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Local Leadership and Social Cohesion at Malaysia-Indonesia Border

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Abstract- Before establishing the concept of modern state, border communities have a common identity and culture - based social melieu they inherited. However, after the establishment of borders, collective identity has been divided into a number of national identity in relation to their respective nationalities. For communities in the border, political identity is the identity that is based on different political orientation. Thus, how the community at the frontiers of politically integrated into the national development? What political structure and power relations that bind social cohesion remote communities diperbatasan with national politic? To answer these questions, this study examines the local leadership and power relations in border communities and their role in bringing local communities in developing countries. Source data is through interviews with informants and survey at three locations namely Lubuk Antu, Kg. Mongkos and Teluk Melano is a village on the border of Sarawak (Malaysia) and West Kalimantan (Malaysia).

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I. INTRODUCTION

Borders refer to the political borders that characterize the sovereignty of nations on the frontier. Community at the border is a social grouping based on common history. For instance, most of the international border communities in Africa come from the same ethnic group (Flynn, 1997). The situation is also similar to the border community of Sarawak (Malaysia)-West Kalimantan (Indonesia). A community is based on a cultural frontier and collective identity since before the formation of the modern concept of state. This feature turns out not to be affected even after the formation of the nation-state based on the borders.

In terms of political space, they are separated but not cultural identity and family. Hence, this community seems to be very strong in terms of cultural identity. However, how are they related in terms of politics and governance in their respective nation-states as well as other communities far from the border? This paper aims to discuss aspects of local leadership and power relations in border communities and the role of local leadership in bringing the community into the national political development. Sources of data used in

this study are interviews with informants and survey at three locations in West Kalimantan border of Lubuk Antu, Kg. Mongkos and Teluk Melano. Overall, this study involved 263 respondents consisting of heads of households.

II. BORDER COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

The border is an imaginary line marking the power between two countries. International border zone serves as a claim of control over physical movement across borders and immigration document requirements. Borders also encourage countries to pursue legitimate activities depending on the regulations of their respective countries, as well as social acceptance of the communities involved (Ong Puay Liu, et al: 2012).

Border areas wherever they may be would represent the same community in terms of structural constraints and social transformation. This includes the international border, cross-border trade, migration and border conflicts. Examination of the political, cultural, and economic history of border communities will shape their perspective on the border, citizenship and community. Further, we can also learn more at the frontiers of identity construction process (Flynn (1997).

The biggest challenge in research on the frontiers is culture, the nature of which is homogenous based on sharing of history, multi- ethnicity and economically and politically binational (Alvarez 1995). Border communities think they have the right to move in their group despite being located in two different countries in terms of the nation state (Flynn 1997). Previous research has linked the Sarawak-Kalimantan border communities at the border markets like Serikin market has become a trans -state identity manifested through common history, kinship relations, customs, beliefs, linguistics and so on (Junaenah, et al : 2010). Frontier communities were not isolated from the dynamics of the market because they have been integrated into capitalism and extend to other social forms. Community ties in the Sarawak- Kalimantan border were built in terms of history, family, faith, culture and continuously strengthened. Although physically and socially frontier communities are far from the administrative center, Serikin market has become "trans -state identity" for traders from Borneo.

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Attachment relationships based on history and family has made the border communities in the countries very close and this is manifested in the Sarawak border communities in West Kalimantan. Thus, the attachment to their ethnic group in the country will keep their borders with the country's political and administrative authorities. Social cohesion may be the key to this border community politics and governance of their respective countries. This corresponds to social cohesion as a process linking micro-and macro-level phenomena affecting the attitudes and behavior of an individual (Friedkin 2004).

The study of social cohesion became popular among policymakers in the 1990s (Joseph Chan & Elaine Chan, 2006). Cultural, ethnic and the challenges of globalization, widen the divide between the rich and poor in the community. The social and political threat causes policy makers to take into account the turbulence and issues related to social cohesion that can affect governance. Social cohesion has a definition that is very subjective. However, it refers to the goals to be achieved by the community. It is also an ongoing process that can create unity in the community. In some situations, social cohesion is the solution to the political, democratic instability and intolerance (Joseph Chan & Elaine Chan, 2006). Social cohesion reflects the mindset of the society, which is expressed through certain behaviors. In particular, citizens are said to be attached to each other if there are three of the following criteria:

- a. they can trust, help and collaborate with other people in society
- b. they share a common identity or a sense of community, which comprises sense of belonging.
- c. subjective feelings in (a) and (b) above are embodied in the objective behavior of individuals (Chan & Chan, 2006: 289-290) .

According to Markus and Kirpitchenko (2007), social cohesion can be defined as sharing the same vision. Thus, social cohesion requires the universal aspirations of common or shared identity of each member. Social cohesion also reflect a community or group that share common goals and responsibilities and cooperation between members. Moreover, it is a continuous process and will not be stopped for the stability of society.

For communities living far from the political and administrative centres, social cohesion is an important agenda for policy makers. The delivery channel for government policies is through local leadership that is close to the people at the grassroots level.

III. LOCAL LEADERSHIP IN SARAWAK

The appointment of community leaders in Sarawak is enshrined in Article 140 of the Local Authorities Ordinance 1996. The article states that the *Yang DiPertua Negeri* (Chief Minister) shall appoint a

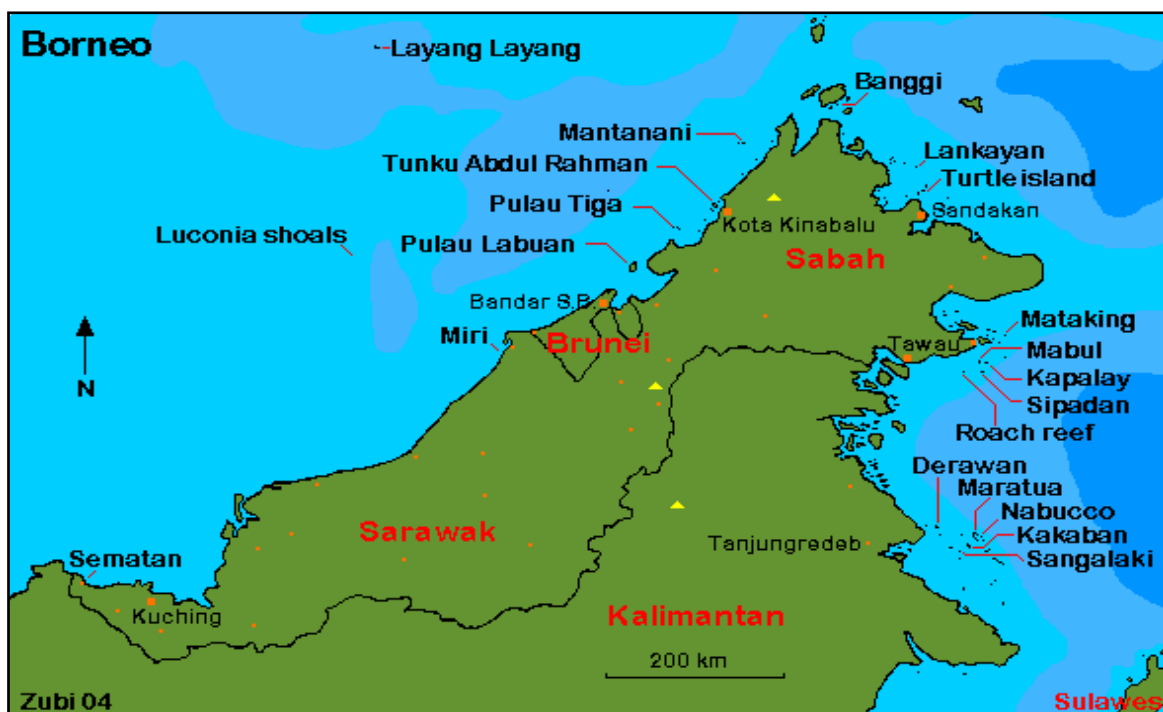
local authority to hold *Tuai Rumah* (Long House Chief), *Ketua Kampung* (village chief)- local level institution, and *Penghulu, Pemancha, Temenggong* (regional institution leaders) to help local authority which includes the power to perform services for the benefit of local residents. Article 140 does not specify in detail the responsibilities of each of these community leaders (Faisal S. Haziz 2012). *Penghulu, Temenggong* and *Pemancha* are institutions at the regional level or in the context of Sarawak in the division. Leadership of a political party is an institution of supra-regional level, while the *Tuai Rumah* and *Ketua kampung* is the most local level institutions. Leadership at the regional (Division) and local level has been around since before independence and supra- regional levels existed around the 1960's (Jayum A. Jawan 1994).

The services of the leaders of this society has been structured in accordance with the local administration that allows *Temenggong* to represent the community leaders at the division level, *Pemancha* the district and sub-district *Penghulu*. The highest level is the *Temenggong* representing the largest ethnic group in every part of Sarawak. The second is *Pemancha* representing the largest ethnic group in the district. Below the level of the local leadership the *Penghulu* is responsible for the welfare of each ethnic at the sub-district level and at the bottom is long longhouse chief, village heads and community chief.

The leaders of this community sometimes actively involved in politics, contesting elections and also as members of the State Legislative Assembly. At the border, local leadership is a key intermediate between border communities with the government, particularly the Office of the Resident and District Office. They are also part of the driving force for the realization of government policy to develop an area (Utusan Sarawak 26 September 2013). For communities living in the border, the important task of local leaders is to mobilize communities and politicians in the development of the country.

IV. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

For studying border communities and social cohesion, the research team took samples from community settings in Sarawak-West Kalimantan border. This paper presents the findings of the study at three locations, namely Kg. Teluk Melano, Kg. Mongkos and Lubuk Antu (Map 1).



Peta 1 : Map of Place of Study (Sarawak-Kalimantan Barat)

Among the three areas studied, Kg. Teluk Melano is the challenging destination to visit. The village which is located in the Lundu District has no road (lack of roads in the forest, time-consuming and need to cross the sea when the tide is low) except by boat which takes about two hours from the pier Sematan town, about two hours away from Kuching. This resulted in Kg. Teluk Melano being marginalized from the nearby town, namely Sematan Lundu. The villagers are mostly farmers cultivating oil palm and pepper. The village does not have the basic infrastructure of electricity, water and roads. The situation is quite different from Kg. Mongkos, located in the district of Serian where one does not have to go through a difficult journey. It is just 40 minutes from the town of Kuching Serian and take almost two hours. The village has basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity but still use generator and water from the hills. The average community here are farmers cultivating pepper and rice and stay at home longer. However, some of them already live in homes as a result of urbanization leading to home ownership by individuals.

Lubuk Antu is the most remote locations by road. The journey takes about five hours. Just as Kg. Mongkos, Lubuk Antu has good roads, electricity and water supply which is only rudimentary. Residents still rely on generators and water from the hills and the river. Communities here live in longhouses and plant upland rice, rubber and pepper. The distance between the villages and towns in Lubuk Antu only takes 15 to 20 minutes.

V. POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP OF LOCAL BORDER COMMUNITIES

Kg. Mongkos average population consists of ethnic Bidayuh, Telok Melano consists of Sambas Malay, and Iban ethnic dominated Lubok Antu. It is also common to neighboring Indonesia Kg. Mongkos / Kg. Segumun (Kalimantan) occupied by the Bidayuh, Teluk Melano / Kg. Temajuk (Kalimantan) Malay majority and Lubuk Antu / Nanga Badau (Kalimantan) mostly composed of ethnic Iban (Dayak). This proves that the border communities are derived from the same ethnic groups, having relationship and common identity though separated by political boundaries through the formation of Malaysia in 1963. For communities that are far from the central government, the most convenient and easy way is to find the village chief and headman of the house for the community living in the long houses because they are the closest people to solve the problems of the village. Problems that are reported are brought to the Headman or continue only complained to the district office and later Resident Office. Selection of *Tuai Rumah* the Village Chief is through meetings among villagers. But usually the son of a former village chief will be selected before the village chief or headman of the house except if the beneficiary refused. The job of a *Tuai Rumah* is informal in nature and quite hard to find a clear definition. But the most important thing is that of custom and religion. A *Tuai Rumah* is also the person responsible for performing the rituals associated with custom. *Tuai Rumah* and village heads

are also selected through a democratic process that is chosen and accepted by society. Authority *Tuai Rumah* and village heads are also linked to their personal qualities. A *Tuai Rumah* should have a deep knowledge of the customs and religion. In addition, he is a person who can understand the socio-economic problems of local residents. Anyway having a deep knowledge of custom does not necessarily qualify someone to be a leader because a leader must also have other features such as non-biased and some other skills (Jayum A Jawan 1994). For the community of Kg. Mongkos and Lubuk Antu, to be a community leader one must have features such as close with the community and knowing the community. Education is the third most important aspect. While the community of Teluk Melano assume successfully engaged community is a key feature, followed by religion and morality as well as close to the people. For Teluk Melano community a leader who can solve the problems of the village is important. Therefore, leaders must be people who have close relationships with community members and superiors. Several respondents who are polled consider Kg. Telok Melano ignored because there is no road that connects the town of Sematan from Teluk Melano. Until now they have many times requested that the village head built five bridges to enable them to communicate with nearby towns but to date the request is not fulfilled. For those who are leaders should be firm and know superiors to allow this problem to be resolved.

According to the respondents, job as a *Tuai Rumah* is not easy even though it is seen as informal. *Tuai Rumah* is a challenge especially when application for assistance is unsuccessful and the villagers also get angry. Among the applications that failed include water pipes and PPRT (Housing Project for the Hardcore Poor). The roof support also did not work because only eight pieces of roofs were given per house. However, government assistance, such as fertilizers are easy to obtain.

VI. POLITICS AND POWER RELATIONS

As a community living away from the administrative center, supporting the ruling party is essential to the survival and development through government aid. Overview of the villages showed that the location of the flag of the BN (Barisan Nasional-The ruling party) flew over the house pillars. Support the ruling party, it is important to get the help of the school children. One of the respondent said, they should support the government because the children can stay in the hostel for free and he is very grateful to the government. For the residents of Mongkos and Lubuk Antu, among other reasons they support the ruling party is seeking the assistance. However, the community of Teluk Melano, the main reason to support the ruling party so that people are not left out of the development.

The community is aware of infrastructure at Temajuk Village (West Kalimantan) is better than Kg. Teluk Melano, especially in terms of roads. Despite many complaints against political leaders in the area, but residents still feel the only party that formed the government alone can help them. This view is based on the experience of rural development in Peninsular Malaysia. According to the villagers, they cannot blame the government for political leaders to present the truth about the problems of the people in the House of Representatives. So the federal government does not know about this problem. Against this, the desire to help and effort to develop the village, the support of the ruling is necessary. According to them, who can undertake the development of the people, the party will be selected. The ethnic factor is not important as long as the candidate from the BN.

Despite numerous complaints from residents of the political leaders, but due to its dependence on the government, the ruling party support is so important. For example, residents of Kg. Teluk Melano had to spend RM300-RM600 a month to buy gasoline for the generator. The term "village trying to project" has been synonymous with the villagers. This was a project that was built did not last long because no maintenance is performed as solar installations, turbine fan, and hydropower projects have also suffered damage. Although there is dissatisfaction, but this border community still consider the government is still paying attention to the development of their village as the PPRT project, Project 1 AZAM and fertilizer plants. According to Abu Seman Jahwie which is Jemoreng assemblyman, as grassroots leaders, community leaders must be loyal to the government to boost local development efforts. Community leaders also are the "eyes and ears" of the government as their role is crucial in developing states (New Sarawak Tribune. [Http://www.UtusanSarawakonline.com](http://www.UtusanSarawakonline.com)) .

Table 1 : Issues Discussed when meeting leaders

	Kg Mongkos				Telok Melano				Lubok Antu			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Seek for assistance/ Help	99	84.6	18	15.4	16	24.6	49	75.4	63	86.3	10	13.7
Agricultural	34	30.4	78	69.6	7	10.8	58	89.2	20	27.4	53	72.6
Education	27	24.1	85	75.9	10	15.4	55	84.6	19	26.0	54	74.0
Other Issues	28	24.8	85	75.2	30	46.2	35	53.8	25	34.2	48	65.8

Table 1 shows the common issue discussed by the residents. Kg. Mongkos and Lubok Antu seek for assistance when they meet leaders, while the residents of Teluk Melano discussed other matters which is 46 per cent. For Kg. Teluk Melano 75 percent answered "no" in terms of seeking help meaning they do not meet the leaders to ask for help. Based on observations and interviews with villagers, projects in the village are not needed by the population. Among the projects are the distillation of salt water and free wifi. Their priority is the road that connects them with Sematan, Lundu town. People assume that the project is built to the popularity and profit only. After completion of the project is not maintained to such damaged propeller turbine and solar projects. Although the problem has complained to the attention of politicians and the district office, but no one was sent to repair the damage. It makes people frustrated and unmotivated to seek help again. Things like this are not only expressed by the population, but the village head himself. He has complained to the assemblyman and promised road will be completed by 2013. Unfortunately the project is not even running. The village chief also had this matter before the chief minister when he visits his marriage feast (village head). However this does not change. This is a manifestation of the frustration people against their leader. Usually every problem will be addressed to leaders such as *Tuai Rumah*, *Penghulu* and *Pemancha*. Political leaders only come once or twice each term elections. For residents of Teluk Melano, political leaders came to the village only once they are old even then. Based on the survey, 68 percent of respondents said the political leaders do not recognize them. The situation is different with the residents of Mongkos when 90 percent said they knew their area leaders assemblyman or MP as well as 82 percent of the population of Lubok Antu also gave the same answer.

In an effort to bring the community into the mainstream of political borders and nation-building, political leaders with community leaders should be more frequent reaching voters and residents in their area. This is to guarantee the bonds of social cohesion between communities living in remote border areas with structures and their governments at the state and federal. Otherwise this community will only be in their ethnic groups in the border either Malaysia or Indonesia

and will continue to be isolated from the political and the administration of their own country. So if not curbed national projects such as establishing a united Malaysian nation will fail, so does the slogan of 1 Malaysia and even national unity for the success of a nation. The spirit of social solidarity that arises when "a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and the horizontal interactions Among members of society as characterized by a set of attitudes and norm that's includes trust, a sense of belonging, and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioral manifestations (Joseph Chan & Elaine Chan 2006:639)."

Social cohesion is not only a national agenda but community leaders and political leaders should take the effort to create awareness to the people to get involved in local community development as well as active in voluntary organizations or politics. According to Elaine Joseph Chan & Chan (2006), the main feature is a network of social cohesion and social solidarity. Social Solidarity includes individual attitudes and structural factors including sense of community, equality and opportunity in society, recognition of the values of pluralism and the existence of public and private organizations which serve as a bridge to social differences. Participation in voluntary organizations or political parties for the three locations studied is still low. In Kg. Mongkos, 66 percent of the population said they had not been involved in voluntary organizations or political parties, while Lubok Antu 86 per cent and 75 per cent of Teluk Melano. However, although many do not engage, they will vote in each election. Reasons given for not engaging is, no time, no interest, not given the opportunity and also answered no experience. For the majority of respondents who participated, the only participation of the village only.

Despite many complaints against the leaders and government, the marginalization compels them to continue to rely on the government. Local leadership and power relations are reciprocal in nature or in the form of pseudo because the support is only at the grassroots level to get assistance for survival. Elements of reciprocity is manifested as in the following passage;

"Since becoming BN representatives for one term in Lubok Antu, many mega projects have been implemented in Lubok Antu such as road projects of Ulu Skrang, Lubok Subong to Sekunyit, new water

treatment plant at Lubok Antu Immigration Complex, Customs, Quarantine and Safety (ICQS) in the border of Kalimantan-Sarawak, Indonesia, three primary schools, Lubok Antu police station, electricity and water supply in rural longhouses around Lubok Antu".

This situation has made the people to continue supporting the ruling party and the government due to the already existing development projects as well as hoping for another project in the future. This character of pseudo support is based on reciprocal relationship between the community and political leaders and the government. The political leaders want support, while the residents hope for help. Despite this capacity, border communities have become involve in politics and administration of the country through their participation in politics, depending on the leaders and government, networking / social solidarity among them and lastly is the sense of ownership towards the community that they are part of the members. Such relationship will integrate different communities in terms of status, wealth and power within the local autonomous polity and relating the society with the state institutions through political competition and economy (Michie 1981).

VII. CONCLUSION

Border communities often have attachment history, family as well as economic relations with each other. With the formation of Malaysia in 1963 Malay community (Teluk Melano / Kg. Temajuk, West Kalimantan), Iban (Lubok Antu / Nanga Badau, West Kalimantan) and Bidayuh (Kg. Mongkos / Kg. Segumun, Kalimantan Barat) was divided into three different nations. But this geographical separation did not separate the already existing relationship. The border communities in Lubok Antu, Kg. Mongkos and Teluk Melano are aware that they are in two different countries with a different political identity. In terms of development, they still look up to the state and federal governments. The isolated situation which rural communities find themselves is not an issue in border communities but it is a common issue to communities living far from the city center. Social cohesion is an important issue in bringing the community into the mainstream of development whether they live in border areas or vice versa. Community leaders and political leaders must take primary responsibility for linking these communities with the political, economic and overall policy which is hoped to be brought by the government to the people.

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