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Cross Border Communication of Community: Case Studies in Napan (Indonesia) and Bobometo (Timor Leste)



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ABSTRACT

Communities living in the border areas of Indonesia (North Central Timor District, East Nusa Tenggara Province) and Timor Leste (District Oecusse) have emotional ties to each other. Therefore, social interaction among them to organize the space of togetherness in their daily lives is quite intensive. Emotional ties between the two societies differ in this country encourage them to build communication in an illegal way and even carry out economic transactions on unofficial channels. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the experience of cross-border communication between the Indonesian-Timor Lestean border community and to analyze the motives for interacting in their daily lives both through official and illegal ways. This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods. Data collection methods are carried out through in-depth interviews, involved observations, and document studies. While the data analysis technique uses the six-step model proposed by Creswell. The results of the study revealed that the experience of cross-border communication from the people of Indonesia-Timor Leste especially in Napan and Bobometo originated from the belief in the presence of shared traditional houses that were believed to be a source of life for both. Cross-border communication motives between the Indonesian-Timor Lestean border community include relations of blood relations, customary agreements, and the existence of cross-breeding, preserving peace, being an example for other borders, and facilitating border business.

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of border areas between countries is always colored by various upheavals; the national borders are always a complicated problem. Since the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, especially geographical border problems have become problems with obstacles that are not easily resolved (Holthouse & Grenfell, 2008: 29), including the problem of development inequality has the potential to create social jealousy among the people.¹ The results of Pamungkas's study (2015: 161); that illegal activity such as illegal trade and smuggling transactions often coloring the routines of border communities due to the limitations of their economic life.² The same relative conditions were also found in the Indonesian-Timor Leste border communities precisely in Napan (Timor Tengah Utara, Indonesia) and their neighboring villages in Bobometo (Oecusi, Timor Leste).



Figure 1. The location of border communities in Napan and Bobometo

The preliminary study found the fact that differences due to citizenship identity did not undermine people's desires in these two regions to build intensive communication. As the results of a preliminary interview with the traditional leader in Napan, Martinus Taeki (30/07/2017); "We, the community of Napan and Bobometo have had traditional ties since time immemorial. So, if the state of Indonesia and Timor Leste wants to separate, we will not and cannot separate. We have different countries but we are one, we are the people of Timor, we are the people of *Ub Meto*. We uphold our customary agreements, *O mata mese, hun nakaf mese. Mu, it atoni nah nabua neum na bua*. That is, we and the people of Oecusi agree, we have one grass and one spring. We are brothers".

Therefore, the results of the Robot study state that the emotional ties as acknowledged by the local leader are the basis for the Indonesian-East Timorese border community in the Oecusi region to communicate intensively with residents in the Wini region, Timor Tengah Utara, Indonesia. In fact, Robot (2010: 64) asserted that the emotional ties between the people of Oecusi and Timor Tengah Utara encouraged them to establish communication illegally and even carry out economic transactions on unofficial routes. Even though you have a brotherly bond, the 'border' needs to be managed properly.³

This difference of the "sense of border" is suspected to have always been a contributing factor to the emergence of a lack of interaction between community members along the border. Where's estrangement, in turn, has the potential to create conflicts and/or disputes along the border regions of different countries. On the other hand, the interaction between the two residents is often carried out through informal channels. Robot (2010: 4)³ also confirms the existence of illegal transactions between border communities. Therefore, this article is focused on mapping and analyzing communication experiences across the borders of the Indonesia-Timor Leste border community and revealing the motives for interacting in their daily lives both through official and illegal channels.

2. SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY

George Herbert Mead - was the main initiator of symbolic interactionism movement – said there are three main concepts regarding symbolic interaction developed and flowed in his book “Mind, Self, and Society” (1934), which later became the main reference to the birth of the theory of symbolic interaction. These categories are considered to be different variants of the same general process called social action (Littlejohn & Foss, 2014: 232).⁴ Mead's ideas were then further developed by Herbert Blumer. Conclusion Blumer rests on three main premises, namely: (1) humans basically act on the basis of their expectations of something they encounter in their daily lives; (2) the meaning arises or is obtained from the results of the social interaction he does with others; and (3) the meanings are modified through the process of interpretation during the process of social interaction (Blumer, 1986: 2).⁵

The level of human social interaction in Blumer's view is divided into two major groups, namely: symbolic interactions and non-symbolic interactions. Non-symbolic interactions occur when someone responds directly to the actions of others without giving meaning to the action. Conversely, if the actions of others are given an interpretation or meaning then it is

included in the category of symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1986: 8).⁵ Thus it is clear that the essence of symbolic interaction is a process of communication and exchange of symbols that are interpreted or given meaning. In this context, symbols are the basic essence of symbolic interaction. The symbolic interaction theory in Blumer's view is a reference framework in understanding how interactions between one human and another together create a symbolic world based on the meaning they give, which in turn forms the symbol of human action.

1. Furthermore, Ritzer (2010: 369) presents the basic principles of symbolic interaction theory as follows: Humans are not like lower animals. He is blessed with his ability to think.
2. The ability to think is formed because of social interaction between humans with one another.
3. In these social interactions, individuals learn the meanings and symbols that enable them to use these thinking skills.
4. Meanings and symbols allow people to take action (human action) and interactions that are characteristic of humans in general.
5. People are able to modify or change the meanings and symbols they use in actions and interactions based on their interpretations of the situation they face.
6. People are able to make these modifications and changes because of their ability to interact with themselves, which allows them to examine the stages of action, assess relative advantages and disadvantages, and then choose one of them.
7. This pattern of actions and interactions will in turn form groups and communities.⁶

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The method of this research is phenomenology. As a qualitative research method, phenomenology in Schutz's view examines the ways in which members of society in structuring and reshaping their daily lives (Holstein & Gubrium, 2009: 336).⁷ Furthermore, Husserl (Kersten, 1989: 21) suggests that phenomenology aims to know the experience of the world or the reality of others that they experience directly (experience of realities).⁸

Data collection in this study was conducted using in-depth interviewing techniques, focus group discussions (FGD), and participatory observation. In-depth interviews with informants

were carried out with snowball techniques taking into account the diversity of occupations, age, position in society, and gender. Group discussions were conducted twice at community representatives. The results of the study were described as naturally as possible according to the perspective of the research subjects to maintain the authenticity of this study.

Data analysis, according to Creswell (2013: 276-283), can be done through six steps. *First*, process and prepare data for analysis. At this stage, all data obtained in the field are recorded and outlined in the form of interview transcripts. *Second*, read the entire data. At this stage, the researcher writes general ideas from the informants to find out the depth of information that is available. *Third*, analyze in more detail through coding. Coding is based on research topics. *Fourth*, create a theme based on the results of categorization according to the research objectives. *Fifth*, present reports in the form of qualitative descriptions/narratives. *Sixth*, interpret or interpret data that is already available. Data collection is done using the technique of in-depth interviews and participatory observation. Informants in this study were people who actively used television every day.⁹

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. EXPERIENCE IN COMMUNICATING CROSS BORDER

Carey (2009: 19) asserts communication is a symbolic process where the reality of human life is produced, organized, repaired and transformed.¹⁰ In the context of cross-border communication, the communication created between the border communities of Indonesia and Timor Leste is a symbolic reality filled with the construction of meaning. The following is presented regarding the cross border communication experience in Napan (Timor Tengah Utara, Indonesia) and Bobometo (Oecusi, Timor Leste).

Traditional House: Source of Life and Place of Consultation

The existence of traditional houses for border communities in both villages has a very vital role. They position traditional houses as a source of life and a knot that can unite them. As stated by one of the informants who are also youth leaders in the following Napan Village: *"For us, we call this traditional house a hit ta monik. That is the origin of life. Without traditional houses, we are like people without homes. Through traditional houses, we can gather and hold meetings. Whatever the problem is faced, it will be completed when entering*

a traditional house. In fact, if we want to ask for a blessing, we will do it all in a traditional house (Bonifacio Bobo, 07/29/2018).

The same thing was also conveyed by one of the traditional leaders from Bobometo, O execution, Fransisko Bata. According to him, traditional houses are considered as a communication node between residents of Napan and Bobometo. *"The traditional house for us, the Dawan people, is a toet of oetene manikin. He is the place to ask for blessings. If the straight meaning is, the traditional house is the place to request cold water. Understanding cold water, in this case, is a blessing. Whatever business in the world as long as it is still alive, the center will be in a traditional house "(Fransisko Bata, 03/08/2018).*

Uniquely, the position of this traditional house is not only in their respective regions but also outside the territory of the country. For example, the Napan communities besides having a traditional house in the village, also have a traditional house in Boboeto village, Timor Leste. On the contrary, the Bobometo communities also have traditional houses in Napan. From the conversation of several informants, it was clear how the existence of traditional houses became a binder of the communication between different countries, Napan and Bobometo. Entering traditional houses jointly disbursed and increased the intensity of communication between the border communities of Indonesia - Timor Leste. The similarity of traditional houses between the two different peoples of the country gave birth to a feeling of belonging to the culture. American cultural psychologist Edward Stewart (2001) refers to it as a "feeling edge of culture". He gave birth to an emotional bond between them (Lull, 2007: 35).¹¹

Family Gathering in the Border Market

In addition to traditional houses, the quality of cross-border communication between the communities of Napan and Bobometo villages occurred in the border market, that market was an area of family gathering. The market, which is opened once a month to be exact every Friday in the last week of each month in addition to being a place to buy and sell goods between the Napan and Bobometo communities, is also used as a momentum to establish mutual missed meetings between them. The results of interviews with informants revealed that the border market is one of the most awaited moments of the border community in addition to other ritual meetings such as when holding a traditional party, and others. On each market day, the informants all claimed to be involved in building promises with each family both in Napan and in Bobometo to meet. Agreements are generally made by telephone. For

the effectiveness of communicating using this telephone media, these two different countries use two sim cards, namely Telkomsel (telephone company - Indonesia) and Telemor (telephone company - Timor Leste).

As expressed by one of the Napan communities leaders who is also a village development cadre, Gregorius Siki follows: *"Every month we meet at Pasar Batas. But before we made an appointment first, if there are important things we want to talk about together. We call them using Telemor numbers, Timor Leste has a number. Later we can get another family to meet each other. It's crowded because every house has food. Next to the [Oecusi] also brought them food. When we get to the market, we gather food together and eat it all. After that, we will just tell, ta euk family, the name "(Gregorius Siki, 07/28/2018).*

What was conveyed by the informant from Napan, was also justified by the Bobometo communities? One of the high school teachers in Bobometo, Kanisius Elu, said, *"Yes, this boundary market is an opportunity for us to improve brotherly relations after 1999. We are close to the family, meet miss while harvesting [eating betel nuts together]" (02/08 / 2018).* Missing meetings conducted at this border market are essentially not just a monthly ritual of the Napan and Bobometo communities. The intensity of communication created through this missed meeting momentum can be seen as a way of constructing their cultural ties and emotional closeness that are very meaningful, as explained Carey (2009: 15), that the highest manifestation of communication is not determined by the power of communication transmission but is determined by meaningful construction of the cultural world which can be seen in the form of action.¹⁰

4.2. Cross Border Interaction Motives

As stated in the introductory section, the cross-border interaction between the communities of Napan and Bobometo villages took place and took place intensively. This interaction did not only occur through official channels required by the governments of the two countries but also through informal channels. Therefore, the following section presents research findings that reveal the motives of the people of both countries in conducting such interactions. Some of them include:

Blood Relations & Brotherhood Relationship

The association of blood ties or brotherhood relations is the word most often mentioned by all informants when expressing their opinions regarding the motive of interacting across borders. All informants agreed that the relationship between the people of Napan and Bobometo could not be separated by anything or anything. Even some informants stressed that the state may be different but blood ties cannot be decided. One of the hamlet heads (*kabu aldea*) Nunkikan, Bobometo, stated, *"We have indeed had family relations from the beginning. We have a grandmother, Napan and Napan's grandmother is Bobometo. Now we are different countries, but we have family relations that cannot be separated"* (Agustino Timo, 02-02/2018). Because of this brotherly relationship, Mariana Imelda Ais, a teacher of PAUD (a special school for early childhood) in Napan hopes that the family communication chain will continue well. *"We are only separated by citizenship, but we are a derivative. In the future, I hope that the relationship will be maintained, there will be no conflict so that family relationships do not break up"* (Mariana Imelda Ais, 07-28/2018).

Preserving Peace

The intensity of communication that exists between border communities is also based on the motive for preserving peace. The results of the study found that the 1999 referendum which finally decided to separate from Indonesia left deep wounds between them, especially the people of Bobometo, Timor Leste. The Bobometo communities who did not approve of independence had to leave their hometown and family and then join and settle in the area of Napan Village. Therefore, various momentum in building communication between them was aimed at maintaining peace between them. They hope that the intensity of communication that has occurred so far will be able to remove the injuries caused by the conflict in 1999. This was stated by Kanisius Elu, *"The 1999 incident was quite painful for border communities. Many injuries due to the incident. With our frequent encounters and the good relations that we have built so far, it is expected to remove these wounds"* (Kanisius Elu, 02/08/2018). Similar opinions were also expressed by the Napan community. Maria Magdalene Eko stated, *"We live at the limit. We must maintain good relations with the people of neighboring countries so that there is no conflict. Moreover, we are still brothers. In order to create border security, we must maintain good relations with each other"* (Maria Magdalena Eko, 07/30/2018).

Customary Agreement

Communities in the two different countries revealed that this maintained network of communication was based on the existence of customary agreements between the two. It was told, during the Portuguese occupation, the Ksatria/army (*meo*) of Napan and Bobometo namely Sae Sanu and Anunu Te'u agreed to enter into a customary agreement that in the future there should not be any conflict and bloodshed between them. Since then, said the informant in this study, every citizen of the border community in Napan and Bobometo upheld the customary commitments and agreements. The way to do it is to greet each other kindly when meeting. "There was an agreement from the two traditional leaders, Sae Sanu from Napan and Anunu Te'u from Bobometo that there should be no more conflict. The string of threads should not be broken and the needle should not be broken. The Dawan language, *Abas in nonon, anit in luken* "(Martinus Taeki, 07/30/2018). In line with Martinus Taeki, the customary leader of the Napan, one of the indigenous leaders of the Bobometo, Paulus Elu, also expressed the same thing. According to him, the proverb as *abas in nonon, anit in luken* is a reminder for them to their grandchildren to always maintain relations with the Napan communities. "We had ancestors who had made a joint appointment by custom. They say *oe mata mese, hun nakamese*; that means, we have a spring and a field. So you must maintain good relations "(Paulus Elu, 08-08/2018).

This customary agreement is closely related to the strong cultural ties as Dawan ethnic communities along the border. Steward (2001: 19) mentions this culture has a very deep meaning for humans. Steward's culture is collective.¹² He has the power to regulate social structures in society. The same thing was also conveyed by Chaney (2001: 76) that culture provides a way to frame individual experiences and actions. Individual behavior in response to the surrounding situation is inseparable from the cultural meaning that he gave to the reality experienced.¹³

Becoming an Example for Other Borders

One of the unique findings of this study in the context of the border communities of Napan and Bobometo villages is that they show exemplary in cross-border communication for other border communities. The results of in-depth interviews with informants from both villages generally claimed to be happy that the intensity of communication that was built between them was the best compared to other borders. Michael Kusi, the former village head of Napan

said, *"The good relations that we show we hope can be an example for other communities on other borders. Because communities on other borders often have conflicts. If animals cross the border, they are killed"* (Michael Kusi, 07-27/2018). The same opinion was expressed by the community in Bobometo. One of the leaders of Bobometo village, Agustinus Timo, confirmed the desire to be a role model in cross-border communication. *"In my opinion, only we who are here are [Napan and Bobometo] who have never had a conflict. Other borders are always a problem. All people in other borders should always build good communication like us"* (Agustinus Timo, 02/08/2018).

Streamlining Border Business

For the people of Napan and Bobometo villages, there is a close relationship between the intensity of good communication between them and the smooth running of the border business. In conducting cross-border trade transactions, people who generally carry outside activities by selling these basic needs, need partners or business partners. The more relationships that are built, will increase the network of trading partners among them.

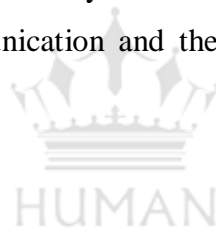
One of Napan's residents, Markus Ala Oki, said, *"If we know a lot of people in [Bobometo], there is also a lot of demand to enter goods. If we are not good friends, do not expect the business to run smoothly. Getting to know people first can only be business"* (Markus Ala Oki, 07/30/2018). This opinion was justified by an informant from Bobometo, Andres Kune from Bobometo stressed, *"We at Bobometo are very dependent on Indonesia. If we know people in Napan, we usually order soap, clothes, noodles, sugar, biscuits, and so on. Even we can get motorbike loans or cars to borrow the names of Napan people as collateral"* (Andreas Kune, 03/08/2018). The two border community residents trade their merchandise with each other. Basic goods, clothing, kerosene, and premium are generally purchased from the Napan community. Meanwhile, the people of Bobometo usually sell rice, granulated sugar, canned drinks typical of Timor Leste, and traditional wine [sopi].

The social interaction built between these border communities has an economic foundation or motive. The more expanding the network of friends that are created, the more smoothly the border business will be carried out. In fact, it is not uncommon, because of this economic interest, the two villagers of different countries often maintain good relations by always sending short messages (SMS) and even installing two sim-cards in their mobile phones (one sim card containing Indonesian telephone numbers and one sim Other cards are Timor Leste

cards. This phenomenon is what Denzin (2003: 81) emphasizes that the exchange of cultural symbols often involves political economic interests in it.¹⁴

Cross Marriage

Another motive of cross-border communication that occurs in the Napan and Bobometo societies is because of cross-breeding that cannot be avoided. Some informants from both regions instead confirmed that crossing between men and women Napan with women or men Bobometo has become a habit among them since their ancestors. *"There is a customary commitment that the Siki tribe [Napan village community] and the Kolo tribe [Bobometo community, Oecusi] to marry and marry"* (Michael Kusi, 07/27/2018). The same thing was conveyed by the traditional figure Bobometo, Fransisko Bata. Marriage relations between young men and young women Napan-Bobometo, said Fransisko Bata, have been established for a long time. Such conditions are one of the reasons for people in these two border regions to actively establish communication links with each other through administrative/official/legal and informal channels. The community stressed that with the occurrence of this cross marriage, the relationship of communication and the relationship of brotherhood between them became increasingly tight.



DISCUSSION

Communicating across borders between the border citizens of different countries in Napan and Bobometo, Schutz called it action based on their subjective meaning. Human actions according to Schutz are oriented to the behavior of people who are constructed based on their consciousness. Therefore, he classifies actions because human awareness of the two parts is in-order-motive which refers to the motive for the purpose (future orientation) and because-motive (motive because) which refers to the past (Eberle, 2014: 14).¹⁵

Based on the two phases introduced by Schutz, the cross-border communication between the Napan and Bobometo communities can be divided into two motives. The act of communicating across borders between the border communities of Indonesia-Timor Leste is divided into two categories: *because-motive* and *in-order-to-motive* actions. Included in the category because of motives, among others, the relationship of blood relations, customary agreements, and the existence of cross-breeding. This past motive, if visualized in the form of a chart, will look like the following picture: Meanwhile, the category in order to motive is to

preserve peace, be an example for other borders, and facilitate border business. As shown in the following picture:

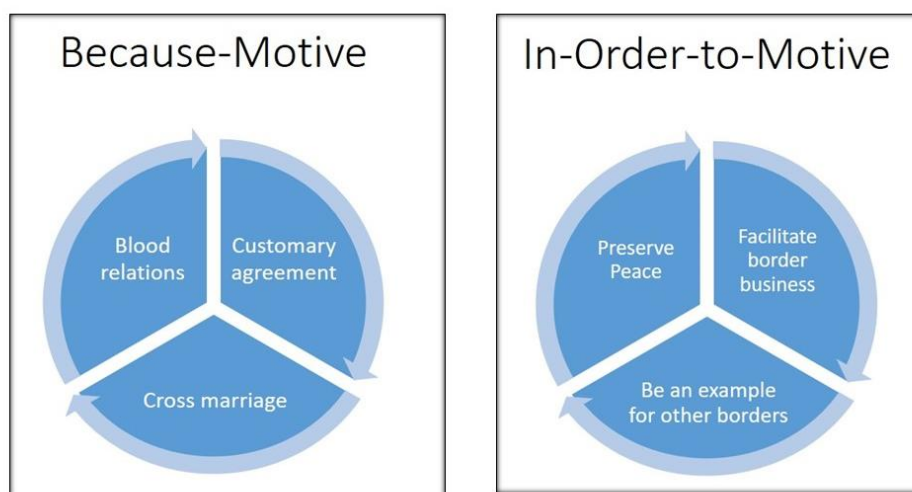


Figure 2. Because-motive and in-order-to-motive of the border communities

The act of communication between the two border community residents in the villages of Napan and Bobometo shows how the world of everyday life is a context for symbolic reproduction. As Littlejohn (2014: 57) says, people actively interpret and/or interpret their experiences in their daily routines and try to understand the world with their personal experiences.⁴

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the description in the previous section, some conclusions can be drawn. *First*, the experience of cross-border communication from the people of Indonesia-Timor Leste, especially in Napan and Bobometo, stems from the belief in the presence of shared traditional houses that are believed to be the source of life for both. The cross-border communication pattern that is between the communities of the two different villages of the country, is interwoven through the missed momentum in the border market. *Second*, the motives for communicating across borders between the border communities of Indonesia and Timor Leste are divided into two categories, namely because-motive and in-order-to-motive. Included in the category because of motives, among others, the relationship of blood relations, customary agreements, and the existence of cross-breeding. Meanwhile, the category in order to motive is to preserve peace, be an example for other borders, and facilitate border business.

From reality like that, then presented some suggestions as follows. The governments of the two countries should always support in order to always build a common space for border communities in Napan and Bobometo to carry out more intensive cross-border communication. This is considering that genealogically, the two communities have a very close kinship. In addition, informal leaders or traditional elders in both villages are advised to always communicate and sit together regularly (once a year) to foster a sense of brotherhood and emotional bond between the two people of different countries.

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