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Social Interactions Between Indigenous Communities In The Mentawai Islands District

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Abstract – *The Mentawai community is one of the indigenous peoples in Indonesia. The Mentawai people have their own attributes that distinguish them from other indigenous peoples. These attributes are unique and make them known globally. These attributes will be seen when they interact socially with each other. Differences in these attributes can lead to potential conflicts if they cannot be addressed wisely. One way to reduce conflict is to carry out good social interactions. Good social interaction will create tolerance, mutual respect, and mutual respect. This paper describes the social interactions carried out by the Mentawai people in order to maintain harmonization and avoid conflicts.*

Keywords – *social, interaction, indigenous, Arat Sabulungan, Mentawai*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic country with more than 17,000 islands spread from Sabang to Merauke. The impact is that Indonesians live and settle in different areas from one another. They live sedentary and in groups which are then called the community. Each individual as part of the community shows specific behavior and a certain identity that refers to the prevailing social groups. Each social group is bound by a sense of togetherness as a single ethnic group. Each ethnic group has different customs and habits which are called culture. Sometimes these differences lead to multiple interpretations between one another due to the differences.

Society and culture are indeed things that cannot be separated from one another. Culture is an abstract knowledge that exists in society. Culture as a series of reference models in the form of knowledge about the position of the group structurally in a wider society, so that behavior appears as a response to patterns of interaction and communication between groups (Bruner, 1974: 251). Thus, the culture that is used to understand the environment in society does not only manifest a response to that specific environment, but also a response to other cultures through social interaction with other cultures. This means that the culture of the community concerned is in the form of a reference to understand and realize behavior. In other words, culture is a series of rules, instructions, plans and strategies consisting of a series of cognitive models that humans have and which are used selectively in dealing with their environment as manifested in their behavior and actions. (Suparlan, 1996:9).

Culture, society, and the environment in fact have relationships and order, so that they have a world view of their own that is different from other societies, cultures and environments. The linkage between culture and its environment and all aspects related to harmony or regularity including humans, creatures and objects and the supernatural which is often referred to as cosmology. This cosmology can be seen from the prevailing beliefs in society as a cultural system. This is due to the relationship between human position and everything in their environment which is reflected in the myths they create.

In the life of a simple society, the cosmos and myths that exist in people's beliefs become an inseparable part of everyday life. The existence of different and contradictory elements are interconnected with one another, which is called interaction. In social interaction, an identity will appear in it that characterizes the social class of the individual concerned. Generally described as ethnic groups. The identity that appears will be in the form of attributes that can refer to one particular ethnic group. Attributes here are meant a series of characteristics, signs, speech styles that distinguish it from attributes of other groups or ethnic groups. Identity is largely derived from culture. So that from the social interactions that occur between ethnic groups, the identity of the interacting ethnic groups will appear. This study wants to explore the social interactions carried out by the Mentawai indigenous people in their daily lives which describe their characteristics and uniqueness.

A. Social Interaction

Interaction in the Big Indonesian Dictionary is reciprocal action while social is related to society. Social interaction is a relationship between individuals or more, where the behavior of one individual affects, changes, or improves the behavior of another individual or vice versa (Ahmadi, 2009). This is actually a great advantage for humans, because with the existence of

two kinds of functions that it has progress in social life. If this human being is only an object, then his life cannot possibly be higher than the life of inanimate objects. So that human life is not possible to arise progress.

Social interaction is a process in which individuals and individuals, individuals and groups, or groups and groups relate to one another. Many sociologists agree that social interaction is the main condition for the occurrence of social activity and the presence of social reality. According to Max Weber, social reality is something that is based on individual motivation and social actions. When interacting, a person or group is actually trying or learning how to understand the social actions of other people or people. An interaction will be chaotic if the interacting parties do not understand each other's motivations and the meaning of the social actions they take (Suryanto, 2015).

Social interaction is a reciprocal (social) relationship in the form of mutually influencing actions. In social life, there are three dimensions that include the notion of social interaction, namely: Interaction between individuals and individuals, one individual gives influence, stimulation, and stimulus to other individuals. Meanwhile, individuals who are affected by this influence will give reactions, responses, or responses. Such as: a handshake or talking. Interaction between individuals and groups, individuals who influence, stimulate and stimulate social groups. Example: a teacher is teaching students in the classroom. Interaction between groups with groups, interaction relationships between social groups that provide influence, stimulation and stimulus to other social groups. Like: one soccer team against another soccer team (Agung and Raharjo, 2009). According to George Herbert Mead, in order for the interaction to occur or run as desired, it requires not only ability to act according to the social context, but also requires the ability to objectively assess our own behavior from the perspective of others (Suryanto, 2015). Social interaction is a social process. Forms of social interaction can be in the form of cooperation, competition, and even conflict. But usually the conflict gets a resolution, although sometimes it is only temporary, namely accommodation.

B. Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Peoples are groups of people who have a history of origin and occupy customary territories from generation to generation. Indigenous Peoples have sovereignty over land and natural resources, socio-cultural life regulated by customary law, and customary institutions that maintain the continuity of Indigenous Peoples' lives as indigenous communities (Baz, 2011)

There are four ancestral heritage or origins as a differentiator between Indigenous Peoples and other community groups. These elements include the same cultural identity, including language, spirituality, values, as well as attitudes and behaviors that distinguish one social group from another; system of values and knowledge, including traditional knowledge which can be in the form of traditional medicine, traditional farming, traditional games, traditional schools, and traditional knowledge as well as other innovations; customary territories (living space), including land, forests, seas, and other natural resources (SDA) which are not merely seen as production (economic) goods, but also involve religious and socio-cultural systems; as well as customary law and customary institutions, rules and management

procedures for living together to regulate and manage oneself as a social, cultural, economic and political group. Meanwhile, referring to the United Nations Organization (UNO) about Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the defining characteristics of Indigenous Peoples include self-identification; historical continuity (before being invaded by colonial or colonial powers); origin (history); spiritual connection with customary lands and territories; distinctive identity (language, culture, beliefs); and a distinctive socio-political and economic system.

Internationally, before the birth of UNDRIP, ILO Convention No. 169 or the 1989 Indigenous Peoples Convention became the first international instrument to recognize Indigenous Peoples. The Convention on Indigenous Peoples, which was adopted by member countries of the International Labor Organization in 1989, aims to revise ILO Convention No. 107 (Indigenous Peoples Convention 1957). The main principle of the convention is the protection of Indigenous Peoples for their culture, lifestyle, traditions and habits. In addition, the right of origin is also a factor that explicitly distinguishes Indigenous Peoples from kingdoms or sultanates. The kingdom or sultanate is an old state concept. Thus, Indigenous Peoples are not the same as kingdoms or empires. Since the beginning, Indonesia has recognized the existence of Indigenous Peoples through the 1945 Constitution (UUD). their traditional rights as long as they are still alive and in accordance with the development of society and the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which are regulated in law." Furthermore, this recognition is also stated in Article 28I paragraph (3) which reads: "Cultural identity and rights of traditional communities are respected in accordance with the development of the times and civilization".

In various narratives and legal products in Indonesia, there are also terms used, namely indigenous peoples (MHA), local communities, traditional communities, remote indigenous communities (KAT), and indigenous peoples. These various designations can refer to indigenous peoples, for example the mention of "local community" in the nagari for the Minangkabau Indigenous People, West Sumatra, or clans in the Batak Indigenous People, North Sumatra, or indigenous Papuans (tribes and clans) in Papua and West Papua. However, the existing designations can also refer to local communities - not Indigenous Peoples - in the context of Java or migrant communities (for example, transmigrant villages) who have inhabited an area for several generations if the mention does not take into account language identity, genealogical ties, or territorial related to inheritance of origins as a differentiator.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research is a type of library research. What is called library research or often also called literature study, is a series of activities related to methods of collecting library data, reading and recording and processing research materials (Zed, 2008: 3). Meanwhile, according to Mahmud in his book Educational Research Methods explains that library research is a type of research conducted by reading books or magazines and other data sources to collect data from various literature, both libraries and other places (Mahmud, 2011: 31). From the explanation, it can be understood that library research is not only reading and recording the data that has been collected. But more than that, researchers must be able to process the data that has been collected with the stages of library research. In this study the authors apply

the library research method because at least there are several underlying reasons. First, that data sources cannot only be obtained from the field. Sometimes data sources can only be obtained from libraries or other documents in written form, whether from journals, books or other literature. Second, literature study is needed as a way to understand new phenomena that occur that cannot be understood, then with this literature study these symptoms can be understood. So that in overcoming a symptom that occurs, the author can formulate a concept to solve a problem that arises. Third, library data remains reliable to answer the researchers' questions (Zed, 2008:3)

However, information or empirical data that has been collected by other people, either in the form of books, scientific reports or research reports can still be used by library researchers. Even in certain cases the field data is still not significant enough to answer research questions to be implemented.

The stages that must be taken by the author in library research are as follows:

- a. Gather research materials. Because this research is library research, the material collected is in the form of information or empirical data sourced from books, journals, results of official and scientific research reports and other literature that supports the theme of this research.
- b. Read literature. Reading for research purposes is not a passive occupation. Readers are asked to just absorb all the "knowledge" information in reading material but rather a 'hunt' activity that requires the reader's active and critical involvement in order to get maximum results. In reading research material, the reader must dig deeply into the reading material which allows him to find new ideas related to the research title.
- c. Make research notes. The activity of recording research material is arguably the most important stage and perhaps also the most difficult culmination of the whole series of library research. Because in the end all the material that has been read must be drawn a conclusion in the form of a report.

Process research notes. All material that has been read is then processed or analyzed to obtain a conclusion that is compiled in the form of a research report.

3. RESULTS

A. Location and Geographical Location of Mentawai Islands Regency

The Mentawai Archipelago is one of the areas in the West Province and is a group of islands that stretch from north to southeast to the west of the mainland island of Sumatra. Between the mainland in most of West Sumatra and the Mentawai Islands, they are separated by the Mentawai Strait, which also serves as a water transportation route that connects the two. The Mentawai Islands are aligned with several important areas in West Sumatra and Bengkulu, such as Siberut Island with the City of Padang, Sipora Island with Indrapura, South Coastal District, Pagai Island and South Pagai with the Bengkulu Province region. Meanwhile, the islands in the Mentawai Islands are separated by 3 straits each; Strait Bunga Laut between Siberut Island and Sipora Island, Sipora Strait between Sipora Island and North Pagai Island, Sikakap Strait between North Pagai Island and South Pagai Island (BPS Kabupaten Mentawai Islands, 2018: 2).

Of the four major islands in the Mentawai Islands, Siberut Island is the largest island with a total land area of 4,097 km². Then successively followed by Sipora Island with an area of 916 Km², North Pagai and South Pagai Islands with an area of 1,733 Km². Siberut Island was allegedly the first place of development for the Mentawai tribe (BPS Mentawai Islands Regency, 2018: 4).

B. Social Interaction Between Indigenous Peoples in Mentawai

Since the independence era, the government has made efforts to carry out development in various sectors and fields as well as in various regions of the archipelago, including remote areas. The transmigration program was also initiated in the 1970s (the New Order era). This transmigration program then created contacts between communities, including the Mentawai people and people from outside the Mentawai. In addition to the transmigration program, a formal touch from the Indonesian government was also carried out through the Ministry of Education and Culture by placing elementary school teachers in villages in the interior and Junior High Schools in the sub-district capital. The Ministry of Social Affairs (formerly) intensively carried out relations with people's lives, especially in its programs, resettlement. Furthermore, the Ministry of Health continuously sends doctors in cooperation with the Higher Education (University).

The social interaction that is manifested shows that the Mentawai people are considered by other ethnic groups who are interconnected with ethnic groups that are backward, lazy and difficult to get ahead. Then nationally the Mentawai people belong to the lowest level of society in West Sumatra. This is strengthened by the habit of the Mentawai people who use magic in their daily lives. According to other ethnic groups related to the Mentawai people, people who use magic in their lives are considered to be underdeveloped. Social interactions between different ethnic groups that occur in the Mentawai area, between Mentawai people and other ethnic groups tend to be based on ethnic stereotypes. This means that the views of other ethnic groups towards the Mentawai people are based on their knowledge of the habits of the Mentawai people in fulfilling their lives. So that the knowledge of other ethnic groups about the Mentawai people is that the Mentawai people always use magic throughout their lives, whether the Mentawai people are Muslim or Christian.

Knowledge of the Mentawai people is used as a social boundary with the tribe these different nations so that with these social restrictions it will be seen who I am and who they are. The use of this social boundary is necessary for interaction to occur so that it will strengthen previous assumptions about the other tribe or this stereotype is used as the basis for dealing with the Mentawai people, at certain times and certain situations, this stereotype fades and what happens is a relationship that mutually beneficial but within certain limits. Meanwhile, interactions between Mentawai indigenous people also occur in everyday life. Social interaction is intertwined in various forms. In groups with close social distance, there tends to be social interaction in the form of cooperation. Even more so if the group is in the same interest. Example: the Mentawai people have an *uma*, which is a large house that is used as a place to stay together, a place to store heirlooms and is considered sacred by each tribe. *Uma* was deliberately built by their ancestors on the banks of large rivers to facilitate water sources, transportation and agriculture. *Uma* is an important place for the Mentawai people.

Uma is a gathering place, a place for healing the sick. To place some rituals. Uma has a leader to carry out a ritual called rimata (Schefold, 2014).

With the uma standing on the bank of the river, their main mode of transportation is a boat. Social interactions between tribes occur here, where adjacent tribes help each other in making boats, from logging to the manufacturing process. Apart from making boats, social interaction also occurs when tribes help each other in building houses. So that the group that has been helped will return the favor when the other group needs help. Religious differences between one society and another can also result in competition in a positive sense. Community groups who are Christians try to enliven their religious activities, as well as community groups who adhere to the Islamic religion also try to activate their recitation activities, both in mosques, mosques and also in residents' homes. Likewise with the people who adhere to the Baha'i belief, Arat Sabulungan who hold their religious events with great fanfare. The difference lies in the intensity of each group's activities, where Muslim groups more often hold religious activities such as weekly recitations. Meanwhile, groups of adherents of the Christian religion were only seen carrying out religious activities only on Sundays and religious holidays. Likewise with followers of the Baha'i belief and Arat Sabulungan.

Apart from the positive side, competition between indigenous peoples in the religious field can also lead to a negative direction which can become seeds for conflict. Counter-productive religious endeavors can lead to conflict. Likewise, assumptions that justify one's truest religion and efforts to invite other people to embrace their religion can also be seeds of conflict. The attitude that considers one's religion to be the most correct usually occurs in groups of adherents of Islam, while efforts to persuade followers of other religions to convert to their beliefs are usually found in Christian groups. Even though there are seeds of conflict between indigenous peoples and those of different religions, they can still work together, either directly or indirectly. In the economic field they still need cooperation, because to meet the needs of life that they cannot fulfill alone, they need other groups. In the interaction between the economic and trade sectors, there appears to be a division of labor, in which the Mentawai people usually look for rattan, plant cloves and patchouli, while those who buy and resell them to the market are not Mentawai people, but from other tribes, such as the Minangkabau and Javanese tribes that exist in Mentawai. From this interaction there is a mutually beneficial relationship, although sometimes, the Mentawai people cannot set a selling price.

The ethnic groups that live in the interior along with the Mentawai people are generally people from Nias. Nias people besides selling goods that are needed by the community, such as tobacco, cigarette oil (ground and gorang), salt and sugar, they are intermediaries or intermediary traders of natural products of the Mentawai people, such as patchouli oil, cloves and rattan. Not only is money used as a medium of exchange in trading, they can also receive chicken eggs from the community to exchange for household needs. Sometimes they also accept debts for these household needs with promises to be paid in patchouli when the harvest is complete. So that at certain times many Mentawai people have debts in stalls.

In contrast to the Minangkabau people in trade relations with Mentawai people. Minangkabau people tend to visit residents in their villages, especially with settlements that are close to the sub-district which can be reached by carrying a wheelbarrow and buying Mentawai products such as patchouli oil, cloves and copra, usually purchases with cash besides that there are also Minangkabau traders waiting in the sub-district town for people who come to sell their forest products, rattan, cloves, patchouli oil and copra.

4. CONCLUSION

Mentawai people consist of various religious, social and cultural backgrounds. That difference has existed since they were in their respective areas of origin. This condition has an impact on the pattern of their social interaction in their new place. Differences in background between members of the group cause social prejudice between them, and this social prejudice has an impact on creating social distance in their lives with other ethnic groups.

For ethnic groups that have cultural closeness, the social prejudice that occurs is more towards positive prejudice and close social distance. On the other hand, for ethnic groups that have cultural patterns that are very different from other ethnic groups, there is negative social prejudice and very large social distance between them. However, even though there is negative social prejudice and long social distance between them, cooperation can still be established, especially in social activities.

DECLARATIONS

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