

Siladang Women and Regional Head Election in Mandailing Natal District, Indonesia

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Abstract: *Perempuan Siladang is an ethnic minority that dwells in Mandailing Godang (Gross Mandailing) in the designation of the Dutch colonial government. This ethnicity has a patrilineal kinship system. The area is now in Mandailing Natal District and precisely in the present Panyabungan sub-district. As a minority the Siladang people tend to be retarded. Compared to neighboring ethnic groups which have been more advanced since the colonial era. Siladang people also did not escape the dynamics of local politics in Mandailing Natal District, their most obvious involvement can be seen when regional elections took place and it was known that their level of understanding of democracy was still very low. Their motives in making choices and voting are still laden with interests in the form of direct material rewards and indirectly strengthened in return. It is known that there is freedom in determining the choice and voting for the pairs of regional head candidates by Siladang women even though there is a dynamic process with other family members in the election process.*

Keywords: *Siladang woman; democracy; minority; Mandailing; election; rewards, options*

I. Introduction

Siladang ethnicity, and outsiders calling it Siladang people are ethnic minorities in Mandailing Natal district. Mandailing Natal Regency itself is inhabited by four genuine ethnicities namely the ethnic Mandailing, Pasisir, Lubu and Ulu (Nasution: 2004:7). Not many know of the existence of this ethnicity, although their existence has been recorded in several literature, but their existence is mentioned only in passing. In the literature inherited by the Dutch colonial government, the Siladang people are known as Lubu people (Reid: 2011:65).

Lubu people are said to live nomadic and spread in the Mandailing region, Padang Lawas to the border of West Sumatra. However, their existence is now only found in two villages in the Mandailing Natal district, precisely in the villages of Aek Banir and Sipapaga (Nasution: 2002:62). Whereas those living on the border of the provinces of North Sumatra and West Sumatra, despite having similarities and confessions from the Siladang people as people from the same ancestor are referred to as the Ulu people or in the designation of the Mandailing people mentioned as "*alak Muarasipongi*" or *Muarasipongi* people (Reid:2011: 43). Whereas Fahmi stated that, "Siladang people originally came from India, namely slaves brought by Indians who had lived in Mandailing, the slaves were placed by them at Tor Sihite, then they left the slaves due to pressure from the outside and the slaves who lived were working, so that the origin of the title Siladang (Fahmi 1988:44-45). Furthermore, it was said, "the Siladang people were former Paderi soldiers who were knocked out and fled to remote forests. (Fahmi:1988:41-42). Whereas the Ministry of Education and Culture's source in 1989 said that the Siladang people were, "one of the small ethnic groups is somewhat alienated both physically and culturally in the depths of the South Tapanuli district, North Sumatra Province, they live as shifting cultivators around Sihite Hill, and rarely associate with the surrounding community (Hidayah: 1997:242). Whereas Dutch colonial sources also

obtained information about the existence of the Siladang people like the following, "ethnic Lubu or Siladang people have historically been found in Dutch colonial literature," *adatrechtsbundels* "serie A no 25 (March 1916-1 May 1919) about the Siladang community called Lubu and Ulu in afdeeling Mandailing (Residentie Tapanoeli). Whereas other sources of J. Kremer's report in 1912 in de Loeboes in Mandailing stated that Lubu people who were residents of the present Siladang, used to inhabit eleven settlements covering the area of Padang Lawas and Mandailing. At the time of the data collection in 1891 the number of Loebo people was 2033 (Syarfina, Silvana, T.S:2010:3).

II. Review of Literature

Siladang people as an ethnic group can be based on the following Koentjaraningrat statement, namely: 1) Language, 2) Knowledge System, 3) Social organization, 4). Living equipment and technology systems, 5) Living livelihood systems. 6) Religious systems. 7) Art (Koentjaraningrat:1990:230). As delivered by Koentjaraningrat these elements are seen from their lives as described below, they farm and hunt and gather forest products (buraden).

Even now the characteristics of life from concocting these forest products still survive. Then as a confirmation by basing on Barth's (1998: 11), ethnic groups are culture and language, it can be said that Barth's statement is very relevant to asserting the Siladang people as an ethnic group because Siladang Language is the single most explicit marker of the existence of identity they. And the most prominent of them can be seen in their livelihood system is utilizing the Enau tree (Aren) where the sap is the main commodity of their production. Enau trees that are tapped are Enau trees that grow wild and natural, because they grow not because they are bred and seeded. Until now the Siladang ethnic group is an ethnic group that tends to be closed, especially if foreigners try to trace their identity and community. This closeness even applies to their closest neighboring ethnic group, the Mandailing people. To assert their existence as an ethnic group can be referred to in the statement of Marvin Harris, that an ethnic group will be able to see the existence of three subsystems in culture, namely: (1) environmental engineering subsystem, namely how humans adapt to the environment, obtain food, mobilize resources owned, using tools, and how to distribute the items; (2) ideological (ideological) subsystems include beliefs, values, myths, legends, art, music, dances, and all aesthetic components of culture; (3) and, the socio-political subsystem (sociopolitical) that sees the essence of the relationship between individuals from one culture to individuals from another culture or the relationship between one individual and another individual in a particular culture (Kessler in Laksono:2000:9).

There is one of their amazing characteristics which is also an ingredient of ridicule for their neighboring ethnic groups. Namely the presence of Siladang women who are adept at climbing trees, especially the Enau tree. But there are actually missed meanings from their neighboring ethnicity, the condition is actually a picture of how vital the role of Siladang women is in their families in earning a living. In general, Siladang women are Enau tappers, although men also do it, women are the main actors because men still have other alternative jobs and the habit of relaxing in coffee shops. In general, due to the low level of education, Siladang men usually do manual labor outside their community. The economic crush can be said to wrap around the entire Siladang family. This condition is mainly felt by women who in addition to playing a role in earning a living are also as housewives who are responsible for raising children (educators) in their daily lives (Laksono:2000:18). To meet the daily

needs of Siladang women, they have to fight hard because there are no rice fields in Siladang. This economic squeeze continues to get harder because of the limited land that can be cultivated. Siladang families have traditionally relied on livelihoods by becoming tapers of sap on Enau trees that grow wild around their settlements. In the era of regional autonomy, Siladang women were also not spared from the hustle and bustle of carrying out regional elections with all their dynamics, the election which was dominated by the Mandailing ethnic group had to inevitably involve them as well. Moreover, the existence of their settlements is in the administration of the Panyabungan subdistrict, which is the capital of the Mandailing Natal district. The issue of dominance presented above can be described to explain the relationship and the conditions between the center and the periphery. This includes the issue of marginality which is an important concern in the discussion of colonial, racial, class and gender "(Tsing:1998:8)

Their existence as ethnic minorities is a special attraction for the success team of the regional head candidates, because it is expected that the ethnic voice can be achieved unanimously. Their residential areas cannot be separated from the target of cultivating the success teams and administrators of political parties, campaign attributes, various promises offered, visits of candidate pairs, offers of material (money), facilities needed by the community to come to them. To find out the attitudes and involvement of Siladang women in regional head elections in Mandailing Natal district will be reviewed through the theory of political participation as presented by Budiarto (2007:367) below.

"Political participation is the activity of a group of people to actively participate in political life, among others by choosing a state leader, directly or indirectly, influencing government action (public policy), this includes actions such as voting in general elections, attending public meetings, holding relations (contacting) or lobbying with government officials or members of parliament, becoming members of the party or one of the social movements with direct action and so on ".

To strengthen the theory of political participation above in looking at the involvement of Siladang women in regional head elections, the Theory of Social Exchange will be presented to see the communication interactions of Siladang women. Because basically political interaction is a matter of communication. Social exchange theory generally assumes that the basic form of social relations is assumed to be a trade transaction, where people relate to other people because they expect something to meet their needs. Social exchange theory examines a person's contribution in a relationship affecting the contribution of others. By considering the consequences, especially of the rewards obtained and efforts that have been made, people will decide to stay in the relationship or leave it (Sasa Djuarsa:1993:81).

III. Discussion

When Siladang was invited to discuss regional head elections or PILKADA with a straightforward language calling it an expression, *mamili Bupati* (District Head Election), they delivered it in Mandailing language not in Siladang, their mother tongue. Although it is known among themselves, the language they use is Siladang language as a daily language. Where is the language that is the one that confirms their only identity now. They use the ethnic language of their neighbors where it applies because of their ability to use the ethnic language of their neighbors well. The use of neighboring ethnic languages is carried out as a

form of adaptation to their living environment, where almost all their life affairs are related to power dominated by Mandailing people.

But it is known that the level of understanding of Siladang women towards the regional head elections at Mandailing Natal is very minimal. For example, they did not understand the word and meaning of democracy and the democratic process itself. They are also not very concerned about the results of the political process that took place. But in reality they inevitably have to be involved, because people from outside want their voices. But in their minds, women, Siladang, the issue of regional head elections is limited to choosing pairs of regional head candidates only, or in their designation, once again *"mamili Bupati"* (electing the Regent and Deputy Regent). They did not realize that the implementation of regional head elections was actually not merely a matter of determining the choice of candidates for regional head and deputy regional head and then choosing it. This means that there is a superficial understanding in understanding the political process at the local level which actually has implications for their lives directly.

Dominant in their minds the issue of regional head elections is an opportunity that must be utilized as well as possible, for them regional head elections are a five-year moment to get instant material benefits. This can be seen from their conversations and expressions around the regional head elections as follows below, *"um na on maia jami Ucok dabo i, habis I nalupa malai i"*, this expression means we will only get this alone, just this once and after that they will forget. From the meaning of the phrase implicitly is the fruit of disappointment with the behavior of politicians who have broken promises so far that there is a statement that they must get rewards in the form of material directly.

In fact, the expression actually confirms that politicians and regional heads who win the contestation, namely the elected Regent and Deputy Regent will not necessarily bring changes to their territory, in the sense that development may be overlooked or not touch their territory at all. That is, there are doubts about commitment. Delivered in the programs offered. So that the initial supply and demand, bills and rewards are the common attitudes that they show to members of the campaign team, or individuals who are considered involved and as sympathizers of one of the contestants or representatives of supporting political parties from the contestants in the regional head elections.

In addition to the above expressions as well as the usual phrases they say, *"sajia i si"* this expression means how much the money is for my vote, this statement will appear to answer the message *"ulang lupa da"* meaning not to forget yes and intended as a message for choose the candidate pairs of regional heads supported by individuals or success teams from each contestant. The expressions in the form of messages and responses from the above conversations are generally conveyed in an atmosphere of jokes but have very serious meaning and are truly expected by the woman.

Then the following phrase *"adong do, sajia"*, this question from Siladang woman is a short question addressed to the members of the success team from the pairs of candidates for the regional head who competed, the meaning of the question is, is there money or compensation and how much is the reward. Even the conversation will often lead to rumors or rumors about the amount of money offered by pairs of candidates for the regional head based on rumors referred from other regions or other villages.

Likewise with this question, *"ma adong naro calon i"*, this conversation means that there have been pairs of candidates for regional heads who came to visit their village, but actually the visit of the candidate pairs of regional heads is not something they should expect.

a regional head candidate or one of these pairs, namely a candidate for Regent or candidate for Deputy Regent is a pride and at the same time an opportunity.

This opportunity is an opportunity to request development facilities if elected later or at least the opportunity to request facilities that can be fulfilled in the short term. These short-term assistance can be in the form of tools for community needs. In addition, the visit is also an arena for the village elites to show their functional exclusivity in the Siladang community. Because visits from candidates involved or representatives of candidates sent in the middle of their communities will be held in the form of meetings with traditional rituals markobar (trial) and at the same time a banquet. Where at that meeting the wishes or requests are conveyed by representatives from both parties.

But actually the meaning of the phrase is more meaningful is there a success team that comes to make a commitment, or offer a promise in the form of material rewards that will be given to them. This means that direct rewards directed at individuals are the most important element they actually expect.

It is also known that they are Siladang women who are not easy to be convinced to vote or vote against one of the pairs of candidates for regional heads who also participate in the contest. After tracing the condition takes place because the motive or motivation in choosing or giving a voice is based on the motive or hope to get rewards in the form of material and directed directly to the woman who owns the voice. Then they will be more determined to give their votes if the regional head candidates have provided assistance material also turns out to contribute or provide direct or short-term material assistance to their community.

Even the success of getting rewards in the form of material directly from the success team of the competing regional head candidates is an encouraging thing and stimulates the existence of competition in the midst of Siladang woman owners. The competition is to get higher amounts of rewards. There is an interesting thing about the communication process between Siladang women and the campaign teams from the regional head contestants, namely the communication relationship between Siladang women and the success team based on hope and reciprocity. The above conditions illustrate that Siladang women will continue to maintain relationships while the expectation of rewards from successful teams still has a chance to be obtained.

As an ethnic group with a paternalistic system, it was also found that the position of Siladang women in the midst of their relatives or kinships in terms of dropping their votes or voting for the Bupati and Deputy Regent candidates in regional elections had the freedom to make choices. However, there is still an exchange of information obtained in the midst of their communities as well as information exchange among relatives, especially from the Batih family (core). The information exchanged and discussed is about the background of the pairs of regional heads who have contested, can be clans, occupations or professions, the nominees 'nomads, the candidates' ancestors, the origins of their home villages and especially the level of economic stability of the couple.

Then there are also influences from land owners and gardens that are relatively large and Mandailing ethnic to them due to the social assistance they provide to the Siladang people, so that even though there are offers from several different politicians to provide compensation, the Siladang People will be relatively willing to choose from the landlord.

IV. Conclusion

Siladang Women's Political Participation in the event of a democratic party at the local level, namely in the event of the regional head election, especially the election of the Regent and Deputy Regent, were found to be actively involved or participating in the election. But the active participation was found because of the motives and expectations to get rewards in the form of material in the short term. That is the reward that is directly directed at themselves personally.

In addition, it was also found that the level of understanding of Siladang women towards democracy in general was still very minimal, even their understanding of the democratic party at the local level, namely the regional head election event was also very superficial, where their level of understanding only revolved around voting questions to candidates candidates who participate in the contest. They do not have a deeper understanding that regional head elections will actually have a direct or indirect impact on them and their communities (ethnic Siladang)

Then it was known in the event that the election of the regional head of the presence of Siladang women in the midst of his kinship system was found to have freedom in making political choices during the regional head elections in Mandailing Natal district. It was found that in their kinship system there was no intervention or dominance of the voices of male relatives against women, nor was it found a meeting or density of members of relatives in determining family political choices. So that there is no problem when there are different choices in the family, sometimes even to maintain an emotional relationship between relatives planned to distribute the vote by choosing different candidates. Even in the Batih family (core) there is also no strict rule that women's voices are determined by the head of the family.

The above conditions took place apart from the low level of understanding of democracy due to the very lack of political education from political parties and the government, coupled with the presence of Siladang's apathy towards political issues due to disappointment with politicians who were considered to forget their constituents after successfully winning the contest. This situation was further aggravated by the difficult economic conditions of the Siladang families, where those who felt the most difficulties were those who also held the status of housewives at the same time. So the temptation to engage in political transactions is very tempting in such a political situation.

Because of that, it is deemed necessary for serious efforts from government officials in Mandailing Natal District and non-governmental institutions to conduct political education on Siladang women in order to have an increased understanding of democracy, healthy political participation, the urgency of regional elections with all their implications for the lives of their communities (Siladang people).

In addition, it is expected that especially political parties in Mandailing Natal Regency should make internal improvements so that the functions of political parties actually play a role for good democracy. Then it is also hoped that they will actively participate in seeking to improve the quality of Siladang women in understanding and using their political rights in regional head elections.

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