

# Harmony of Coastal Community Regarding Its Ethnic Religion and Cultural Diversity

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**Abstract :** West Papua is often known to be the miniature of Indonesia. The diversity of ethnicity, religion and culture embraced by the people of West Papua is very much like the concept of *Bhinneka* and *Tunggal Ika*. However, there is a negative stigma towards the people of West Papua, namely in its underdevelopment and conflicts. This research was conducted in West Papua using the observation method, library research and interview. This study aimed at providing an overview of West Papua using emic and etic approaches. The people of West Papua have an ingredient to maintain harmony, namely through local wisdom such as the term "One Stove Three Stones", "One House Four Doors" and the principle of brotherhood that is held firmly. Ultimately, this forms a culture of understanding in the community and establishes religious harmony. Apparently, the negative stigma of outsiders about West Papua is formed by the mass media as well as films containing negative elements about West Papua. Therefore, there is a misperception about the people of West Papua.

**Key words:** *harmony, diversity, local wisdom, negative stigma, and community.*

## 1. Introduction

West Papua is located in eastern Indonesia. The stigma formed towards the West Papuan community is that of a backward and conflict-prone area. This causes the society to believe in the idea that there is no peace within the community. In fact, behind that stigma, West Papua is filled with harmony in its diversity, namely its ethnic, religious, and cultural diversities. Based on the data obtained, the total population of West Papua as of the year 2015 was 871.510 inhabitants. [1] The 2006 data shows that the largest percentage of the followers of faith are from, Protestant Christian (50.70%), Islam (41.27%), Catholic Christian (7.70%), Hindu (0.12%), Buddhist (0.08 %) and Confucianism (0.01%). [2] Such data proves the religious diversity of the Papuans and that they can coexist together. The people who are now residing in West Papua are not just from the Papuan ethnic but there are also people from other ethnic groups in Indonesia, namely Batak, Sunda, Bugis, Makassar, Manado, and there are even from the tribes originating from Maluku and other areas. However, a specific ethnic will not dominate another ethnic because each ethnic will always maintain its own trademark, while maintaining an understanding with other ethnicities. They realize that their diversity will fail if they are unable to accept it and will become a fortune if they are able to keep it. The brotherhood becomes the main pillar in the community life. [3] Brotherhood is not just about ethnic but about religion and culture as well.



Religion and culture are elements that are closely related to human life because of the nature of human beings as servants and as social beings. [4] Religion is a belief in the Creator whereas culture is a shared way of life and that is passed on from generation to generation. The indigenous tribes of the West, has for generations been making Islam an option for religion, namely Kokoda, Arandai and Raja Ampat, while the Abun tribe in Sausafor (Tambraw Regency) finally switched beliefs to Islam after initially embracing animism. The transformation process does not cause conflict because it is seen that the religion choice are the rights of each individual and can not be influenced or imposed on by others. The diversity of the people of West Papua was juxtaposed with the harmonious use of the pillars of brotherhood and mutual acceptance. The One Supreme God in the first principle of *Pancasila* is used as guidance for religious diversity in West Papua. This study is important because some opinions are still negative towards the concept that is being applied in the community in West Papua. One of the contributing factors is, the dominant mass media, depicting the people of West Papua with backwardness and conflict. Therefore, this study aims to change the stigma of society about West Papua which is only synonymous with the conflict, but instead it is a West Papuan community that can live in harmony despite the diversity. Referring to the above background, therefore the main problem to be studied is how well can the West Papuan people live in harmony despite having ethnic, religious and cultural diversity.

The previous researches related to the harmonization of the people of West Papua are as follows: First, was a research done by Saidin Ernas titled "Political Symbols and Social Harmony: "The Meaning of a One Stove Three Stones in the Dynamics of Local Politics in Fak-fak West Papua" which summed up three things. First, the propaganda of One Stove Three Stones, as a symbol of harmony and peace in Fakfak, was accompanied by a process of manipulation of the symbol for various political interests of power. Second, the process of symbol manipulation is done by controlling the authority of interpretation and meaning and conquering the power of civil society and local leader to eliminate their critical reason. Third, this study shows that political symbols to some degree can create social harmony and stability, as evidenced by the low incidence of conflict rate in Fak-fak. Second, was a research done by Muhammad Rais titled "Islam and the Local Wisdom; Dialectics of Understanding and Religious Practice of the Kokoda – Papua Community in Local Culture", where the results of this research indicated that the practices and understanding of the Kokoda community originated from a single concept of "brotherhood" or "acknowledgment". His religious knowledge is seen in the form of trust and motivation which is practiced on; 1) Establishment of religious activities. 2) Participation in giving alms, and 3) Togetherness in ritual and ceremonial. There are two forms of local wisdom from the Kokoda community; 1) Through behaviour; 2) Knowledge (cognitive). Meanwhile, religious dialectics and local wisdom in Kokoda's religious practices are also seen in two aspects; 1) Inclusive religious practice and 2) Cultural Acculturation between religions. The current study will discuss the harmonization of West Papuan life in its diversity where all this while the West Papuan community has been rated as backward and conflict prone and there is no peace. This study will also discuss the real condition of the people of West Papua, different from what is often broadcasted by the mass media. The principle of brotherhood and local wisdom possessed by the people of West Papua remains harmonious even if it is diverse.

## 2. Method

This research was conducted in the West Papua Province. The area of West Papua, which is often viewed as a conflict-prone area by outsiders, is actually harmonious. This research is qualitative, namely by describing the harmony of the people of West Papua. This study also used an anthropological approach. The researchers will also analyze the diversity of West Papua from the

point of view of the West Papuan people itself (emic). The collection of data was done through the method of library research, namely by collecting data from the library and the data was further processed into research materials. Interviews were also conducted to the people of West Papua regarding the real condition of the society. In addition, this study also used the method of observation, where researchers observed the practices or realities that exist in society about the diversity that exists.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. West Papua Profile

The West Papua Province was originally called Irian Jaya Barat, founded on the basis of Law No. 45/1999 on the establishment of West Irian Jaya Province, Central Irian Jaya Province, Mimika Regency, Paniai Regency, Puncak Jaya Regency and Sorong City. [5] The conflict about the establishment of West Irian Jaya is certainly there, but since its formation, the government was increasingly keen to fix itself. It took a long time to make West Irian Jaya to recognize its existence. Then finally on February 6, 2007 West Irian Jaya Province changed its name to West Papua Province. The West Papua Province lies on the coordinate point between 0° - 4° South Latitude and 124° - 132° East Longitude, located just below the equator with an altitude between 0 - 100 meters above sea level, and based on Regulation of Minister of Home Affairs No.6 Year 2008 and BPS Irjabar, the total area of West Papua Province is close to 97,024.37 km<sup>2</sup>. The number of sub-districts and villages in West Papua is as follows [6] ;

**Table 1.** The number of sub-districts and villages in West Papua

No.	Regional Name	Capital City	Number of sub-districts	Number of villages
1	Fak-fak	Fak-fak	9	5
2	Kaimana	Kaimana	7	2
3	Teluk Wondama	Rasiei	13	1
4	Teluk Bintuni	Bintuni	24	2
5	Manokwari	Manokwari	29	9
6	Sorong Selatan	Teminabuan	13	2
7	Sorong	Aimas	18	15
8	Raja Ampat	Waisai	17	4
9	Tambora	Sausapor	7	0
10	Maybrat	Kumurkek	11	1
11	Sorong	Sorong	6	31

In addition to geographic information, this discussion will also inform about religion and tribes followed by the people of West Papua. Population in West Papua consists of various tribes with different languages. In fact, even in one tribe alone, there are many kinds of languages. In Papua and West Papua there are 310 languages spoken by the community and in West Papua alone there are 67 tribes inhabiting. In addition to diverse tribes and languages, religions embraced by the community are also diverse, namely Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and others. It is clear that West Papua is made up of various ethnicities and religions, but lives side by side in harmony.

### 3.2. Mass Media as a Creator of Stigma

The stigma of the outsiders regarding West Papua is a conflict-prone and primitive region, is not excluded of the role of the mass media. Wherein the reporting or portrayal that is broadcasted is only an aspect of insurrection, conflict and primitiveness of West Papua. One of the news that caused a stir is of the Tolikara case. Tolikara is one of regencies located in the West Papua Province. It was rumored that the Tolikara case was a conflict that was triggered by different beliefs, in this case Muslims and Christians. Whereas the case of Tolikara has actually been designed by conflict actors, only so far with ethnic, racial and group identities have not worked, so experiments were carried out by prioritizing religious status. This case was deliberately designed by certain parties to divide the harmony of the Tolikara community. Even outsiders were provoked by the case, triggering religious sentiments.

In addition through the news, Papuan ethnics are often depicted through film. There are several Indonesian films that take Papuan ethnic as the main highlight. Among them are Denias and Lost in Papua. These films have a different story line and problems portrayed. However, behind these differences there is also the same role pattern which continues to be repeated among the films based on Papuan ethnics, which are, ethnic immigrants who are considered superior (in this case the Javanese ethnics) and come as the savior and are considered to make the Papuan ethnic to be considered as the more inferior ethnicity which makes them advanced and modern. [7] From the depiction of such a role it will enforce the thinking of the outside community about the primitive Papuan community and always rely on other ethnic groups to improve their living standards. In fact, it is not just people from ethnic immigrants who can become high-ranking officials in West Papua. As an illustration of the political conditions in Sorong (West Papua), members of the Regional House of Representatives elected for the period 2014-2019 consist of the composition of Ayamaru, Malamoi, Java, Sunda, Madura, Bugis, Makassar, Batak, Buton, Ambon, Kei, Toraja, Minahasa, Masohi, and Seram. [8] The indigenous Papuans included on the list are Ayamaru and Malamoi. In addition to proving the ethnic integrity of indigenous Papuans, the data can also depict West Papua which actually consists of ethnic diversity but can interact in harmony. Therefore, the term that West Papua is a miniature of Indonesia was spread. Thus, it is not only the bad image that dominates the social life of the people in West Papua. West Papua is also a peaceful and harmonious place. This is in line with the statement of one of the heads of urban villages in Sorong Regency, which said that:

There are about 1300 residents who live in the Klaru village, where Islam 70%, Christian 28% and Hindu 2% make up for the percentage of religion adopted by the people there. While based on ethnic or local origin makes up of Java 70%, Moi 15%, Maibrat 10%, Sulawesi 3%, and others about 2%. The conflicts that arise in the community are caused by problems of land or customary tradition. Regardless of its diversity, conflict is not about religion or ethnicity. In my opinion, harmony in the community can be achieved because good communication is always carried out and mutual understanding in the interaction of the community is maintained, so there is no gap between the differences [9]

From these interviews it can be concluded that ethnic and religious diversity is not the cause of conflict. Despite the conflict, there are other factors that cause it, one of which is the problem of customary tradition. Therefore, the news that West Papua is an area that often has conflict caused by differences of religion and ethnicity is not something absolute, because sometimes the conflict caused by other factors are misused by certain parties as a conflict of religion and ethnic. Thus, news or mass media is one of the formers of negative stigma towards the people of West Papua.

### 3.3. Local Wisdom as a Harmonious Adhesive

Local wisdom is the view of life and science and various life strategies that manifest the activities taken by the local communities in solving various problems regarding their needs [10]. Local wisdom or in the *fiqh* term is called *al-'urf*, is something that becomes custom and tradition for society either in the form of speech or deed. [11] By looking at this understanding then in this study, local wisdom concerns the tolerance and brotherly principles that gave birth to the harmonization in diversity in West Papua. West Papua is a province in Indonesia whose society consists of various ethnic, culture and even religion. West Papua is said to be a miniature of Indonesia, diverse but still one like the *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. The diversity can be unified with the principle of brotherhood, as what has happened in the West Papua region of Fak-Fak, Raja Ampat Islands, and the Kokoda tribe in Sorong. Fak-Fak is one of the regencies in the West Papua Province. The people in Fak-fak is not only dominated by one religion only, but there are three major religions embraced by the community there. For example in a family there are three religions, namely the family of the Mbaham tribe in one clan / fam there are three religions; H. Muhammad Temongmere (Islamic Religion), Demianus Temongmere (Catholic Religion), Yewisa Temongmere (Protestant Religion). [12] Therefore, the term "One Stove Three Stones" describes the religious condition of the people there.

The simple philosophy of "One Stove Three Stones" is a description of the brotherhood of the Fak-fak society across different religious and cultural identity. [13] The religious diversity in Fak-fak is integrated with the understanding of "One Stove Three Stones" is more motivated by the attitude of the public tolerance in all fields, so that there are no domination that can cause division among them. As which was disclosed by one of the Head of TR BAPPEDA of Fak-Fak Regency is that:

In applying the term "One Stove Three Stones", we not only regulate the issue of social life in the daily life in Fak-fak. However, religious issues are also applied in this tradition, so that there is no dispute of understanding and belief. If there is construction of a house of worship such as a mosque, then the chairman of the development committee is of the Catholic religion. Vice versa, if there is a church being built, then the chairman of the development committee is of the Muslim religion. Just an addition and information from me, that frankly I was once chairman of the committee of one of the church being built in Fak-fak Regency when I am a Muslim. In addition to the construction of houses of worship, the tradition of one stove three stones is also applied in securing religious rituals. For example, if Catholics are performing a mass or a Christmas celebration, then those who keep the worship safe are the Muslims. Meanwhile, if Muslims are organizing Eid prayers or other worship, then those who keep their security is from the Catholics. This is what makes Muslims and Catholics in the regency of Fak-fak always have cooperation in various activities. [14]

The "One Stove Three Stones" is like the "stove" as the family and "stone" as the religion. It is said that to cook on a stove, it requires at least three stones. The philosophy is that brothers must be one-hearted, whenever they are united, no force will be able to penetrate it. [15] Thus, it means that the people of Fak-Fak society can live in harmony even with the three major religions they have in their society are Christian, Catholic and Islamic. [16] The majority of people in Fak-fak are Islam which makes up of 53.80% of the local population as well as immigrants, while Protestant Christianity is embraced by 28.35% and Catholics 17.59%, other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism are very few or below than 1%. [17] Such is the picture of religious diversity in Fak-Fak, West Papua Province. Unlike the case with Fak-fak, in the Raja Ampat Islands, there are four major religions embraced by the people, namely Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism and animism. [18] In this term, the people of Raja Ampat describes a family is a house which its family members can enter through any door. It is clear that what the community holds firmly is tolerance, where they will accept each other and respect whatever religion is followed by members of his family, instead of disowning a family member for having different beliefs.



Besides the people of Fak-fak and Raja Ampat Islands, the Kokoda society is also able to maintain the harmony by holding firmly to the principle of brotherhood. The harmony is inseparable from their belief in the 5 kings. There are three inherited messages of the five tribal kings who are always spoken by tribal chiefs (now) or Kokoda residents when talking about religion, firstly, maintaining religious harmonization among peers, secondly, no bonds should be broken because of religious belief, third, no matter wherever you go, everyone is your brother and sister. [19] It is clear that the principle of brotherhood is the key to Kokoda's harmony.

The three groups of society make the difference not as a breaker of unity but as a binder of harmony. Even when it comes to religion they will respect each other. For them the difference is not a barrier but a means to keep in touch with each other. This is obvious during religious festivals, where each religion will help each other.

Like when the celebration of *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*, people from other religion will help. Similarly, with the celebration of Christmas, the Muslims will also lend a hand. When it comes to food, it is not an issue, as there is already an understanding of the host religion of what can and cannot be consumed by people from other religions. With such a small thing, religious differences are not a breaker, but can create a harmonious unity if coupled with tolerance and brotherly principles.

### 3.4. Harmonious Religious Diversity

The principle of brotherhood and tolerance demonstrated by the harmony of the people of West Papua can also be illustrated in the provincial Papuan *Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran* (MTQ) committees in West Papua. All the organizers are not only from the faith of Islam, but the pastor and church youths also joined in it. The celebration of *Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran* (MTQ) together with the brotherhood and togetherness is the key to its success. Religion is only a private matter and not an entity that has the right to influence its followers, and has nothing to do in communal affairs. Religion is not an excuse to create a division. Therefore, the implementation of religious rituals never gets in the way. The expansion of the *At-Taubah* Mosque in Malanu, Sorong City was supported by the willingness of the Protestant landowners to give their land. [20] Submission of this land is not free but the selling price was far more below from the market price. Meanwhile, the land owned by the State Islamic High School (STAIN) of Sorong was handed over to the church to build a house of worship. [21] This matter proves the religious harmony between both faiths.

### 3.5 Culture Strengthening

Culture is a way of life that is shared by a group of people and passed down from generation to generation. Culture is also a norm carried out by a group of people who are ultimately executing it on an ongoing basis. One culture that illustrates harmony among the diversity of the people of West Papua is a culture of friendship during a religious celebration. Observations made during the celebration of *Eid al-Fitr* and Christmas is that during the celebration of *Eid al-Fitr*, not only the Muslims visit each other, but the Christians will also come and join in the celebration. Similarly, when it is Christmas, the Muslims will visit and their Christian friends and join in the celebrations. This shows that the people of West Papua strongly holds firm to the belief of brotherhood and tolerance. Religious differences are not a cause for conflict but will encourage each people from different religious background to interact and acknowledge the diversity that exists. Conflicts arising on the basis of differences are only made by certain parties who use religion as an instrument to spread hatred. On the other hand, conflicts in the name of religion are carried out by those who have not understood or imposed things on what and how they interpret religion. The people of West Papua have made diversity as a place to strengthen the relationship, even gave birth to a new culture.

#### 4. Conclusion

West Papua, although is a region rich in diversity but is still peaceful in harmony, however not only is it peaceful in religious diversity, but also ethnicity and culture. The diversity possessed by West Papua makes it known to be a miniature of Indonesia. Behind the diversity, the stigma of outsiders is still always negative. In this study, it was found that mass media was one of the origins of the negative stigma surrounding West Papua, where the dominant news gives a negative meaning to the West Papua Ethnic. The ethnic of West Papuans were described as, people who like rebellion and conflict, such as in the Tolikara case. In addition, the formation of a negative stigma towards the society was also supported by a couple of Indonesian films depicting primitive Papuan ethnic, one of them which was, the *Lost In Papua* film, in which the inferior Papuan ethnic needed the other superior ethnic in order to advance.

This study confirms that diversity is not a trigger for a conflict. In fact, diversity will contribute to the harmonization of life if built with the pillars of brotherhood and tolerance. The pillars of brotherhood and tolerance are reflected in the motto "One Stove Three Stones" and "One House Four Doors" which originated from the community residing in Fak-Fak and Raja Ampat Islands, West Papua, where in the family, religion is not a differentiator. The diversity of religion adopted is used as a means to strengthen the relationship. It is even entrenched in West Papuan society, that, when there is a religious festival it will provide opportunities for interfaith friendship and bond to be greater.

In addition, the harmony of the people of West Papua can also be seen in the implementation of the Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran (MTQ) which involves not only Muslims but also Catholics and Protestants. Infact, when it comes to places of worship, there is no difficulty in its construction. Brotherhood and tolerance among the diverse community is also clearly visible in binding the harmony of the people of West Papua amid their diversity of ethnicity, religion, and culture. Therefore, this research is expected to be able to change the stigma towards of the people of West Papua that is linked to conflict and backwardness, into a harmonious society despite its diversity.

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