

## **Preservation Of Status Quo Or Inter-Ethnicity Relation The Dynamics of Malay-Chinese Economic Relation in the Northern Coast Area of West Kalimantan**

**Fachrurrazi  
IAIN Pontianak**

### ***Abstract***

*The ideal goal of interactions that an ethnic group performs within itself or with other ethnic groups entails more than mere actualization of values; good and bad, proper and improper, right and wrong. The diverse ethnic groups living together in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan which covers: Bengkayang Regency coasts, Singkawang City, and Sambas Regency have revealed at least three dominant local ethnic groups, i.e. Dayak, Malay, and Chinese. The dynamics of economic relation between Malay and Chinese people in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan, from Functional Structural perspective and regarding Malay economic actors in Sambas Regency and Chinese economic actors in Singkawang City both were based on ethnic dominance—was deliberately created as an effort to strengthen system stability or status quo for the interest of the dominant group. From non-functional perspective, the analysis began on the concept of society as a complex social system, in which economic competition was a sub-system; both were functionally interdependent. Society could become a means to realize a conflict of power because job and earnings were distributed unfairly and differently.*

**Keyword: Preservation, Ethnicity, Malay, Chinese, West Kalimantan**

### **A. Introduction**

The ideal goal of interactions that an ethnic group performs within itself or with other ethnic groups entails more than mere actualization of values; good and bad, proper and improper, right and wrong. It also involves the intimacy and disparities among the members of the group in accelerating their norms towards shaping their ethnic behavioral system. The norm-based behavioral system belongs to each ethnic group and determine the way by which the group view their relationship and interactions, based on pluralism and multiculturalism perspectives.

The diverse ethnic groups living together in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan—which covers: (1) Bengkayang Regency coasts, (2) Singkawang City, and (3) Sambas Regency—have revealed at least three

dominant local ethnic groups, i.e. Dayak, Malay, and Chinese. Intensive interaction among the three groups, particularly between Malay and Chinese groups, has in fact been going on since the 7<sup>th</sup> century. It solidified when the Chinese settled in the area in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Malay is an indigenous ethnic group in the area, and most Malay people still consider Chinese people as foreign settlers; even though some have accepted the Chinese as a local ethnic group.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike Chinese communities in Java and Sumatera, who came from Hokkien- and Kanton-speaking groups, Chinese people in West Kalimantan mostly came from Hakka- and Teochiu-speaking groups. Only a small group of them originated from Kanton- and Hokkien-speaking communities.<sup>3</sup> Chinese people's settling and living in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan is heavily loaded with economic interest. It was recorded that Chinese people came to the area with the consent of Sambas Sultanate.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in the 1750s, the Sultan of Sambas allowed Chinese people to exercise gold-mining activities in the area. The colony of Chinese miners thrived around Monterado area—because the area was rich with gold deposit.<sup>5</sup>

From social perspective, the arrival and settling of Chinese people in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan enriched the pluralistic nature of living in the area, especially with Melayu and Dayak people. From economic

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<sup>1</sup> The Western region of Kalimantan (Borneo) Island has been famous among the travelers and traders from China, India, and Arab since 10<sup>th</sup> century. Atmaja, Dwi Surya and Fachrurazi. 2018. *Escalating Threat on Chinese-Malay Interaction. Acceptance and Resistance towards Chinese in Northern Coast of West Kalimantan*. Pontianak: IAIN.

<sup>2</sup> Result of FGD with Religious Figures, Social Figures, and Academic Figures in Sambas Regency, 2018. Atmaja, Dwi Surya and Fachrurazi. *idem*.

<sup>3</sup> Nearly all Chinese groups that came to West Kalimantan originated from the southern region of China. However, their spoke vastly different languages, which hindered each group from communicating well with the others. The Dutch East-Indies Colonial Government dubbed Hakka as "Khek" and Teochiu as "Hok-lo". The Hague., M. Nijhoff. *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch*. 1927. Leiden: Brill. Groenevelt.

<sup>4</sup> It can be proven that until today, there stands a Sambas Keraton (Palace) in Sambas Regency. The palace is called *Alwatzikhubillah*, an Arabic phrase which means "faithful to Allah".

<sup>5</sup> The first mining effort of the Chinese people yielded a promising result. The news of the pioneer miners' success spread through the junk route. In 1760s and 1770s, the Chinese arrival in Sambas increased rapidly. They then opened more mines in Larah, Buduk, and Seminis. Jackson, James C. 1970. *Chinese in the West Borneo Goldfields: A Study in Cultural Geography*. Hull: University of Hull. Hal 20-22.

perspective, it was a fight for capital; through which the socio-economic status of Chinese people immensely improved. They succeeded building Chinese trading companies in the area, such as Taikong (the Great Ditch) and Samto Kiaw (the Three Bridges).

Chinese communities in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan did gold-mining activities as well as farming and trading activities.<sup>6</sup> Many of them also built agriculture businesses, particularly in Pemangkat area. These people previously built trading companies in gold-mining industry, then found farmers' union. It was recorded that there were two big farmers' unions around the 1770s,<sup>7</sup> (a) Thien-thi-Foi<sup>8</sup> which was led by Lioe Sam Pak and had jurisdiction in Rantau, Pakoetjing, Wong-littoeng, and Kulor; and (b) Lan-fong-Foei under the leadership of Lo Thai Pak, was founded around 1772 or 1774 and controlled Thai Sjoe hill area.

The success of Chinese people in building the company and the union was a concrete consequence of their strong capital ownership, through which they realized their goals. On one side, the companies and union served as collective norms to preserve their trading activities, as well as to meet certain other purposes such as socio-cultural, religious, and political goals. On the other hand, from economic perspective, the norms tended to be used as a mean to achieve capital superiority, including strengthening status quo in Chinese relationship with Malay people in the area.

Interaction between Malay and Chinese communities, especially their struggle for capital superiority, was a very dynamic competition—full of highs and lows. Malay people fought for superiority through the reign and authority of Sambas Sultanate while Chinese people did that through their trading companies and unions. Conflicts and prejudice were also part of the dynamics

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<sup>6</sup> During the gold-mining era, the development began with housing for miners and trading companies' employees and worshipping place (*thai pak kung*). It was followed by residential area development, with stores that sold daily necessities, blacksmith, fiduciary house, health service (healer's house), gold-smith, recreational houses (gambling den and opium den), and other services that gold-miners needed.

<sup>7</sup> *Singkawang Agrarische Zaken in Binnenlandsch Bestur. No. 2569*, cited by Rahmayani, Any. 2014. *Op Cit.* p.43-44.

<sup>8</sup> *Foei* is literally translated as agreement or bond.

in the two ethnic groups' social relation. The prejudice held by Malay people against Chinese people in the past left a trace until today. In 1964, Chinese people became part of the North Kalimantan People's Army (Paraku) which joined with Sarawak People's Guerilla Army (PGRS)—both were anti-Indonesian Republic. As a consequence, people in some regions in Sambas Regency, such as Tangaran, Sajad, and Galing, still reject the presence of Chinese people today.

The dynamics of socio-economic competition in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan was even more interesting to observe in Sambas Regency and Singkawang City, because, the substantially economic competition for capital and status quo also happened socially. It was different at the Coast of Bengkawang Regency, which was more multicultural. In this region, both Malay and Chinese people considered that their interaction and relationship should be functional.<sup>9</sup> When a deviance from the inter-ethnic relationship occurred—in the forms of socio-economic discrepancy, conflicts, or violence—the incident would be regarded as a deviance within the overall good system of interaction.

This functional perspective is different from most people in Sambas Regency, who continued to preserve the prejudice that Chinese people—even though the latter had been recognized as citizens of Indonesia—were foreign people. This view later turned into a discourse, and the social dichotomy spread to economic field in the form of struggle to strengthen each party's economic superiority. Similarly, Chinese people also believed that Malay people in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan were essentially foreigners themselves.<sup>10</sup> Thus, they believed that everyone from each ethnic group had equal economic opportunity to achieve success and capital superiority.

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<sup>9</sup> Regarding “functional”, Talcott Parsons stated that society is a whole system of norms and behaviors in it are related to, limited by, and governed by the system of social organization as a legal agent of social control.

<sup>10</sup> Bong Wei Khong, the Chief of Chinese Cultural and Traditional Community (MABT) of Singkawang City, considered that Dayak, Malay, and Chinese ethnic groups were foreigners to Northern Coast of West Kalimantan. Considering that they all were immigrant to the area, Chinese people dubbed Malay people *Fan Nyin*, which means foreigner or immigrant. Atmaja, Dwi Surya and Fachrurazi. 2018. *Loc Cit.*

Referring to functional perspective,<sup>11</sup> as stated by Friedson (1970)—for instance, both Malay and Chinese people should not preserve the local-and-foreigner dichotomy. Although the arrival of Chinese people might be seen as the point where Malay people's existence in the area was recognized as the indigenous ethnic group; the latter actually participated in the economic success of Chinese people. Meanwhile, Chinese people's economic success should not allow them to consider Malay people inferior; or to compete with them and destroy their economy; because Malay people had created the socio-economic opportunities that allowed Chinese people to thrive, as can be seen in Singkawang City.

This functional socio-economic relationship between Chinese and Malay people in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan would be different if viewed from non-functional perspective. Considering that there had been dichotomy as a result of economic competition—as could be found in Tangaran, Sajad, and Galing in Sambas Regency where Malay people rejected the existence of Chinese people due to economic and social reasons and trauma of the latter's involvement in Paraku and PGRS in 1964—Malay people believed that Chinese people's existence in their region would destroy the local economy because Chinese people always competed, monopolized, and even forced Malay traders to bankruptcy through 'price-war', as had frequently happened to Malay traders in Tebas Sub-District, Sambas Regency.

Even though Malay people were deeply worried about the ethnic interactions, especially in the regions where Chinese people were rejected in Sambas Regency, Chinese people in those regions did not feel like minority. It was because socially, their lives went on in harmony—helping each other. It was different in Singkawang City, where Chinese were the majority. Economic life and capital superiority were in the hands of the Chinese. In the city, under such condition, socio-economic relationship between the two

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<sup>11</sup> Critiques on Functionalism Perspective, as well as critiques on Non-functionalism perspective, referring to the schools of Weberian (Hermeneutics), Phenomenological Sociology (Phenomenological Theory), Ethnomethodology, and Exchange Theory, among others, stated that norms themselves are means or agents that correlates with the norms as inevitable subjects of socio-economic investigation.

ethnic (Chinese and Malay) had developed into a behavioral system expected by the Chinese. Meanwhile in Sambas Regency, Malay people focused on their role as Malay—as indigenous people—in their interaction with Chinese people.

Such functional and non-functional relations consequently affected the acceptance and rejection of both groups. Malay people in Singkawang City, who accepted the existence of Chinese people, functionally had to be ‘prepared’ to accept Chinese domination in socio-cultural system and Chinese economic role. Economic (capital) superiority of Chinese in Singkawang became a great instrument to achieve success in other fields, including securing political power in Singkawang City.

The goals of Chinese people, who had controlled the socio-economic, cultural, and political sectors, had in fact preserved their position in Singkawang City. Moreover, historically (or so the legend said), the original Chinatown in West Kalimantan was Singkawang; and the name Singkawang itself was given by Chinese travelers and sailors. It was said that a group of Chinese travelers had seen two “mountains at the mouth of the sea”, located near a river by the sea—which in Chinese was *San Kew Jong*. They regarded this coast of West Kalimantan the most fertile and beautiful in West Kalimantan.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile in Sambas Regency, Malay ethnic group, who was the majority, non-functionally continued to keep its role as the social agent against Chinese economic control. Even though Chinese traders were not required to display a role of “directly obeying” Malay people, there was a normative requirement for Chinese people to respect the socio-cultural system of Malay people, including accepting their long-lasting rejection towards Chinese.

Concerning the socio-economic attitude and behavior in Chinese-Malay relationship in the Northern Cost of West Kalimantan, the majority—

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<sup>12</sup> The coast referred to here was the coastal area stretching from the north to the south: Sebangkau River, Selaku River, Singkawang River, Pajintan River, Sedau River—all were in the north of Batu Belat Cape, now known as Tanjung Gundul—Raya River, to Duri River. Veth, P. J. 1854. *Borneo's Wester-Afdeeling: Geographisch, Statistisch, Historisch*. Eerste. Deel. Het Platen: Zaltbommel.

Malay people in Sambas Regency and some part of Bengkayang Regency coast and Chinese people in Singkawang City—had shown a dialectic of socio-economic interaction; which the researcher deemed as a cultural struggle for status strengthening and preservation. This cultural struggle aimed to preserve social norms of Malay people in Sambas Regency and to preserve economic norms of Chinese people in Pontianak City. The struggle of two ethnic groups for two different sets of norms, based on functional or non-functional structural perspectives, covered at least four specific aspects: (1) technical specification, (2) effective neutrality, (3) universality, and (4) functional specification.

## **B. Discussion**

### **1. Professional Attitude of Economic Actors**

The technical specification aspect had to do with both groups' beliefs concerning the other ethnic group's effort to control the situation and autonomy in their trading activities or other economic activities intensively and with good competence. It was evident in the interaction between Malay and Chinese people since the latter came (or called) by Sambas Sultanate, which was loaded with strategies and capital.

It was strategy-laden because Sambas Sultanate had allowed Chinese people to come and stay to work in gold mines, such as Monterado. It was capital-laden because the Dutch East Indies recognized Chinese people's trading capability, which they utilized to approach indigenous people in isolated areas and persuade them to trade their natural resources. Through Chinese trading companies and their capital, the Dutch East Indies became politically successful in fighting Sambas Sultanate's monopoly in trading.

This strategy and capital struggles then indirectly became Chinese economic hegemony system and control—as social agent—to hinder Malay economic actors from expanding their businesses. Such control was based on the technical competence of the economic actor (in this case the Chinese), and was separate from political, social, religious, and other

interests. Malay and Chinese then locked each other in a competition, using their strategic capability and capital, to secure or maintain their existence in economic interaction. “The struggle” in the context of this interaction had made any and every action of both ethnic groups in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan very meaningful.

Effective neutrality implied a social gap that allowed economic actors from both Malay and Chinese ethnicities to stay neutral and objective during an economic activity or interaction. If the economic actors, from any ethnic group, became too emotionally involved, it would socially affect their objectivity and technical considerations. Chinese people in Singkawang City kept effectively implement their economic norms, particularly in trading, because they believed that capital stability was the foundation to achieve success in other fields, including political power. Meanwhile, Malay people in Sambas Regency kept their commitment to implement economic norms based on their strong socio-cultural norms; leading most of them to strongly reject Chinese people.

This indicated that when Malay and Chinese economic actors interacted, the interaction and relationship would be dynamic and equal, as can be seen in Sambas Regency, because Chinese people (the foreigner) had to respect and observed the existing socio-cultural norms. This was different in Singkawang City. The equality of socio-economic relationship between the two ethnic groups was only on the surface; while beneath it social, economic, and political hegemony kept boiling. Consequently, the resulting relationship—which was expected to be mutual—was doubted to be equal. Chinese people, the majority whose economic stability and superiority had led them to an expected beneficial position, particularly in terms of economic and political authority, kept trying to preserve Singkawang City’s status as a multicultural city in which Chinese ethnic group could continue exerting their control.

Building the stigma of Singkawang City as a multicultural city, particularly by economic actors and political figures in the city, which

were dominated by Chinese people, depicted the role of Chinese people perfectly: working for and on behalf of all people (who were ethnically plural) in a system of social equality, regardless of sex, social class, age, or other social characteristics. As this universality opened up, Chinese economic actors became very confident in building producer-consumer pattern of interaction. It was an economic metaphor packed in a trading strategy for Chinese people to preserve their existence. It even made to be their cultural, economic, political, social capital to compete with Malay people.

This condition was the requirement to satisfy the functional specification aspect of economic actors' interaction. It was closely related to the interaction pattern limited to certain regions or economic activities. Chinese economic actors then build a foundation of socio-cultural and economic values to win the competition in a culturally heterogeneous field—particularly against Malay people in Singkawang City. They worked as subtle and as hard as possible; keeping people from realizing their hegemony.

## **2. The Nature of Interaction between Malay and Chinese Economic Actors**

The social expectations of Malay and Chinese people in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan were proper and effective implementation of economic activities and fulfillment of economic needs, even though many critics had challenged them because certain economic actors, who had superiority in terms of ethnicity and capital tended to dominate and monopolize the market.<sup>13</sup>

Among the important rights demanded in the economic activities of economic actors in both ethnicities, it revolved around how to self-regulate, i.e. setting standards for economic activities, evaluating their own

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<sup>13</sup> As Friedson (1979) stated from Conflict Theory perspective, the demand for monopolistic professional control—as practiced by economic actors from both Malay and Chinese ethnic groups—seemed to have more to do with the efforts to support their own economic interest and social status than with social awareness of improving people's economy.

economic activities and behavior — whether they were in accordance with social norms and will or not — because there would always be social sanctions for deviation. As a result, in terms of economic capital, Malay people in Sambas Regency were seasoned, but it was not effective enough to hold back or protect themselves from the "threat" of Chinese people's economic capital power. In contrast, Chinese people's economic capital power was quite effective in dominating the socio-economic and political life of Malay people in Singkawang City, which now had begun to spread to Sambas Regency.

The ineffectiveness of Malay people in Singkawang City, and lately in Sambas District, in the process of self-regulating in all economic activities, was in fact due to its foundation was based more on their multicultural attitudes than on their plurality standard. The Chinese then took the respect of Malay people as a form of outside control, because they thought of themselves as locals in Singkawang City. Consequently, the view became the reinforcing reason to approach and conform to Malay socio-cultural and political standards — or, to stay away from satisfying or developing Malay people's interests.

Economic actors in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan—the relationship between economic actors from Malay and Chinese ethnic groups—did not automatically apply their economic knowledge to serve fairly and develop economic competencies dynamically. As a result, it was as if an ideology that represented the dominant groups or classes in the society had been inherently created.

The economic discrepancy between Malay and Chinese ethnic groups, even between the economic actors was suspected to have occurred severely. Efforts to create social stability in a wide range of institutional environments in order to reduce tensions, from attitudes and behaviors of disappointment, to conflict and social change, had begun to appear. This was similar to the widely-recognized consistency of Chinese people who had—in the New Order era—been pushed behind and underappreciated,

because their resources had been "deliberately staggered" compared to Malay people, causing them to only involved themselves in one economic activity, i.e. trading, even though they knew that economic sector was the most strategic to obtain control to other sectors.

From functionalist perspective, lately many economic actors who deviated—not multicultural—or were unable to perform their economic activities fairly, began to emerge from both Malay and Chinese groups. It was probably a system intentionally created by a dominant ethnic community in an effort to strengthen the "stability" of the system or the *status quo*, and in this case for the economic interests of certain ethnic group and other closely related groups.

On the other hand, from non-functionalist perspective, Chinese domination (as the majority) in Singkawang City had allowed them to freely build a system to play their economic role, to keep their existence in social, cultural, and political scene of the city. The system built by the two dominant ethnic groups was developed in a dialectic process. Chinese people in Singkawang City knew very well that "turning" Singkawang as the center of their ethnic tradition—building various attributes of Chinese ethnicity, such as *kelenteng* (Chinese worshipping place), dragon statues, and Chinese lanterns all around the city; holding Chinese traditional performances, such as Tatung—in the context of their interaction with Malay people would be regarded as the validation of their economic dominance.

The consequence of socio-economic relation between Malay and Chinese ethnic groups, in functionalist perspective, was the preservation of ethnic domination, through which social system was build based on the dominant culture. In Sambas, some regions still rejected the existence of Chinese people, while in Singkawang, an economic hegemony over Malay people had been built, keeping them away from the center of power in the city. Furthermore, in non-functionalist perspective, Singkawang City witnessed how Chinese people gained respect amidst Malay and Dayak

people, and it had been successfully constructed. Their goal was not to take the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan for Chinese people but to change the region to be identical with Chinese and put it in the center of Malay-dominated social structure. As a result, Chinese economic actors gained more ‘legitimation’ and validity to strongly influence all existing social and political structures.

### 1. Acceptance towards Chinese Ethnic Group

The social structures relation that culturally and socially imitated each other could be seen as a form of Malay people’s acceptance towards Chinese people, and vice versa, and became the fundamental character of the social space in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan.<sup>14</sup> The ‘competition’ of interaction in economy, especially in trading, was mutual and it had been going on for a long time.<sup>15</sup>

The openness of Malay people in turn led to a condition that opened the door for competition in wider area, i.e. power (politics). “Politics” of relation in economy, particularly trading, played by the Chinese seemed to be one of the reasons why trading monopoly held by Malay people in Sambas Sultanate era diminished as trading transactions shifted to companies owned by Chinese.

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<sup>14</sup> The use of language in communication in public spaces, as occurred in Singkawang City Market and in several markets in Sambas Regency (i.e. Selakau market, Pemangkat market, Sekura market, and Sambas market), involved variations of languages used by and to sellers and buyers in the market, including Sambas Malay Language, Chinese, and Bahasa Indonesia. However, almost all local people used Sambas Malay Language. The varied languages were due to the fact that majority of buyers were Malay and majority of sellers were Chinese. The factors affecting the variation of languages used depended on the public space where the speaker was. Generally, the people used inconsistent levels of speech in such communication. It meant that in a discourse, the speakers seldom held on to just one level of speech. They mostly used two or more levels of speech—based on their own speaking habit. Observation, September 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Kazim, an informant, revealed that: business relations based on traditional economic system that Chinese people built was humane. It was implied in the consensus that when a Chinese man employed a Malay man, and the *tauke* (boss) could no longer hold the business together, all debts that the employee owed to the boss would be considered settled. And according to Chinese belief, that was not a problem because it was part of the risk of running business. Chinese people considered business based on relationships (even kinship) and *hokki* (luck or fate). Chinese people believed that *hokki* was closely related to the success of relationship and partnership in business.

The resilience of the true Malay identity and existence began to erode in a formal way, and the Chinese slowly mastered strategic economic lines in the social space, not only reducing the population of Malays, but also the dwelling areas which were increasingly narrow, shifting to the periphery.

The resistance of the ethnic Malays to the dominance of ethnic Chinese basically did not only take place in the social space, but had been going on for a long time in the economic sphere and began to develop in the space of politics and government, even culture. The resistance of Malays to the dominance of ethnic Chinese was not a single narrative. The resistance was also the process of redefining and revitalizing the openness and acceptance of Malays. These efforts took place both individually and are sustained by forces in government institutions.

The situation of Malay people's social structure began to change, a complex and open social space made it possible for everyone (Malays and Chinese) to have access to external structures, or to side with/support Chinese people who also had the freedom to develop *agency* capacity, especially in government and politics. The Chinese increasingly appeared victorious with the establishment and average capital ownership above the Malays. Whereas Malays who on average internally had social capital (relations, partnerships and kinship) began to be affiliated and even segregated. Some of them in fact openly stated their support for Chinese people's success, including in politics.

The moment of regional autonomy was an opportunity to change structural relations and social agents. Chinese people who had succeeded in the economic field, especially in the field of trade can freely "swing" in embracing 'new' status in the form of success in government and politics. It was here that there was a contestation of the Chinese people's "resistance space" over the previous Malay

dominance which had weakened, due to the revitalization of poorly organized Malay culture. At the same time there had been a shift in the interpretation of Malay existence as the dominant ethnic group, becoming a peripheral ethnicity among several urban lives in "Malay land" in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan.

Logically Malay ethnic group should remain and continue to be dominant, not to be marginalized either culturally, economically or in population. However, this counterproductive situation had occurred. This marginalization reality then led to the emergence Malay people's awareness to reaffirm their identity and uphold the spirit of Malay in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan. These phenomena were strengthened by the support of government elites, community leaders, religious leaders and cultural figures in Sambas Regency, even academics from Malay ethnic group themselves.

The Northern Coast of West Kalimantan was a social sphere, not a monolithic and homogeneous space. The habits emerging from the social space could not be said to be formed from a single and linear source, i.e. Malay people in the past, and spread to the present and hacked into plural and dynamic forms, penetrated ethnic boundaries, and affected the habits formation process. In other words, internality of Malay ethnic group was not a stable formation that was free from Chinese structural influence.

The resilience of Malay ethnic group and its elements should be understood and interpreted as a strategy to preserve its identity amidst the 'attacks' from Chinese ethnic group. Logically, it should be admitted that in certain regions such as Pemangkat and Singkawang, the symbols of Chinese "pride" had been deeply and neatly instilled in the creation of cultural and political symbols, sneaking itself under the pretense of Malay acceptance and tolerance. Malay people had to accept and tolerate Chinese people who created a new identity from their ancestral culture to highlight their position in public spaces, as

can be seen in Chinese lantern festival during *Imlek* celebration and Tating performance in *Cap Go Meh* ritual.

Essentially, all actions that Malay people took on and against Chinese people were based on openness and hospitality. Malay people's hospitality was a collective identity, even though its implementation might differ. Changes in individual identity also led to changes in ethnic identity; which meant that relationship between Malay and Chinese ethnic groups were based on mutual needs and supplementing, based on their differences. Changes in identity was possible when Malay people interacted with Chinese people as the dominant or majority group (as happened in Singkawang City). Chinese traditions were reproduced by Malay people, so that the latter could be equal to the former. Malay people were able to speak Chinese and were aware of Chinese cultures and tradition, in the name of acceptance.

Habits and practices were articulated and actualized by Chinese ethnic group to win the social and economic space from Malay's openness and hospitality. Practices were produced through dialectic interactions between the two groups. Chinese people's movement was dependent on Malay people's openness, and Chinese people had practiced it for a long time to increase their opportunity to be superior in social, cultural, economic, and political fields; from the moment Sambas Sultanate allowed them to come over to the moment Dutch East Indies government recognized them as second class citizens.

## **2. Rejection towards Chinese Ethnic Group**

The life of Malay people in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan always touched the social space, particularly in its dynamic interaction with Chinese ethnic group. The "high and low" of their social interaction had always been based on economic and political (power) interests. It was clear since their cultural and religious typology were distinctly different. Malay people put Islam as

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the foundation of their life philosophy, as symbolized by the reign of Sambas Sultanate. That value competed and interacted in the structure of Chinese people's life that upheld their ancestors' tradition and belief. This dialectic was even more interesting to observe, in terms of their actions.

Chinese-Malay relationship was inseparable from the stereotype about Chinese people, including things that Malay people disliked. For instance, Chinese people tended to live in a group and "isolated" themselves in an area separate from other groups of people. In fact, some assumed that Chinese people's loyalty to Indonesia could and should be doubted. The worst of them believed that Chinese ethnic group hated Indonesia.<sup>16</sup> Another concern was that Chinese traders would eventually destroy Malay people's businesses.<sup>17</sup>

The politics of trading that Chinese traders frequently practiced was highly efficient in crippling Malay traders' spirit. This was also the reason why Malay traders found it difficult to become big businesses. The politics of trading was based on Chinese people's capability of competing—due to their huge capital and distribution chain—in economy. It sometimes turned into "over-adaptation" because it created the culture of "exclusive trading" under the pretense of capital hegemony for the sake of strengthening the "pride" of being great at trading, boasting himself as the controller of economy in every

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<sup>16</sup> Chinese people did not wholeheartedly identify themselves as Indonesian. They only pretended; that was why their actions clearly showed their opportunistic nature, especially in identifying themselves with Indonesia as a nation. The opportunist character was particularly related to money and their trading business. They are not like other Indonesian, who were highly dedicated to their country. During the colonial time, Chinese people were given good position in the government and social space, which allowed them to dominate the economy in the country. They did that particularly through oppressing Indonesian and hindering the growth and development of indigenous business classes. They were not satisfied with the local people who tended to do economic subversion. They were masters of bribery and experts in smuggling. Coppel, Charles. 1983. *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press. Hal 5.

<sup>17</sup> An informan named Nasrullah revealed a series of facts occurring in Tebas Sub-district pertaining to Chinese traders' actions to overthrow Malay traders; including by lowering the price of their goods as low as possible in order to lure customers to their shop and leaving Malay traders. After Malay traders suffered huge loss and even became bankrupt because they had no more capital, Chinese traders would return the price into its previous stable condition.

central city on the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan, right in the midst of Malay people.

Chinese people were going to implement the same politics, repeating the process of instilling negative stigma over competition constructed during the golden age of Chinese trading companies against the trading monopoly of Sambas Sultanate. Assimilation and acculturation they had done to Dayak ethnic group provided them security “behind” Dayak people’s culture and tradition, i.e. adopting the principle of daily interaction as brothers.<sup>18</sup> Chinese people had reflected and were reflecting their identity behind rituals they deliberately constructed. Through such cultural competition, they hoped to find new mechanism for internal revision, not only for their own culture but also as a response towards its interaction ‘versus’ Malay existence.

The struggle to achieve equality for Chinese ethnic group was not easy because rejections kept continuing. To this day, they still experienced rejection, including the rejection from Malay people against Chinese right to settle in their area. It was due to trauma from past experiences when Chinese people joined PGRS/Paraku. At the time, the incident disturbed public safety and security. It caused a wave of migration towards the city and restriction towards Chinese people. Several sub-districts in Sambas Regency were closed and Chinese people were put under surveillance, particularly those who came from outside the area.

### **3. Threats to the Existence of Chinese Ethnic Group**

The viscosity of Chinese culture that survived a long and abstracted history in its cultural value, was considered a formidable

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<sup>18</sup> Dayak people called Chinese people “*Sobat*” (good friends) and they called Dayak people “*darat*” or sometimes “*Laci*”. *Laci* was translated as offspring. *La* means child and *Ci* means man or descendant. A child born from marriage between Dayak male and Chinese female is called *Pantokng* while a child from Chinese mother and Dayak father is called *Pantongla*. Supriyadi, Yohanes. 2010. *Identitas Kelompok Cina, Perubahan*.

and resilient culture, even though it aimed to avoid the process of natural selection and cultural competition that is contextually modified. Chinese people were able to appear as a distinct identity in the "land" of Sambas Malay culture, while at the same time turning parts of the Malay region into Chinese region by upholding the values of respect, obedience and tolerance. The model implemented by Chinese people was considered effective in overcoming potential conflicts with Malay people, because its basic value was integration, as implemented in its kinship values. Chinese people were "brothers" of people from ethnic Dayaks, as well as threats to the existence of Malay in the future.

The political, social and economic pressures felt by all Malay people, one of which was due to the increasingly strengthening Chinese culture and life. On one hand, it was the greatest challenge for Malay people, because they openly faced not only the strong cultural mentality and work spirit of Chinese people but also another 'shield' of hegemony behind the Chinese. Furthermore, Chinese people were supported by their assimilated and acculturated 'brothers', the Dayak people.

Concerns about the "threats" of the existence of Chinese people, which strengthened in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan that had been Malay "land", involved the possibility of "cultures war" in which Chinese economic and political power attacked "silently" through hegemony against Malay principles and cultural values—which were based on Islamic values. Such attack had been felt, where Malay people were lulled away from Islamic belief so that Chinese people could realize their desire to subjugate Malay people.

The signs of "cultures war" were reminiscence of the cultural strategy implemented by the Dutch East Indies government. At the time, the Dutch had killed two birds with one stone: firstly, destroying the local economy, and secondly, destroying the political and cultural

networks of local people so that it would be easy to turn them against each other (*devided et impera*). Simultaneously, the Dutch and the Chinese created and instilled stigmas that indigenous people were lazy, dirty, wasteful, incapable, *pan nyin* (half human),<sup>19</sup> et cetera ; which after centuries became a widely believed myth.

Malay people's concerns towards Chinese people's behaviors with their elite and capitalistic style inspired a question about the future of Malay ethnic group in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan. Through their economic and capital superiority, it would be easy for Chinese people to take over the 'stage of life' and played the 'comedy of the theatrical state'. A comedy in which Chinese people would act as the puppet masters and Malay people served either as properties for them to use in the play or as dumb spectators.

### C. Conclusion

The dynamics of economic relation between Malay and Chinese people in the Northern Coast of West Kalimantan, from Functional Structural perspective and regarding Malay economic actors in Sambas Regency and Chinese economic actors in Singkawang City—both were based on ethnic dominance—was deliberately created as an effort to strengthen system stability or status quo for the interest of the dominant group. Economic movements and their success in controlling trading areas were laden with achievement to strengthen and preserve status quo in other areas, including socio-cultural, politics, and religious fields.

From non-functional perspective, the analysis began on the concept of society as a complex social system, in which economic competition was a sub-system; both were functionally interdependent. Society could become a means to realize a conflict of power because job and earnings were distributed unfairly and differently. There was a struggle for economic and political

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<sup>19</sup> The name *pan nyin*, according to Bong Wei Khong (an informant) should be corrected. It should be *fan nyin* instead of *pan nyin*. *Fan* in *fan nyin* means travellers. Chinese people had also been *fan nyin* because they travelled to foreign land.

superiority to satisfy and maintain each group's needs and interests. In terms of economic struggle, people tended not to practice impartial economic activities, not only for the interest of the dominant group but also for the sake of their own ethnic group; i.e. to strengthen their position and status quo in economy, socio-cultural, politics, and religious fields.

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