

The Survival of Ethnic: A Study of the Non-Displacement of Javanese Trans-Migrants between Gam and TNI Conflicts in Aceh, Indonesia

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This article provides a case study of the survival and non-displacement of Javanese transmigrants during the conflict between the GAM and the TNI. Its purpose is to describe the survival strategies of Javanese transmigrants in the face of conflict. The conflict between GAM and the TNI resulted in the massacre, expulsion and forced relocation of Javanese transmigrants in the Aceh region. The strategy of surviving transmigrants was to build social strength through social solidarity and to build social cohesion through collective awareness and mutual understanding. The cooperative role of Diponegoro is referred to in this study.

Key words: *Survival strategies, conflicts, Javanese transmigrants, social solidarity, GAM.*

Introduction

Bloody Aceh leaves a deep wound for Indonesian people. Many victims were massacred because of conflicts between Free Movement Aceh (GAM) and the TNI. The first GAM rebellion took place in October 1976 under the leadership of Hasan Tiro, the founder of the Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF) or GAM. At that time, Hasan Tiro declared the independence of Aceh-Sumatra in December 1976; this declaration was not a call for an Islamic state as previously demanded by Darul Islam. Although, his argument changed by using ethnic-based propaganda; he provoked Acehnese sentiments against "Javanese colonialism" (which he called Indonesia) as the Javanese had replaced the Dutch as emperors (Kell, 1995). Tiro focused on Aceh's natural wealth and said that the Acehnese should benefit from its own resources such as those in Brunei Darussalam (Walton, 2009). Acehnese nationalists described Indonesian rule as colonial; an extension of Dutch rule. For this reason, GAM's struggle was a continued opposition to the Netherlands. As Aspinall noted, Aceh's independence, declared in 1976, was the nineteenth-century sultanate's successor state (Aspinall, 2005).

Military power is the main tool for maintaining national integrity and rebellion does not have the ability, or strength, to oppose government military forces (Cribb, 2002). As such, the Aceh rebellion received was met with a swift response from the government. Not only was the first rebellion defeated in a relatively short period of time, it also failed to attract popular support especially among Acehnese clerics as GAM sought a secular state. Under a government regime, popular support does not have significant political influence because of the extreme centralisation of state power (Kell, 1995). The lack of popular support was seen differently.

In response to a second rebellion, GAM replied with increased troop involvement. With military training in Libya, the troops responded with heavy security measures by launching a counter-insurgency operation to curb new challenges. At that time, Aceh was considered a military operation area (DOM) where the government could launch military operations at will. Defeated by the military in a short period of time, GAM military commanders were captured or killed. Consequently, GAM was defeated by the military in 1991. The impact and violence of the military operation mostly affected civilians. Ironically, the use of prolonged violence failed to address the main problem and, in fact, turned the Acehnese against the Indonesian military and government. Over a ten-year period, thousands of Acehnese lost their lives. According to a report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) published in 2001, at the end of 1998, the group documented 871 civilians killed by soldiers, with 387 missing people who were later reported dead. More than 500 were deemed to have "disappeared" and were never found; and tens of thousands of Acehnese were imprisoned and tortured in military camps. In addition, hundreds of documented rape cases and various human rights violations affected

Acehnese citizens until the cessation of military operations (DOM) in August 1998 (HRW, 2001).

Aceh's increasing collective hatred towards the government was unable to be constrained. The government had evicted, persecuted, tortured and killed Javanese transmigrants in Aceh because it was considered a part of Indonesia. Many transmigrants were subjected to brutal violence from GAM soldiers as they moved through villages looking for Javanese. The conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the government caused ethnic Javanese transmigrants to flee Aceh. Sweeping checks carried out by members of the Free Aceh Movement (and the TNI and Brimob) significantly impacted, for the worse, the lives of transmigrants. Transmigrants preferred to live in refugee areas because their security was guaranteed while seeking opportunities to establish new businesses (Budi, 2007). The research conducted by Mathias Czaika (2009), ethnic Javanese transmigrants were intimidated by the very existence of GAM. Many fled and moved away from the conflict, the peak of which was in 2001. Various conflicts, especially with GAM, resulted in Javanese transmigrants leaving Aceh. However, this was not seen in Buket Hagu Village, Lhoksukon District, North Aceh Regency, Aceh Province. Although the area is very remote, approximately 25 km from the City of Lhoksukon, the area is hilly with inadequate facilities.

Given the harsh and brutal conditions faced by transmigrants, this study describes how an ethnic group is able to survive and not be displaced by conflicts in an area that wants to secede from its own country. The ability to survive, and not expel Javanese, provides for an interesting study.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative research and, according to Bogdan et al (1975), is research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral accounts from people. This research approach focuses on the entire individual and their background. It is not permissible to isolate individuals or organisations into variables or hypotheses as they form a part of a whole. This is a case study that explores the survival of Javanese transmigrants in the conflict between GAM and the TNI. Primary data was obtained through interviews with community leaders, GAM leaders, former GAM members, transmigrants and TNI who were involved in the conflict. The secondary data informing this research was obtained from historical documents to do with all elements of the conflict. The data analysis technique used in this study was in the form of data collection, data reduction, presentation of data and conclusions (Miles and Huberman, 2005).

Results and Discussion

Context of Survival from Javanese Transmigrant

Since 1976, and even long before Indonesian independence, Javanese transmigrants have occupied islands outside Java, In this case, Javanese transmigrants occupy an uninhabited area, namely the jungle village of Buket Hagu. In the early years, small transmigrant groups formed to shape social relations and community welfare by regulating the social structure of the community. As expressed by one transmigrant resident:

... in the beginning, transmigration officers selected one leader for each of the 30 family heads, and the ones appointed were those who had good religious knowledge, so it was not arbitrary so that the structure of our society was strong. For example, when our leader gives direction, what we want to do, we just obey, because we believe that what is said is definitely good. (Suwarno)

Life together assisted transmigrants to build settlements within one year. They fulfilled their food needs from plantations on land provided by the government. The communal social structure formed had a positive impact on the building of other settlements.

The survival of transmigrants also shaped social relations with local Acehnese. This relationship was formed through trade wherein transmigrants sold plantation crops to collecting traders in Lhoksukon. As stated by Edward M. Brumer (1974) a "dominant hypothesis" centres on dominant or undominant social relations as social forces. It can influence the form of social relations among different ethnic groups living together in one place. The presence and interactions of ethnic groups in a local area provides a different pattern according to environmental conditions. This assertion is reinforced by Leman (Suparlan, 1984) who states that the interaction between ethnic groups is actually the perpetrator of 'taking positions in cultural systems.' This cultural system is then the point of reference because it requires the ability of individuals to manipulate the symbols of their identity in order to interact with other ethnic groups. Having a life together in a social structure shows that people with good relationships have a greater chance of survival than those who do not have good social relations. In this case, Javanese transmigrants established relationships with local communities so as to create strength and kinship. This can be seen as one strategies of survival.

Social Solidarity in Building Social Strength

Social solidarity according to Durkheim is the property of all people and is a bond that unites individuals. According to Durkheim, the division of social solidarity consists of mechanical and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity is governed by the collective consciousness and

simple division of labour; whereas organic solidarity is more specialised (Durkheim, 1947). Solidarity formed in the Javanese transmigrant community is mechanical, meaning they are a simple society. This is indicated by transmigrants who easily assimilate and have high kinship relationships between one group and another. The tight relationships between communities fosters solidarity in building community strength. The slogan “*mangan ora mangan, sing penting ngumpul*”, meaning “eating or not eating is not important, more important is the gathering”, holds the community together, especially in the face of conflict.”

Kinship is an interaction with community and automatically also builds cohesion and strength. This motto above is closely held by Javanese transmigrants in the village of Buket Hagu. From the outset, they agreed that nobody would leave the village. No matter what happened, no matter how hard the conflict; they could not leave the village that had been built on their blood and sweat. One informant declared that:

yes, we are actually afraid and haunted by the conflict that happened, every day and overnight we were not restful, at any time they attacked each other, and we were the victims. However, considering that moving where will also be difficult, here we are jointly building this village from scratch, if left behind it is very unfortunate. Not necessarily when we go, we are safe from there. Yes, I just surrender what our parents say, surely the best is to tell us to stay. (Sawidi)

Durkheim states that reducing difference creates interdependence. Interdependence allows individuals to think of themselves as part of an organ, an organism or society’s organ (Durkheim, 1969). Durkheim's example shows that when Javanese transmigrants are individually legitimised, they assume that they cannot escape the community group. It is evident that close bonds of kinship and togetherness create community power. The existence of community and religious leaders is important in creating a viable and enduring social structure. With community unity and solidarity, community strength is very easy to achieve. It is this strength that allows transmigrant communities to survive any conflict.

Durkheim views religion as an important tool for social solidarity as it deters any threat that damages the order of social life. Here, transmigrant communities strongly believe that with the presence of religious leaders in the community, they are united by a common understanding of religion.

Collective Awareness and Collective Agreements in Building Social Bonds

Collective awareness is the fruit of solidarity formed in a society. The community is integrated because of an agreement between community members towards certain social values. This collective awareness has the power to coerce individuals. In other words,



collective awareness is a community consensus that regulates social relations among members of the concerned community. Collective awareness can be moral rules, religious rules, rules about good and bad and so on. Collective awareness is one form of shared morality. This thought arises from the increasing division of labour which ends with the transformation of collective consciousness.

Javanese transmigration, from the beginning to the peak of the Aceh conflict, can be said to be heartbreaking. A high work ethic and principles of living together helped Javanese transmigrants survive the horrendous conflict. In the early days of transmigration, the land was divided into two hectares for fields, half a hectare for housing and yards for each family. Transmigrants established cooperatives for cultivating and collecting palm oil products to be sold to palm oil mills. Plantation products sold individually attracted low prices as they required high operational costs. So, a village unit cooperative, known as "Diponegoro Cooperative", was created

The stand and independence of the cooperative witnessed the Aceh conflict which caused an escalation of violence and Aceh was designated as a military operation area. Regarding the conflict, there have been many illegal Nangroe tax collections by GAM against ethnic Javanese. In addition, the condition of the TNI in guard also requires basic materials and operational costs.

This condition places Javanese transmigrants in a state of being sandwiched between two military forces. On the one hand, the Free Aceh Movement suppressed and threatened the existence of transmigrants. When transmigrants do not provide what GAM wants, they will threaten eviction by burning houses, killing livestock, and other threats. Then the only way to fulfil their needs. On the other hand, the TNI is also fulfilled by the transmigration community, because transmigrants are legitimate citizens and are still bound by the government.

Looking at the conflict, to meet the needs of both parties, the elders of Buket Hagu village held a meeting with transmigrant community members with the decision that the remaining business results for Diponegoro cooperatives were not shared with members but used to meet the needs of the two conflicting parties. In this case, the village chief of Buket Hagu, negotiated with both parties so that they were not expelled by GAM and protected by the TNI.

When people have a collective awareness of what they must do in defense and face conflicts, they have a common agreement in overcoming these problems. Whereas the transmigrant community which has the advantage of the results of the cooperative jointly agrees to provide

GAM and the TNI with assistance in the form of cash and other basic commodities. As said by the chairman of the cooperative, Hadisukmono said that:

based on an agreement between all transmigrants who are members of the cooperative" Diponegoro "agreeing on the provision of rations to each armed member namely GAM and TNI. At that time they were given a sum of money if I am not mistaken the number was up to 10 million on the condition to keep peace in the village of Buket Hagu. A number of transmigrants negotiated with GAM not to commit violence, massacres and to keep the village of Buket Hagu apart from the conflict area. Likewise, for the TNI, the village head also negotiated to always maintain the safety and peace of the transmigrant community. (Hadikusumo)

Not only that, but the recognition of former ex GAM combatants also explained that:

the villagers of Buket Hagu are good people, they are not afraid of the existence of GAM armed groups, they even help us in matters of food. In addition, the problem of closeness before the conflict, the transmigrant community in the village of Buket Hagu often mingled with the local people of Aceh. With their food assistance, we can live in the forest to keep on carrying out guerrillas. And we hold our promise at that time, to never disturb their existence because we also depend on them. (Sholeh)

In addition, the narrative from one of the GAM leaders namely Muhibbun said that:

the collaboration between GAM and transmigrants, in the form of mutual assistance, helped, even though GAM hated the Javanese, but the transmigrants in the village of Buket Hagu had also helped GAM in many basic materials. I often go to the village of Bouquet. Happily, before the conflict, I also had good friends with them, the transmigrants were polite and friendly, not stingy, so how come the ideology of GAM who wanted to expel Javanese from Aceh would be defeated by relations kinship. And from the story of transmigrants to me, they gave GAM a sum of money in a month and fulfilled their basic needs. (Muhibbun)

Based on an interview with one of the former TNI members, Agus Paripurno, also explained that:

Javanese ethnic transmigrants have a strategy in overcoming problems with GAM, so they are not expelled from their homes. The structure formed in the community is enough to help them in negotiating. With the existence of cooperatives that they build, can help their lives. In contrast to other areas that I know that their cooperatives are not going well. Due to poor management, the existence of these cooperatives can help

them survive the conflict. Besides that, it can also help us to survive because there are donations of basic commodities. (Agus Paripurno)

The results of the study reveal that transmigrants have collective values that allow them to survive conflict. In a society, there are values that are collectively held, shared and recognised by community members. From Gadamer's perspective, the long struggle of collective values involves experience confrontation, tradition transition and dialogue. The experiences of meetings between community members form a tradition which later becomes the collective identity of the community. In addition, the dialogue that takes place is considered to be suitable for maintaining community integrity. Based on these collective values, experiences, traditions and dialogues, GAM and the TNI are a result of community relations that create social bonds of kinship.

Dependence on Building Social Harmony

Dependence is created due to the existence of formed, social relations. This social relationship is influenced by the values, norms, status and community role and, from this habits and beliefs are created. It is this interdependent relationship that exists between Javanese and Acehese separatists. Because each needs the other and Acehese need trade cooperation and laborers to work in their fields as well as business partners.

The acceptance of the local community towards Javanese transmigrants gave rise to kinship and which later became a working relationship. Javanese transmigrants became mostly casual laborers in Aceh's rice fields around Hagu Buket. Muhammad Tayeb Sulaiman, a village head of Seunebok Lama who often interacts with Javanese transmigrant communities, explained that:

in the early days of their arrival, many of them offered only to help the Acehese rice fields. The rice fields in Aceh are so extensive that they cannot be carried out by the owners themselves, resulting in being overwhelmed. Even though they told the local population, there were rarely unemployed people, so the presence of these transmigrants helped them to work on their fields. This is where good communication is established, no one is harmed by such work ties, they establish harmonious relationships to connect their lives, to get welfare. And their principle that I know is, they migrate to settle, wherever they live it is only temporary, and so they must try to provide the best for the environment around them. (Sulaiman)

Acang Iskandar is also a local community that has a close kinship with Buket Hagu transmigrants as *'they are very well received because they are very clever, and they need their presence.'*

The role of interaction in creating good social relations among different ethnic cultures cannot be separated. This shows that harmonisation can take place through decent and intense interaction using existing social structures (Rahmad, 2015). Relations or social interactions can be seen as actions that are mutually intended by two or more people (Suparlan, 1984). The interaction between Javanese transmigrants and Aceh was based on various economic, political, social and cultural interests. The existence of this relationship creates social networks that aim to improve lives. Simply, a trade relationship between Javanese transmigrants and Acehese brought harmony.

The harmonious relationship between GAM and transmigrants is caused by dependence. As noted previously, GAM needed resources, in the form of basic and other materials, to survive and these materials were obtained from transmigrant communities. Ahmad Satari, who was the main negotiator with GAM, said that:

our relationship between GAM is fairly good before the conflict. Every day we get to know each other and often interact. When they forcibly requested food for us, our village head used to have the power to prevent the coercion from happening, the village head and several residents discussed the matter. So the solution was found and GAM sometimes got food from transmigrant communities in the village of Buket Hagu. (Satari)

This resulted in the two parties forming an interdependent social structure. Javanese transmigrant Hadikusumo, who became the chairman of the Diponegoro cooperative, said:

in this way, the relationship between GAM and us, is getting better because on the one hand we are helping their needs, on the other hand they are also dependent on us so we do not dare to carry out evictions as happened in other areas. When they do movements, sometimes they return to normal activities as usual, sometimes when together with them, sometimes back to the forest. Because it has one another's interests, good relations between GAM are maintained so that we are safe too. (Hadikusumo)

On the other hand, the conflict created co-dependence between GAM and ethnic Javanese transmigrants. In this relationship, the formation of interactions between transmigrants and GAM was sound. Interaction is one survival mechanism for human life, groups and society. Through social interaction, humans experience a variety of life events because social interaction and activities establish a co-dependence.

Controlling GAM and TNI forces

Transmigrants are strategically skilled at surviving. Informants and collaborators who had established kinship with transmigrants were used as sources of information. It was not uncommon for GAM and the TNI to recount their conditions to informants because they were friendly. Informants knew how to position themselves and to keep secrets. Of course, when GAM and the TNI knew the true role of these individuals, their lives were in danger. One form of information provided to transmigrants centred on strategies and other valued information. Information held by transmigrants was disclose to GAM and the TNI. One informant in his interview said that information on the TNI was withheld from GAM in order to avoid bloodshed. In this case, Javanese transmigrants have the power to regulate between GAM and the TNI. This invisible power has enormous and dangerous potential and is far more dangerous than it appears to be. Ironically, however, this invisible force creates stability.

“Menang tanpa ngasorake” - winning without defeating - is a Javanese philosophy held tight in the face of the conflict. Winning in an elegant way means winning with a big soul. Likewise, it is intelligence, and not any army that wins a war and this is done by ethnic Javanese transmigrants. The Javanese people won this conflict because they were able to organise GAM and the TNI. One informant declared that:

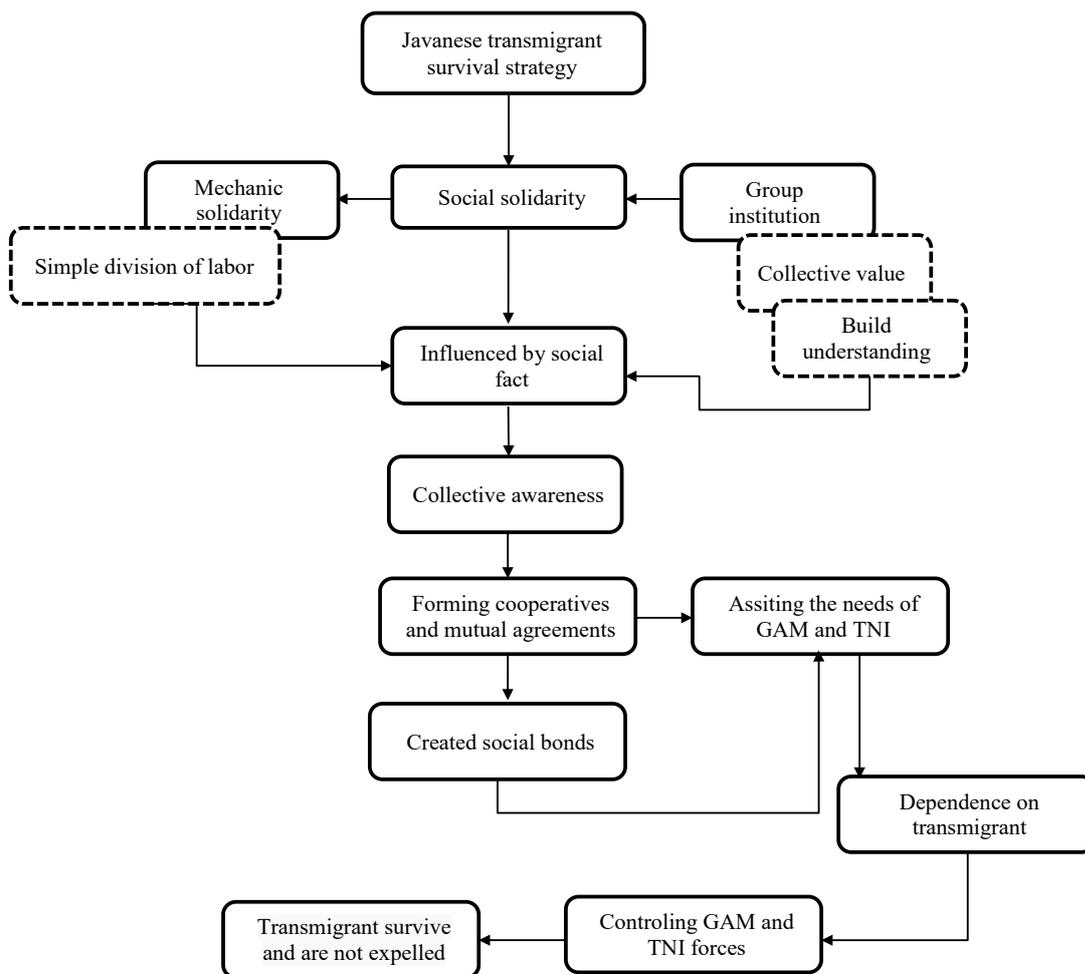
if they want to attack us, we can't fight anything, but they don't dare to attack us, because we negotiate with them, by meeting their needs, and we are managing them, we provide basic food and money 5 million for them. When the TNI operated we told them to leave, so they left their base, some of them were stubborn, who was arrested by the TNI. GAM needs us, so they don't dare to expel us.

This expression truly reflects the true power of transmigrants and illustrates how transmigrants mediate conflicts between GAM and the TNI. Such a balancing act represents a true and honest form of transmigrant resistance to conflict. In this way, way the community survives, and individuals are not be expelled from Buket Hagu village.

Conclusion

The conclusions of this study are illustrated by Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Javanese Transmigrant Survival Strategy



The findings of this study show that Javanese transmigrants form community groups that share a common goal in how they survive. The group functions to maintain social solidarity by implementing regulations that are rooted in social consensus about shared values. The findings of this study indicate that understanding among groups can create a close relationship between communities so that it creates solidarity in building community strength. The strength of the community is built on the Javanese slogan "*mangan ora mangan sing penting ngumpul*". The transmigrant's life philosophy reflects that when they come together, they can build social strength because it creates a social attachment between them.



This research shows that when people possess a collective awareness of what they must do in the of face conflicts, they have a common agreement in conquering and surviving these problems. The transmigrant community has an advantage in that the cooperative jointly agrees to provide GAM and the TNI with assistance in the form of cash and other basic commodities. These collective values are experience, tradition and dialogue formed in the community with GAM and the TNI. The results create social bonds and, subsequently, establish kinship. Transmigrants and GAM are interdependent: GAM needs transmigrants to fulfil their needs and transmigrants depend on GAM to not evict them from their land. Likewise, the interdependence between transmigrants and the TNI resulted in transmigrants very easily controlling the conflict between GAM and the TNI.



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