Oral Tradition in the Discourse of Ethnic, Race, and Religion Diversity

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This panel is questioning the positions, roles, and contributions of oral traditions in dealing with and responding to the development of ethnic, religious and class diversity in Indonesia. Empirical data on oral tradition shows that many traditions that are originally considered as local have disappeared or transformed due to various causes and purposes. Some oral traditions, were used to support practical political interests. For example, in Flores, the *wuat wai* tradition were utilized to support candidate running for the head of regency during regional election’s campaign. On the other hand, oral traditions such as the *Tabuik* ceremony in Pariaman are used by the government as tourism objects to support tourism industries in the region. In another cases, many form and function of oral traditions have been disappeared or changed example as a result of cross-cultural encounters/collision between local culture with outside cultures or divine religions such as the *Saba ritual* of Badui in Banten and *Rambu Solo* in Toraja. There are also expressions of rejections to the existence of oral traditions in which can develop into conflict or at least have potential to be latent conflicts. The burial ceremony in Bantul, Palu namoni in Donggala Sulawesi and *gawai* Dayak in Kalimantan are among the example. Thus, oral tradition can be appropriate for different purposes; as tools to develop regional potential, but it can also be a source of conflict due to the different interpretations of various groups that exist in this country. In other words, oral traditions can lead to the integration or disintegration of the nation. After reformation era, which shape democracy in this country, have its own impact related to diversity and oral tradition. Almost every groups are struggling to maintain their existence, especially those whose existences are threatened by the rejection from the outsiders, which can lead to extinction. After reformation era, movements like that are increasingly widespread throughout the country. Those movements could become a capital or on the contrary it can be a source of conflict if there are collisions. The
argument of equality as a label of democracy causes the problem solving become complex. Questions that can be asked about this situation include: How is the position of the tradition from the local tradition? What is the contribution to this country? Does the oral tradition have to be maintained as a cultural capital of this country? Should oral traditions be maintained on the basis of equality? Should the oral tradition be developed? How did this tradition survive or be maintained or developed without inviting conflict? How to overcome threats related to maintaining and developing oral traditions that clash with outside/foreign culture? What policies should the government take as an effort to maintain oral traditions in the context of encounters and developments with the outside world? Studies related to the questions above are expected to maintain the cultural assets of this country as well as the issue of equality in the diversity of groups in this country without inviting conflicts or creating latent conflicts.

THE EXPRESSION AND EMOTIONS OF MADURESE AS AN AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGE

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INTRODUCTION

Administratively, Madura is part of East Java residency, which consisted of many large and small islands. Madura also has small islands which are mostly in Sumenep districts, such as Kangean, Masalembu, Ra’as, Gili Raja, Poteran, and many other small islands. Geographically, the large of Madura Island is approximately 5.168 km, with a length of approximately 200 km and a width of approximately 40 km. Madura has different climate from the other regions in Java Island. Madura is situated in an arid region with infertile soil. If there are many mountains on Java, then in Madura we will only find highlands and hills. The condition of the soil is infertile and the water highly contains lime (Abdurrachman, 1977).

Madurese people tend to migrate, hence we can see that horseshoe area (daerah tapal kuda) in East Java such as Probolinggo, Bondowoso, Jember, and Banyuwangi are inhabited by many Madurese and northern Surabaya is also dominated by Madurese. Some Madurese - especially who live on that islands - live from agricultural products and grow crops such as rice, corn, beans, and yams. From the aspect of livestock, they mostly raise cows, goats, and poultry. However, it is undeniable as an island area, the people in the coastal area are very dependent on fishing and salt making.

Related to their religious belief, Madurese people are very infamous as strong believers in their Creator. Therefore, there are many assumptions which are given to Madurese as religious people. In the economic development context, it would be relevant to Yang’s statement that “... in some regions in the world, not all economic societies are hijacked by western capitalism” (2002:477). The western economic system with the power of state hegemony does not influence the development of an economy in a particular society.

In my humble opinion, we can find that excessive belief in religious ritual does not inhibit the creation of an advanced economy in Madura. Madurese are working and earning money because they are encouraged by a religious spirit. It could be because they have a will to go on pilgrimage (umrah or naik haji) for many times, celebrate haflatul imtihan festival in boarding schools, arrange a marriage, or hold a funeral. Generally, when Madurese will go out of the island, they will sowan (say goodbye) to kiai (the clerics) to ask for permission and prayer which become their