



BETWEEN CULTURAL AND POLITICAL IDENTITIES : STATE AND SOCIETY IN THE MAKING ENGGANO, AN OUTER ISLAND IN INDONESIA

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ENGGANO ISLAND





SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES OF ENGGANESE





BACKGROUND

- Enggano occupied a strategic position in the past. The Dutch used Enggano for cultivating coconuts and raising pigs and cows; they also sought to use it to grow pepper (Modigliani, 1894). Dua Island (a small island near Enggano) was used as a trading post by the Dutch, becoming such a major economic center that it was named the "Second Batavia". When the Empire of Japan occupied Indonesia between 1942 and 1945, Enggano was a major basis of maritime defense, and several Japanese pill boxes can still be found on its coast. In 1995, the New Order government developed plans to transform Enggano into a center of gambling and hunting for Indonesia's upper class; these plans ultimately fell through when the regime collapsed.
- This identity construction has involved diverse actors, agents, and structures, all of which have influenced the island's people at different times. The lengthy identity contestation process experienced by the people of Enggano has occurred owing to the influence of new values, such as the entry of religion, trade, modernization, and development. Diverse actors were involved in the process, including the Portuguese, English, Dutch, Japanese, and Indonesians. The first of these were the foreign merchants who arrived in Enggano to trade transferred new knowledge to the local people such as introduced metal, clothes and new religion.



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- Through their interactions with these foreign merchants, the indigenous population of Enggano transformed from a closed society into an open one. Before foreign merchants came to Enggano, the Engganese lived in the middle of forest, war all the time, and killed each other who disturbed their border areas. Because of that, the number of Engganese being decline and some of tribes had gone. At the same time, the migrants came to explore this Island. The first meeting between Engganese and Portuguese people made some of Portuguese people were killed by Engganese because they assumed that these foreign people were devil which was tall, white, and physically different with them. Further influences came when colonial governments (Portuguese, Dutch, Japanese, and Indonesian) implemented socio-cultural transformations (especially through missionaries and transmigration policies), thereby changing the traditional settlements, religion, and tolerance. Apart from these historical encounters, more recently, people of various ethnic backgrounds have migrated to Enggano from throughout Indonesia in the 20th century, thereby influencing the cultural identity of Engganese.



IDENTITIES OF ENGGANESE

- Enggano's identity has been constructed by various factors, such as past experiences, collective memories, pressure from government policies, and the influx of new people and values. On the one hand, the people of Enggano maintain local wisdom, traditions, and customs derived from the experiences of their ancestors; on the other hand, these values must be adjusted to various state interests. Government regulations and policies have increasingly threatened the existence and identity of tribal communities. As such, Enggano is a site of contestation, with the people of Enggano asserting their cultural identity while the state promotes its brand of nationalism. Being isolated does not mean being outside the reach of state regulations and interests (which tend to ignore local interests).
- There are dual leadership practices have ensued, with state recognized administrative leaders such as *Camat*, village heads (*Kepala Desa*), and apparatuses coexisting with locally-chosen community leaders (such as tribal chiefs, or *Pabuki*), who are capable of understanding Enggano customs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



- ~~This study not only investigates the rejection and acceptance of change, but questions how these significant changes~~ have been addressed by the Enggano people and how they have utilized these changes for their own betterment. In other words, this study looks at how contestation between local cultural authority and national political authority takes place in Enggano. As such, this study seeks to answer three questions:
 1. What are the influences of different outside cultures, religions, economic and political systems on the lives and identities of the tribal people of Enggano?
 2. How does the state transform social order and identity of Enggano? What political instruments are used by the state to achieve its interests and exercise political power at the local level in Enggano?
 3. How do the people of Enggano respond to and accommodate modernization and state intervention in making their tribal identity?



RESEARCH METHODS

1. Fieldwork, both qualitative observations and in-depth interviews and surveys with questionnaires, will be the main foundation of this study. A series of intensive interviews will be conducted with local residents and traditional (informal) leaders, migrants and (formal) government leaders. Local leaders, both tribal leaders (*pabuki*) and traditional leaders, will be interviewed regarding the origin and formation of Enggano's cultural identity. In-depth interviews will also be conducted with migrants to identify their motivation for coming as well as their contribution to the formation of the current Enggano identity.

- Interviews with religious leaders will also be conducted, considering that Christianity and Islam were introduced to the island in the 19th century.
- Government officials at the island, regency, and provincial level will be interviewed in depth. Focus group discussions will also be conducted to deal with relevant issues. Government apparatuses (sub-district heads, village heads and village officials) are important actors in reconstructing Enggano identity through state policies. At the same time, these policies and their influence on the community are evaluated using a local perspective.



2. Historical documents, including books written by traditional leaders in Enggano (such as those of the *Himpunan Hukum Adat Istiadat dan Seni Budaya Asli Pulau Enggano* [Traditional Law, Art, and Culture of Enggano Island Association], which delineates the traditional laws of the indigenous people), Italian-, Dutch-, and English-language records from historical expeditions to the island, and previous studies (such as Ekorusyono's article on Enggano culture) will be employed in addition to the living oral history from the people of Enggano.



THANK YOU

PLEASE GIVE ME COMMENTS

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