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Post-Reformasi Indonesia: The challenges of social inequalities and inclusion

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Post-Reformasi Indonesia: The challenges of social inequalities and inclusion

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2.4. CONSTITUTION OF URBAN HAMLETS (KAMPUNG) AND THE DAILY EXPRESSION OF IDENTITY IN JABODETABEK

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Abstract

The greater Jakarta area (Jabodetabek) represents a heterogeneous urban space characterized by an incessant influx of population. For the old residents, however, there is a strong sense of identity regarding ethnicity as well as hamlets of their origin. Betawi is a term to refer to the indigenous population residing in the city and the surrounding area since the time of Batavia, but the definition of Betawi as an ethnic category has long been subject to state intervention. However, the notion of Betawi Ethnicity, as it emerges in the immediate social settings, always does so in relation to the sense of belonging to respective urban hamlets (usually referred to as *kampung*). Boundaries of such hamlets sometimes overlap with administrative boundaries such as *kelurahan*, but at other times do not.

This paper first exemplifies what constitutes peoples' strong identity for their hamlets, focusing on one such *kampung* located in the suburb area of Depok. It then goes on to examine how a sense of belonging to *kampung* is expressed in daily occasions, especially in regard with ethnicity. In the case examined in this paper, relatively stable aspects of the hamlet's social structure seem to ensure the uniqueness of the community. However, their identity is most ostensibly expressed in the residents' aspiration for changes in accordance with the vicissitude of their lifeworld; as long as those changes are to maintain the uniqueness of the community. Ethnic identity of Betawi people is always expressed with reference to such a strong sense of belonging. In Jakarta, where the conversation involves ethnic identity, it is almost indispensable to refer to his or her hamlet. And this reiterated juxtaposition of ethnicity and hamlet is what ensures a channel so as to recognize and represent individuals in Jakarta not by the homogeneous ascription but by a multifaceted description.

Keywords: Kampung, Urban Village, Betawi, Nation-state, Ethnicity

INTRODUCTION

The greater Jakarta area (Jabodetabek) represents a heterogeneous urban space characterized by an incessant influx of population. For the old residents, however, there is a strong sense of identity regarding ethnicity as well as hamlets of their origin. Betawi is a term to refer to the indigenous population residing in the city and the surrounding area since the time of Batavia, but the definition of Betawi as an ethnic category has long been subject to state intervention. However, the notion of Betawi Ethnicity, as it emerges in the immediate social settings, always does so in relation to the sense of belonging to respective urban hamlets (usually referred to as *kampung*). Boundaries of such hamlets sometimes overlap with administrative boundaries such as Urban Sub-districts (*kelurahan*), but at other times do not.

This paper first exemplifies what constitutes Betawi peoples' strong identity for their hamlets, focusing on one such *kampung* located in the suburb area of Depok. It investigates the social constitution and everyday practices in this *kampung* in order to explain what makes the spontaneous hamlet remain so lucid as the basic unit

for people's identities and for their social activities. In the case examined in this paper, relatively stable aspects of the hamlet's social structure seem to ensure the uniqueness of the community. However, expression of their identity is most ostensive in the residents' aspiration for changes in accordance with the vicissitudes of their lifeworld.

The paper examines cases where a dialectic relation is observed between the hamlet imagery and the actual social activities. Spontaneous social activities, so long as they are conducted with *kampung* as the focal point, reinforce the uniqueness of the community. The paper also examines what it means to inherit or preserve local traditions. People in this *kampung* are quite aware that changes have to be made in order to preserve their culture. An appropriate understanding on the essence of a tradition naturally entails alteration to it, which is an indispensable prerequisite for traditions to survive. After all, this perpetual attitude and incessant aspiration towards changes in traditions is what ensures the consolidation of hamlet imagery and makes it last.

Administrative Units and Spontaneous Hamlets

In Indonesia, the smallest unit in the government administrative system is Urban Sub-district (*kelurahan*) or Rural Sub-district (*desa*). Several sub-districts form an Administrative District (*kecamatan*), and multiple Administrative Districts constitute a City Region (*kotamadya*) or Regency (*kabupaten*).

Above this are the primary units of local municipalities, that is, the Provinces (*propinsi*). Below the Urban Sub-districts, however, are smaller geographical units of Residents' Unions (*rukun warga*: RW) and Neighbors' Unions (*rukun tetangga*: RT). One RW is constituted of several RT. According to the government decree, these are "recognized as organizations of the people which are positioned under the protection of the government, but they are not units in the government administrative system." As Dwianto explains, the neighborhood associations of RW and RT are given the task and duty of promoting integration between the people and the government, of accepting and implementing all of the government's efforts and plans for the development of society, of preserving and promoting the Indonesian people's spirit of *musyawarah mufakat* (mutual consultation) and *gotong royong* (mutual assistance), of collecting dues and of making full use of any means available for the improvement of the living conditions of the people. (Dwianto 2003: 43)

As the "representative locality group," each RW or RT is responsible in managing "various community matters comprehensively," as well as "keeping a stratified interaction with other organizations in the area, such as the *arisan* (rotating credit association), the PKK (family-welfare group), the *Karang Taruna* (youth association), the *Posyandu* (community-based health care group)" (Dwianto 2003: 41). Under the Province of Jakarta, for instance, there are five city regions and one regency, which are; the regency of Hundred Islands, as well as the city regions of Central Jakarta, North Jakarta, East Jakarta, West Jakarta, and South Jakarta¹. Au total, the Province of Jakarta holds 44 Administrative Districts and 268 Urban Sub-districts. By 1994, the total number of RW was 2,544 and RT 28,981 (Dwianto 2003: 43).

In this way, RW and RT, although they were officially

1 As the capital of Indonesia, Jakarta is granted a special status. The city is treated as a province in the administrative system, with the governor as its head. Under the governor, there are five mayors (*walikota*) who serve as head of each of five city regions (*kotamadya*): Central Jakarta, North Jakarta, West Jakarta, South Jakarta, and East Jakarta (Dwianto 2003: 43). Unlike secondary municipalities in other regions, *kotamadya* in Jakarta are not granted so much political authority as to be called autonomous political units (Okamoto 2014)

positioned outside the administrative system, were the very apparatuses through which government sought to intervene into the private sphere of people's lives, as well as to mobilize people for its political ends (Sullivan 1992). The manner in which the government implemented the administrative units is reflexive of this intervening or oppressive character. Notably, the village imagery that the Rural Sub-district of *desa* implies has frequently provoked controversy especially outside Jawa. On the implementation of administrative village, *desa* imagery (the term itself derived from Javanese language) was chosen to represent the smallest administrative unit. More importantly, the boundaries of *desa* were often not accorded with the village boundaries as were previously conceived of by local residents. In West Sumatra, for instance, the boundaries of *desa* did not correspond with the boundaries of *nagari*, whose socio-geographical distribution had its basis on matrilineal clans of ethnic Minangkabau. The same is true for *banjar* in Bali, *pekon* in Lampung, and so forth.

Such a gap has been so widely recognized that there was a law amendment in 2014 regarding the constitution of administrative village where it was decided that the names and boundaries of the Sub-districts ought to be in accordance with the native conception of the village.² Although the law does not seem applicable to Jakarta and its environs, similar conditions are observed in the land of Betawi. Villages or hamlets in the area, usually referred to as *kampung*, show gap with administrative units of Urban Sub-districts and the neighborhood associations of RW/RT. In what follows, I will illustrate this gap by explaining the social constitution of one such *kampung*.

Social Constitution of an Urban Hamlet

The whole *kampung* of 3500 people was too large for any formal organization or sense of unity. The inhabitants identified less with the *kampung* than with clusters of houses along the several paths. Along each pathway, neighbours knew one another by 2 "sight, origin and occupation. Most knew each other's names. Every day they passed each other in the narrow pathways, shared the same market place, patronized the same stall keepers, used the same sanitary facilities and, on special occasions, attended the same prayer house. A number of parallel and intersecting pathways and the houses to either side delineated a neighbourhood.

2 (1) *Desa* terdiri atas *Desa* dan *Desa Adat*; (2) Penyebutan *Desa* atau *Desa Adat* sebagaimana dimaksud pada ayat (1) disesuaikan dengan penyebutan yang berlaku di daerah setempat" (Bab II, Pasal 6, UU No. 6 2014)

(Jellinek 1991: 26)

Jellinek realized that it is unrealistic to conceive the whole kampung as "a village where almost all the residents are mutually acquainted," which Levi-Strauss thought were "regarded as something traditional and primordial" (Levi-Strauss 2005: 44-5; my translation). Then, she moves on to observe the smaller neighborhood of 77 households. It is true that the whole kampung is far from being a primordial village of complete mutual acquaintance and total understanding of one member by another.

From daily conversations, however, it is observed that the smallest unit of reference regarding one's origin is the neighborhood community conceived of as a hamlet (kampung). Such hamlet imagery is frequently referred to. Then, what gives the basis for such an imagination? Instead of looking for a primordial village in the urban condition, this paper attempts to depict the style in which the community of kampung is imagined (Anderson 1983: 6). Here, I will exemplify the factors that make this imagination so real and evocative in the instances of everyday face-to-face interactions. I will do so by giving an example of one such kampung located in the suburb of Jakarta, with a special emphasis on the social constitution and collective activities in kampung life that develops certain form of group consciousness among residents.

Kampung Utan is an urban hamlet located in the urban sub-district of Krukut, the city region of Depok, West Java. The hamlet is constituted of three Residents' Unions (RW), and it shares one urban sub-district with another hamlet called Kampung Krukut, which is constituted of the rest four RW of the sub-district. The number of RW has increased with the decrease in the size of each, whereas the boundaries of the two kampung remained the same. According to several residents, the boundaries has not changed since the time of Dutch colonial rule, when the supervisory figures called *leluhur* or *tuan tanah*³ were sent by the colonial administration to take charge of the respective areas. Although Kampung Utan now shares the same urban sub-district with Kampung Krukut, uniqueness of the former is recognized especially in relation to the latter.⁴ According to some residents in Kampung Utan, people from respective hamlets "have never been together" like "oil and water." Even when they "play football or whatever, just try and have a look, they are them, we are us."⁵ In what follows, I will explain what makes the boundary so obvious.

At present time, it is often said that Kampung Utan is constituted of eight clans or "big families" (*keluarga besar*).

Among them are families that descend from A and B. Perception of ancestry among the residents, in their daily recognition, goes up to 5 generations or more. It is traced back either along paternal or maternal line, depending on the residential distribution. Recognition and expression of ancestry comes about in the intertwined meshes of various socio-cultural activities of the hamlet. Besides the utter occasion of family events, those activities have to do with the genealogy of mosque administrators, the line of martial art teachings, and so forth.

The first ever mosque in the hamlet, Masjid Kampung Utan, was established in the initiative of B and D, and it was built on the land of their father, A. The first administrator was A's first child B, and A's fifth and the last-born child D later succeeded the position. I, who married to D's daughter, became the third administrator of the Mosque. As for Masjid Darut al Taqwa, the second ever-established mosque in the hamlet, I's grandfather G was the first administrator, and the position was later succeeded by I's father H, and then by I's brothers⁶.

The above genealogy is well intermeshed with that of martial art gurus. The current great master (*guru besar*) of the school of martial art practiced regularly in the hamlet is a man in his 70's called E. The guru before E was I. Before him was C who was the fourth child of A's. Therefore, C was father of E and an older brother of D. The genealogy continues into present day. Current young master, called K, is a grandson of I. Thus, knowledge of ancestry in the hamlet are well recognized and often invoked in the course of social activities that have to do with local traditions.⁷

Perception of ancestry aside, the most explicit feature concerning the social constitution of the hamlet is the practice regarding entombment of its members. Below The Mosque Prosperity Committee (*Dewan Kemakmuran Masjid: DKM*) is formed an institution called The Tomb Prosperity Committee (*Dewan Kemakmuran Kober: DKK*). The mission of DKK is to collect monthly fee of 5,000 Rupiah from the original inhabitants as a fund for the member's entombment. When someone dies in the community, some financial aid is granted to his/her family. Not only the autochthonous, but also the allochthonous, most of whom came to reside in the hamlet after 1970's, can be part of this institution after they have resided in the hamlet for 15 years. Non-members have access to similar institutions based on RT and RW. Although the hamlet now holds multiple mosques, only Masjid Kampung Utan alone takes charge of the administration of DKM.⁸ This is reflective of the fact that the boundary of Kampung is the primary frame in which people engage in social activities.

3 For the illustration of one such figure, see Fabricious (2008 [1979]).

4 Fieldnote, 23, 25, January 2016.

5 Fieldnote, 11 February 2016.

6 Fieldnote, 11 February 2016.

7 Fieldnote, 6 March 2016.

8 Fieldnote, 11 February 2016.

Vicissitudes and Consistency

The institutional aspects of the hamlet, along with the recognition of ancestry, seem to provide a cognitive frame for the imagery of the hamlet to be depicted as a bounded entity. And this apparently enhances the probability of it being reminded of and referred to as the primary unit of one's sense of belonging. Practically speaking, however, these aspects are not so static as such imagery exhibits itself. Usually, they undergo vicissitudes over the course of time. DKK, for instance, once had various functions including youth association (*ikatan remaja masjid*), religious teachings for reassurance (*jadwal pengajian ta'jiah*) and other activities to help out those in distress (*membantu yang duka*); but has lost all of them except for the one regarding entombment.

Having a closer look at the vicissitude of each organizational body and its function, however, a dialectical relation is observed between the kampung imagery and actual community practices. Although the hamlet now holds multiple mosques, for example, Masjid Kampung Utan alone takes charge of the administration of DKM. This is reflective of the fact that the boundary of kampung is the primary frame in which people engage in social activities. Some organizational aspects may be lost or put to change as time passes, but the kampung imagery remains lucid and keeps making up a significant part in people's cognitive schemes.

Social constitution and kampung imagery

This dialectical relation becomes more evident if one looks at the rise and fall of youth associations in this kampung. In 1996, long after the youth association under DKK had not been active, several youths got together on the month of Ramadan. They came to consult J. J is an uncle of K, the young master of martial art, and a son of I, the third administrator of Masjid Kampung Utan. They did not like it when established figures in the hamlet identified them as youngsters who were just hanging out in the alleyways engaging in evil deeds such as drinking alcohol. They hoped to be respected as members of the hamlet. According to J, they were hoping the elderlies in the hamlet to guide them to good deeds and meaningful activities. By the time the Eid al-Fitr festivities were held that year, they had made effort to come up with necessary funds to hold an event for the youth in the hamlet, as well as to invite established figures in the hamlet, local government officials. It was successful because the event organizers went down to the youngsters and talked to them face to face in inviting them. According to J, no one had approached the youngsters in kampung "by heart (*secara kejiwaan*)" by this time.

This lasted for 3 years, but after that the youth became inactive again. In 1999, some youths were planning to establish the mosque youth association (*remaja masjid*). However, they failed to go down to the individual youngsters who liked to hang out in the alleyways to talk to them on an individual basis. Among the 200 some youths they invited, only about 50 came. In 2005, an association called Forum for Communication of the Youth in Kampung Utan (*FORKUT: Forum Komunikasi Remaja Kampung Utan*) was established in the initiative of several youths. But it did not work out for the same reason. Again, the movement was put on freeze (*dipeti-esin*).⁹

These days, however, youth movement is on track for a revival. This time it is based on more spontaneous organizational activities. Active-creative Youth Association (*IRMAK: Ikatan Remaja Aktif Kreatif*) is an association established in the 1980s, covering the area of one of three RW in Kampung Utan. Today, their routine activities include monthly religious teachings (*pengajian*), weekly martial art trainings (*latihan silat*), weekly voluntary work (*kerja bakti*), the collection of edible plants (*ngeramban*), and a futsal competition on the day of independence.

Existence of this association eventually stimulated the youth in the other areas of the hamlet. It made them think, "If they can, there is no way we cannot (*Masa mereka bisa kita nggak bisa*)." Later formed two associations in another RW, and five in the other RW. Apparently they do not operate on RW basis, but on the basis of smaller districts. Some associations were named after alleyways and some after local landmarks such as a food stall. They are called Galur Youth Association (*IREGAL: Ikatan Remaja Galur*), Perin Youth Association (*IRP: Ikatan Remaja Perin*), Ambara Youth Association (*Ikatan Remaja Ambara*), Petruk Youth Association (*Ikatan Remaja Petruk*), Sawo Youth Association (*Ikatan Remaja Sawo*), Uphill-food-stall Youth Association (*WARTAS: Ikatan Remaja Warteg Atas*), and Madrasah Youth Association (*Ikatan Remaja Madrasah*), respectively. These eight associations engage in regular activities independently, but also get together to hold monthly meetings.¹⁰ Apparently, it is much easier for these associations to reach out individually to the youth in respective areas because they operate on the basis of smaller districts. Thus, youth movements in Kampung Utan have witnessed vicissitudes in the course of time, but every time the revival occurs, it operates on the basis of hamlet. As such, the kampung imagery is repeatedly reified as the frame of reference in the pursuit of spontaneous local activities.

⁹ Fieldnote, 6 March 2016.

¹⁰ Fieldnote, 6 March 2016.

What it means to “preserve” local traditions

Importantly, changes in local activities do not reduce or disguise the uniqueness of the hamlet, but rather reify and strengthen it. This is largely because of people’s attitude towards the changes in traditions. As a clear illustration of this matter, I shall cite an example from the activities of local martial art trainings in the hamlet (see 2-1). The traditional art circle (*sanggar seni budaya*), in which I have participated for over a couple of years, was established in 2008 in order to revitalize the local martial art school that has not been active for more than a decade. The school of martial art practiced here is a variant of Gombel. The descent of the school stretches back to 9 generations before. The first to third gurus were from the area called Ciracas in East Jakarta. The fourth and fifth gurus were from kampung called Gandul, which is right next to Kampung Utan. From the sixth generation on, all the gurus were from Kampung Utan. The ninth guru called E is a son of C, the seventh guru. After E stopped teaching for quite a while, a guy called K came to consult him and talk him into holding regular training again. This was when he established the traditional art circle. K is a grandson of I, the eighth guru. His grandmother’s father was the younger brother of C, the seventh guru.

The circle is involved in various activities other than regular martial art trainings. The most important among them is the activities as a theater troupe. On occasions of wedding ceremonies and circumcision rituals, they are brought in to perform the forms of comedy play called *palang pintu* and *lenong*. Exchange of rhymed verse and the demonstration of martial art are two indispensable features of this comedy play. In the course of their activities, they emphasize their role as the “practitioners of traditional art (*pelaku seni*)” and the “guardians of culture (*centeng budaya*)” whose duty is to “preserve culture (*lestariin budaya*).”

However, the fact that they emphasize the preservation of traditional art does not discourage them at all from modifying the way they practice it. It is taken for granted, for example, that different schools have different styles and moves even if they share the same root. It is quite natural for different Gombel schools to have different moves. Difference is usually regarded as the result of modifications made by each guru. They are quite aware that succession of tradition inevitably entails changes. For the preservation of a traditional practice, they seem to believe that it is indispensable to understand the essence of it so that one can make an appropriate alteration.

There was a moment when the nature of this attitude revealed to me. One day I was learning the sequenced moves. I felt confused about the sequence and went to consult K, the young guru. The footing of Gombel in its

sequenced moves basically traces a square shape clockwise on the ground. It goes around the square three times before it ends. At that time, I was confused with the move at the end of the third round, where I was supposed to put my hands together in the front at stomach high, with my fist open and palm towards the ground, after giving a back fist. And then withdraw my hands towards my body while putting them to the lower left side. This move was to drag the opponent’s hand or head downwards and close to me so I can hit him from above. The moment I poked my hands forward in front of K, however, he told me not to do it that way. Instead of putting both hands forward, he told me to poke my left hand first and then put my right elbow to the front so my right elbow meets my left palm. According to him, it was only after giving the elbow blow that I should drag my hands down and towards my body. It was apparent to me that the poked hand was for grabbing the opponent’s head to make sure my elbow hits it. But this advice confused me a little because it was a different sequence than the one I was taught by a younger trainer a few minutes before.

The next day, I was having a chat with F, after staying the night over at his as I usually do after the training. He is a grandson of a sister of the great master (*guru besar*) E, which means he is a great-grand son of C. He is also one of the oldest and most frequent participants of the martial art circle and the theater troupe. In talking with him, I suddenly came up with the incident the night before and brought up the same question, but this time I asked for his advice by showing the moves that I had been told by K the night before. He said my moves were not correct. But then I told him that this sequence was the one I was just taught by K. To this, his reaction was very immediate and obvious. “Oh, it must have been modified (*Ooo, diperbarui kali*),” said he, seeming so convinced as if the dots were connected within his head. It did not need any further explanation for him to grasp the whole context. If someone with a good knowledge about the essence of the traditional art, like K, thinks it is appropriate to add a certain modification to it, then it is so acceptable and appropriate. This course of incidents was a clear illustration of their attitude towards the succession and preservation of traditions.

Conclusion

Although the conception of spontaneous village was long absent in the administrative sphere, it has never lost its importance in the everyday socio-cultural milieu, especially as the basic frame of reference in the pursuit of local activities. In the case of Kampung Utan, the consistency and boundedness of the hamlet basically comes from the institutional aspects of the kampung. What is more critical about the case, however, is that the spontaneity of

the kampung activities cannot solely be attributed to the relatively static aspects of the community. If one looks into the quotidian occasions of spontaneous social activities, those activities are being practiced with reference to the imagery of kampung as the basic frame. And this is what reifies and reinforces the consciousness of the hamlet community. Moreover, such process has continuously been in operation because of the residents' attitude towards tradition. For the residents in Kampung Utan, preserving tradition does not mean the rigorous and pedantic reproduction of it. For them, succession or preservation of culture means the appropriate alteration of the old practices based on the appropriate understanding of the core intent of them.

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