves generally by making references to time and place to one of their ancestors in ancient times, as well as a point of origin (*kawitan*) which is often stated in a sacred place of the temple.

In addition, to explain identity and its changes, Maalouf's opinion (2004) is important to note, as he argues that identity is what prevents us from being

identical to other people. However, identity is not given once and for all; it is built and changed throughout an individual's life. Identity is made up of a number of ties, but it is equally important to emphasize that identity is also singular, something we all experience. One's identity is not an assembly of separate ties or a kind of loose woven cloth. Identity is a pattern outlined on a parchment, stretched firmly. Flick a part or a connection, and the person's self will fully react (Maalouf, 2004:26).

If we use Maalouf's perspective as a reference, then identity is generally defined as awareness of personal unity and continuity. A unique entity that maintains the continuity of its past meaning for self and others; unity and continuity that integrate all self-images, either perceived by others or self-imagined about what and who he is and what he can make concerning himself and others. A person's self-identity can also be understood as the overall physical characteristics, dispositions he holds and believes in, and capacity. All of them are characteristics that distinguish the individual from others and are, at the same time, an integration of the stages of development that have been passed before.

Structurally, it can be seen that the identity changes in individuals in Fakfak society also directly affect the population demographics, such as ethnicity, which gets a lot of support from the marriages between two Papuan Indigenous, Papuan Indigenous people and migrants, and two migrants. Other population demographics that change are religious experience and practices and economic status. The rest are captured in the following chart.

Table 1:
Ethnic Identity Change

| Indicator | Generic Identity | First Change Differential Identity | Second Change Differential Identity |
|-----------|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Surname | Iribaram | Iribaram/Bauw | Iribaram/Bauw/ /Patiran/La |

Source: Processed from primary data

The table above provides an important indication of how identity change occurs in the people of Fakfak. In general, each individual's identity evolves because of two factors: an identity obtained generically and one obtained because of the encountering differences. For example, the surname attached to an individual at birth will not necessarily be passed down to her descendants if she is a woman. However, in current practice, the surname can also be used to deal with pressures of political interests. The table shows the surname change

from Iribaram to Iribaram or Bauw in the first change. It may continue to shift to Iribaram, Bauw, or even Patiran, because of the marriage mechanism, where the surname is inherited in a patrilineal line. However, as aforementioned, in the context of political strategy, this surname inheritance system may turn matrilineal as an effort to maintain identity, if the marriage occurs in ethnic groups outside Papuans.

The merging of nobility titles from outside Papua with indigenous Papuan surnames is certainly a form of change due to encounters between indigenous Papuans and people outside Papua (migrants) who may have experienced resistance at the beginning. However, now it is starting to become a trend and is happening a lot in the community as an attitude of accommodation as well as a strategy in dealing with the pressure of power that comes from the rules that divide society into classifications based on the birthright inherent in indigenous Papuans. As a concrete example, some people use two surnames or ethnic titles, such as La so-and-so Woretma, which can be explained that the La title in the individual's name is one of the nobility titles for the Butonese in Southeast Sulawesi, acculturated with Woretma as one of the surnames of the original Fak-Fak people.

In a more straightforward context, changes in one's identity in society can also be influenced and shaped by the experience and practice of religious teachings. An individual raised by his parents as an ordinary believer (congregation) can transform into one who preaches religious messages (*ustad/ustadzah/pinatua*) and even at a certain point in time can turn into a religious leader (Imam of a mosque/Christian priest), as illustrated in the following table.

Table 2:
Identity change due to Religion

| Indicator | Generic Identity | Change 1 Differential Identity | Change 2 Differential Identity |
|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Islam | <i>Jamaah</i> [congregation] | Ustad/ustadzah | Imam of a mosque |
| Christianity | <i>Jemaat</i> [congregation] | Pinatua | Priest |

Source: Processed from primary data

In addition to the change in identity due to ethnicity and religion above, the change can also occur due to an individual's economy, education, or

occupation, whose nature and form are also unchanged, determined by space or the context that follows. For example, identity due to occupations, at a certain point, an individual can be a civil servant, but in other contexts, he can also be a motor-cab driver because he has a second job to provide for his family, as illustrated in the table below:

**Table 3:
Other Identity Changes**

| Identity Indicator | Generic Identity | Change 1 Differential Identity | Change 2 Differential Identity |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Occupation | Civil Servants | Ojek | Ahli Reparasi |
| Economy | Poor | Rich | - |
| Education | No formal education | Primary School (equivalency) | Junior High School (equivalency) |

Source: Processed from primary data

Changes in identity that are either fixed or depend on the context, as described in the three tables above, directly contribute to shaping and determining the demographics of the community, especially the state of the population and settlements, where new and more diverse residential spaces are created as an effort to accommodate the increasing population, as well as the birth and emergence new value which is a result of the arrival of global and market values. In such circumstances, the community then tries to produce or reproduce local knowledge in an effort to maintain identity, as well as to show its existence as the owner of the original culture that seeks to get recognition. Systematic changes in community demographics, especially as population increases, can be seen in the expansion of villages, the addition of houses of worship, as well as the emergence of religious-affiliated community organizations, such as the birth of the Maluku Pentecostal Church or the emergence of AFKN founded by Ustadz Fadlan Garamatan, a representation of native Papuan Muslims in Fak-Fak Regency.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS AND ALTERNATIVE RESOLUTIONS

As described above, the changes in identity and demographics have directly divided the community into various interests with their differing goals. In general, the society's problems today can be seen politically and the presence of several multinational companies engaged in mining and plantations —which

have encouraged people to be more exclusive in terms of land ownership— as well as the potential for capitalization and exploitation of the community and the younger generation. Iribaram reported that the community encounters at least three fundamental problems: customary leadership, customary rights, and the future of “disrupted” local children. In the context of politics and customary rights, which highlights the limits of leadership authority and territorial boundaries that pit people against each other between communities and between communities and companies. This is a crucial problem that must be resolved, as he explains:

The potential for conflict is increasing. We can see this from several aspects, for example, political aspects. This political aspect of the division of the regions that make up the new autonomous regions that the government had formed turned out to be in conflict. Some agree, and some disagree. That is, if we see the potential, it certainly has the potential for conflict. In addition to political issues, there are now problems regarding recognizing who is the real king and that is also a crucial problem there. There are several examples in several areas, for example in Rumbati district, Patipi Bay district. In Rumbati for example, there are two traditional leaderships: recognition. Each of these leaders has recognition of the right to be king and has followers. As we have seen, there is a rift in that district known as the Rumbati kingdom. The second example is in the Patipi Bay district; there is a conflict; there is a long story about customary law and the issues of the legitimate king and who the original king is, which is also a conflict. To date, they are enemies of each other.

In the context of the younger generation’s future, Iribaram explained how young people in the village have shifted their mindsets and future orientations. There is a strong reluctance to go to school and work in companies around Berau Bay and Patipi Bay even though they can only get a job as a contract worker for security or a cleaner. They think it is still worth it, because they can make money very quickly. On the village’s streets, we can see young children walking to the kiosk to get some snacks carrying the IDR 100,000 banknote, which signifies how money has become an idol in today’s society. He said:

Encouraging children to progress and get a good education is very unusual now. For example, if we want to see global companies’ role in improving education for the community, that would be very unlikely. Companies are recruiting students to drop out... so that will ruin their future. They only recruit to be employed as laborers, security guards, and some very low-level jobs there. Furthermore, that is made possible by community activities, made possible by people who choose to get a shortcut. So, in this

society, this is the mindset, “It’s better to go to work than to go to school, we may be dead tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. So, if we’re still alive, it’s better for us to work so we can live.” So simple. I saw this, too, when the local people who owned the nutmeg farm, they think, “well, it’s like that, you don’t have to go to school, later in the nutmeg season you go pick [some nutmegs] and earn money.” People are like, “It doesn’t matter if you want to go to school or not. The important thing is that we have a hamlet. Then, they also think we have the sea. Such mentality still exists. The worst thing is that the promises of social assistance currently create dependence for the people there.

In the religious context, the potential for conflict also shows symptoms, both internally and externally driven by religion, or between religions, which in general the triggering factor is the expansive nature of religion and also the penetration of political interests that continue to disrupt the pillars of life of the Fakfak people. Iribaram further revealed that the politics of the king’s leadership in the local community has shifted the conflict from between traditional leaders to between religions. He notes:

There is a rift within that one district known as the Rumbati kingdom. The second example is in the Patipi Bay district where there is a conflict. There is a long story about customary law and the issues of the legitimate king and who the original king is, which is also a conflict. To date, they are enemies of each other. In addition, there are many other potential conflicts. It could have an impact on the issues of inter-religious harmony. Because in the areas of the kingdom, since ancient times they have been united as one kingdom. Meanwhile, the Christian group, they are supporting one of them that turns out to be opposed by the people who on the other hand think this is not true, not the king. That’s what causes the conflict to break out there, and a conflict of inter-religious hostility occurs because they are no longer united in the royal system

Although the potential for conflict described above is undeniable, it turns out that there is a great power in the community that can still bind and strengthens the companionship between them. The local genius of the Fakfak (Mbaham) community seems to be able to resolve the existing rift and deserves appreciation: the existence of four community life guidelines called 1. *atanam misia*, 2. *aroa misia*, 3. *faneka misia*, and 4. *awkawai fafia*. *Atanam misia* means always asking [for more information] or confirming. *Fenaka misia* means to be tolerant. *Aroa misia* means to be prudent. *Awkawai fafia* can be translated as having honest intentions or the wide path of life in society. If the community observes these four principles, then no matter how significant the

differences, or rifts that occur, they will not be able to undermine the spirit of brotherhood and kinship among the Fakfak community.

These four life principles are then combined with a philosophy of living side-by-side in society, known as the philosophy of *satu tungku tiga batu* (three stones in one furnace). A philosophy that takes the analogy of the traditional cooking stove of the Fakfak people, which usually sits three stones, is an essential element in food making, a basic human need. This furnace philosophy is used as a reference for the philosophy of life of the local Fakfak people, which describes the integration between customs, religion, and the state. It is highly possible because the Fakfak society is plural and open, and its social structure has transformed from traditional to modern and postmodern culture.

In line with these changes, new institutions have developed which reflect the application of the life philosophy of a furnace with three stones, which in local terms is known as *toromit war istery*, which can be interpreted as unity, equality, and mutual support or in a wider context can be described as harmony between the three main stakeholders in society: customs, religion, and the state which must be integrated to create harmony in life. This spirit of *toromit war istery* also forms solidarity that makes it possible for the Fakfak community to learn and accept the differences between them.

CONCLUSION

This article has brought us an example of changes in the structure of society that are possible due to internal and external drives from the community itself, in addition to the socio-political and cultural context that follows, be it acculturation, assimilation, reception, or even resistance as critical supporting elements of a transformation. In general, the structural changes in the Fak-Fak community were triggered by two critical aspects: ethnicity and religion, which are faced with the generic (inherited) and differential (selected) cultural characteristics, forming a unique new structure and having implications for the demographics of the population. It occurs with the emergence of a new interaction space, both a physical open space in the form of settlements and a space that emerges due to shared identity.

This article also shows that there is a significant potential conflict that continuously lurks in the harmonization of people's lives triggered by local geopolitics, which is caused by the expansive nature of religion as well as the monopoly and hegemony of globalization which has channeled people to believe in two main values: capital and markets. When confronted with this

situation, the community creates a bonding mechanism that originates from local genius, which can unite the rift that continues to occur in society by continuing to promote the *Toromit War Istery* philosophy of life which was later known as the philosophy of *satu tungku tiga batu* (three stones in one furnace) that can be translated as unity in diversity.

Future researchers could continue to expand upon this article, especially in terms of the depth of analysis regarding one important factor forming the structure of society, politics, and the enactment of the special autonomy law for the province of Papua-West Papua, which directly gives some privileges to indigenous Papuans compared to migrants who live in Papua. In addition, the method, the theories, and the concepts tend to prioritize anthropological or sociological perspectives, so it may have overlooked the legal perspective, for example, which is the main factor that forms values and norms in society.

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