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Identity, power, myth contestation and land control in Manokwari, West Papua-Indonesia

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Abstract

This article investigates the power of the tribes in Manokwari to occupy back the land controlled by the state. The basis of the claim is rooted in tribe myth about the customary land ownership neglected by the state in the past. Qualitative research is utilized to reveal how the tribes use the myth, power, and connection to control and claim the land. Tribe claim over land becomes more frequent, especially when West Papua is given special autonomy and Manokwari becomes the capital city. The spirit of sovereignty over land and Papuanisation of bureaucrats are amplified during the implementation of special autonomy. The special autonomy, Papuanisation of bureaucrats, power to mobilize masses, and connection with the elite and bureaucrats have strengthened and rejuvenated the power of the tribes in Manokwari to exercise power by retaking, squatting, and controlling the state land.

Keywords: Identity; Power; Land Control; Myth; Manokwari

1. Introduction

Long before the nations of the world came to Manokwari, the Manokwari region was a nameless region. There comes a tribe that calls themselves the Biak people with the spirit of seeking new territories. Due to frequent visits to this empty area, they began to think about names. The first name given by the Biak people to this nameless area was Mnu kwar. Mnu means village, and kwar means old, so mnu kwar is the old village.

In 1855, armed with a mission to spread Protestant Christianity, two German missionaries named C.W. Ottow, and J.G. Geissler arrived on Mansinam Island. The two missionaries, or in local terms called apostles of the Papuan people, were accepted by the Biak ethnic group on the island of Mansinam on February 5, 1855. This is the history of the early arrival and spread of Protestant Christianity in Papua, so Manokwari (Mansinam island) is often referred to as the early civilization of Papua [1]. Manokwari Regency was labelled as the City of the gospel even to commemorate this event. In 1898, precisely Europeans arrived at Mnu kwar. This area was designated as the government centre, or a kind of first government centre in Papua, on November 8, 1898, by the Resident of Ternate Van Horst on behalf of the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. J.J.van Oosterszee was appointed as controller of Afdeling Noord Nieuw Guinea (supervisor of North New Guinea) based in Manokwari.

In the modern context, the formation of a New Province, namely the Province of West Irian Jaya (IJB), is established to separate from the Province of Papua. Manokwari is selected as the Capital of the Province of West Irian Jaya. The realization of this discourse is contained in the state's decision through Law Number 45 of 1999 concerning the establishment of the Province of West Irian Jaya (IJB) with the capital city of Manokwari Regency. Then based on Government Regulation Number 24 of 2007, dated April 18, 2007, the name of West Irian Jaya Province (IJB) was changed to West Papua Province, with the capital city in Manokwari. In addition, the implementation of special

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autonomy for West Papua Province has amplified the ultimate goal for West Papuans to be the lord over their land, forest, and resources. It is in line with the policy requiring all top-level management positions, including the governor, mayor, and head of the district, to be filled by West Papuans. This Papuanisation policy has further awakened the power of the local tribes in Manokwari to exercise power, reclaim their customary land controlled by the state, and ask for monetary compensation for the land controlled by the state.

Since the beginning of the historical civilization of Manokwari, the native tribe has existed. Of course, the dynamics of changes and developments that occurred in Manokwari went hand in hand with the existence of the tribe. Accordingly, it is essential to understand the contestation about the origin of the native tribe and their strategy to claim, retake the land, and demand monetary compensation from the state. The focus of the research aims explicitly at investigating the effort of the local tribe to retake and demand financial compensation for the land where the Rendani airport at Manokwari regency is located.

2. Material and methods

Research methodology is a significant part of scientific research activity because, through the methodology, field research activities can be carried out structurally, starting from problem identification to field data analysis. The method utilized is a qualitative approach with five essential stages: (1) choosing a research location, (2) finding informants, (3) collecting and recording field data, (4) classifying, identifying, and analyzing all field data, (5) writing research reports [2][3][4]. The interview is also done to key selected informants with a purposive sampling method. It means that the informant is chosen based on their knowledge of the customary land. The key informant is someone who has relatively complete information on the culture under study [5]. In addition, it is essential to consider the people who have had informal experience for many years in selecting key informants [6]. In the context of this research, key informants must have two elements, knowing and experiencing. Therefore, those who were appointed as key informants were three tribal clan leaders who demanded compensation for land rights to the state, re-mythizing the myth to be seen as a legitimate tribe. Finding key informants in research is not difficult because the informants are clear. The author obtained the clarity of key informants from experience through direct observation, local print media information, electronic media (television), and interviews. Key informants appointed include Chief of the Arfak Tribe (Mandacan clan), Chairman of the Borai Tribe (Mansim clan), Lawyer (Doreri Tribe), Head of Arfak Tribe, Chairman of the Papuan Customary Council Region III Mnu Kwar, and the Government of West Papua Province (the Head of Government Bureau).

3. Results and discussion

This section discusses 1) the historical context of the native tribe of Manokwari, 2) the modern context and the rise of native tribes, and 3) the strategy used to retake land controlled by the state, especially in the case of land where the Rendani airport of Manokwari regency is located.

3.1. The Historical Context of the Native Tribe in Manokwari

Historically, in Manokwari Regency, there were three tribes, namely: the Arfak Tribe, the Doreri Tribe, and the Borai Tribe. The Arfak tribe consists of 4 sub-tribes: Arfak Hatam sub-tribe, Arfak Sougb sub-tribe, Arfak Moile sub-tribe, and Arfak Meyah sub-tribe. The name Arfak is taken from a mountain in the area, namely Mount Arfak [7]. The word Arfak means big or big mountain. The coastal settlers perceive the Arfak tribe as all small tribes living around the Arfak Mountains [8]. From this concept, we can conclude that the Arfak ethnic group is an ethnic group living in the Arfak Mountains, originating in the Arfak Mountains. The life centre of the Arfak Tribe is in the Arfak mountain area, and identifying the Arfak tribe is based on physical appearance, language and family name. The Arfak tribe, as well as other Papuan tribes, has curly hair and black skin. The tribe is classified into the Melanesian race. In terms of culture, the Arfak Tribe has a distinctive identity as a cultural product, including the traditional house called Kaki Seribu. Other distinctions are language (Meyah, Moile, Hattam) and family name. Those categorized as Arfak people have surnames (clans), including Mandacan, Ayok, Nuham, Sayori, Ullo, Iwow, Indow, Inyomusi, Msen, Muit, Tbyai, Salabai, Wonggor, Pungwam, Meindodga.

Doreri is one of the local tribes that inhabited Manokwari Regency. According to history, the origin of the Doreri people is the Biak Tribe because they come from Biak. According to Kamma, the Biak people migrated to Manokwari and other areas in the mid-15th century or around the 1450s [9]. Since coming to Manokwari, the coastal area has been empty, uninhabited, and nameless. In this coastal area, the Doreri people began to settle down, gave place names, and changed the name of the tribe from the Biak Tribe to the Doreri Tribe. Evidence of Doreri settlement and place names can still be found today. Because they live in the coastal area of Manokwari Regency, the Doreri are given a social label as coastal

people or coastal settlers. The Doreri Tribe are identified with Eight R's and one B's. The Doreri Tribe are people who have a clan, namely: Eight R (Rumbobyar, Rumfabe, Rumsayor, Rumadas, Rumburen, Rumbekwan, Rumakeuw, Rumander), and one B (Burwos).

Borai is another tribe inhabiting and claiming control over land in Manokwari Regency. There are two versions of who the Borai people are. The first version is through Christian missionary notes. It is said that the Borai people are actually descendants of the Arfak and Biak people. There was intermarriage between the Arfak and the Biak people. The first locality of the Borai people was on the beach near the Oransbari district, and one of the groups named themselves Mansim after the place where they lived. The Borai group then migrated to Arfai Manokwari until now. The migration of the Borai Tribe was originally in the Oransbari district, and the subsequent migration was from the Arfai to other regions. Even the locality of the Borai Tribe can be found in Arfai. The traditional identity to the modern identity that can be used to categorize him as a Borai is a clan name. The surname is placed after the person's name. For example, Oskar Mansim consists of a person's name (Oskar) and Mansim as a surname that indicates the person is from the Borai tribe.

In the second version, the term Borai comes from the Borai language, which means native or land. The Borai Tribe is an indigenous tribe that owns the land of Manokwari Regency. The Borai Tribe is the guardian of Manokwari. There is a historical story about the origin of the Borai Tribe, which has long been passed down from generation to generation. It is said that God created humankind and placed them in their respective localities. The Borai tribe was created by God and placed in the City of Manokwari. The City of Manokwari is the locality and centre of the spread of the Borai Tribe. This story shows a strong belief that the Manokwari city area belongs to the Borai ethnic group, the Mansim clan.

The Arfak Tribe, Doreri Tribe, and Borai Tribe have a long engagement and social interaction. Social interaction is defined as a dynamic social relationship among individuals or between individuals and groups [10]. In this context, the social interaction between these three tribes is built through contact and movement. The Arfak Tribe travelled for centuries from the interior (Arfak mountain), some of them settled on the coast, and thus the Doreri people met the Arfak people in Doreh Bay [8]. Not to mention, through marital relations, where the Doreri Tribe presented a woman to the Arfak tribal chief. Meanwhile, the Borai Tribe is actually descended from the Arfak and Biak people [8]. Seeing the phenomenon of social interaction in the past concludes that the Arfak Tribe in the mountains, through a long journey, finally came in contact with the Doreri Tribe on the coast of Doreri Bay. They continued social relations with marital relations and produced the descendants of the Borai Tribe.

3.2. Modern Context: Rise of the native tribes

Law Number 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for the Papua Province was announced in the state gazette and implemented in the modern context. It recognizes a new awareness that had been born among the Papuan people to fight peacefully and constitutionally for the recognition of basic rights. There are demands for resolving problems related to violations and protection of the Human Rights of the indigenous Papuans.

The above phenomenon is interpreted as a space of freedom, a space for the awakening of ethnic groups (tribes) or, in other terms, the space for the awakening of indigenous peoples. The tribes in West Papua, especially Manokwari precede the existence of government and religion brought by the colonial power. The most important issue in the current revival is land rights [11]. Perhaps the status of the land that was initially owned by the indigenous tribes in the past was changed in the name of the national interest, and the interests of the colonizers became state-owned land or land belonging to the ruling government. It could also be that the status of the land which the residents originally owned was unilaterally changed to become the property of the Sultan [12]. The lands that have changed their status are used to construct public and corporate facilities. Later, the land controlled by the state and private parties was claimed by the tribes. The native tribes only ask the government and other parties that control the land to fulfil two demands: returning the customary land rights or replacing them with compensation terms. The state (the government) recognizes the rise of the tribes and their demand for retaking the customary lands. Fulfilling the demand of the local tribes resonances with the idea to fulfil whatever the people ask as long as it is not a demand for independence.

At the provincial and regency level, the government faces challenges when the land has unclear historical and customary ownership and the land is claimed by more than one clan or tribe. The local government can quickly fulfil the demand of the native tribe when the customary owner is straightforward for one clan or one ethnic group. Suppose the customary ownership is not thoroughly scrutinized. In that case, the local government might make the wrong decision to pay for land rights, which later leads to legal charges and contestation from the actual customary ownership of the land.

3.3. The strategy to retake the land; the case of Rendani Airport in Manokwari

The research focuses on the native tribe's strategy to retake the land where the Rendani Airport is located. The regional government plans to extend further the runway's capacity for the Manokwari airport, but it is required to complete the payment for customary land. At the planning stage for the payment of customary land, the local government experienced difficulties because the customary land of the Manokwari Airport was claimed by three tribes, namely: the Arfak Tribe, the Doreri Tribe, and the Borai Tribe. The complex claim over the land is maintained and escalated into the debate. Each tribe maintains the land ownership and tries to weaken other tribes' claims.

To strengthen the arguments of each tribe, the leader of the Arfak Tribe, the Borai Tribe, and the Doreri Tribe convey facts in the form of myths. Why does each tribe provide facts in the form of myths? Even myth is formed by the disappearance of all historical things [13]. It means that the location of the Rendani Airport, which is now being claimed by three tribes, has no verbal evidence and no written evidence of who owns the rights to the customary land. All history about the location has been lost. The location just left the myth that there is no owner. From this myth, then a new myth is narrated by three tribes. This phenomenon is what the author borrows the term Roland Barthes to myth the myth [13]. The question is, how is the new myth constructed by the three tribes?

The myth of the Arfak Tribe is narrated as follows: The original tribe that started in Manokwari was the Arfak Tribe. At the same time, the tribe in the City of Manokwari is the Borai. Indeed, from the beginning, Borai was in the City, from the beginning, from generation to generation. There was a tribal war between the Borai Tribe and the Arfak Tribe in the struggle for the Manokwari city area. When the war against Japan took place, only the Arfak tribe got involved, not the Borai Tribe and the Doreri Tribe. The struggle for the City of Manokwari is because it is located on the edge of the beach. The Arfak Tribe won the result of the war. The Arfak Tribe finally controlled the area within the City of Manokwari. He further said that the Regional Government must pay 80 billion in compensation for customary land rights because of the history of the struggle against Japan and the Allies, there were many casualties. The government has to pay because this is blood money. The Arfak Tribe still question the claim of the Borai and Doreri Tribes, as they are considered migrants and not the natives of Manokwari. Although the Doreri Tribe confirmed that they had a Dutch certificate, they still faced resistance from the Arfak Tribe.

There are two historical pieces of evidence of customary gardening areas and those who handed over the relinquishment of land to a Dutchman for the benefit of cocoa plantations. The myth told by the Doreri Tribe confirmed that the Doreri Tribe came from the island of Biak, but the customary land of the Manokwari Airport (Rendani) belongs to them. It proves that it was the Doreri Tribe and not another tribe that released the customary land of Manokwari airport to the Dutch. A sarcastic expression is directed at the inability of the Arfak Tribe to prove the rights to the customary land of Manokwari Airport. On the other hand, the Doreri Tribe can prove that the Arfak Tribe had made a letter acknowledging that the customary land of Manokwari Airport belongs to the Doreri Tribe. It is shown by written evidence in the form of a letter signed on a seal by the Arfak Tribe and the Borai Tribe.

The myth told by the Borai Tribe confirms Manokwari as the customary land of the Borai Tribe. The myth reveals that God created the Mansim Borai Tribe on the coast and not in the mountains. Therefore, the customary land of Manokwari airport belongs to the Borai Tribe. It is indeed released to the Arfak Tribe with three messages: 1) if the Arfak tribe want to do activity on the land, they must provide information and ask permission from the Borai Tribe, 2) if the Arfak Tribe sell the land, they must coordinate with the Borai Tribe, and 3) the Arfak Tribe must share the compensation of selling the land to the Borai Tribe so that there is no curse fallen on them. The threat of the curse is confirmed due to the belief in the ancestral spirit. It is even said that the name of the ancestor of the Borai Tribe who controlled the area of the Manokwari Airport was the seven-headed Umbong Nnggang, who ventured to a place called Wosidori.

The three myths above show that myths are products of the tribe and constructed by the community [14]. If myth is a product of the tribe, what message is it trying to convey to us? Of course, every myth is actually a means of tribal communication to convey a message. In the context of the mutual claiming of customary land rights at the Manokwari airport, the message emphasizes land ownership and the most authentic and most valid myth to control the land. The most authentic myth strengthens the position of the native tribe as the owner of the customary land rights. Myth is not a matter of right or wrong, as myth is a matter of value [13]. Each tribe maintains this value. In the life of traditional society, the existence of myth serves to strengthen social value and construction [15]. It means that each tribe maintains values, reinforces its myths and even blames and disclaims the myths of other tribes.

Each tribe (Arfak, Doreri and Borai) fight to win the contestation of the land claim by subduing other tribes' claim. It is done by creating a myth to counter-attack and downgrading the myths constructed by other tribes. A powerful weapon against myth is to re-mythize the myth again and produce an imitation of myth [13]. Accordingly, nothing can be accepted, and nothing can be rejected among the three myths conveyed by the contesting tribes. Efforts are being made to re-mythize new myths. According to the reconstructed new myth, the customary land rights at the Manokwari Airport are not owned by one tribe. The new imitation of myths derived from the contesting tribes concludes that the customary land rights at the Manokwari Airport are communal property belonging to the three tribes, namely: the Arfak Tribe, the Doreri Tribe, and the Borai Tribe.

Finally, the phenomenon of myths and producing new myths is recognized and accepted by the Regional Governments of West Papua Province and the Manokwari Regency. The Regional Governments of West Papua Province and the Manokwari Regency are ready to pay compensation for land rights at the Manokwari Rendani Airport as long as there is a recognized customary and legal owner. The Arfak, Doreri, and Borai tribes responded to this recognition by establishing a confederation of ethnic groups called group five. Group Five combines or integrates five tribes, namely: Arfak Tribe (3 sub-tribes: Hatam, Moyle, Meyah), Doreri Tribe, and Borai Tribe. The group can mobilize mass and squat at the Manokwari airport multiple times. It disturbs flight and airport operations. Group five can access information about the sum of money provided by the government to compensate the land. The group also have a close network with their elites in the government. For instance, the Arfak Tribe can capitalize on the network with the head of the regency since he is also from the Arfak Tribe. The Borai Tribe also has a connection with their elite at the local member of representatives. Securing the elites at the regency level and local representatives strengthens group five's position in the financial compensation negotiation. Accordingly, the local government is forced to talk with the representative and fulfil the demand for monetary compensation. Through gruelling negotiation, the local government is required to pay financial compensation for fifty-five billion rupiahs for group five consisting of the Arfak Tribe (3 sub Tribes: Hatam, Moyle, Meyah), Borai Tribe, and Doreri Tribe.

4. Conclusion

Understanding Papuan people and culture must be based on the idea that there is ethnic heterogeneity in Papua, not ethnic homogeneity. The three sub-Arfak Tribes, the Doreri Tribe and the Borai Tribe, explain the legality of ownership of customary rights over land using the Mythical Myth strategy. The first myth: the location of the land at the Rendani Airport, Manokwari Regency, West Papua Province, has lost its history, so three tribes have created a new myth, namely the second myth: The location of the Bendani Airport, Manokwari Regency, West Papua Province, is owned by individuals from the Arfak Tribe, Doreri Tribe, Borai Tribe, However, because it was not recognized and accepted by the state (read: the Regional Government of West Papua Province and Manokwari Regency), they finally created a new myth, the third myth, namely: the land of the Airlangga airport, Manokwari Regency, West Papua Province, belongs to the communal property of three tribes, namely: Arfak Tribe, Doreri Tribe, and Borai Tribe.

The concept of mythological myth as local knowledge of the Arfak Tribe, Doreri Tribe, and Borai Tribe, can contribute to thinking and drafting national laws. There is a tendency for the phenomenon of re-mythizing myth as the concept of the legality of ownership of land rights in Manokwari Regency, West Papua Province, will continue to occur in the present and future. Therefore, when there is a new myth, the title of the customary mat is immediately made as a symbol of customary recognition of the myth, studied by universities, recognized by the state, and documented in written evidence as a recognized myth.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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