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PRESERVING DIVERSITY: LESSONS FROM BATANG TARANG VILLAGE OF WEST KALIMANTAN

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ABSTRACT

The recurring communal, racial conflicts in West Kalimantan have left unpleasant memories among the local community. Unfortunately, some people believe that similar events will keep happening. This article was based on field research that relied on interviews and observations involving several crucial things. This research argues that communal conflicts in West Kalimantan can be averted by empowering internal forces to maintain balance in a plural society. This article found that conflict-prone societies such as those in Batang Tarang have the capacity to build harmony through togetherness, inter-ethnic marriages, the moderate practice of Islam, fair practice of adat [customary law], and strengthening awareness of shared origins.

Keywords: Preserving Diversity; Harmony; Ethnicity; Religion; Batang Tarang

INTRODUCTION

Recurring conflicts in a plural society in West Kalimantan have brought about pessimism among some experts. Arkanudin (2006: 185), for instance, claims that it is difficult to avoid the tendency for conflict to arise in a society of different ethnic groups that could inevitably lead to recurring inter-ethnic conflicts in West Kalimantan. Arafat (1998), Alqadrie (1999), and Petebang et al. (2000) found that there were at least 10 to 12 violent clashes between 1933 and 1999. Although these three sources indicate different frequencies of conflict, all of them at least refer to the idea that disputes often occur and continue to recur. Ten to twelve wars had occurred in the previous 50 to 60 years (an average of one conflict every four to five years) (Bahari, 2005). Due

to the repetition of similar incidents, Alqadrie (2010) refers to it as a 30-year cycle of violence that has the potential to happen again. Based on these data, Human Rights Watch has classified West Kalimantan as a conflict-prone area.

Inter-ethnic relations are considered positive where different ethnic groups -- Malays, Dayaks, Madurese, Chinese, Javanese, etc. -- interact without conflict in various realms of life. However, in reality, because of the difference between what it means to be indigenous and what it means to be a migrant, the social reality of everyday life is filled with low-level hostility. Control of economic resources and natural resources that are not profitable for native people, who claim that they are indigenous people and are still under pressure from the presence and role of migrants, also contribute to the construction of ethnic identity that can be contested (Haba, 2012: 42). This unique situation, as Haba describes, occurred several years before the major ethnic riot in 1999.

Haba's findings above are supported by the fact that fights between individuals could easily lead to communalism. For example, at least until the late 1990s, people in Batang Tarang lived in a tense atmosphere. Even though the conflict did not surface, people lived in suspicion. The two main ethnic groups, namely Malays and Dayaks, felt unsafe even though they lived in the same environment. The Malays, for example, felt that they were living under the siege of the Dayaks, who could attack them at any time or impose customary law arbitrarily. The Dayaks feel suspicious of the Chinese and other migrant groups who were considered more intelligent and used their intelligence to deceive the Dayaks.

However, the Dayaks and Malays also have wisdom that can maintain the foundations of peace in society. Hermansyah (2018b) found that the Malays of West Kalimantan have inherited collective memories, including oral traditions, beliefs, and diverse ways of life, such as the agricultural system from their ancestors. Thanks partly to this piece of collective memory, they can now recognize their common ancestry with contemporary Dayaks. This collective memory is an important aspect that awakens them to be able to live together with their brothers and sisters, who were shunned by divisive colonial politics.

With a more positive perspective, a violent conflict hypothesized to recur in a 30-year cycle, as described above, can be prevented, among others, by strengthening local mechanisms. However, we must also realize that the public position that specific cultural practice is divided into small groups that support their respective sub-cultures to ensure the accommodation of individual and group interests (Abdullah, 2009, p. 7).

Community harmony in a small sub-district capital in West Kalimantan

with a population of less than 3,000 can teach how traditional values can become a local mechanism for preserving the dynamics of plural community relations. The name of this village is Batang Tarang, the capital of the Balai sub-district, Sanggau, West Kalimantan. For example, *adat* [customary law] is a trusted source of law in the community and is supported by groups from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. In fact, in other places, there are customary “thugs” who make some people lose confidence in the capacity of this traditional heritage to solve problems. Thus, due to the prevalence of this practice, the Head of the Customary Justice Division of the Central Council of the National Dayak Customary Panel of Judges (DPP MHADN), Tobias Ranggie SH, said that currently, it is challenging to eradicate customary law business practices or the “thuggery” of Dayak customary law (Suara Pemred, 20 December 2021).

Awareness of the importance of maintaining peace within the Batang Tarang community has strengthened partly due to the terrible experience of ethnic riots at the end of the 20th century in several areas in West Kalimantan. There have been reinforcements initiated by local leaders, as well as cultural movements, to maintain harmony. For example, several ethnic associations have emerged, accommodated by forums bridging this diversity. The situation is different in Enggano, where people can have harmony. However, migrants are “forced” to eliminate their original identities and be united with a new identity called Kaamay (Sari, 2020, p. 84). In Batang Tarang, inter-ethnic and religious marriages are common despite being considered a big problem in many places. Other factors contribute to maintaining harmony, such as the moderate practice of Islam by the majority group and life in an environment without segregation. In light of the explanation, the article aims to describe the values and life practices of the Batang Tarang community, which function to maintain the harmony of a plural society in the region.

SOCIAL RELATIONS IN BATANG TARANG

This article is based on a study carried out in Batang Tarang. Batang Tarang is the name of a village located in Hilir Village, where there are four hamlets: Hilir Hamlet, Hulu Hamlet, Sembatu Hamlet, and Melaban Hamlet. Batang Tarang is located in Sanggau Regency, West Kalimantan. It is located on an axis road that connects several regencies in the eastern region of West Kalimantan with Pontianak, the provincial capital. The transportation route that crosses Batang Tarang is also connected to the roads of all the main routes in the province to the east, west, and north, as well as the two districts in the south. The road is also connected to the axis that connects West Kalimantan with Sarawak,

East Malaysia. The distance from Batang Tarang to Sanggau is 78 km. It takes approximately 2 hours to Pontianak across 121 km. From Batang Tarang to the Indonesia-Malaysia border in Entikong is 124 km.

In the past, when the river was the only route to the surrounding villages and the city center, Batang Tarang was a transit point. People from villages located upstream of the river came to Batang Tarang to sell forest, agricultural, and plantation products, which intermediary merchants then sold to Tayan. In Batang Tarang, people from the villages bought groceries from Tayan. This situation made Batang Tarang a business center that attracted not only local people but also migrants. It is no wonder the people of Batang Tarang are relatively more diverse than those in other villages around it. Even though there is still a rural atmosphere, very few people work in the agricultural sector. The agricultural and plantation businesses in this place are mainly rubber and palm oil, in addition to rice farming. A famous gardening product is palm sugar, known as 'tayan sugar.' Besides that, the Batang Tarang durian is renowned in West Kalimantan, especially Pontianak. Most of the residents work in the service and trade sectors. As the center of economic life that supports the surrounding villages, there are relatively many financial institutions in Batang Tarang. There are two sub-branch offices of government-owned banks. There are at least five cooperatives in the form of Credit Unions.

The plural population of Batang Tarang, among others, can be seen from the religious followers, which amount to 2,428. Of that number, 59.76% or 585 people are Muslims, 585 Catholics or 24.09%, followed by 224 Christians (9.23%). The remaining 155 are Buddhists (6.3%), Hindus, and Confucianism less than 1%. Compared to two neighboring villages, such as Semoncol and Cowet, in the same sub-district, there are only Muslims, Catholics, and Christians¹. Unfortunately, there needs to be official data regarding the existence of ethnically based residents in the area. Based on the oral account, the Batang Tarang population consists of Malays, Malian Dayaks, and Chinese, in addition to several other ethnic groups such as Javanese, Minang, Batak, and Flores. In recognition of the existence of this diverse population, ethnic group associations have been founded in Batang Tarang, such as the Malay Cultural Council (MABM), the Dayak Customary Council (DAD), the Chinese Cultural Council (MABT), the East Nusa Tenggara people's association (Flobamora: Flores, Sumba, Timor, and Alor), and the association of the Javanese.

¹ See Sidompu, the official website that details the government of Sanggau Regency.

In 2016 the public in Indonesia was shocked by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok)'s statement that Indonesians should not be deceived by those who use Surah al-Ma'idah (5:51) about the prohibition of electing non-Muslims as leaders. This statement sparked a fierce debate among Indonesia's Muslim population, leading to Ahok's two-year prison sentence for blasphemy. However, long before that, using the same method, several members of the campaign team for one of the candidates for the elections of Sanggau Regent-Deputy Regent for the 2009-2014 period had caused public unrest in Batang Tarang:

"Before the year 2000, there were problems with relations between communities. Some people often made trouble in the market, and there was no effort to prevent it. There was suspicion between people of different ethnicity and religion. There was 'segregation' between the upstream and downstream villagers, etc. In the past, there was suspicion between different ethnic groups. People here still had their own blocks, especially during a regional head election. There was once a member of the campaign team distributing leaflets containing verses from surah al-Maidah about the prohibition on electing non-Muslim leaders during the election of the Sanggau Regent. At that time, one of the candidates running for regent was a Muslim named Setiman.² Finally, it was found that those who created and distributed the leaflets were non-Muslims. The aim was to provoke the Dayaks not to vote for a Muslim regent candidate. In the end, three perpetrators were arrested and jailed for eight months after going through twenty times of court hearings" (Samlana, interview, 17 June 2022).

The unrest occurred because of identity politics, pitting one against the other, coupled with memories of the significant social riots with ethnic backgrounds in West Kalimantan, which has given rise to feelings of suspicion among residents. Previously, individual fights could spread to war between villages, as described by the chairman of the Dayak Customary Council as follows:

"...once we were attacked from outside, which was known as the Jam (name of person) case. Jam was a Malay... So it was a fight between ordinary individuals, but because the situation was not conducive, the issue became big because the handling was slow. There were no devices like we have today, and communication was not working, so they used violence as revenge. Those who attacked were from the Sosok area, and those who were attacked were the Malays from Batang Tarang, and those who attacked were the Dayaks from Sosok (Salipus Sali, interview, 30 July 2022).

² Elected as Regent of Sanggau for the 2009-2014 term.

Several important events that disrupted the harmony of the people of Batang Tarang have awakened the community to return to live in peace in diversity without suspicion. The conditions have changed a lot, as they live in an environment without segregation. Customary law of the Dayak people can be applied, accepted, and used as a reference outside the community. Good relations have also led to many intermarriages. Some of these factors are creating a harmony of life in Batang Tarang. In the following section, we will describe aspects of community life in Batang Tarang that have the potential and have been proven to be able to preserve diversity.

TOGETHERNESS FOR HARMONY PRESERVATION

As stated in the previous section, Batang Tarang is inhabited by a majority Muslim population of 1,451 (59.76%) and Malay ethnicity but is surrounded by non-Muslim Dayaks. Although no statistical data classifies the population based on ethnic groups, most of the areas surrounding Batang Tarang are villages where the Dayaks inhabit the majority. A statement made by the chairman of the Balai Sub-District Dayak Customary Council confirmed the fact as follows:

“So we (Dayaks), because here we are a large ethnic group and it has been agreed that I lead the inter-ethnic forum. I will be the chairman with the consideration that it has recently been established, and we still need to work on many other things. Because when there is an inter-ethnic problem, it is easier to handle it for the time being” (Salipus Sali, interview, 30 July 2022)

The relationship situation between residents in Batang Tarang can affect those in other villages in the vicinity. Should a conflict lead to ethnic and religious issues, it will, without a doubt, spread to the surrounding areas. Realizing this, the residents of Batang Tarang do their best to maintain a conducive relationship between residents through solidarity:

“... even though Dayak villages surround the majority of Malays in Batang Tarang, If there is a conflict related to ethnicity or religion, it will be hazardous. While the Dayaks used to feel inferior to the Malays because many did not go to school, now they are smarter and are going to school. The Dayak people in Batang Tarang also know themselves well. For example, they do not take it for granted in applying customary law. We also live here as neighbors with people of other ethnicities and religions. People here do not choose their neighbors; sometimes people in other places do not want neighbors of different religions or

ethnicities. In addition, for example, the Dayak people keep dogs; for us here, it is normal. Our father sold land near our house to Bang Baek, a Dayak. Now he is building a house there, near our house. It's the same in other villages; Malays or other people may buy land in the Dayak areas. Likewise, at the Ilek market, those who have shophouses are Chinese, Malay, Dayak, Javanese, and Batak. [There are] various ethnic groups there. In addition, business relations between the Dayak, Malay, and Chinese in Batang Tarang are mutually beneficial. The Dayak people bring agricultural and plantation products from the village. Malays and Chinese are the buyers. The Malays and Chinese buy durian, palm sugar, and vegetables from the village. The Malays and Chinese make *dodol* [pumpkin cake], *lemang* [sticky rice cake], and *lempok* [durian cake]; the ingredients are purchased from the Dayaks. Those who help cook *dodol* or roast *lemang* are the Dayak people; they are really good at it (Suhardiman, interview, 5 August 2022).

In addition to being surrounded by Dayak villages, Batang Tarang also contributes to an atmosphere of friendliness and togetherness. Residents' houses built without segregation have also strengthened community harmony. The Malays, who have lived here for a long time, provide a place for Chinese, Dayak, and other communities to build or house without questioning different backgrounds, as stated by the following informant:

“People here are peaceful and united; it is hard to distinguish a Dayak from a Malay. Their homes are not far from each other; they blend in. For example, near my house, there are Dayaks and Malays. In the market, too. The shophouses in the market are not only owned by the Chinese; there are Malays and Dayak owners as well. We invite one another if there are wedding receptions and other events” (Khi Sen, interview, 18 June 2022).

In line with that, Amuy, a hawker, stated:

“Relations between people here are good. When a member of someone's family dies, they usually attend the funeral. It is normal for the Chinese to give a big donation to the Malays at funerals. The Chinese also usually donate when someone is sick. People here like to open the house door to hear neighbors on the left and right. We know of the problems of our Chinese, Malay, and Dayak neighbors. My neighbor used to ask me to help clean the fish. They bring me fish to fry. Chinese, Dayak, Malay do the same” (Amuy, interview 18 June 2022)

The sense of togetherness that grows in a social environment without

segregation has strengthened harmony in Batang Tarang. The harmonious and friendly atmosphere created between plural citizens is very different from the relationship between residents in Makassar and ethnic Chinese, as reported by Darwis (2013). The report stated that because each ethnic group lived in groups, the interaction between the Chinese and Makassarese was less intense in their environment. As a result, the Makassar people have stereotypes and prejudices that the ethnic Chinese are selfish and only consider profit and loss when dealing with neighbors. Residents of Chinese descent close themselves with a closed-house model; they still uphold and maintain traditions. Disharmonies arise when two ethnic groups do not realize the importance of communicating with each other and blending in everyday life. In Batang Tarang, this sense of togetherness and kinship is manifested in the form of mutual assistance and visits between residents:

“Togetherness in Batang Tarang is strengthened by various activities such as mutual visits and assistance when a funeral, wedding, or other events occur. In addition, people here visit each other on religious holidays such as Eid al-Fitr. They come to the homes of Malays, Chinese, and Dayaks. It is the same with the Lunar New Year when Dayaks and Malays visit Chinese homes. For Christmas, the Chinese and Malays visit the Dayaks. We feel that we are one big family here despite different ethnicities and religions” (Marsudin, interview, 17 June 2022).

Segregation and lack of interaction between plural citizens have given rise to a lack of harmony among community groups. Recurring conflicts in Ambon, among others, are influenced by settlement segregation between residents of different religions, as reported by Ansori et al. (2014). As an example of this segregation, the Gunung Nona area in Ambon is inhabited by a majority of Christians, and a Muslim majority inhabits the Leihitu peninsula. Other areas, such as Passo, are synonymous with the Christian region, while Batu Merah is synonymous with the Muslim region.

INTER-ETHNIC MARRIAGE AND HARMONY

Marriages between people of different religions and ethnicities sometimes go smoothly. They often face opposition from the family. Hermansyah's research (2018a) shows that there is rejection by Chinese families of their family members who marry and then follow their partner's religion—especially Malays who are Muslim. This phenomenon is different in Batang Tarang. In a small sub-district town with a population of 2,428, marriages between people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds are considered “common” by the local community:

“There are many couples who are of different ethnic groups. For example, a Chinese marries a Dayak or a Malay. There are also Dayaks who marry Malays. For us Dayaks, Chinese and Malays are the same” (Marsudin, interview 17 June 2022).

Based on interviews with several informants, there were at least 22 married couples of different ethnicities, as shown in the following table:

Table 1
Interethnic Marriage Couple in Batang Barang

No.	Husband's name	Ethnic Group	Wife's name	Ethnic Group
1	Hardiman	Dayak	Mung	Chinese
2	Lorensius Panggel	Dayak	Lusiana	Chinese
3	Atung	Chinese	Nurfah	Malay
4	Abdul Gafur	Javanese	Vivi	Chinese
5	Abdul Gani	Malay	Aman	Chinese
6	Julkurniansyah	Malay	Selin	Dayak
7	Bujang Yahya	Javanese	Nursiah Longgil	Dayak
8	Brian	Javanese	Nurul	Malay
9	Nazirin	Malay	Juliati	Dayak
10	Lexy	Flores	Yanti	Chinese
11	Adi	Chinese	Ica	Dayak
12	Sutata	Javanese	Julita	Dayak
13	Aci	Chinese	Nikemoni	Dayak
14	Waluji	Malay	Meriam	Dayak
15	Ramlan	Malay	Ana	Dayak
16	Tan	Dayak	Titin	Malay
17	Deki	Malay	Farida	Dayak
18	Aut	Chinese	Reni	Malay
19	Surya	Malay	Amuy	Chinese
20	Dedi	Malay	Silvia	Chinese
21	Boni	Chinese	Tiara	Malay
22	Martinus Ala	Dayak	Sumaria Tobing	Batak

Source: collected from interviews with several informants

Some of these inter-ethnic marriages in Batang Tarang resulted in religious conversions. Sometimes religious conversion is one of the triggers of conflict in society (Lukito, 2008). However, it did not happen in Batang Tarang. Marriages between people of different backgrounds have strengthened the

process of integration in Batang Tarang. Customary boundaries, especially the Dayak customary law, which regards this marriage as a problem, can also be resolved through custom. If someone of a different ethnic background than the Dayak—especially non-Dayak men—intends to marry a Dayak woman, they must pay a customary fine. With the payment of the fine, the man can marry a Dayak woman and be entirely accepted in the Dayak community, as reported by the following informant:

“Here, we live side by side without any problem. Like now, I’m hanging out and having coffee with the Hamlet Head, a Malay. If there is a problem, the leaders will solve it first. Since ancient times, the Malays have visited *tembawang* (fruit gardens), bringing salt, sugar, fermented fish, and salted fish in exchange for durian, rice, chicken, and other fruits. We help each other during the funeral. We help each other with the meals when there’s a wedding. Muslims used to help cook with different utensils at a Dayak person’s home. There are many couples of different ethnic groups here. The Dayaks have no problem if a member [of the Dayak ethnic group] marries a Malay as long as they pay for the customary rituals and it’s considered done” (Abuer, interview, 17 June 2022).

A Chinese informant also confirmed the fact that interethnic marriages are acceptable.

“Marrying someone of a different ethnicity is not a problem. It’s the same thing. People here usually intermarry between Chinese and Dayak or Malay. God has determined destiny. Religion does not teach hostility; what we get will all return (die)” (Amuy, Interview 18 June 2022).

This phenomenon is similar to what happened in Enggano, Bengkulu, where the indigenous people have relatively no problem when marrying migrants called the Kaamay ethnic group and follow the religion of the Kaamay people (Sari, 2020). Because it is considered normal, inter-ethnic marriages in Batang Tarang have strengthened community integration. It is based on mutual respect, which helps people adapt to their environment and psychology, both of which influence cultural awareness to promote personal growth and a reduced sense of ethnocentrism so that they can learn about other cultures well through their partners. In addition, they can see other civilizations with a more open attitude, such as research findings on marriages between members of the Javanese and Chinese in Solo (Kurniawan, 2019). Interaction through marriage is a blend of cultural values, behavior, and customs. In addition,

intercultural communication in marriage influences married couples who tend to have a high tolerance level. Since there have been more and more inter-ethnic marriages, inter-ethnic relations have also grown more robust as a result of the extended family ties involved, as reported by the following informant: “Maybe more and more of our people (Malays) take (marry) village people (Dayaks). So more and more people here are related to people of different ethnic groups. Many Chinese also marry Malays or Dayaks” (Abdussamad, interview, 19 June 2022).

MODERATE ISLAMIC PRACTICES

As a religion embraced by most of the population, Islam strengthens social harmony in Batang Tarang. The religious (Islamic) ideology adhered to here is generally the same as most of its adherents in Indonesia which is moderate and accommodating to local culture. Islamic religious figures, especially preachers such as khatibs who deliver religious messages regularly on Fridays, prefer the peaceful Islamic model. Islam can coexist with people of various religions and beliefs. This fact is recorded, among others, in the following field notes:

“After visiting the sub-district office to report the purpose of the Research Team’s arrival at Batang Tarang, we decided to perform Friday prayer at the Aljihad Mosque, the oldest Muslim house of worship in Batang Tarang. Members of the research team and I went to the mosque around 11.30. Before entering the mosque, we did our ablution first while looking around the mosque. Across the small road opposite the Qibla of the mosque, there is a low-roofed building. In the building without walls and floors, there are three tombs, one of which is the tomb of Prince Saleh. According to his descendants, Prince Saleh was a community leader in Batang Tarang who was appointed by King Tayan, Gusti Tamjid, to become the representative of the Tayan kingdom in Batang Tarang. After seeing the tomb, we took ablution and entered the mosque. More and more people were coming. Not long after, the call to prayer as a marker of the start of the Friday prayer time was recited by the *muadhin* at 12.41 West Indonesia Time. After the call to prayer was recited, most of the congregation performed the *sunnah* prayer of two *rakats*. After a while, the *khatib* [person who delivers the sermon] climbed onto the pulpit. The *khatib*, also the *imam* on that day, whose name we later found out was Sukmajaya, was a former village head, giving a sermon on guarding the tongue. In his sermon, the *khatib* delivered a message about the importance of guarding one’s tongue against anyone because humans are basically the same, coming from the same ancestor. Guarding one’s tongue is not limited to fellow Muslims. After about 12 minutes, the sermon ended with prayer. After Friday prayer,

it was continued with *wiridan* and prayer recital. After the prayer, the congregation dispersed, and some shook hands and continued with the *sunnah* prayer. We returned to the lodging to immediately record the results of our observations” (Field Notes HR1706221).

This model of Islamic understanding refers to the fact that Islam teaches its followers to safeguard the rights and safety of the people around them and their surroundings. A person who adheres to religious rituals must also protect the honor, dignity, and property of others (Bensaid, B and Machouche, S. 2019: 59). For this purpose, the Prophet Muhammad was reported to have said: “A Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue and hands. And a Muhajir (emigrant) is the one who gives up (abandons) all that Allah has forbidden.” (HR, Muslim). In line with this, the Qur’an teaches to spread peace which is symbolized by saying peaceful words, including those who are ignorant: “The true servants of the Most Compassionate are those who walk on the earth humbly, and when the foolish address them improperly, they only respond with peace.” (QS. al-Furqan: 63).

Even so, in Batang Tarang, there are also followers of Islam who believe that being Muslim must be the same and compatible with their group. It is considered heretical if the religion is not like the Islamic model they practice. Only a few support this group. The supporters of such religious understanding and practice are what Bruinessen (2013: 17) refers to as “fundamentalists” because they concentrate on the Qur’an and Hadith, the two primary sources of Islamic law, and follow literal and rigid interpretations of both. They undoubtedly agree with some of the majority viewpoints, including conservatives. Like rejecting hermeneutical interpretations and rights-based ideas, perhaps these fundamentalists also conflict with conservatives about traditional values that do not have strong pillars in the holy scripture, such as *tahlilan*, *selamatan*, including practices related to formal worship, such as *wiridan* and reciting prayer together after obligatory prayers.

At first, the presence of the followers of this group caused problems in the community, as reported by an informant:

“There is also a strong interaction with this influence, but there is no mutual understanding. For example, yesterday, there was a group of people wearing robes, and they were rejected not only by the Muslim group but also by non-Muslim groups, and there was disagreement among them here. But after we explored it further and discussed it with other groups and community groups, things like this must be ‘filtered’ to create peace in our place. Something like that usually gives someone

an opportunity, and it has to be under surveillance by the police so that it doesn't become a daily [concern] in conversation" (Salipus Sali, interview, 30 July 2022).

However, this style of understanding of Islam does not "sell" in Batang Tarang, as the following informant stated: "There is also one Muslim who practices a religion that points out other people's faults but has no followers. Because most people here don't fit such a religious model, he finally built a small mosque in his house. Previously, he was active in community activities. Since joining that sect, he has no longer been active in religious activities. But if someone dies, he's still involved in the funeral, for example, digging a grave" (Samlana, interview, 17 June 2022).

In the end, the group that consisted only a few people no longer participated in the activities of the Muslims in Batang Tarang, which they considered to be heretical, as reported by the following informant: "Many years ago, someone passed away studying religion at the Jamiatul Muslimin recital group in Tayan. He was a knowledgeable religious figure. After studying with the group, he forbade people here to call to prayer twice on Friday, even though people here had practiced the call to prayer twice. He forbade *dhikr* together after congregational prayers. Since then, he had hardly ever associated with people, even though previously he was very active in society. In the past, relations with non-Muslims were also good. After joining the recital group, it was not good; his female family members wore the face veil. He severely changed religious habits because, according to him, [people] deviated from the true teachings of Islam. He resigned as a civil servant to focus on preaching. During his life, there were 3-4 people who followed this ideology because he was a knowledgeable person.

However, this sect was not growing, as the people of Batang Tarang were not compatible with this model of a religious sect, because they do not respect differences and non-Muslims" (Suhardiman, interview, 5 August 2022). However, in funeral activities, these people provided help, especially as gravediggers, as seen in the following observations:

"The brightness on Sunday morning kept us excited to collect data. Whether coincidentally or not, there was a funeral procession for a Muslim resident in Batang Tarang on that day. We also paid a visit to the funeral home at 7.30 to a resident's house not far from our lodging. We followed a series of funeral activities that day. There was something unique in that those who came to the funeral were not only Muslims but people of other religions and ethnicities who also took part in the

takziyah, except praying for the deceased. It was also seen at the funeral that several people digging the grave had a distinctive look, growing a beard and wearing cropped pants. Later we were told that one of them was a follower of the Wahhabi Salafi ideology and used to be active in almost all Islamic activities. However, he is no longer active recently; even if he prays, he does it in the small surau next to his house and the congregation with his family members. After the whole procession, we returned to the lodging to rest a while” (Field Notes HM190622).

Only when this research was conducted did residents give room for the radical and anti-diversity religious beliefs and practices in the public sphere. Exclusive religious understanding is believed to undermine community relations that have been built in harmony.

ADAT AND CUSTOMARY LAW

Traditional customs and wisdom have recently gained momentum to be revived to preserve harmony and peace. Its proponents assert that indigenous approaches to peacemaking that are relational and participatory have a higher probability of reaching peaceful solutions than peace initiatives pursued through “liberal peace” (Mac Ginty, 2008). A study conducted by Rumahuru and Gaspersz (2021) on the post-conflict Maluku community provides evidence of the social reality in the Tual area that the cultural approach is still valuable for efforts to stop inter-group conflicts and promote community peace. Meanwhile, Samiyono (2017) states that local wisdom has a significant role in building social harmony in society, although it still needs further elaboration, especially when it has a national impact. This is because local wisdom is generally still verbal and not fully documented.

In Batang Tarang, *adat* [customary law] has played an essential role in resolving disputes and problems, including those that have the potential to escalate into ethnic and religious conflicts. For example, when this research was carried out, traditional leaders were resolving the case of a Dayak woman remarrying while she was still married to a Malay man. Sensitive matters like this can lead to inter-ethnic clashes if not handled properly and thoroughly. The following is the statement by the chairman of the Balai Sub-District Dayak Customary Council:

“Well, we have just finished dealing with the divorce between a Malay and a Dayak because the claimant is Malay and Muslim. The only two things I asked the *temenggung* [tribal chief] were, first, when the marriage was performed or not, and whether it was done according to *adat* or not; if it was, then it was legal according to *adat* if we deal with

this in accordance with *adat*. The second was that today it was legal and convincing whether or not she has remarried and left her marriage; now it cannot be denied anymore; even though he is a Malay, he still has the right to sue, and this is where we give justice. So, we do not defend that these are Malays and Dayak people, and we justify the Dayak people, and I do not justify that even though there is a tendency in it, I think there is still tolerance. If, for example, there is still tolerance, that's fine because it must follow customary rules, and then both parties must be able to accept it, and it is done. I was asked how fair this customary law is. Moreover, I answered that both parties could accept according to customary rules, that is it. That is justice, and how else do you want to seek justice" (Salipus Sali, interview, 30 July 2022).

Although the majority population in Batang Tarang are Malays, the customs and culture of other community groups have a place to live. In addition to the Malay Cultural Customary Council (MABM), which facilitates the majority of the population, there are the Dayak Customary Council (DAD) and the Chinese Traditional and Cultural Council. Several ethnic groups can also be found here. These traditional cultural institutions enliven and develop their respective customs and culture.

It has become an unwritten consensus that should an incident violate customs involving different ethnic groups; it will be resolved by applying the respective ethnic groups by prioritizing deliberation and amicability. If in this way, an agreement is not reached, the parties involved can choose to settle it through customary law or state law. Only the Dayak people have customary laws and instruments in Batang Tarang. Even though the resolution of the problem is left to the respective ethnic groups involved, the implementation of Dayak customary law, which is authoritative and is considered capable of fulfilling a sense of justice, has won the hearts of the local community, including non-Dayak people. So it is common for problems involving non-Dayaks to have a settlement with Dayak customary law. As an example, the following informant reported:

"There were fights involving two parties; for example, Chinese and Malay had problems and complained to us (the Dayak Customary Council), asking to be resolved, and we tried to mediate them. We also let them communicate with other community leaders, and they hand it over to us, and we resolve it amicably and peacefully. Still, it must be handled in accordance with customary law. So, they agreed to [resolve the matter using] the Dayak customary law" (Salipus Sali, interview, 30 July 2022).

The resolution of problems through customary law accepted by these parties has contributed to maintaining harmony in society. A Malay informant reported that he felt safe owning property in the form of land in the Dayak area because he received protection from the Dayak customary law. Here is his statement:

“Because according to the Dayak customary law, as far as I know, whatever happens on their land, in their area, if something happens or an accident occurs, and it bleeds, and that is obligatory to get rid of bad luck, and that is why there is a term for which is *sangka parang*, so they make offerings and keep a jar at the scene of the incident because there was blood earlier. Moreover, don't let it happen again in the future, and as a prevention...because it has always been like that, and we also do not consider it *shirk* [polytheism]. Still, we consider it their custom, which doesn't harm and disturb and actually saves [us]. For example, yesterday, I bought a piece of land in the Kampung Dalam area, where the majority are Dayak people. So when you have bought the land and the way they refer to it, there is that if you have bought this land with Person A and Person A has handed it over to you. But your land borders the land of B, C, D, etc. So they have to know too. So if something happens, local customary law will help if there is theft and, for example, the land is taken over, and we will help with that matter” (Dedi Bastian, interview, 30 July 2022).

Regarding any land that is newly owned and located in Dayak customary areas and adjacent to land owned by Dayak people, the buyer must pay *adat* for the ceremony. If the buyer complies, then after the customary ritual is held, the land he bought becomes part of the customary system, which receives protection from the local community's traditional leaders. This means that if something happens, for example, theft or someone moves the border markers, the traditional leaders are also responsible for resolving the problem. Thus, the existence of *adat* has provided a sense of security among the people. In the context of *adat*, it guarantees the safety of humans and the property they own. In addition, *adat* also serves as a means of settlement in the event of a dispute to prevent more significant conflict. This finding is in line with several other studies, such as those conducted in Enggano, Bengkulu. With their local wisdom based on customary rules, the Enggano people settled differences and turned them into peace. Ethnic and religious differences that have been seen as dividing the nation have never occurred in the case of the Enggano people (Sari, 2020, pp. 84-85). Unlike in Enggano, the people of Batang Tarang are given the freedom to assert their ethnic identity and are given room to practice their culture through their respective ethnic associations. Newcomers to

Enggano, regardless of their origins, are forced to merge their ethnic identities into the Kaamay (Sari, 2020 p. 84).

STRENGTHENING AWARENESS OF COMMON ORIGINS

The politics of *divide et impera* [divide and rule] practiced by the Dutch colonialists were implemented as segregation of the ethnic population based on religious affiliation. The previously unknown labels Dayak and Malay were used to describe the indigenous people of West Kalimantan before the arrival of Europeans. Traditional tribal names associated with a person's place of origin are a general form of local identification such as language, name of a river, or village. Within certain parameters, this identification is still used as a marker of a person's origin. The Dutch came and provided the local people in Borneo with a new identity structure in the form of two main categories: Dayak and Malay.

Meanwhile, the leading indicator of the construction of ethnic identity is religion. Residents who followed traditional beliefs—and later Christianity—were called Dayaks. At the same time, those who had converted to Islam adopted Malay as their new ethnicity (Hermansyah, 2018b).

Even though people in Batang Tarang, especially Malays and Dayaks as the majority ethnic groups, are classified as members of different ethnic groups due to religious differences, most are aware of the same historical origins. There is an increase in awareness, especially when more and more local people are educated and socialize more broadly. A Dayak informant reported the following:

“Because this religion is something of our choice, but ethnicity is not, but it's destiny. Even though today we see a Dayak marrying a Muslim or Malay, their ethnicity is still Dayak, even though their religion is Muslim or Islam. Well, this makes us harmonious, but in the past, it was different because of Dutch brainwashing; originally, a Dayak married a Malay and converted to Islam, and they said the Dayak became Malay. So, it must be fixed, and we are slowly fixing it. Moreover, it doesn't matter if we want to convert to any religion, but the ethnicity remains the same. Moreover, we start slowly so as not to question it. So if he already loves his culture, even though he is a Dayak who has converted to Islam, he will not get rid of his identity because he already loves his culture. Furthermore, I once participated in the Dayak National Congress in East Kalimantan, the Dayak Youth Movement. That was the first National Congress, and the organizers wore a turban, etc., which was not a problem because they were Muslims but also Dayaks. We also

saw that in East Kalimantan, and this is what we want to instill so that people don't clash later, we were all brothers, especially in Balai, which we are the descendants from Mangkit, from Beruak, from Birang, from Muyak and it will be a great loss if we let certain party pit us against each other because we are brothers. So, let's start slowly to open up people's insight, so we don't clash. So if it's like this, there will be no problem; no matter what religion we follow, we are still one ethnic group" (Salipus Sali, interview, 30 July 2022).

A Malay informant said, "In fact, the Dayak people and we are from the same village. Our ancestors were village people too. So we are of the same origin" (Rukiyah, Interview 19 June 2022). Because they realize that they have blood relations with each other, ethnic differences due to religious affiliation are not a barrier to living in harmony. For them, the bonds of brotherhood originating from the same ancestor cannot be removed, even though there were past colonial efforts to eliminate them. More and more educated people in the local population recognize this common origin. Understanding family relations because they originate from the same ancestor has increased their awareness to coexist sincerely with their 'distant' relatives. The fact that the people of Batang Tarang are knowledgeable about the same origins is in line with a study by Nasrullah (2014) on the Bakumpai people in South Kalimantan and Hermansyah (2018b), who researched the Malay people in West Kalimantan. Bakumpai and Malay people realize that their ancestors were local people of the same ethnicity as those called Dayak today.

CONCLUSION

In light of the earlier description, it can be concluded that several experts are concerned that the existing forces in society can avoid recurring conflicts due to differences. Several internal forces in the Batang Tarang community have been proven to successfully preserve harmony between people who used to live in a tense atmosphere. This article argues that togetherness in various events –good and bad–, inter-ethnic marriages, moderate Islamic practice, fair implementation of *adat* [customary law], and strengthening awareness regarding the fact that the people in Batang Tarang originate from the same ancestors are among the factors of the community's strengths to build harmony: (a) despite being the majority, Malay-Muslims in Batang Tarang are aware that they should maintain good relations with other residents, especially the Dayaks because if a problem involving ethnic and religious issues occurs and spreads, there is no doubt that it will trigger major conflicts with neighboring villages where the majority are non-Muslim Dayaks. This cultural atmosphere has given rise to community solidarity to face the good and evil of fellow

community members.

In addition, the pattern of settlements that blend in without segregation strengthens the unity of the local population; (b) Inter-ethnic marriages, which are increasing and have no opposition from locals, have also contributed to the preservation of harmony in Batang Tarang; (c) The practice of moderate Islam also significantly contributes to maintaining an atmosphere of harmony, because an extreme religious model that can disrupt the community's religious life does not get the sympathy of the local people; (d) in Batang Tarang, *adat* [customary law] plays a crucial role in resolving disputes and conflicts, including those that have the potential to escalate into ethnic and religious conflicts. Here the Dayaks have no problem applying their customs, even though most of the population is Malay. The opportunity to implement *adat* in a fair manner without discrimination, and to promote deliberation and tolerance when it comes to people outside their community, has made *adat* and its instruments a trusted reference for solving problems for all groups; and (e) recently, the people of Batang Tarang have become increasingly aware that they, in particular the Malays and Dayaks, mainly originate from the same ancestors. Religion, which was previously considered a significant factor in changing the identity of local people, is increasingly understood as an individual choice and cannot change one's origins. Therefore, differences are formed because of people's choices, and it should not create a gap between people, let alone trigger conflict. Further studies are needed to understand the findings in this research, especially on fostering inter-ethnic and religious harmony in the interior of West Kalimantan, because this article merely presents a basic portrait of it.

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