

To Become Indonesian: Experience, Perception, and Hope of East Timor Refugees after Referendum (1999-2009)

Silverius C. J. M. Lake¹ and Frederikus Fios²

¹Character Building Development Center, Mass Communication Program, Communication Department, Faculty of Economics & Communication, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia 11480

²Character Building Development Center, Computer Science Department, School of Computer Science, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia 11480

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Abstract: Nowadays and by temperament of East Timor refugees regarding the national identity of Indonesia, become a kind of problem. The objective of this research tends to find the national identity of Indonesia among East Timor refugees in the border area West Timor Indonesia, after the referendum 1999. However, the locations of the research are the border as follows; Kupang district, North Central Timor district, Belu district and Malaka district. The important of this research is to know their nationality of Indonesia through their experience, perception, and hope. Other idea in this article is the sustainability of the national identity of Indonesia for East Timor refugees. And the research uses qualitative method especially in-depth interviews, literature study, narrative description and focus group discussion. The theoretical frame uses community psychology and social history. The expectation of this research is to strengthen East Timor nationality of Indonesia.

1 INTRODUCTION

On completing this article, my concern turns to my research about the East Timor refugees who are living in the border area between Timor-Leste and West Timor, East Nusa Tenggara Province. To become Indonesian for East Timor people who are living now in West Timor is the core issue on this research. Three keywords will help us to do research on Indonesian nationality of East Timor people who are living in the border area in West Timor. For sometimes East Timor people enter upon to Timor-Leste, it means that they are still yearning their hometown in Timor-Leste. Those three keywords on the studies are *experience*, *perception* and *hope*. The experience of the East Timor people can be seen in the history of East Timor especially colonized by Portugal for a long period, 450 years. Then, the history of East Timor related to the integration with Republic of Indonesia for two decades that has made a special experience. I will also describe tragic experience of East Timor people after the Referendum 1999 which caused them left their home town for West Timor, the East Nusa Tenggara province. The tragedy after the referendum make their nationality of Indonesia was eroded.

On experience, the first keyword, we can find and use the thought of David Hume (1711-76). He is Scottish, born in Edinburgh, and generally regarded as the greatest of British empiricist. Hume was an historian and a philosopher. He developed a philosophy based on impression and making substantial use of the new doctrine of the association of ideas (Lacey, 1996). East Timorese experience as refugees can be related to the concept of experience and perception according to Hume. In his opinion as an empiricist, Hume thought on experience that a human being is a centre of experience, awareness, thought, and feeling. Those things are related to impression that connected to East Timorese knowledge and experience as an Indonesian.

Furthermore, how is about perception? When we talk about perception, the second keyword, it is very complicated. The analysis of perceiving is complicated by the variety of its objects. Therefore, it suggests us to pay attention comprehensively and factual. For example, how is perceiving the redness of Smith's face related to perceiving that his face is red, that he is angry, that he is afraid? And can one perceive an object without perceiving facts about it? Usually 'perceive' is a success or achievement if we

can only perceive what is there and is true. But we can misperceive for example make mistakes about what we perceive. Perception is a complex notion, and two main problems concern its relations to sensory experience and to intellectual notions like belief, judgment, inference. (Lacey, 1996) If we attempt to start from East Timorese experience as refugees, we can only perceive their experience as far as we keep the sense data. The sense data supposed to serve as a bridge between us and the East Timorese experience in their hometown (East Timor) then in the border area of West Timor, East Nusa Tenggara Province.

I will also try to explain the third keyword namely hope. The definition of hope can be described as well as a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen. For example, the East Timorese people hope looked through their thinking, feelings, belongings in the hope of becoming pure Indonesian. Besides, East Timor refugees who are living in the border area of West Timor hope our help to save them. They need something good for their life and hope for the future as genuine Indonesian (Soanes & Stevenson, 2008). My explanation on the hope of East Timor people in the border area related to needs of human being as usual. Human basic needs are clean water, food, house, sleeping, and so on. In this case, the government should provide all especially for the East Timor refugees. For chronically and extremely hungry man, they need plenty of food. If only he or she is guaranteed food for the rest in life, he or she will be perfectly happy. Life itself tends to be defined in terms of eating. Anything else will be defined as unimportant for example freedom, love, community feeling, respect, philosophy, may all be waved aside that are useless since they fail to fill stomach (Lake, 1992).

Those three keywords describe background of this article. I have shown some problems that needled East Timorese in the border area to stay in Indonesia or homecoming again in Timor-Leste. I underline the East Timor people are in dilemma situation, on one hand they are living in Indonesia, on the other hand they are going to homecoming again in Timor-Leste. The East Timor people in the border area should become Indonesian actually. It is naturally great.

2 METHOD

The problem of East Timorese people in the border area West Timor Indonesia is how to become Indonesian, viewed from their experience, perception, and hope. To fulfil this article, I will use some methods based on the social history. The focus

of this research is on the history of common people. To get a comprehensive description regarding of data collection, I have done library research, interview method, and narrative method (Fay, 1998). To enrich the data collection, I offered a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in place with regencies' leaders who are making the policies for handling East Timor refugees.

By the narrative method, East Timor people have told their experiences and hopes for living in the border area, then I as researcher measured and interpreted the story through a psychology of oppressed as an approach. How far their collective memories on their hometown and homeland Timor-Leste. And, how far their national identity of Indonesia. Are they psychologically motivated by their homeland Timor-Leste or Indonesia? The meaning of those perceptions, their face and heart can be caught through narrative approach and interview method. We can see their face and we can feel their feelings when they tell the story verbally (Garraghan, 1957). Coordination with East Timor people in the border area was held to show their statement, attitude, behaviour, trust, story-telling, in the resettlement place. I as researcher was among them for a month. Furthermore, as an observer, the researcher has intended to know and to interpret the East Timor people orientation whether towards Timor-Leste or Indonesia.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

To discover perception and hope of East Timor People as Indonesian citizen, they all want to become Indonesian if they get prosperity, safety, happiness, health life, self-esteem, independent, political rights, positive identity both individually and communal. We believe that it is important to start with a focus on the people and communities with whom community psychologist work, the way community psychologists think about the problems those communities and people face, and the goals towards which community psychologist works. Community psychologists are concerned with the issues and problems facing disadvantaged people, problems that have deep historical roots. The journeys of disadvantaged people have been ones of pain and suffering, dislocation and colonization, oppression and marginalization. Society has constructed stories about disadvantaged people, making them into something different between you and me. These stories are often of the victim-blaming variety and help members of dominant groups to rationalize their role in

contributing to and perpetuating the oppression of disadvantaged people. They also serve to disconnect disadvantaged people from the journey of their people and themselves. Listening to the stories of disadvantaged people is a first step in undoing the damaging stories that society has constructed about those people, in this case the East Timor people (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

Amanda Wise in "Nation, Trans-nation, Diaspora: Locating East Timorese Long-distance Nationalism" showed the result of the research with the East Timorese refugee community in Sidney Australia (Wise, 2004). Amanda Wise has adopted transnational dimensions to their practices of long-distance nationalism. Moving beyond a simple homeland to refugee trajectory, Amanda Wise takes the position that transnational connections and influences must be seen to be both located and interconnected beyond the bounds of the group and its homeland. However, Amanda Wise always contributed her article on East Timor. In this article "Embodying Exile: Trauma and Collective Identities among East Timorese in Australia", Amanda Wise has explored diasporic community and transnational identities (Wise, 2006). Those issues have emanated from scholars working in cultural studies and contemporary anthropology. With a little attention has been paid to specific experiences of refugee diasporas, and particularly role of trauma and embodiment in creation of these moral communities. Based on her research with the East Timorese diaspora in Australia, Wise has shown this article looks at the performative dimension of diaspora's political campaign for East Timor independence (Wise, 2004).

Januar Achmad on his article "East Timorese Refugees in West Timor" was published by JSTOR in "Out of Ashes" Book Chapter 12 showed the situation and condition East Timorese refugees in West Timor, East Nusatenggara Province since 1999-2000. Januar put many considerations on his article as follows; exodus from East Timor, dispersal, the camps, self-help projects, Indonesian government responses, violence against refugees, health, and repatriation. One of the important ideas was about repatriation of the refugees. In general, West Timor community and government received the refugees well since early September 1999. Despite this, most of the refugees wanted to return home (Achmad, 2003).

Starting from those journals above, I as the author ensure that the topic in my research is new entry point to the East Timor studies especially on refugees. My focus is on a new life of East Timor people in the border area. We find their new life, their experience,

their perception and their hope for Indonesia. Therefore, they are going to become Indonesia and to build their national identity of Indonesia in resettlement place.

4 TO BECOME INDONESIA OR HOMECOMING TO TIMOR-LESTE

It was a regulation for East Timor people in the border area West Timor, East Nusa Tenggara province who choose to stay in Indonesia or homecoming to Timor-Leste should follow the registration and voting process for 17-year olds and up. With the regulation, the East Timor people who are living in the camps and resettlement place make question why their nationality of Indonesia should be checked. Thousands of East Timor people join the election since June 6 – June 9, 2001. The result of the election, 98% of 100,000 people chose to stay in Indonesia. It means majority of East Timor people kept stay to become Indonesian. East Nusa Tenggara province has noted this event as a big achievement peacefully without chaos. By the result of the election, some of East Timor people in the border area will join the repatriation program for returning home. The East Nusa Tenggara Province facilitated and protected refugees who chose to return home. Meanwhile, East Timor people chose to stay in Indonesia, joined the relocation or resettlement program (Sarong, 2001).

An attempt to read and to interpret the election for East Timor people in the border area. There are two main points of the East Timor people. Firstly, since 1976 the East Timor people already integrated with the Republic of Indonesia as Indonesian citizen. Secondly, after the Referendum 1999, although they failed or lost in the election, they still felt as pure Indonesian citizen. The East Nusatenggara province in this case, should receive and to appreciate their nationality of Indonesia. More than that, East Timor and West Timor people are one ethnic and one brotherhood. Any further description is about identity transformation that underestimate their nationality of Indonesia. What should East Nusatenggara province do for East Timor people in the border area? The East Nusatenggara province had to add little more attention for strengthen their Indonesian. Leaders on the province can understand the East Timor people narration, then mix East Timor people with East Timor people in relocation or resettlement place.

Furthermore, to observe East Timor people in the border area like Tuapukan (Kupang), Naen, Oebkin,

Napan, Keun, Ponu (Nord Central Timor – TTU), Motaain, Atambua (Belu), Motamasin (Malaka), we impress that they still have emotional, traditional and culture of East Timor. Their collective memory on East Timor is still strong. They have strong perception and hope on Timor-Leste as the place of their ancestor. Therefore, everyone has responsibility to make them becoming Indonesia. This research is going to find solution and strategies to strengthen their nationality of Indonesia. Historical experience is related to the past and the future. Historical narration of East Timor refugees is collective memory that they told from one generation to other generation. As well as the national identity of Indonesia should be transmitted from one generation to the next generation, including East Timor people in the border area. We need a sustainable historical narration based on awareness, wisdom, and vision of Indonesian from this generation to the next generation.

The sustainability is a contemporary issue and properly description for continuing the national identity of Indonesia. The historical reflection here represented the East Timor refugees' hope and we all hope that they will become Indonesia again and again sustainably. It will enlighten and revivify the East Timor refugees in the border area. Then, the purpose of this research is to outline the sustainability of becoming Indonesia.

5 CONCLUSION

This study shows that to become Indonesian is still a problem for East Timorese people in the border area. The problems in the border area can be solved as follows; reducing violence done by themselves in the border area. Then, building and maintaining social relationship, both among them and the local communities. Furthermore, improving the economic life of border residents. The role of government both national government and the East Nusatenggara province is to hold cooperation in managing conflict, contributes the conducive conditions for the East Timor refugees and local community. It seems clear that we can make negotiations for solving the problems among them peacefully.

Today, East Timor people are living in the border area well in their relationship with local people. To make them becoming Indonesian, we need to respond and to reply their ill experience, to direct their perception, and to fulfil their hope. In an increasingly nationality of Indonesia, we should continuously strengthen good-neighborly and forwards looking policies of friendship and cooperation in the interest of

respective national development goals as well as the peace, progress and stability for our beloved country Indonesia. Sustainability thought about the history of East Timor refugees is largely history in the border area. It directs us to know the past, the present, and the future of East Timor refugees in becoming Indonesia.

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