

Networks as a social resource: The case of Bugis migrants in Sumatra and Sabah, Malaysia

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Introduction

Around 15 years ago when I conducted field research on Bugis migration in the southern part of Sumatra, I found some typical features on their migration pattern (ITO 1990:30-31). I suggested there four points like bellow:

(1) chain migration: It is difficult to find any person who migrates by himself. Indeed, when they were in their country, some of them were still young and needed other's assistance: they started with their parents, elder brothers, or close relatives. But this is not depended on their age. Among villagers, there were one or two personage who had the leadership when they would migrate. Such a person usually has much experience and can tell them a splendid story on the outside world.

(2) high mobility from one place to other places: It is difficult to find any migrant who has never changed their dwellings as migrants. When they relate their life stories, they often articulate their course of life by indicating the places where they lived at each period of time. This change of places often accompanies change of their occupations.

(3) flexible choice of occupation: When I trace back their change of occupation, I was surprised that they had so often changed their occupations in the course of their life. Most of their fathers were farmers in South Sulawesi, while the succeeding generations wouldn't keep their fathers' occupation. They aren't attached to have the same job as their fathers'. A Bugis migrant I met in Sungsang (South Sumatra) once said, " I don't come here to be a farmer."

(4) socio-cultural reasons as motives of migration:

The objective of migration for them is to have success both in an economic and religious sense, and to be recognized as such. As a first step, they may aim to become free from anyone, for example, from a tenant farmer to an independent one, or, from a sailor to a captain. They usually say that they can be a boss as long as they are independent on no one.



On the other hand, for most of Bugis migrants, to make a pilgrimage and to become a haji is one of the most important event for success. A haji I met in Jambi said that he couldn't become a haji as long as he had stayed in his *kampung*, Sulawesi.

If compared with Bugis migrants, difference is remarkable among the Javanese migrants. They like to settle down with their fellows and cultivate rice fields at one fixed village even though they are not state-arranged general trans-migrantsⁱ. What conditions enabled Bugis migrants to move and to choose their way of living rather freely? Since then, though I have an idea to answer this question, I haven't chance to make it out clearly. In this occasion, Prof. Unchibori and Yamashita have arranged a session in the framework of "resources" as a key concept. So I try here to give my idea on Bugis Migration using the concept of "social resources."

Generally speaking, in the Indonesian Archipelago, human flow is characterized by so called chain migration based on familial or local ties or network. Scale and closeness of such network often provides a decisive factor for migrants in choosing their destination and way of living. It may give them temporary dwellings, foodstuff, information, or occasions to learn how to make living. In this sense, having networks and being always on the networking with others constitute their vital part of life among the migrants and it is, in other word, precious "social resources" for them to survive and develop themselves in the place where they are going to live. If we consider such crucial role of network among migrants, Bugis people of South Sulawesi origin will give a good example.

1. Difference between the Concept of Social Resources and that of Social Capital

Before entering into the Indonesian and Malaysian context, I want to explain briefly why I use "social resources" rather than "social capital." Indeed, my concept of social resources in this paper is very likely if we read such definition:

"Social capital consists of the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviors that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible." (Cohen and Prusak 2001: 4)



As this quotation suggests, the concept of social capital is almost a synonym with that of social cohesion. However, what differentiates this definition with my understanding of “social resources” is concerned with the understanding of dynamic nature of social networks. For some sociologists or promoters of development projectⁱⁱ, social capital is something exists, or, as it were, an attribute in a society. Indeed, social networks are a part of social capital (as long as it is the synonym of “social cohesion”), but it becomes a social resource only after some constituent (agent) put it in use. In other words, one can select a certain relation among many kinds of relations one has. Or, one can create, spread, consolidate one’s networks. Selecting a certain relation sometimes may lead to social differentiation rather than social cohesion. So it is far from static, but dynamic nature, always put in motion and this is the reason why I prefer to adopt the concept of resource as proposed by Mr. Yamashita in his opening paper in this session:

“Our fundamental assumption is that we do not regard a resource as something that exists out there but as something that becomes a resource.”(Yamashita 2005: 4)

2 Bugis Society as networking society

It is generally agreed among the researchers on Bugis society that the bilateral character of Bugis kin relations is better understood from the perspective of network or networking. As long as Bugis people live in their *kampung* they mainly utilize their own familial ties to extend their relations and to attain their objectives. For them, existing familial tie are not a thing to be kept still, but a thing to be strengthened. Their marriage strategy, as was depicted by Millar (1989), always seeks to spreading their familial ties while consolidating existing familial ties. To have a wide spreading familial network which includes a high rank personages or officials, is by itself a source of power and sign of social status. In Bugis society, social status is not a fixed position, but like prestige or honor, which is in turn evaluated by social recognition. In their society, social status may be evaluated in several ways: (1) by birth –distinction between nobility and commoners is still felt conscious, (2) by marriage: with who their daughter wills get married is their focal concern, (3) political position, profession, or religious title like high officials or military officers, doctors, lawyers, university professors, or *haji*ⁱⁱⁱ. (4) economic achievement, and (5) enlarging personal networks. When they are outside their home country, the principle of social recognition is basically same, however, they come to recognize more seriously the importance of their



keeping network. Though they mainly utilize their own familial ties or relation based on commonness of original place, they want to mobilize any connections to which they can be related.

For that purpose, organizing a locally based association provides a good occasion for people to come together. Any two persons who don't know each other in a strange place will soon feel sympathy each other if they know that they are from the same province, belong to same *suku* (ethnic group), or have an acquaintance in common. It is not unusual to hear some migrants from South Sulawesi saying "I couldn't come to know him/her as long as I was living in South Sulawesi; I met here my remote familial member for the first time." Any network based on personal ties tends to become intermittent sometimes by individual moving-out or death. But, if there is a formal association, it would be able to consolidate the existing tie for a long time, give chance to spread one's own networks. Furthermore, having an association is a means of power for the members, to give chances to come to know established or influential persons living there. The more wide-ranging an association, the more often one can get such occasions. Indeed, it is common that other ethnic groups have their own associations, but it is rare that they have such an extensive association as Bugis or Sulawesi people has in Indonesia and Malaysia.

3. the Bugis related association: KKSS and PKBS

A social network is usually anonymous and individualistic by nature. As I noted above, any network of which an individual makes a knot point tends to become intermittent sometimes by moving out or death etc. So it need to be reinforced and their associations have been partly playing such a role.

3-1. The South Sulawesi Families Association (*Kerukunan Keluarga Sulawesi Selatan* = KKSS)

People of South Sulawesi, especially, Bugis people, have a wide-spreading locally based association in almost every province in Indonesia. This formal association is called 'Kerukunan Keluarga Sulawesi Selatan' (KKSS), or, the South Sulawesi Families Association. Though the KKSS is not exclusive to Bugis people, they are usually predominant in number and occupy the majority in the association. The association was organized as a formal organization in 1976. The main proponents at that time were the late Prof. Baharuddin Lopa



(he was well known later as a secretary general of KOMNAS, committee for the Protection of Fundamental Human Rights.) and Haji. Kalla (a entrepreneur of transportation service and the father of the vice –present now H. Yusuf Kalla)^{iv}.

The KKSS has a pyramid-like structure from the center to province, and from province to regency level. The central (head quarter) office is located at Jakarta. Then, in provincial level has a branch office (or the chairman's house) usually located at the capital. The person nominated as the chairman of the association were, in most cases, among the local assembly members, high officials or business men of South Sulawesi origin. Though the KKSS has as objective social welfare and exchange, The central office of KKSS has published a periodical called *PINISI*. The association sometimes exercises an influence over local politics. For example, it is reported that the KKSS elected two candidates of Bugis origin as the mayor of Samarinda city (the provincial capital) and that of Bontang city in Kaliman Timur^v.

Bellow, I will show some data on the KKSS which I got in 1988. According to the central office of KKSS in Jakarta, there were 116 branches (including one head quarter in Jakarta) and divided into two categories: BPW(*Biro Persatuan Wilayah*, meaning Regional office) and BPC (*Biro Persatuan Cabang*, Branch office). The former usually located in each province amounts to 30 offices (Only in Jakarta there are 4 BPW), and the latter as a branch of each BPW amounts 86 offices

Before organizing the KKSS in 1976, there had been some association in each area. I will show such example taking from South Sumatra. Today, in the province of South Sumatra, there are one Reginal Office in Palembang and two Branch Offices BPC in Bangka and Belitung. But before 1976, there had been another association, first KOMPAS (Koordinasi Masyarakat Perantauan Anak Sulawesi) in the 1950's, and secondly, PKS (Persaudaraan Keluarga Sulawesi) in the 1960s. According to a present KKSS member, the KOMPAS was organized by some influential militaries and officials. Nowadays, the active members of KKSS are Bugis entrepreneurs or merchants, mostly coming from the regency of Bone. The aims of this association are of social kind, to call for contributions to the mosque in each area or to the suffering district in South Sulawesi, or to exchange information among members. Under these Regional or Branch Offices, Bugis people often hold a more private meeting usually in the form of monthly *arisan*, or another form of social gathering like *selamatan* rituals.



3-2. The Welfare Association for the Bugis-Sabah (*Persatuan Kebajikan Bugis-Sabah* =PKBS),

In the Sabah state of East Malaysia, there is a Bugis-related association, the Welfare Association for the Bugis-Sabah (PKBS) since 1985. This association has no relationship with the KKSS mentioned above and other Bugis associations in Johor or Malacca. The core members of the association were mostly of the migrations' second generation who had settled in Tawau as estate labors in the 1950s. They had grown up as a Malaysian citizen and most of them got higher education at the universities in Malay peninsular or abroad. The first chairman of PKBS, Dr. PT, born in Borneo Abacca Limited(BAL)^{vi} Estate, got scholarship to learn university and became a medical specialist. The central office of PKBS is located at Kota Kinabalu, having 21 branches and 18,496 members in the state of Sabah (May1997 present). Main activity of the association is said to be socially concerned matters: to giving scholarship to less advantageous children, to give assistance to those got disasters, or to exchange social-cultural information among themselves.

Though the core member are largely Sabah born Malaysian of Bugis origin, some Bugis migrants directly from Sulawesi are also the members. To become a member, the eligibility as follows: (1) Malaysian citizen, (2). being born in Sabah, (3) possessing Indonesian passport and visa. By these conditions, we know that the membership is not restricted to the Malaysian of Bugis origin. Migrants from South Sulawesi are also able to become a member as long as he or she has an official documents^{vii}. But, as we will see the following section, the nature of this association changed in the 1990s.

3-3. Recent development: Polarization of the associations

Entering into the middle of 1990s, these two association began to change its nature. In 1994, the KKSS held a 3 days-meeting of the Bugis-Makassar businessmen (*Pertemuan Saudagar Bugis-Makassar* =SMB) for the first time. The meeting was supported by the Chamber of Commerce of Ujungpandang^{viii} and gathered many of successful personages in a business or political world. including the late minister of National Defence Jenderal M. Jusuf, the most respected figure among Bugis people. If we see the later development of the KKSS and the SBM, we understand that this meeting was a starter so that the KKSS became more and more interested in business and political world. At the 2002 meeting, the leading figure of the



association said, “What is real thing is to keep our spirit and networking....the KKSS only gives occasion for business meeting. In that occasion each participant will freely talk business apart from the KKSS activities.” Against such inclination, there are also protest or critics especially from ordinary people. A Bugis taxi driver I met at Samarinda said, “Today, the KKSS is just a political instrument for rich men. It is nothing to do with poor people like me. Rather, I feel sympathy with an association by regency. In Samarinda or Bontang, there are associations for Baru people or Bone people.”

If we turn our eye on to Sabah, there was another development, or, precisely speaking, declining happened in the PKBS. Since the middle of 1990s, the PKBS began to make their position clear on politics^{ix}. According to a Bugis business man of middle age, the Sabah born Bugis have not got full citizenship yet for they don't have the *Bumiputra* status. *Bumiputra* is a civil status given to an ethnic group admitted as the natives by the local government. So, those persons of second generation of foreign migrants who have already got a Malaysian nationality are not necessarily given a *Bumiputra* status as long as their parents came from Indonesia. As to this *Bumiputra* status, many of the Sabah born Bugis felt unfair, the man said, “so the PKBS now has a plan to our representatives to the State minister so as to be given the status.” In the election of the state assembly, the PKBS succeeded in sending Dr. PT, the first chairman of the PKBS, as an assembly member. But three years later, at the time of general election, some member of the PKBS were involved in an election offences. According to a local magazine, some PKBS staff were found out to forge a ID card in order to get valid voting rights for illegal residents. A core member of the PKBS said to me, “After this affair, the state government nearly forbid the PKBS to do all kinds of activities. Since then, there aren't any activities.” When I met him again, he said to me an impressive word, “Now, we have just organized a new association called *KECAPI*. The members only amount to 30 persons, but each of us has some proficiency. What is important now is networking among us....”

4. Temporary Conclusion

As I described above, the two association have coincidentally inclined to politics in the middle of the 1990s. The KKSS has intensified their activities centering around some leading political figures. Consequently, the association has lessened a function to assist keeping social networks for ordinary people, but now a smaller scale association has emerged and begun to



substitute such function.

On the other hand, in Sabah, the PKBS once declined also to politics, is now nearly dying. There is also emerging a new type of association but with a very limited scale. In such environment, there are little possibility for Bugis migrants (not those Sabah born Bugis) to keep or strengthen their network. Even though the PKBS could give them any occasion, most of migrants as labors must stay apart in an oil palm estate or a logging camp far from urban area. So, the frequency of their transaction is also limited. But, nonetheless, social networks have been playing a certain role as social resources for them. On one day in Sumpurna, a native Bajau asked me, “Why Bugis migrants coming with no fund have succeeded in their business? Most of taxi drivers here are of Bugis origin.” Such question, though indirectly, would exemplify their ability to make good use of their resources.

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i Usually, state-arranged trans-migrants are prepared 2ha plot and a small housing, so they don't have the choice to move out there.

ii The concept of social capital is now paid attention as a key word by World Bank:



“What is Social Capital? Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society .it is the glue that holds them together. (<http://www1.worldbank.org/prem/poverty/scapital/index.htm>)

iii As for haji pilgrimage, see ITO 2003.

iv This information based on the news “KKSS "Partai"-nya Jusuf Kalla”, '(n.d.)Suara karuya, Internet edition.

v See, Gerry van Klinken (n.d.) “Indonesia's New Ethnic Elites.” p.19

vi Under the British rule, the Borneo Abaca Limited estate was opened in the district of Tawau. This estate, based on the former Japanese ‘Nissan Norin’, or ‘Kuhara’ estate, was the largest one in the area. In 1953, the BAL began to grow cocoa in 1953 employing many foreign workers from Indonesia, largely from Sulawesi.

vii Other than the PKBS, there was another association for Indonesian migrants, the Association for the Indonesian family in Sabah and Sarawak (Perhimpunan keluarga Indonesia Sabah dan Sarawak = PERKISA). This association was formed in 1978 under the guidance of Indonesian Consulate at Kota Kinabalu. Its aim was to give an occasional meeting and recreation for Indonesian immigrants of various origin. There were four branches: Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, Laha Dato, and Tawau. In the case of that of Tawau, where most members are from Sulawesi, activities were dying out until around 1990.

viii At that time, the head of the Chamber of commerce at Ujungpandang was Mr. Jusuf Kalla.

ix A young member complained that the PKBS didn't do anything for migrants from Sulawesi.”

