Ethnographic Study of Post-Reformation Assimilation of Tionghoa Settler to Indonesian Natives in Indonesia

Nyoto

Faculty of Education and Social Science, University Selangor, Malaysia
E-mail: nyotoriau@gmail.com

Abstract: Tionghoa ethnic was formerly considered as foreigners who came from Tiongkok mainland to find a new place to live. Later, the group was known as Tionghoa foreign settler who live and breeds in Nusantara and called as Indonesian Tionghoa people group. In everyday practice, Tionghoa community is inseparable from the interaction with the natives people. And further, assimilates with the local community in all aspects of life. This study uses ethnography qualitative approach to observe assimilation process and mixing that occur in Tionghoa people with natives people. The data used in this study came from interviews with 11 informants. This study concludes that Tionghoa ethnic assimilates in several aspects with 2 methods: (1) partial assimilation, (2) total assimilation. This study also found that Tionghoa people have low national integrity because they are only oriented to the trade sector alone. To build Tionghoa ethnic’s integrity for natives people, it is advised that Tionghoa ethnic do total assimilation, not just in business and trading sector. Tionghoa ethnic has to enter every aspect of life, such as politics and government.

Keywords: ethnography, assimilation, Tionghoa ethnic, natives people

1. Introduction

Indonesia has a pluralistic community structure. The community structure can be viewed in two ways, horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, it is characterized by the existence of social unity based on religion and belief, ethnicity, norms or customs difference. Vertically, the society is divided into two layers, the upper layer and the lower layer. These two layers differences are considered as too big. (Nasikun, 1991: 17), Furnivall (2009: 78).

Assimilation through marriage, in this study is called a cross marriage that happens due to the geographical similarity. People who come from other region feels comfortable living in the region. It may also happens because the improved level of their economic life, then settle down and find a life partner. This is a beginning of marriage assimilation. The generation of the marriage is called as pernakan. According to Central Bureau of Statistics of Indonesian residents in 2010, Tionghoa Indonesia is only 1.20 percent of 2.832.510 inhabitants, and largely live in Jakarta, West Borneo, Bangka Belitung, and Surabaya. From the field survey, author can give description that there are also distribution of Tionghoa ethnicity other than the regions mentioned above, such as Bagansapiapi, Selatpanjang, Bengkalis (Riau), Medan (North Sumatra), Singkawang, and Bangka Belitung. Tionghoa ethnic over Indonesia has many sub-ethnic. Indonesian Tionghoa ethnicity are showing up their own identity by communities called Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia (PSMTI: Social Community of Tionghoa Indonesian) and Indonesia Tionghoa (INTI) which struggling for acknowledgement of Tionghoa as an Indonesian tribe. Ethnicity becomes a foundation of group identity, even there are differences between the members. It is also strengthened by traditions, customs, norms, and faith. (Hariyono, 1993), Groeneveelt, (2009).

Tionghoa Indonesian has characteristics, in Haryanto’s opinion, majority of them have sub-ethnic language, such as Tio Ciu, Khek, Hai Lam, Hok Cia, Kong Hu, Liok Hong, dan Hokian. Tionghoa as the biggest ethno cultural distribution in Indonesia also has a strong migration history (Handelman, 1977). So, Tionghoa people also unconsciously causing diffusion in the homeland. There
is a big correlation between diffusion and human distribution in the world. Migration can develop slowly and automatically, but can also develop quickly and rapidly (Koentjaraningrat, 2009; Sunarto, 1993)

![Diagram of Migration Perspective Diffusion Process](image)

**Figure 1. Migration Perspective Diffusion Process**

From the picture above, we can conclude that the diffusion patterns are formed because there are factors in the distribution of the population by migration, which is the movement of people from one place to another due to internal factors and certain external ethnicity. (Naim, 1984)

2. **Method**

This research was done with qualitative approach. The main data source is interview results with 11 informants. Triangulation of literature study and observation was done to support the data validation.

3. **Result**

3.1. **Assimilation**

Assimilation is a social process that occurs when there are classes of human beings with the different culture backgrounds and intensive mutual interaction for a long time, so that the culture of each groups change its unique characters, and its elements turned into a mix of cultural elements. So, assimilation is the mixing of two or more cultures to form a new culture (Paul B and Chester L. Hunt., 1990; Koentjaraningrat 2009; Lawang, 2005). There are at least three requirements to form assimilation: (a) Human groups with different cultural backgrounds, interacting intensively for a long time; (B) cultures of groups had changed its unique nature, and also each of the elements changed its form into a mixed cultural elements. Usually, groups that are assimilating are majorities and some minorities. In this case, minorities are the one who changed its unique culture characters, to adapt with the majority culture, so that in the matter of time minorities lose its culture identity and get into the majority culture.

Assimilation usually happens if there is tolerance and sympathy from individuals for other cultures. Tolerance and sympathy in the culture could be obstructed by several factors: (a) the lack of knowledge of the other culture (b) fear of other culture’s strength (c) superiority over individuals from other culture (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). There are important things that obstruct the assimilation process. From various assimilation process that have been researched, it is concluded that it is not guaranteed that intensive interaction between groups will result in assimilation if there is no tolerance and sympathy for each other (Horton, Paul B dan Chester L. Hunt., 1990). For example, Tionghoa people in Indonesia interacts widely and intensively with the natives for centuries, but still, they are not integrated fully to Indonesian culture because there is not any tolerance and sympathy yet (Husodo, 1996). But, assimilation between homogen groups are easier to happen. For example, assimilation between Javanese transmigration groups from Java with Malayan as majority in Riau.
Malayans are tolerant and recessive, so that the Javanese becomes progressive, and later assimilation happens by marriage or cultural assimilation (Koentjaraningrat, 2009), Becker, Jasper (2000).

Source: Processed, 2016

**Figure 2** Assimilation Process Between Minorities and Majorities

The discussion about assimilation in ethnic group in Indonesia would be about theories correlated with arrival, existence, and Tionghoa people’s behaviour, social role, economy, culture, and politics in Indonesia, ethnic group theory, power theory, integration theory, and social theory that correlated with the research field.

Source: Developed from description of Mochtar Naim, 1992
3.2. Assimilation as New Order Government Coercive Model Against Tionghoa Ethnic

In the New Order government era (1966-1998), Tionghoa community’s strongest issue is diffusion. New Order government considered Tionghoa existence was already at the edge of national disintegration, so revamping was done to increment the national defense. Gerakan 30 September 1965 event by Partai Komunis Indonesia that revolted against Old Order government which killed seven army generals, was a consolidation effort from New Order Government to Tionghoa community. It was because Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) was backed by Tiongkok’s government. Meanwhile, there were still many Tionghoa people who had dual citizenship after the government’s regulation enacted in 1959, effective by 1960. The agreement about dual citizenship was regulated in Law no. 2 of 1958 between the government of Republik Indonesia and the government of Tiongkok.

Because there were still many nationalist Tionghoa to the Tiongkok homeland, while they reside in Indonesia, resulted in New Order government to force Tionghoa community to natives with assimilation. Many efforts were made, such as issuing the Presidential Decree No.14/1967 which aims to prohibit culture, worships, religious celebrations of Tionghoa. In addition, there was still Decree of the Minister of Trade and Cooperation Officer No.286/KP/XII/1978 on the replacement of the original Chinese name to original Indonesia name. This decision further strengthened with the issuance of the Decree of the Ampera Cabinet of Republic Indonesia No.127/U/Kep./12/1966 on Name Change.

4. Conclusion

Tionghoa ethnicity does partial assimilation by marrying natives, looking for foster parent, converted to Islam, and totally left their entire original identity. Total assimilation only occurs in peranakan (hybrid) generation. Tionghoa community seriously demands the right to be recognized as one of the tribes in Indonesia through the Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia (PSMTI: Social Community of Tionghoa Indonesian) dan Indonesia Tionghoa (INTI: Association of Indonesia Tionghoa). Assimilation by marriage is difficult to be occurred because of the inhibiting factors, such as religion adherence by the majority group, which is Islam in Indonesia. During this time, assimilation was limited to the economy, trade, social, education, sports, and health fields. The other fields were deemed to be exclusive for Tionghoa such as politics, government, and defense. Tionghoa existence post-reformation started to get into the exclusive fields such as politics, government, and defense because the government has revealed themselves as a reformation. New Order assimilation was deemed as failure because it was oriented only to marriage and identity removal by name change. Tionghoa name was removed and changed with Indonesia origin names.

5. References

[1] Becker, Jasper. 2000. *The Chinese*. London: John Murray Publisher Ltd.
[2] Brewer, John D. 2000. *Ethnography*, Philadelphia: Open University Press
[3] Furnivall, J.S. 2009. *Hindia Belanda Studi Tentang Ekonomi Majemuk*. Jakarta: Freedom Institute.
[4] Groeneveldt, W.P. 2009. *Nusantara Dalam Catatan Tionghoa*. Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu.
[5] Hariyono, P. 1993. *Kultur Cina dan Jawa., Pemahaman Menuju Asimilasi Kultural*. Jakarta:Pustaka Sinar Harapan.
[6] Handelman, Don. 1977. *Ethnic Groups; An International Periodical OfEthnicStudies*, Vol. 1., No.3., New York: Bronx.
[7] Heidhues, M.F.S. 2008. *Timah Bangka Dan Lada Mentok,. Peran Masyarakat Tionghoa Dalam Pembangunan Pulau Bangka Dalam Abad XVIII S/D XX*. Jakarta: Yayasan Nabil.
[8] Horton, Paul B dan Chester L. Hunt. 1990. *Sosiologi. Jilid 2 edisi ke-6,. Bahasa Indonesia*. Jakarta: Erlangga.
[9] Husodo, Siswono Yudo. 1996. *Warga Baru (Kasus Cina Di Indonesia)*. Jakarta: Yayasan Padamu Negeri.
[10] Ismail, Nawari dan Muhaimin AG. 2011. *Konflik Umat Beragama dan Budaya Lokal*. Bandung: Lubuk Agung.
[11] Jusuf, Ester Indahyani. 2001. *Jalan Panjang Penghapusan Diskriminasi Racial*. Jakarta: Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa.
[12] Koentjaraningrat. 2009. *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*. Edisi Revisi. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
[13] Kusuma, Indradi. 2002. *Diskriminasi Dalam Praktek*. Jakarta: Forum Kesatuan Bangsa.
[14] Lawang, Robert. 2005. *Kapital Sosial Dalam Perspektif Sosiologik, Suatu Pengantar*. 
[15] Naim, Mochtar. 1984. *Merantau Pola Migrasi Suku Minangkabau*. Yogyakarta: Gajah Mada University Press.
[16] Nasikun. 1991. *Sistem Sosial Indonesia*. Jakarta: Grafiti Pers.
[17] Sunarto, Kamanto. 1993. *Pengantar Sosiologi*. Jakarta: Lembaga Pendidikan Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas Indonesia.