Dualism in the South Halmahera Government's Policy on Managing Diversity in the Bacan Sultanate

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ABSTRACT

The issue of dualism in the South Halmahera government policy on managing cultural diversity in the Bacan Sultanate is an interesting phenomenon to study. *Saruma*, the multicultural icon used to manage diversity in the Bacan Sultanate, is not reflected in governmental policy or society, in general. This study focused on three research questions: 1) What is the socio-historical context of the Bacan Sultanate from which the concept of *Saruma* emerged? 2) Why has the South Halmahera government failed to apply the concept of *Saruma* in its policy on managing diversity? 3) What are the impacts of this dualism on the people? This qualitative research employed observation techniques to understand the community's dynamics. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain data concerning the people's social lives as well as the government's policy and its impact on society. A literature review was undertaken to understand related research and to formulate a theoretical framework as an analytical device. The results showed that in spite of the cultural authority owned by the Sultanate, the absence of political authority has led to a failure to implement its *Saruma* concept in managing the cultural diversity. The change of political system from representation to participation has also led to transactional politics, which benefits the majority but disadvantages the minority, and the traditions of domination and hegemony, in turn, have discriminated against the minority, endangering their identity.

Keywords: *Bacan Sultanate; civil servant uniforms; dualism in government policy; Saruma culture; school uniforms; South Halmahera government*

BACKGROUND

A multicultural society, if it is not managed well, can often give rise to discrimination, conflict, and violence. Religious and ethnic identities are the two multicultural elements that may bring about various social problems. This statement is supported by several studies showing that in the last two decades, tensions between different religious and ethnic identities have triggered discrimination, conflicts, and violence in many regions in Indonesia (Mas'oed, 2000; Betrand, 2004; Mujiburahman, 2006; Achmad, 2019). This is a consequence of identity contestation as an unavoidable phenomenon in society.

An-Na'im explains in his book "Islam and the Secular State (2008: 225) that Indonesia, as a multicultural country, is facing a fundamental challenge to implement what they call the "nation-state model," made more problematical, because of potential coercions to comply to an artificial uniformity imposed by the authorites, or by certain groups over other groups. An-Na'im's statement is a description of an existential ideological war in Indonesia. Despite the demands of Islamic leaders not being agreed to insert state acknowledgement of adherence to syariah law by Muslim in the Jakarta Charter, the struggle for greater Islamic ideological influnce is ongoing.

Ideological wars as a multicultural phenomenon in Indonesia is not only a part of the nation's history, but also a political state dynamic that exists til now at both at the national and local levels, when religion and politics integrate to become a force for political power.