

SURVIVE STRATEGY AND STRUGGLE OF *MARAPU* ADHERENTS IN TARUNG VILLAGE, WEST SUMBA

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ABSTRACT

Marapu is the indigenous religion of community in Tarung Village and Sumba Island in general. *Marapu* adherents experience hegemony including state discrimination and the spread of religion by the church elite. This study aims to reveal the hegemony process experienced and the survive strategies and struggles of *Marapu* adherents. Data were analyzed using hegemony theory and practice with qualitative research methods. The results showed *Marapu* adherents experience state hegemony in the aspect of their religious legality. This condition was used by church elite to spread their religion. The people of Tarung Village accept Christian/Catholicism, but still maintain the *Marapu* ideology as their religion, so that the reality that occurs in the local community is the practice of religious dualism as strategy of survive and negotiation. The struggle of *Marapu* followers continues after the Decision of Constitutional Court Number 97/PUU-XIV/2016 by trying to obtain a determination as *Marapu* customary law community.

Keywords: Hegemony, Survive Strategy, Struggle, *Marapu*, Indigenous Religion

INTRODUCTION

The state is a tool of elite power that has an ideological interest in perpetuating agreements between subordinates and suppressing efforts to liberate the lower classes against upper class positions (Santoso et al., 2015: 82). The interests of the elite, according to Gramsci (in Takwin, 2009: 72-74) can be persuasively instilled in the lower class society through various state-owned awareness engineering institutions. An institution has a set of rules in carrying out its regulations on civil society, such as laws or various policies.

The power of the state in determining what constitutes "religion" is contained in Presidential Decree No.1 of 1965 which was later adopted into a Law in 1969. The description of the legal product states that Indonesia only recognizes six religions, namely Islam,

Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Meanwhile, those outside of the six religions are classified by the state as a belief (mysticism, spirituality, psychiatric), and the government tries to channel them towards a healthy outlook and towards the One Godhead.

Unhealthy stigma is a construction of mainstream religions towards believers as an atheist, heretical, infidel and idolatrous ideology (Subagya, 1981: 240). The state even long beforehand oversaw the existence of religious sects by establishing a bureau for the Monitoring of Community Beliefs Streams (PAKEM). On 19-21 August 1955, the Indonesian Spiritual Congress Board (BKKI) was established, however various BKKI proposals were rejected by the state and mainstream religious leaders affiliated with the political elite. On the other hand, the state increasingly marginalized believers when the House of Representatives (DPR) and the Ministry of Religion discussed the definition and requirements of a religion (Subagya, 1976: 120).

The ideological strength of the state and mainstream religions, apart from having created a majority-minority classification, has in fact worsened the condition of believers. Even though religion has an important position because it is able to influence human life (Haryanto, 2016: 21). Religious issues have recently returned to the spotlight. The public was shocked by the decision of the Constitutional Court regarding the inclusion of "Believers" in the religious column of Family Card (KK) and Identity Card (KTP). After the decision was read out on November 7, 2017, adherents outside of the six religions in principle did not need to manipulate or empty the column of their religious identity, although they could not show specifically considering the large number of believers in Indonesia.

Marapu is one of the believers whose petition was granted by the Constitutional Court. *Marapu* followers can be found in Tarung Village. Administratively, Tarung Village is in the area of Sobawawi Village RW 9 RT 20, Loli District, West Sumba Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Based on the results of the author's data collection in 2017, residents in Tarung Village assessed 219 people with the proportion of *Marapu* 37.91%, Catholic 31.52%, Christian 30.15%, and Islam 0.42%. Although the data above shows that the people of Tarung Village truly adhere to *Marapu*, in reality they still experience hegemony practices. However, the *Marapu* adherents in Tarung Village have still survived through various survive strategies, for example maintaining the *Marapu* ideology and adopting religious dualism, as well as

fighting for their identity after the Constitutional Court decision which was reviewed in the discussion section.

CONCEPT AND THEORIES

In this study, the authors used two concepts, namely *Marapu* and Religion. According to Wellem (2004: 42) *Marapu* is belief in the highest God or Divine and ancestral spirits. Meanwhile, Boersema (2015: 72) argues that *Marapu* is a religious term for the Sumbanese people. Soeriadiredja (2013: 60) deeply defines *Marapu* as the native religion of the Sumba people. According to Gramsci (in Bocock, 2007: 124) religion operates as a moral value system, a related belief system and a ritual / symbolic system. Religion operates hegemonically by producing a moral value system that is leading which is often enshrined in various state laws. Religion becomes an arena for rulers to practice hegemony, while *Marapu* adherents launch counter hegemony through various strategies to fight for their religion.

The theory on which this paper is based includes hegemony and practice. Gramsci's idea can be interpreted as a domination of the state and church ideology of a group of *Marapu* adherents to spread to all the people who underlie an organization. The involvement of traditional cultural and intellectual methods is able to paralyze critical awareness and manipulate the ideology of the people under control, so that without realizing it, the ideology supports power (Strinati, 2016: 207). Bourdieu's theory of practice leads to a strategy to determine the position of each agent, namely *Marapu* and the church, in the contestation arena based on capital accumulation (Fashri, 2014: 109-111). Both dominant agents and subordinate agents usually apply defensive strategies more often to defend or protect their positions, this phenomenon can be seen in the contestation that occurs in the people of Tarung Village (Haryatmoko, 2016: 51).

RESEARCH METHODS

The research was designed based on qualitative methods through the application of participatory observation, in-depth and unstructured interviews with purposive-determined informants, and document studies. This qualitative research method emphasizes a thick description that is emic, ethical, and holistic (Saifuddin, 2005: 89-91). The method used by researchers of Cultural Studies is also known as the naturalistic method because the research

is carried out in real conditions, so that qualitative research does not only describe socio-cultural phenomena but finds the hidden ideology behind it (Ratna, 2010: 94-95).

DISCUSSION

State and Church Hegemony against *Marapu*

The state of Indonesia is not only guided by one religion, but also guided by the One Godhead, where all religions and beliefs are respected for their position and every citizen is free to adhere to his religion and belief and to carry out his worship. However, it is ironic that the *Marapu* adherents cannot demonstrate that they are able to embrace religion freely. In carrying out their religious rituals, they can only do it on the island of Sumba. This limitation is motivated by the practice of state hegemony which subordinates *Marapu's* position as a believer.

This marginalization constructs the *Marapu* adherents and his teachings rarely appear in the national realm. This hegemonic treatment has actually been felt even by a *Marapu* follower who only graduated from elementary school, the results of the interview show that the awareness built by the elite has led those who are oppressed to live in the shadow of state power, they are aware that their current modalities cannot be used as the basis for liberation from hegemony.

Based on the results of observations in 2016 in Tarung Village, the filling of the religious column for *Marapu* adherents in the Family Card was marked with the belief, while the Identity Card was left blank / given a line like (-). But ironically, when the author visited the office of the Central Bureau of Statistics, West Sumba Regency, the data provided by the officer showed that the number of followers of the faith from 2011 to 2015 was zero, and the officers chimed in on the grounds that *Marapu* was part of the Sumba culture, meaning that it was not a religion. , so it doesn't matter if it's not in the table. If you pay attention to the data obtained from the Office of the Ministry of Religion, West Sumba Regency, this shows that there has been manipulation of data that is not in accordance with the reality of the existence of *Marapu* followers in order to cover up the interests of the mainstream religious elite, especially church domination to perpetuate the ideological domain.

The data that contains elements of discrimination against *Marapu* adherents above can be compared with data held by the West Sumba Regional Development Planning Agency. Table 1 shows the condition of the number of *Marapu* followers (Aliran Kepercayaan) in West

Sumba Regency which has experienced a significant increase since the revision of the Population Administration Law was passed in 2013. This increase is related to the struggle of *Marapu* followers from the shackles of the state and church elites, and to restore their existence in the public.

	Religions	2011 (people)	2012 (people)	2013 (people)	2014 (people)	2015 (people)
1	Katolik	20.961	23.483	29.215	22.393	29.215
2	Kristen	79.065	79.406	64.975	62.977	56.823
3	Islam	8.849	9.291	5.664	6.240	6.870
4	Hindu	195	199	214	248	248
5	Budha	0	0	0	0	0
6	Khonghucu	0	0	0	0	0
7	Aliran Kepercayaan	4.119	4.242	17.719	28.049	28.765
Total Population		113.189	116.621	117.787	119.907	121.921

Table 1. Population of West Sumba Regency by Religion, 2011-2015
(Source: Regional Profile of West Sumba Regency, 2015)

Marapu adherents in Tarung Village are among those who have / have not completed formal education and work in the agricultural sector as well as crafters. Based on the research results, none of the children with student status were registered as *Marapu* followers, in addition to the practice of hegemony through formal education. Since childhood, the children of *Marapu's* parents have been baptized to obtain legality from one of the mainstream religions.

A baptism certificate is an official document issued by the church authorities to show that the person concerned has passed the sacrament of baptism. In West Sumba and districts on Sumba Island, the legality of a baptismal certificate equals a birth certificate. The baptismal certificate serves to fulfill administrative requirements such as attending school and working in the formal sector. The use of a baptismal certificate as a substitute for proof of birth, because the traditional *Marapu* marriage, namely by the local community it is called a customary mat title, cannot be recorded based on the state law system, in other words if the marriage is not through a church procession, then the couple cannot have a marriage certificate, thus impact on making birth certificates and being unable to send children to school.

The issue of birth certificates had become a central issue in West Sumba, when the *Save the Children partner of the Sayangi Tunas Cilik Foundation* on 9 December 2016 pioneered a joint declaration with the local government and local residents, especially *Marapu*

followers. In the event, the participants of the declaration were committed to fulfilling the rights of every child, without exception in West Sumba, to obtain a birth certificate. However, at the moment of handover of birth certificates by the regents and deputy regents to parents, the author found an irregularity. The names of the children who are said to have obtained birth certificates are registered as having baptized names, meaning that they are children who have actually participated in the sacrament of baptism.

The arena of struggle for *Marapu* followers cannot be separated from the ideological control mechanism, the church in Sumba has a relationship with government officials in managing civil registration (Strinati, 2016: 207). This relationship was revealed when the author listened to a conversation between a pastor and a congregation who was about to baptize his child, when the conversation about the baptismal procedure was about to end, the pastor suggested that his congregation did not need to go to the village office because the church had coordinated with the civil registration authority to take care of it. administrative documents.

Survive Strategy of *Marapu* Adherents in Tarung Village

a. *Marapu's* Ideology Defense Strategy

According to Gramsci (in Barker, 2014: 138) ideology cannot be separated from daily practical activities, ideology provides an order of practical and moral behavior for people in everyday life. Religion as a set of ideologies contains the most powerful elements in every society to direct collective action (Haryanto, 2016: 234).

The survival of the people of Tarung Village cannot be separated from the *Marapu* ideological values which are dogmatically transmitted from generation to generation. The *Marapu* ideology was able to survive through the involvement of the younger generation in religious practice and narrative (oral tradition) by generations of *Rato Rumata* and the *Rato Kabisu* as organic intellectuals. Religion has become an arena for *Marapu* adherents to struggle to pass on *Marapu* teachings to their children, especially during *Wulla Poddu*.

Wulla Poddu is a communal ritual held by the people of Tarung Village for one month, held once a year between October or November. One day before the closure of *Wulla Poddu*, the residents who had migrated or lived outside the Tarung Village area would return to their original homes. At that moment, after being in touch, the *Rato* will convey *Marapu's* knowledge to his extended family / clan (*kabisu*). Knowledge is transmitted to family members

by involving them in the *Wulla Poddu* ritual and telling of the earth-heaven creation process, the birth of the first human, the origins of ancestors, and the series of human life cycles.

Since birth, the people of Tarung Village have not missed the ritual procession of their life cycle. Danandjaja (1985: 19) explained that in living life humans will go through a series of critical phases. These phases begin when the human is still in the womb of the mother until the human dies, so that a ceremony is held as an effort to neutralize the various dangers that are believed to befall them. These ceremonies became known as Life Cycle Ceremonies.

The rituals of the human life cycle that are still carried out by the people of Tarung Village include: 1) a ritual when the fetus is three months old which is called *Gollu Umma*; 2) *Pangarana*, namely the ritual of giving names taken from the names of the ancestors; 3) *Kahutti'i* is a ritual that is performed for the first time when a child shaves his hair; 4) *Malingo* or commonly known as circumcision, is held when boys are grown up; 5) the wedding ritual includes three series, namely *Demawinne* (proposing to a woman's house), *Pa'uma Anamangoma* (a ritual for women who start a household), *Tuntas Belis* (the final stage of the marriage series, where the groom hands over the *belis* that has been agreed with the bride); 6) the death ritual begins with the *Tengi Watu* ritual (pulling the grave stone), then the burial ritual procession, namely *Patane*.

b. Religious Dualism as a Survive Strategy and Negotiation

The life lived by the followers of *Marapu* Tarung Village to survive the hegemony of the state and the church is by adhering to one of the religions recognized by the Indonesian state, in this case, namely Christianity or Catholicism. There is no rejection in them of the principles brought by the church and it is not easy for them to abandon the principles passed down from their ancestors. The two conflicting religious principles are accepted and lived up to, so that the reality experienced by the community in Tarung Village is a religious dualism. In the context of the local community, the phenomenon of religious dualism is referred to as "half *Marapu* and half Christian / Catholic" as expressed by Lidda Mawo Mude that since the people of Tarung Village were born, before being baptized they have been given names through the *Marapu* ritual called *Pangarana*.

For the people of Tarung Village, religious dualism is a strategy to obtain their rights as citizens, especially in order to facilitate population administration affairs and save themselves from stigmatization. Likewise, from among children in order to get education at school to

college. Even though in the early stages the principles of the church were limited to administrative purposes and the value of religious subjects, the doctrine of education could manipulate awareness into something that could be trusted, so that Christian / Catholicism was not automatically considered as "the religion of KTP".

Half *Marapu* and half Christian / Catholic are two opposing ideologies, but one unity is balanced and side by side in the religiosity of the people of Tarung Village. Religious dualism is a construction of community identity in Tarung Village to reduce the forces that want to dominate. They do not hesitate to present their dual identity in public, as in Picture 1 below, which shows a Sumba dancer wearing two religious symbols, namely the cross necklace and the *Mamoli* necklace.



Picture 1. Sumba dancers wearing a cross necklace and a *Mamoli* (Dokumen: Oka, 2016)

Bourdieu (in Ritzer, 2012: 907) defines the field / champ as a battlefield, namely the arena of struggle that guides agents' strategies to determine their position based on the accumulation of capital ownership. The phenomenon of religious dualism in the people of Tarung Village has resulted in a balanced position between the two parties in the contestation arena. The struggle to position the strategy of each agent, namely between *Marapu* and the church (Christian / Catholic) yielded to each other by loosening the boundaries of religious dogmatic teachings. Giving aims to maintain the position of the two ideological forces in the dynamic arena of contestation, as stated by Bourdieu (2020: 68) that pretending to be modest to show superiority (condescension) is the best strategy to strengthen the position.

The loosening of the boundaries of religious dogma as a defense strategy shows that there are negotiations taking place between *Marapu* and Christian / Catholicism. The dualism of religion in the people of Tarung Village is a manifestation of compromise to reduce the forces that want to fight for symbolic power. According to Bourdieu (in Fashri, 2014: 141-144) symbolic power is a power to construct reality, an invisible power because in hiding the practice of domination it takes a subtle form as symbolic violence, which is violence that is soft and invisible, so it does not accept resistance because it has gained social legitimacy.

The Struggle of *Marapu* Adherents After the Constitutional Court Ruling

The decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia Number 97/PUU-XIV/2016 regarding the inclusion of "Believers" in the religious column of the Family Card (KK) and Identity Card (KTP), is a breath of fresh air for *Marapu* adherents in Tarung Village. Expressions of happiness were seen in several news uploads about the verdict on their social media. After the verdict, *Rato Rumata* with his symbolic capital fought for the discourse of Tarung Village as a customary institution with legal status. The plan, through customary deliberations, obtained an agreement from all the *Rato* in Tarung Village so that it could be followed up. On 20 October 2017, the West Sumba Regency Government issued a Decree of the West Sumba Regent Number KEP/HK/588/2017 concerning the Establishment of a Tarung Site Village Traditional Institution, Sobawawi Village, Loli District, West Sumba Regency, 2017 Fiscal Year.

Although the Regent's Decree above was motivated more by the urgency of the fire incident in Tarung Village that occurred on 7 October 2017, and it can also be said that it was the government's response to the results of literacy efforts "Basic Rules for the Association of *Marapu* Loli Indigenous Peoples, West Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara" which was successfully compiled by *Rato Rumata* after the implementation of *Wulla Poddu* in 2015, namely on 20 November 2015. However, the struggle of *Marapu* followers is still quite long because in terms of this Regent Decree uses the word "Establishment" as if the customary law community unit in Tarung Village formed in 2017, so what they really need is recognition through "Determination" (Palar and Sungkar, 2019).

As a practical matter, it is very difficult for minorities to carry out legal religious activities without access to institutional status that has the authority to become a legal entity. For example in the construction of houses of worship which require religious groups to be legal

entities. Apart from that, they also receive religious donations, permits or notices religious holidays, or receive religious services from the state. In the Indonesian context, there is a strong tendency how the right to freedom of religion or belief guaranteed in the constitution can only be enjoyed by religious groups recognized by the state, while religious groups outside those that are recognized face discrimination (Hafis, 2016: 233). The decision that the *Marapu* adherents fought for, especially by *Rato Rumata* and the people of Tarung Village, has yet to come to light. Their struggle after the Constitutional Court Ruling as a "gateway" is still a long way to go so that *Marapu* is not eroded by extinction.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, *Marapu* adherents experience state hegemony in the aspect of their religious legality so that they become targets for the spread of religion by church elites. The survival strategy of the *Marapu* adherents is to maintain the *Marapu* ideology through the involvement of the younger generation and narrative (oral tradition) as well as undergoing religious dualism as a form of negotiation. After the Constitutional Court Decision, the struggle of the people of Tarung Village was still continuing to get the determination of the *Marapu* customary law community.

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