

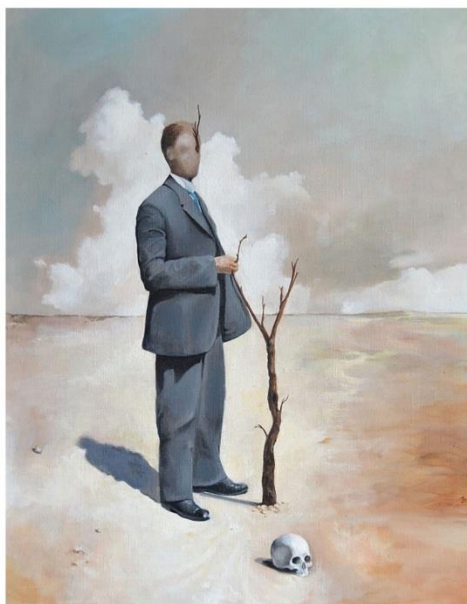
# opción

Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,  
Lingüística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 35, diciembre 2019 N°

24

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales  
ISSN 1012-1587/ ISSNc: 2477-9385  
Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



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Departamento de Ciencias Humanas  
Maracaibo - Venezuela



# Tribes in Bawean as "the Miniature of Indonesia"

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## Abstract

This study explores the unique cultural phenomena of the tribes in Bawean who identify themselves as Bawean people and interpret "the miniature of Indonesia" as their cultural identity. The ethnographic method through the "thick description" technique in this study enables the researchers to formulate the substance of a group of people's consciousness who identify themselves as being Bawean. As a result, the tradition of wandering and Islamic beliefs has become a cohesive basis between Creole culture tribes. In conclusion, the tribes in Bawean who proud themselves as Bawean community, they are subversive to the idea of regional and language-based nationalism.

**Keywords:** tribes, miniature, Indonesia, kreol, Bawean.

# Tribus en Bawean como "la miniatura de Indonesia"

## Resumen

Este estudio explora los fenómenos culturales únicos de las tribus en Bawean que se identifican como pueblo bawean e interpretan "la miniatura de Indonesia" como su identidad cultural. El método etnográfico a través de la técnica de "descripción gruesa" en este estudio permite a los investigadores formular la sustancia de la conciencia de un grupo de personas que se identifican como Bawean. Como resultado, la tradición de las creencias errantes e islámicas se ha convertido en una base cohesiva entre las tribus de la cultura criolla. En conclusión, las tribus en Bawean que se enorgullecen de ser comunidad Bawean, son subversivas a la idea del nacionalismo regional y basado en el idioma.

**Palabras clave:** tribus, miniatura, Indonesia, kreol, Bawean.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, Bawean people are not as popularly as Balinese, Javanese, Madurese, Papuans and others. Ironically, Bawean people are better known in Malaysia and Singapore, even in Vietnam, Bawean people are politically recognized as citizens by strengthening Bawean identity (KARTONO, 2004). Bawean identity is comparable to the languages spoken by people of the archipelago as, Sumatra + Java + Sulawesi + Kalimantan = Bawean (KARTONO, 2004). This shows the Bawean identity is not a tribal identity, but rather a collection of tribes who claim to be Bawean or Boyan.

Bawean people, in essence, realize that they are a collection of tribes who once settled in Bawean Island. It is roughly about identity struggle between Bawean and other living tribes such as Madurese, where those who deserve to be called Bawean are the people of origin, even though in terms of language use, both tribes share a great similarity. This similarity is reflected in a large number of vocabularies and dialects of both languages. In lexicostatistic analysis, there are about eighty percent (80%) of the Bawean basic vocabulary share similarity with that of Madurese, much of which is dominantly shown in the sound of aspirate dialect.

Bawean people prefer to be called the imagery of "miniature of Indonesia" and a mixed cultural identity, instead of being equally compared with Madurese. In fact, the Madurese living in Bawean would love to be called a Bawean. The Bawean recognize the origin of their parents or ancestors, and have close relatives living in Madura, Palembang, Bugis, however, they prefer to call themselves Bawean people. Something normally happens in most tribes out of their origin, because anywhere they go either for a short or long period of time they will proudly acknowledge their tribe. The tribes who settled in Bawean are more proudly acknowledged themselves as Bawean people instead of their innate or tribes of origin. This study was aimed to explore reasons for those tribes' sense of pride being called Bawean despite their lands of origin is diverse, in addition to ideas underlying people's interpretation of "the miniature of Indonesia" as their cultural identity.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

All the living tribes who once settled in Bawean proudly acknowledged as Bawean people, despite the fact they know the origins of their ancestors. Those tribes who feel themselves entitled to their identity to Baweanese are typical assimilation. Bawean identity is built from collective sense of belonging, for they occupy the same area. Among the tribes living in Bawean are people who left their place of origin, and established an identity as a result of having contact with diverse tribal community and enacted themselves being a distinguished community with newly named local identity. KOENTJARANINGRAT (1990) explains that identity can be established from a collective entity of community that has been occupying a territory, interacting according to a system of customs, and bound as a group of people.

Creole culture as an imagery of the two or more cultures, which selectively takes elements and creates new possibilities that transcend and replace the culture of parents, which itself is increasingly known as a stream of renewal. This shows that creolization concerns an effort to establish a newly introduced culture in society from an organized group. Creole culture as cultural identity is a typical unfinished product that has not yet been completed, in the context of history and culture, this remains a process of identification (HALL, 1990). In this case, HECKMANN (1993), explains that a melting pot society which consists of various tribes will receive the results of social and cultural negotiation. This typical culture is the result of an undergoing

negotiation process which turns to be cultural knowledge as a parameter measuring identity to realize specific norms or ideologies which determine people's standard of behavior. As Bawean people come to realize the similarities in linguistic aspects of their language from the Madurese, however, throughout the time the Baweanese have developed their language with various other language elements to provide distinctive sense on Bawean language. They feel different and consider that theirs is a typical language of Bawean. A statement illustrating that identity becomes an inherent property, where most of the time individuals are afflicted with a situation to state who they are. In this context, individuals may argue that:

My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose (TAYLOR, 1989: 27).

The living tribes in Bawean many of the cases prefer to show themselves as Bawean people. Even the Madurese living in Bawean with strong Madurese language would inevitably reject to be equally comparable to Madurese. This shows identity as the essence of a group's beliefs, values, a world view which has been embedded in the individual members. Identity is embedded in the individual's consciousness as a frame of reference and identifying him/herself.

In particular cases, any language can possibly be a medium of the users' identity. FROMKIN, RODMAN, & HYAMS (2007: 438) explains that "the way you use language shows a tendency to be a member of a group". Language as one aspect of culture and culture is

seen as a depiction of human behavior, individuals who exhibit specific language behavior will be classified in the unique community that shows certain cultural characteristics. Therefore, identity is not uncommonly identified from language.

### **3. METHODS**

This study was designed with the descriptive qualitative method and the ethnographic approach, in addition to using “thick description” technique. This approach and technique were chosen to provide a description of experiences and meanings mutually understood by individuals as the life of society, by adhering to the following steps.

### **4. DISCUSSION**

The imagery of “miniature of Indonesia” is a typical melting pot identity. Acculturation is a process of mixing two or more cultures which gradually establishes new cultures accepted and processed into their own culture without having lost the original cultural personality (KOENTJARANINGRAT, 2002). Creole culture along with its acculturation patterns as Bawean inhabitants shows those settled tribes’ attitudes and understanding to adapt one another to build a cultural identity in a new place. Thus, the tribes in Bawean try to show their new identity as Bawean people. In this context, identity must be



seen as a reflective self-image built, experienced and communicated by individuals specifically in intercultural relations situation.

Creole culture is concerned with mixing and borrowing, leading people to be mixed origins. People of Creole cultures tend to be more tolerant of cross marriages. The Bawean people reinforce that they come out of the mixed marriages. Many Bawean people feel doubt to be descended from one particular tribe. They are, indeed, originated from several tribes, i.e., their parents, the father from Madura and mother a mix of Madurese-Palembang marriage ceremony, and the mother of Palembang from Malay and Bugis descent. When they first settled in Bawean, these people would prefer to be called Bawean people. They consider that they already have a distinctive culture of Bawean, even though they do not have – i.e., Javanese, Madurese, Bugisnese culture - a famous history as a high-cultural society. Creole identity is an embryonic form of Bawean identity.

Bawean people adopt more other cultures to establish new cultures. This is reflected in the evolved various arts adopting a lot of Malay culture with Madura Bawean dialect as its medium. Creolization in Bawean provides a lot of space for the existing tribes to create a newly situated home, a place to express their uniqueness to confront homogeneous cultural dominance. The tribes in Bawean equally treated, there is nearly no attitude to accentuate any tribe with a dominant population. On the basis of attitudes unity and share, similar religious Islamic belief enhances cultural interaction, interconnectedness and interdependence among the existing tribes; and the challenge to solidity shows ethnic identity. The concept of

toghellen as a collective awareness of the need for unity marked by inter-tribal interaction communication has never been a serious barrier to people's diversity. This is a "latent" driving factor affecting the establishment of various tribal unity organizations. For example, AOP (Anak Orang Pebhian) "the children of Bawean people", Pena Bawean is a communication forum that aims to unity between various living tribes in Bawean and actualizes themselves as Bawean people. The "miniature of Indonesia" shows people's cultural idiom which comes into existence out of the process of mixing culture. The results of the mixing cultures found mainly in food, music, clothing, traditions and language practices in newly constructed forms. The standardization has occurred in part in languages, as Bawean teaches, however, there are no generally agreed-upon orthographic standards, due to the large variety of languages that appear.

The term "Bawean people" is more "neutral" and is seen as representing all the tribes who settled in Bawean, although on the other hand, is less favorable in cultural identity. Bawean culture has been quite familiar with several traditions and associates themselves being the "mosaic" of culture oriented to establish a conducive situation. Bawean language as the Madurese Creole language is seen as an oral idiom and is considered basic and limited compared to other archipelagic languages such as Javanese, Madurese, Sundanese and others. Bawean Creole culture remains a process of establishing a new culture, where many constructive elements are still being negotiated.

The tribes in Bawean who have called themselves Bawean people are subversive to the idea of regional and language-based

nationalism. In addition, they are subversive fundamentalism, since they emphasize the syncretic nature of the belief system instead of the origin of their beliefs. They migrate to carry out Islamic traditions and sharia, in addition to meeting economic needs. In line with the tradition of wandering, they renegotiated their culture as a mixed culture. In addition, being able to adapt to other cultures; the mixed marital patterns influence the Bawean's Creole culture identity. Identity is an ongoing process of adaptation and negotiation that leads to cultural acceptance and coherence. Even though, most of the Bawean are the Madurese who have long been existed since the eighteenth century, their relationship with Madura in most cases faded; however, they became the economically and culturally dominant group in Bawean. In the context of a democratic contemporary society and mutual influence among the tribes settled in Bawean and nomads culture has created dynamic exchanges between symbols and practices, which ultimately lead to new forms with varying degrees of stability. The adopted Creole culture in Bawean has been successfully driven people into having strong religious rituals by combining the influence of Islamic religion and the existing customs in Bawean. This is reflected in arts and traditional celebrations, such as the art of Jibul demonstrated in the tradition of kemanten and circumcision, played by a player who at the same time plays a large tambourine as his music and tells stories about Islamic religious teachings. The tradition of welcoming the 21st night of Ramadan fasting is celebrated lively by visiting each other delivering "snacks" in exchange for other "snacks". The migrant traditions on condition

should have four provisions, among others; they can read the Koran well, can read barjanji, have already recited the classical book of Sullam Safinah (basic book of religion) and can perform pencak silat or self-defense.

The imagery as “Indonesian miniature” is a typical understanding which addresses a mixed identity in Bawean, and the tribes voluntarily claim themselves as Bawean people. The imagery of Bawean as a miniature of Indonesia marked Bawean as a Creole society with a mixed population of several settled tribes. That imagery motivates the spirit of the Bawean people’s unity. Creolization in Bawean has reached its peak, thus the mixed population should now be recognized as one of the Bawean constitutive ethnic groups, which was realized to distinguish between other tribes and Bawean people. Similarly, the Bawean feel dislike to be equally comparable to Madurese. The reality shows that the problem of identity needs to include an understanding of mixed identity. On the other hand, it needs to be considered as a cultural identity that has cultural treasures, cultural practices, rituals, and ways of life. Bawean as a “miniature of Indonesia” is a quite specific and instantly recognizable cultural formation - not just a “mixture”, but “a very special mix consisting of other settled tribes” cultural elements and other cultural assimilation forms in the overseas, translated and articulated in a complicated and subtle way. Those mixed cultural elements obtain specific cultural meaning as identity only once united and translated (HOLMES, 2001).

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Bawean as a "miniature of Indonesia" shows the people's cultural situation over the mixed living tribes settled in Bawean and marked Bawean as the center of Creole culture. Cultural renewals out of all living cultures which after time to time those diverse living tribes have merged their identity into a single cultural identity and feel proud to be called Bawean. In addition, to being openly welcomed to different tribes without conflict, the spirit of unity has been a priority to many living tribes in Bawean. The concept of "toghellen" as a sense of belonging among the living tribes in Bawean which no longer concerns diversity and accentuates their respective cultures. An analogy to describe the sense of Indonesianess shown by the people of Bawean is that the tribes in that island no longer seriously concern to trace back their culture of origin. The Creole culture which characteristically emphasizes openness to other cultures created dynamic exchanges and shaped distinctive Bawean cultures. Based on Madurese, renewal by adopting vocabulary from other languages and accents is an effort to establish a social language. The tribes in Bawean who proud themselves as Bawean community, they are subversive to the idea of regional and language-based nationalism.

The tribes in Bawean no longer call themselves by their original tribal identity. Their culture and customs are no longer recognized as their identities, although they do not forget their kinship from their ancestors. They voluntarily merge themselves into the identity of "Bawean people". The term "Bawean people" is considered more

“neutral” for it encompasses tribes who claim themselves wanderers and Islam as their cultural fundamentals.

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DEL ZULIA

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Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales  
Año 35, N° 24, (2019)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.

Maracaibo - Venezuela

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