

The Ethnic Identity: The Genesis and Its Dynamics (The Case of Bugis)

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ABSTRACT

This paper will discuss the genesis of Bugis as an ethnic and its dynamics over time and space. Following the theories regarding ethnicity and identity, the author will elaborate on three questions: (1) How the Bugis emerge; (2) How the ruling power perceives the Bugis through the census; (3) How their members appropriate the Bugis ethnic identity in their daily interaction. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. Field research was conducted by organizing interviews and observation and literature review from previous research. The government's census data was also considered to explain the classification of an ethnic group. The phenomena observed are analyzed using the interpretative method. This study shows that Bugis as an ethnic group does not have a clear origin. The author argues that Bugis ethnic is a result of the dialect of external and internal processes. Other societies have contributed to shaping Bugis with categorization and labeling. In contrast, the people who have lived with the traditional practices have appropriated themselves with these external categories and apprehended themselves. This identity is not something fixed and permanent, there are always shifts in ethnic identity within an interaction.

Keywords: Bugis, ethnicity, identity, South Sulawesi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a nation with hundreds, even thousands of ethnic groups. The BPS, in collaboration with the Institute of South East Asian Studies (ISEAS), stated that there are 633 ethnicities in Indonesia. Before the revised version of the census in 2010, the BPS conveyed that 1,331 ethnicities and sub-ethnicities in Indonesia were recorded by the self-identification method based on the respondents' responses. The record showed an imbalanced composition of ethnicity: 41% Javanese and 15% Sundanese. It means that 55% of the Indonesian population consists of these two ethnicities. The other ethnicities only form 2 and 3% of Indonesian people: Melayu, Madura, Batak, Minangkabau, Bugis, Betawi and Banten. The other ethnicities form an even smaller portion of the total population.

No administration from an "ancient era" and "new era" (Orde Lama and Orde Baru) in the republic had put citizens' ethnicity in the census record. The percentages mentioned above were from the census conducted during the "reformation era" (Era Reformasi). For the new order administration under President Soeharto,

ethnicity was considered a threat to national unity [1]. It seemed that this measure was the government's effort to strengthen the national identity. Also, ethnicity was seen as an obstacle to national development [2]. In other words, local identity was exploited aesthetically but it repressed politically.

After the Reformation, in the 2000 population census, ethnic groups were included in the census, which indirectly showed the state's recognition of the people's local identity. At the same time, ethnic identity has been strengthening in the increasingly democratic political sphere in the spirit of decentralization. Nevertheless, the celebrated democracy is full of conflicts in many parts of the archipelago, full of nuances of primordial identity, religion, and ethnicity [3]. Of course, the cause is not simplistic, only because the inclusion of ethnic groups in the census provides room for strengthening ethnic-based identities. However, the problem involves social, economic, and political dimensions and involves various local, national, and even international actors.

Although it appears that Indonesia consists of various ethnic groups, research on ethnicity is rare.

Even if there is, the discussion does not pay attention to developing theories [4]. Nevertheless, at least three fundamental questions related to this ethnicity: (1) How is the origin of an ethnicity formed? (2) How to determine the boundaries of ethnicity? (3) How does one use the ethnic identity in their interactions? These questions will guide this paper by taking one case, namely the Bugis ethnicity from the South Sulawesi region. However, before discussing the questions raised, various theories regarding ethnicity will be presented to help understand the problem in the following.

2. LITTERATURE REVIEW

2.1. What is an ethnic group?

The words "ethnic" or "ethnicity" comes actually from the ancient Greek word; *ethnos*, which seems to have referred to a range of situations in which a collectivity of humans lived and acted together [5], which is typically translated today as "people" or "nation" or sometimes partly related to "tribe". In the discipline of Anthropology, notably in the classic perspective, "ethnic group" is primarily viewed as an extension of a clan. The member of the ethnic group is considered of common descent, however distantly, seen to have a shared culture [6]. In an essentialist perspective, "ethnic group" emerges from cultural similarities among the members, however unclear, the family relation. Among the American Anthropologist, before naming "ethnic group" to a group of people lived isolated with their unique culture, they called it "tribe" or "tribal society." From where we have learned the historical evolution of what we call "ethnic group."

What implies the notion of "tribe"? It seems that the Ethnographer or anthropologist who visits the village for doing long-term fieldwork considered the tribal society as a primitive social organization or non-civilized social organization with discrete and bounded entities, having an apparent ethnic boundary that was so permanent and fixed. The structuralist-functionalist view in Anthropology that was very strong for some couples decades presupposed the culture as a whole closed system.

"...The Ethnographer has in the field, according to what has just been said, the duty before him to draw up all the rules and regularities of tribal life; all that is permanent and fixed; of giving anatomy of their culture, of depicting the constitution of their society.." [7]

Research on ethnic groups mainly was held during the colonial period, notably in the 19th and the first half

of the 20th centuries, has perpetuated this essentialist view. The colonial society has to distinguish between civilized and non-civilized social organizations, between "us" and "them." By this distinction, the government could avoid the ambiguities to control and civilize the colonized society. So, it could be clearly stated that the colonial government has also played its role in shaping ethnic identity. Colonial rule in Africa, for example, was, undoubtedly, marked by powerful new forces that played a significant role in shaping the particular manifestation of modern ethnicity all across the continent. Even though It occurred undoubtedly not in a historical vacuum [8], it seems that the external actor partly provides the basis of the emergence of ethnic.

Social anthropology perspective has contributed to revising for a better understanding of the classical anthropology view of the origin of a "culture group." Jenkins, mainly influenced by Max Weber [9], has argued that the belief of the same ancestry is likely to be a consequence of collective political action rather than its cause. Thus, people share the same sense of belonging, not because of their origin similarities, but because of the consequences of their collective action, which represent the same interest. In other words, the origin of ethnic formation is not essentially descended from the same ancestry but socially constructed following the interest similarities. Nevertheless, of course, any cultural trait in common such as the same language, ritual, kinship can be a perfect background for an ethnic formation.

From this social construction perspective, the presence of another cultural group encourages to shape the "groupness." The research of Perret [10] about the emergence of Batak (an ethnic group in Sumatra) related closely to the presence of the Malay group in the coastal zone. During the 19th century, no local source from where one can find the term "Batak." The community living around the lake Toba represents the Batak today, often called the "savage community" or the "consumer of pork." The emergence of "Batak" as an ethnic group related to the colonial interest hampered the Muslim - Malay influence to the hinterland people baptized into Christianity.

The current social studies incorporate ethnicity into the theory of the nation. The study of ethnicity and nationalism has become one of the significant growth areas. Many historians and social scientists relate the emergence of the nation-state with ethnicity. The origin of the ethnic is not the main problem but how to transform this primordial "groupness" into the spirit of "nationality."

2.2. The ethnic border

The view that sees ethnicity as essentialist and presupposes a permanent feature as developed in classical anthropology could not be more defended. One of the reasons is the changing context of society. Intense interaction across groups makes change very easy to happen, which causes postmodernists to see that ethnic identity is fluid and does not have a "core." Everything changes according to the historical context (historical moment).

In contrast to the views of postmodernists, Frederic Barth [11], through his seminal work, attempts to reconcile the views of classical anthropology and postmodernism. On the one hand, he saw that ethnicity was formed from the existence of cultural similarities. The sharing of a common culture is generally given central importance. The classification of a person and local groups as members of an ethnic group must depend on their exhibiting the particular traits of the culture. Differences between groups become the difference in trait inventories. However, on the other hand, he does not deny the dynamic nature and openness to change. "Shared culture" is understood through the interaction of a person that allows the production and reproduction of culture. Ethnic or cultural boundaries are not defined descriptively before interaction, but ethnic boundaries are determined dynamically through interactions with others. However, Barth did not fall into patternless change because there is always persistence in the changes made possible by the phyletic line. This term follows the concept of evolution in biology. For Barth, the ethnic boundary canalizes social life – it entails a frequently quite complex organization of behavior and social relation. Identifying another person as a fellow member of an ethnic group implies sharing criteria for evaluation and judgment. Entailed in ethnic boundary maintenance is social contact between persons of different cultures; ethnic groups only persist as significant units if they imply a marked difference in behavior.

In line with Barthes' opinion, from a psychological point of view, ethnic identity is a dynamic process in which people construct and understand their ethnicity. Nevertheless, in the process from the psychological literature, the ethnic identity, which is called fluid and attached to the socio-historical context, does not eliminate "a stable core" or a sense of belonging to the central aspect of the self [12].

3. METHOD

This research is qualitative. It begins with an effort to interpret the historical process of the emergence of an ethnic group. A qualitative approach allows a person to build a strong understanding of a topic through activities, circumstances, people. The data are taken

from several sources; field research was conducted by organizing interviews, observation, and previous research literature reviews. The government's census data was also considered to explain the classification of an ethnic group. Finally, the whole data collected are analyzed using the interpretative method.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. How the Bugis emerges: an extension of the hypothesis

No reliable source had revealed when "Bugis" as ethnicity was created' Further investigation is still needed for Bugis and other ethnicities in South Sulawesi. Many Bugis people, including cultural practitioners, relate Bugis with the text of La Galigo. One of the characters in the epic, La Sattumpugi, is referred to as the name from which the word Ugi or later became Bugis comes. This historical myth is related to the emergence of the Chinese Kingdom (situated in Wajo, South Sulawesi). The *Lontaraq* from Wajo explained that this kingdom was founded by a sailor from Luwu called 'La Sattumpugi' and his follower called *Ugi to Cina*. La Sattumpugi married We Tenriabeng, a sister of We DatuSengeng, consort of La TiulengBataraLattu', the second king of Luwu [13]. From this point of view, following the view that sees ethnicity as a cultural unit originating from the same ancestor is justified. However, in the text of La Galigo itself, the word "Bugis" is not found, which reflects the fact that the people described in the epic did not call themselves that way. In general, the naming in the text refers to toponyms such as Tjina etc. It is not easy to use the La Galigo as definite reference because the nature of this text is also a debate, whether it is just a literary work or a history.

Until the 15th century, it seems that Bugis as an ethnic category has not yet been formed. Even if it does exist, it certainly has not yet become a solid identity. Referring to the *Nāgarakertāgama* text in the 14th century, such as the La Galigo text, does not find the word Bugis to refer to ethnic groups living in Sulawesi, but only uses its toponyms such as Silaja, Bontain. The word "Bugis" was only found in colonial records of the 16th century: Godinho de Eredia. This record stated that in 1545 at the request of the kings of *Bougis* and *Macaçar*, Father Viegaz left Malacca and headed for Suppa di Machoquique (Bacukiki) on a mission to baptizing the nobles of Suppa and Siang.

Furthermore, as with any naming system in general, the name "Bugis" is not given by people who think they are Bugis because the name was given by someone else who was then interiorized by the group named after this. It can be seen in the opinion of the famous Bugis Anthropologist who said that the population of lowland plains on the coast of Bone bay from the northern to the

southern part of the South Sulawesi peninsula were called *To Lu' Pabbugi* (sea people who catch fish). It may be why people from this area are called Luwu' or Ugi (Bugis) [14]. So, according to him, it was people from other groups that create the name of Bugis. Consequently, from two eminent expert of Bugis, Mattulada and Abidin, we have two contradictory opinions up to this point. Namely, according to Abidin, the name "Bugis" was born from La Satumpugi, which means internal, while according to Mattulada, "Bugis" was born from a name given by external parties.

However, the two agreed that the Bugis are related in the first place to Luwu. But from today's reality, the Luwunese themselves refuse to be called Bugis and choose to label themselves as *Wija to Luwu*, which can be understood because linguistically, the Luwunese have a different language from the Bugis in general.

What can be said so far from all this is, the "Bugis" that exist today are not what they were in the beginning, both territorially and culturally, or in other words undergoing a transformation and change of identity. At first, the Bugis might be only a tiny community living in a village (*wanua*) which in the following period was able to expand their influence in certain areas so that the people in that place over time identified themselves as "Bugis."

It is quite certainly that the Bugis itself was formed during the development of the kingdoms in South Sulawesi. And especially after the development of the Wajo kingdom. Following the words Macknight, "small leads to large, simple to complex thus the world progress," power and political relation influence the extension of the group. Larger groups are formed as such group realizes the benefit of cooperation. While state regalia certainly plays some role as a sign of power in ritual and popular belief [15].

What we want to say that in the period before the development of the kingdoms, Bugis was undoubtedly not yet formed. Eventhough Sulawesi island, where Bugis comes from, has been inhabited by people who have developed their culture. South Sulawesi can thus be said to have been influenced by various cultures and races who come from several different directions; east, north, and south. Regarding the language dispersion model, some think that the Austronesia people from South Asia migrated to this island around 3000 B.C before arriving in Madagascar and the Pacific.

From the recent archeological data, our knowledge of the prehistoric background of the Sulawesi population has been radically transformed. The discovery of the 7,200-year-old skeleton from a female hunter-gatherer associated with the "Toalean" shares most genetic drift and morphological similarities with Papuan and indigenous Australian. Also, Denisovan has shown the complexity and discontinuity of the Sulawesi

population [16]. Prehistoric remains of humans living in the South Sulawesi area show that in the various past types of races and cultures have lived in the Sulawesi area, thus making a belief about the birth of "Bugis" as a tribe that was born during the development of the kingdom. The intensity of meetings with outside groups and the expansion of regional and socio-political institutional systems has facilitated the emergence of the larger socio-cultural identity.

4.2. Bugis in the census: the non-fixed community

As mentioned before, the external group partly influences that ethnic identity; through the census, one can learn how the government classifies the people according to their ethnicity. It can reflect the way the government comprehends the society by which it can control and administer it. In this article, we discuss how the colonial government classifies the Bugis who lived in Batavia (Jakarta) and how the census method determines the affiliation of the ethnicity of the people.

The Dutch colonial government has classified the Batavia people by their cultural characteristics. The enumeration held in 1689 has identified the presence of Buginese in the capital of the colonial city. However, what was identified as Buginese at the time also comprised also the Makassarese. The government has probably failed to differentiate the two ethnic groups or has no socio-political reason to separate them. Even the colonial enumeration of 1739 includes the Butoneses and Makassarese and other groups from the eastern part of the Archipel identified as Buginese. For that reason, while the Buginese, Makassarese, and Mandarese were classified differently in their homeland, in the newly adopted land, they were identified as Bugis by other groups [17]. The first census in which each group was enumerated properly took place in 1756. The Buginese and other groups were classified differently. However, from the contemporary perspective, the way of the colonial government to count the number of Buginese in Batavia was confusing because the people from Wajo were excluded. This kind of classification was perpetuated until the 1930 census. For what reason the colonial government has set aside the Wajo from the Buginese? Two working hypotheses are taken here (1). Many Wajo fishing boats in the port of Sunda Kelapa made the colonial government consider the community separate from other Bugis (2). The government was confused about defining the politics of the Wajo people who, during the war between the kingdoms of Bone and Makassar (Bone was a representation of the Bugis), Wajo supported the Makassar troops. It could also be the "devide et impera" strategy of the colonial government.

4.3. Bugis as a multiple identity

It is hard to retain the perspective about the existence of the one and fixed Bugis identity. Not only because of modernity, but also the existence of another community in different contexts can identify themselves as Bugis. In South Sulawesi, four major ethnic groups make up what may be called the province's original population of the province; Buginese, Makassarese, Torajanese, and the Mandarese, which speak with their local language. In some districts, some sub-ethnic life, revealing a mixture characteristic of the leading ethnic group. For example, in Enrekang Regency (Kabupaten), living amongst the Torajanese in the north and the Bugis in the south, Enrekang, particularly those living in Duri district, inherited the significant influence of both ethnic. They speak a vernacular language with vocabularies that resembles either the Torajanese or the Buginese. Even though it seems of the religious reason, this group feel more Buginese than Torajanese. When the Duri people migrated to another island, they even called themselves a Bugis people. The same phenomenon appears in other borders districts, in Maros and Pangkep regencies to the north of Makassar and Bulukumba regency to the south Makassar, the Buginese territories. Most of them speak bilingually, using either the Buginese language or the Makassarese language in their daily conversation. When they visit the family in the "real Buginese" or "real Makassarese" territories, they will soon call themselves Buginese or Makassarese, depending on the territory.

Furthermore, the Bugis living in Malaysia, the Buginese son who speaks the Malay language in their daily life identifies themselves as a Buginese in front of the "pure Malay people." On the contrary, they preferred to be called Malay people during their interaction with non-Muslim people, like Tamil or Chinese.

So, ethnic groups identity implies ethnic relation, which involves at least two collective parties. Identity is a matter of self-identification as well as identification by others. So it is not unilateral. Different contexts of interaction can change the way people position and perceive themselves. For example, feeling like a minority group is the reason to change the way people change their self-identification. To distinguish their self with another community can also be another reason. Therefore, considering these phenomena, the ethnic identity border could not determine the interaction with other people from other ethnic groups.

In addition, in the context of mobility and the diaspora, in the current era, it is interesting to highlight the birth of another "Bugis" community whose members have migrated for centuries to South Kalimantan. They invented a creative way to stand out and band together with fellow Bugis living in Sulawesi by calling themselves the "Bugis Pagatan" to show similarity and

some difference. As a result, in the 2010 census, the government recognized the presence of this ethnic group as different from the "Bugis" living in other places.

4. CONCLUSION

Considering that during the sedentary period and the developing agrarian culture, the population in South Sulawesi has lived separately in a different small settlement where each collective identity emphasized the same village, ethnicity seems has not yet become a prominent identity. However, the emergence of kingdoms that made these separate settlements part of their territory gave rise to a broader socio cultural identification. Based on their similarities of territory of political unit, the same of the cultural traits and encounters as well with other social groups, a 'name' as ethnic identity progressively emerges. A group with territory and culture is seen as different from the others.

As from the beginning, what is called a sharing culture is a complex of values, ethnic identity can be interpreted and evaluated by a member of an ethnic group. It happens in particular when there is interaction with other groups. In this situation, the emergence of different expressions of an ethnic group's members might arises depending on the interaction context. Therefore, ethnic identity is understood as not something fixed and permanent, like a guide whose expression or form will remain the same at the same time and place. Outsiders contribute to the formation of identity. Identity is ultimately a matter of relational, the way one person identifies himself and the other way identifies us.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The contributions of each author are as follows: conceive and design the analysis, collect the data, contribute data and/or analysis tools, perform the analysis, and write the paper.

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