

Religious Conflict Transformation through Collective Memory and the Role of Local Music

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Abstract— This study departs from the writer's interest in efforts for conflict transformation in Maluku where religious diversity has been used as an instrument to escalate the conflict between people in Maluku. In efforts for conflict transformation in Maluku, the local music functions as a way of reviving the collective memory of the Maluku people about their cultural identity as *orang basudara*, an identity that was formed within the cultural institution of the community, such as in the cultural ritual *pela-gandong* that has been practised since ancient times, as well as in the life practices of *orang basudara* in their daily social encounters. The collective memory of the cultural identity of the Maluku community as *orang basudara* encourages the transformation of situations and relationships of conflict into situations and relationships in their life as *orang basudara*, which means they should always protect one another, help one another, and make peace with one another to end any conflict. Therefore, the goal of this research is to present an academic explanation which shows that music has the potential to communicate the collective memory of the Maluku people in connection with their cultural identity so that it can contribute to the scenario of conflict transformation in the community.

Keywords— *religious conflict, transformation, collective memory, local music*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Maluku conflict was occurred from January 19, 1999 to 2004. The Maluku conflict was a horizontal conflict between Christian and Muslim communities in Maluku. Many previous studies suggested that the Maluku conflict was a social conflict, caused by various factors, such as: Because of the contradiction politics of elites in post reformation.[1] The Maluku conflict was very easy to spread because of the potential for hidden conflict as a colonial heritage that segregated the Maluku community based on religion.[2]

Maluku conflict, originally a social conflict, eventually emerged as a religious conflict that used various religious symbols. The conflict was difficult to overcome because the difference in religious ideological was used as instrument to trigger and spread the conflict. Each of the believers confirmed the truth and blamed each other. In conflicts, religious symbols were sacrificed for example by burning churches or mosques by rioters, to incite the emotions of each religious people who involved in the conflict. Therefore the Maluku conflict was also referred to as religious conflict.[3]

The Maluku conflict has had negative impacts that have implications on various aspects of community life. Trijono explained that the Maluku conflict caused a devastating impact

in the Maluku community. The impact of the conflict resulted in victims of direct violence, thousands of lives were floating, thousands of people injured and Maluku people must became refugees in their own land. In addition, there were also indirect impacts of conflict, such as damaged to buildings or physical damaged, damaged to social relations, economic crises and the sharpening of social segregation.[4]

When the Maluku conflict occurred and had negative impact then various efforts to transform the conflict were carried out, among others, by increasing the number of security forces of the TNI and POLRI in conflict areas, peace negotiations mediated by the central government as well as local government, religious leaders and community leaders, and other peace efforts initiated by various Social Institutions that developed in the conflict. In all of these conflict transformation approaches, the local music of Maluku also played an important role as one of the media for building peace in Maluku. In efforts for conflict transformation in Maluku, the local music functions as a way of reviving the collective memory of the Maluku people about their cultural identity as *orang basudara*, an identity that was formed within the cultural institution of the community, such as in the cultural ritual *pela-gandong* that has been practiced since ancient times, as well as in the life practices of *orang basudara* in their daily social encounters. The collective memory of the cultural identity of the Maluku community as *orang basudara* encourages the transformation of situations and relationships of conflict into situations and relationships in their life as *orang basudara*, which means they should always protect one another, help one another, and make peace with one another to end any conflict.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research used qualitative method by doing fieldwork and library studies. By this method, gathering data from two different religious communities with their different experience both in conflict and in conflict transformation effort, and form local musicians to see what practices, ideas and tool kits such different societies had regarding the use of music to influence people's views of each other. Combining fieldwork and library studies was intended to have more material available for analyzing and understanding the processes that take place when music was used for conflict transformation purposes.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

A. The Meaning of Conflict Transformation

The process of conflict transformation is highly significant in efforts to realize peace in Maluku. Jacky Manuputty, a peace activist in Maluku, explains that conflict transformation is the process of paving the way for peace by endeavouring to make changes or to end conflict and violence that cause suffering in the lives of the Maluku community, in which the only life choice needed by the Maluku community is mutual reconciliation.[5]

Arild Bergh states that in studies about conflict and peace that have developed over a period of more than 60 years, the words conflict resolution and conflict transformation are an important part of the peace work and also an important topic in the world of academic research. These two phrases have a different meaning. Conflict resolution refers to efforts to resolve conflict or solve problems of conflict in a relatively short period of time. Previously, the phrase conflict resolution was used in matters such as disputes over inheritance or wills that could be resolved quickly because the source of the problem was specific. Bergh argues that social conflict of a multidimensional nature is difficult to resolve with only a very short conflict resolution project. For this reason, another expression has emerged – conflict transformation. Conflict transformation places more emphasis on a continuous process to change the form of conflict from a highly aggressive scale, full of violence, to a non-confrontational situation. Bergh stresses this as follows:

"I will use the expression conflict transformation to indicate efforts aimed at changing conflicts from a violent/aggressive stage to a less confrontational situation. Conflict resolution will only be used if particular sources use the term." [6]

The phrase conflict transformation is also used by John Paul Lederach to describe an ongoing process:

"The process of building peace must rely on and operate within a framework and a time frame defined by sustainable transformation. In practical terms, this necessitates distinguishing between the more immediate need of crisis-oriented disaster management in a given setting and the longer-term needs of constructively transforming the conflict" [7]

In a situation where conflict continues to escalate, transformation efforts point to a change from one status to another. More specifically, transformation is a movement of change from a situation of violence or confrontation – into negotiation – continuing with a dynamic to resolve the problem of conflict – and ultimately leading to a situation of peace. In addition to its orientation towards the process of handling conflict or crisis, conflict transformation also focusses on the impact of social change resulting from the conflict and violence, working towards a situation of peace that can be preserved and is sustainable in the future. A conflict transformation approach is not limited to analyzing changes that result from conflict that has occurred; it also projects changes that are expected on an individual level, in communal relations, and also on a structural and cultural level. The main

change that is hoped for is a change from a conflicted relationship to a sustainable relationship of peace.

Patrick Barron, Muhamad Najib Azca, and Tri Susdinardjanti, departing from the results of a research study on the post-conflict situation in Maluku, explain in their book *After the Communal War*, that a peace process which does not include comprehensive conflict transformation may cause other forms of violence to emerge after the conflict has passed, or what is known as post-conflict violence. In order to overcome this problem, a process of conflict transformation is needed, referred to as a post-war peace consolidation, which has the courage to change various forms of potential conflict into a potential for peace that can continue to be developed.[8]

Craig Robertson, in his study on *Music and Conflict Transformation in Bosnia* (2010), reviews a number of other studies related to music and conflict transformation. These include studies on current conflict transformation practices (Bercovitch, 1984; Burgess, 2003; Fisher, 2001; Paksoy, 2001; Quigley, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 1999), anthropological theories of conflicts and conflict transformations (Bowman, 2001; Clastres, 1994; Kloos, 2001; Schmidt and Schroder, 2001), social geography (Connell and Gibson, 2003; Mitchell, 1996), ethnomusicology (Merriam, 1964), cultural theory (Levy, 2004), arts approaches to conflict transformation (Aharoni, 2002; Skyllstad, 2004), music therapy (Forrest, 2006), and music education (Small, 1998). From all of these works, Robertson reaches the following conclusion:

"I came to the conclusion that music did seem to have some traceable reflexive influence on group cultural identities that could theoretically be included in a conflict transformation scenario. This conclusion was possible since a majority of conflict transformation authors claim that long-term successful conflict transformation requires an acceptance of differing cultural identities or the creation of a new shared cultural identity... music is increasingly broadly considered to be an effective resource with which to build shared cultural identities, since it represents the values and power structures of the societies from which it originated." (Robertson, 2010: 3).

In the process of realizing peace through conflict transformation in Maluku, the cultural identity of the Maluku people as orang basudara that is stored in the collective memory of every community can become a cultural language for carrying out consolidation or negotiation to change a violent or confrontational situation into a peaceful one. Living as orang basudara is a way of life in which people position themselves as 'children of Maluku', regardless of which island they come from, which language they speak, or which religion they follow, with the basic life principle that they are siblings who live to care for one another – *baku kalesang*, love one another – *baku sayang*, and live in peace with one another – *baku bae*. Siblings, or orang basudara means that all the people of Maluku are born from the same motherland – Maluku.[9]

This can be realized by reviving the collective memory of the living culture of orang basudara which is apparent both in relations of the formal ritual *pela-gandong* and also in social encounters and the day to day informal interaction between people in the community. Their collective memory as orang

basudara can form a bridge to connect religious differences that are often used as an instrument to trigger conflict.

The local music of Maluku has a connection with the living culture of *orang basudara* which has existed for generations, and plays a role in strengthening the social bonds between the people of Maluku in the process of social conflict resolution in Maluku. Local Maluku music plays a role in safeguarding, preserving, and communicating the living culture of *orang basudara* from one generation to the next. Music has even become a cultural element that is created to express various life struggles or people's life stories as *orang basudara* in their own cultural practice.[10]

Living as *orang basudara* is a cultural element that forms the background to the creation of various compositions of local Maluku music with the goal of realizing peace. During periods of conflict, numerous compositions of local music in Maluku have adopted themes of peace, including the theme of living as *orang basudara*, and have been created, performed, and recorded so that they can be distributed throughout the Maluku community. This process is not only a consequence of the development of the industrialization of local music, but is also a way of communicating the values and meaning of the living culture of *orang basudara* to the Maluku community at large.

B. Local Maluku Music and the Peace Process

Efforts to realize peace through a process of conflict transformation involving musical performances are by no means easy. John Paul Lederach describes these efforts as complex and difficult to believe. However, the musicians involved, who are also peace activists or peace-builders, are advised not to give up or abandon this complex struggle. Striving for peace through a process of conflict transformation is a valuable struggle because of the complexity of the struggle itself.[11]

The involvement of music in peace-building efforts through a process of conflict transformation is a form of creative diplomacy. Creative diplomacy provides a wide space for artists, including musicians, to create musical compositions in order to support peace-building efforts. Through music, messages of brotherhood and peace can be communicated to all members of the community. They participate in singing and making music, music which carries a diplomatic message of peace in the midst of a conflicted community. The role of music in peace-building efforts is an indication that music is more than simply a sound without meaning; more than that, music can act as a universal language, an emotional language that can motivate human behavior.[12] Even though it is a universal language, peace diplomacy through music should be carried out within the cultural context of the community to whom the music belongs. The reason for this is so that the messages of peace communicated in the cultural component of the community to whom the music belongs are easily understood.

During the time of the Maluku conflict, musicians in Maluku played a part by creating works of regional Maluku music which they then disseminated to help the conflict

transformation efforts. The role played by these musicians can be divided into two types, namely live musical performances and recordings of songs of brotherhood in the form of CDs or DVDs that were distributed to the Maluku community.

Cano Kiat and Muhamad Abeng, Moslem musicians living in the Batumerah region, shared their experience of being involved in a program to prepare for a performance of music for peace organized by the Provincial Maluku Government. Kiat explained:

"In 2000, the conflict in Maluku was still continuing to heat up, we were asked to practise together with our Christian brothers and sisters (basudara) at Taman Budaya in Karang-Panjang, a district where the people are all Christians. At first we didn't believe it but our fellow musicians who are Christian convinced us that they would pick us up, protect us, and escort us back home safely. Armed with this assurance, we decided to go and join the group of Christian musicians. It turned out to be true, they were still as they always had been, full of comradeship and friendship. They protected us in the same way they protected themselves. We worked together to create a concept for a performance of music for peace. The beautiful harmonies and melodies of the music erased our fear, stress, and sorrow caused by the conflict and these feelings were replaced with joy and the sense of togetherness we had built" (Kiat, interview, October 13, 2015).

Their involvement in these musical activities amidst the situation of conflict brought about a process of personal transformation in the musicians. The conflict had caused them to live in fear, constantly suspicious of one another, and always looking out for themselves, but this changed after their experience of working together with musicians of a different religion. From this experience, the musicians were then able to act as agents who passed on their stories and experiences to other people, beginning with their own families and friends, and later with other members of the community. Muhamad Abeng, who experienced this story of brotherhood first hand, said that when they entered and returned home from the Christian district safely, it was a good signal, especially for their families. Here, a change in perception and attitude occurred, from worry and suspicion to mutual trust. This was a process of transformation or change which led to a process of making peace. Abeng said:

"When we took our leave to go and practise music at Taman Budaya, our families at first forbade us to go and were worried for our safety because the conflict was still ongoing. However, when we returned safely, they could hardly believe the real events and experiences we had witnessed. All we could do was convince them that the Christian musicians were our brothers and sisters who were prepared to risk their lives to shelter and protect us" (Abeng, interview, October 13, 2015).

The process of creating a concept for the composition of music for peace also involved the use of traditional musical instruments from Maluku which had previously been categorized and recognized according to the religion of the musicians. The *hadrat* and *rebana* are known as musical

instruments that are found in communities of Moslem musicians, while the *totobuang*, *tifa*, and *suling* are widely used by communities of Christian musicians. In the composition of music for peace, the sounds of bells and large drums (*bedug*) were also combined, since these two instruments represent the instruments of the two different communities. Christians use the sound of bells as a call to worship, and the *bedug* has a similar function in the Moslem community. The combination of the melodies and harmonies of these musical instruments acted as an invitation for members of the community to come and watch the performance of music for peace and to take part in realizing a life filled with peace.

Musical performances to promote a life of brotherhood and peace continued to take place. On 19 January 2014, the Interfaith Institution in Maluku initiated an activity called *Festival Orang Basudara*, to mark the 15th anniversary of the humanitarian tragedy in Maluku. In this festival, music was once again the main instrument for communicating messages of peace, in addition to the launching of a book entitled "Cerita Orang Basudara" and a Festival of Photography for Peace. Below are a number of photographs which document *Festival Orang Basudara*.

Festival Orang Basudara was held on 19 January 2014. The reason for choosing this date was to revive the collective memory of the Maluku community about the humanitarian tragedy or Maluku conflict which first took place on 19 January 1999. In his welcome speech, Jacky Manuputty, the initiator of this event, said that *Festival Orang Basudara* was an opportunity to learn and reflect on the bitterness and tragic nature of the conflict, as well as to enjoy the sweetness and beauty of peace as *orang basudara* in Maluku. In the same way that different kinds of music are able to produce beautiful, harmonious sounds, the Maluku people with their different characteristics can interweave a sense of togetherness and brotherhood in order to build a peaceful Maluku (Manuputty, interview, January 19, 2014).

According to Manuputty, the decision to create a collaboration of different musical styles and instruments that have always been affiliated with different religious characteristics – *hadrat* music and *sawat* dance which are popular in the Moslem community and *totobuang* music, trumpet, and *lenso* dance which are popular in the Christian community – was intended as a medium to promote brotherhood and peace. This beautiful, harmonious collaboration reflects a message that brotherhood and peace in the lives of people as *orang basudara* is indeed a beautiful thing. Life will become beautiful if there is collaboration and cooperation in the diversity of identities (Manuputty, interview, January 19, 2014).

The process of making music in the spirit of brotherhood continued to spread and penetrated all parts of the community. The musicians who had been trained at *Taman Budaya* in the Maluku Province returned to the midst of their own communities and formed new music studios which involved a large number of people of all ages, from young children to

adults. These studios include Sanggar Musik Hadrat in Bantumerah, Tifa Damai in Waihaong, Totobuang Siwalima run by Taman Budaya, Totobuang Soya, Totobuang Amahusu, and also the Music Bamboowind Orchestra (MBO) with 200 members who come from several different Christian and Moslem districts.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Religious conflict transformation in Maluku through the role of local Maluku music is a reality that exists in the process of peace building in Maluku. Writing about this means analyzing and communicating the experience of this in the struggle to build peace, specifically through the role of local music. Of course it must be acknowledged that playing music in the middle of conflict does not necessarily in itself turn things around. Making music does not directly bring an end to war. But music can help in the long process to create peace that is based on the cultural awareness and identity of the people. This kind of local music has aesthetical and philosophical values that can be passed on and developed in the educational process of music for peace.

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