
Ethnic Identity in Colonial and Postcolonial Politics: The Case of Minahasa, Eastern Indonesia

Basri Amin (Gorontalo State University, Indonesia)

Abstract: *This article shows how Minahasans have been involved in the dynamics and disputes of collective identity at both the local and national levels in postcolonial Indonesia. Moreover, the interplay of media influences and collective action reflect Minahasans' identity aspirations and strategies. This is attributed to the process of Minahasan locality as well as the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian society itself where the politics of identity, communal ties, and regional resurgence have proven to be powerful forces.*

Key words: *Minahasa, identity politics, postcolonial, regionalism, Indonesia*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, in explaining the social forces, dynamics and consequences behind identity as a social phenomenon, sociologists have approached it in cultural narratives, historical background, and global influences in a certain society. Basically, there are two models explaining the complexity of ethnicity: circumstantial and primordial. The model I apply in this study is a complimentary approach relating to the manner of ethnicity conception, or rather, between fixed and fluid understanding. The primordial approach tends to understand ethnicity in fixed terms and is rooted in socio-biological and traditional points of view. In contrast, the circumstantial model uses a fluid understanding of ethnicity rooted in history, material interest and rational actions (Chai, 2001; Cornell & Hartmann, 1998).

Identity is not a thing taken for granted. Identity is created and developed. Castells (1997) points out three forms of identity building: *legitimizing identity, resistance identity* and

project identity (p.8). Legitimizing identity is a condition wherein the actors of the dominant institution in society use their authority to legitimize an identity. Resistance identity compels actors, who are devalued by the dominant, to oppose the legitimized identity through identity politics. It can be seen as a struggle for identity recognition. Projected identity is a condition where actors have opportunities to use cultural materials to create a new identity, or transform it into a new social structure.

I argue that postcolonial countries share specific processes in their identity construction. This includes the rise of nationalism and ethnic nationalism, as well as a political consensus amongst the national and local ethnic elites. Moreover, religion, region and origin are substantial concepts identifying identity (Chai, 2001: 182). In addition to this conceptual development, I intend to contribute empirical considerations that when studying identity, socio-historical location, political moments and geographical settings are also defining factors.

This paper is about Minahasa, an indigenous ethnic group in North Sulawesi, eastern Indonesia. As a nation-state, Indonesia has successfully constructed its national identity through cultural and political integration out of the multitude of cultural entities, ethnicities, races, class, religious groups, regions and islands. However each of those social entities has its own internal concept of identity, but has successfully established a collective understanding about Indonesia as a nation in postcolonial period (Jacobsen, 2002). The concept of nation, of course, is constructed, imagined, reinforced, and transformed over time. From this perspective, the Indonesian nationality came about through shared historical experiences during the pre-colonial and colonial epochs. By using historical events and social events of the ethnic media I wanted to show how they have informed Minahasan postcolonial consciousness in constructing collective identity in postcolonial Indonesia.

2. Historical background

Minahasa is located in the Northern Sulawesi island of Indonesia with a population of about 795,284 (in 2010). Administratively, Minahasa is a part of North Sulawesi province but culturally Minahasan predominates Northern Sulawesi region. Minahasa is divided into four districts, Minahasa, South Minahasa, Southeast Minahasa, North Minahasa, and three cities, Manado, Tomohon and Bitung. The city of Manado is the capital of the North Sulawesi province and is a “melting pot” city, based on its history on ethnicities and religions.

The word “Minahasa” and its homeland are inventions. Literally speaking, Minahasa means “united” or become “one”. This word, Minahasa, has been associated with other local words of the Tombulu language such as Minaesa, Nimahasa, Nimaesa, where all of these words have an underlying meaning: united, to become one. The word Minahasa first appeared in Dutch records in 1789. It used not used to refer to a specific territory or ethnic group, but as a council of chiefs that helped give the Dutch directions in government and administration. Furthermore, before 1822, there was no evidence that suggested Minahasa as a category of specific territory or as a reference to an ethnic group (Henley, 1996: 36). Thus, inherently, this word was an indication of diversity or plurality of the people who lived in “Minahasa land” located in the Northern Sulawesi island of Indonesia. It is similar to the ideal concept of the Indonesian nation, “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” which means “unity in diversity”. It indicates a dimension of the “plurality” of social structure of the Indonesian people.

According to some scholars and cultural creators both in Indonesia and outside, Minahasa was an absolute invention, modified along the way, and, given its historical experiences, was shaped both by internal and external factors and influences. The pre-colonial condition of the Minahasa, as argued by Henley (1996: 45-49) had a highly fragmented linguistic distinction, traditions and folk memory. In fact, before the eighteenth century, there was no concept of Minahasa as a distinct category of people or community that

had a certain border of identity as well as geographical location. In the area later called “Minahasan land”, there used to be three major linguistic groups (Tontemboan, Tombulu and Tonsea), and five outsider groups (Tondano, Ratahan, Tonsawang, Bantik dan Panosakan). It is clear enough, then, that the concept of Minahasa as an ethnic community was created by eighteenth century colonial Dutch as an “act both to unify Minahasa and to enhance its differentiation from the outside world. At the same time, deliberate efforts were made to exploit some aspects of the old ethnic heritages in order to create a new kind of community” (ibid). This provides the main background information in approaching Minahasa, first of all, as a perceived community and the other as a territorial unit, a social category and as a political cause (Henley, 1996).

3. The Dutch and Minahasa: An Ambivalent Relationship

One of the important stages of Minahasan identity development is its connection to the Dutch during the colonial period. Construction of the concept and consciousness of being Minahasan was significantly shaped from that period. A treaty between political community representatives of Minahasan, called *walak*, with the Dutch/VOC in 1679 was the entry point in occupying Minahasa both as a region and a traditional community. Before that point in time no recorded information about Minahasa existed. Essentially, the relationship between Minahasa and the Dutch during the colonial era, particularly in the nineteenth century was in the areas of education, Christianity and political administration. It was noted that in 1900s monetary economy, schools and Christianity reformed Minahasans’ life. For the Minahasans themselves, this condition provided the momentum for social progress using the Western ideals. Coupled with this, a new social class, the new Minahasan elites, slowly came into existence, courtesy of the Dutch school system and the modern economic development operating in the Dutch administration (Schouten, 1998: 206-207).

The Dutch intervention through education, western government system and business treaties permeated the authority and interests of the Minahasan Chiefs. The success of the Dutch in realizing their colonial agenda was due to their policy to allow local autonomy by Minahasan chiefs to co-exist. We know this from one of the treaties of 1679 quoted above. The Dutch also considered traditional Minahasa as tribal communities, called *alfur*. In other words traditional pre-colonial Minahasans were considered “primitive”.

Interestingly enough however, Minahasan life was not totally transformed under Dutch rule and influences. One of the main characteristics of traditional Minahasan society was its orientation toward “individual” powers. This was embedded in Minahasan life experience as tribal communities. On the one hand the Dutch did push for a privilege and exclusive social position in the 1920s and 1930s only for the Chiefs’ family in the Dutch administration; on the other hand, it was clear that “personal achievements”, rather than descent factors, were considered a major source in producing prestige and in achieving social influence in Minahasan life. On the whole descent factors still provided an extra legitimacy for those who running for a position in the Dutch administration or running for local elections such as Chief (Schouten, 1998: 199-200).

In terms of Dutch policies which were a combination of economic interest and religious missions, schools were a powerful instrument to enhance and change Minahasans’ minds. It was noted that schools in Minahasa had significantly transformed Minahasan life, and since that period Minahasan active participation in school programs and church activities extended outward from Minahasan Chiefs’ families to common Minahasans. The embracing of the new systems was understandable because the Dutch needed to provide job opportunities continuously. They recruited office staffs and educated administrators especially for jobs in Java to support the Dutch company and for its resident offices’ needs (Buchholt and Mai, 1994: 5).

Arguably, therefore, the first generation of Minahasan diasporas and its cultural confidence happened when Minahasans became a “collaborative community” to serve the Dutch administration in East India out of Minahasan land. However, for Minahasans, this matter was just an opportunity to gain “status” as well as “welfare”. Minahasans cooperated well with the Dutch for their own interests. Despite this general impression of cordial relations among Minahasans and the Dutch, there were many internal conflicts among Minahasans themselves, particularly between the Christian missionaries’ expectations and traditional Minahasan values pagan rituals and indigenous cosmology where nature was intricately connected with the supernatural (Schefold, 1995).

In short, the Dutch’s impact on the Minahasans can be simplified in the following:

- Minahasa become an ethnic community as an ideal consensus from several sub-ethnics. As a result, Minahasa is “invented” and the consciousness of being Minahasan and its homeland are constructed. Cultural pluralities of Minahasan life and the formation of authorities and leaderships practices are the major basis in forming an egalitarian and a democratic society in Minahasa.
- Minahasa become a well-educated community through the Dutch education system. It provided a new social class in the Dutch Indies as well as privileges and images. Minahasa also became a place and center of progress in the colonial period. This is the starting point of Minahasan diasporas as a group of public servants and as an elite community in terms of life expectancy, skills and achievements.
- Minahasans received Christianity from European missionary (the Dutch and the Germans). But after Indonesia became an independent state, Christianity was perceived as a minority religion and remained peripheral in Indonesian society.
- Minahasans are now connected with the global economy and interaction. It means that Minahasan

social and economic resources are part of the global trade and other forms of exchange.

- Minahasans have been consistent in preserving a sense of geographical borders and community boundaries in order to maintain its identity and a sense of ethnicity although ideas of territorial understanding and borders have not fully pushed Minahasan to be an exclusive society.

4. Postcolonial Politics

The postcolonial Indonesia is primarily marked by the process of nation building. It was first started in the 1920s as a combined effort by Indonesian students in Europe and Java (Anderson, 1972; Kahin, 2003). The process of creating “Indonesia” became a unifying force fostered by educated elites and proponents of the independence movement particularly by a civilian militia during the “revolution period” of 1945-1949. All the efforts and the struggles to create an independent nation were geared toward driving away the colonialists, particularly the Dutch and Japan. The proponents of independence also utilized the issues of resource exploitation, social justice and human rights as platforms for an independent state.

After the repressive regime of Soeharto (1966-1998), political reform began to take shape in 1998. This was an important stage because after 30 years of authoritarianism under the New Order regime (1965-1998) the idea of Indonesia as a plural and multicultural nation was realized as part of the political reform, integration and economic development (*pembangunan*).

Nationalism in Indonesia was a result of political negotiation and cultural bargaining by regional elites. In the context of Minahasa, since the 1930s, Dr. G.S.S.J Ratulangi became a leading actor and political speaker in presenting national and “regional” nationalism based on Minahasa’s collective interests and objectives. Ratulangi was a well-known intellectual, mathematician, journalist, nationalist, and one of Indonesia’s founding fathers. As a prominent politician, he

is popularly known as the “father of Minahasan nation”. Sam Ratulangi played an important role in the shaping of Minahasan identity development. He was a prominent spokesperson of Minahasan vision during the first era of Indonesian state building (1920s-1949). According to Henley (1996), Sam Ratulangi successfully established moral and intellectual foundations of Minahasans dignity and provided political advice and cultural imagination. Other observers view him differently. Klinken (1996) for example, presented Sam Ratulangi as a Christian leader from Outer Indonesia during the 1920s-1940s.

For many years Sam Ratulangi’s ideas were popularly quoted and was a source of inspiration for Minahasans. Several books have been published in the light of Ratulangi’s brilliant vision to remind Minahasans of their position and role at both the national and international levels. In the Dutch language magazine, *Nationale Commentaren*, Ratulangi wrote:

“The national unity of the Indonesian *volk* is a political unity. It rests upon the political will to form a unity to be a political nation. With full *recognition of the cultural and ethnic differences* between the various groups, and of the political consequences of those differences, we must campaign strongly for the recognition, acceptance and realization of the political unity of the component parts of Indonesian *volk*. It must be impossible for anybody to drive the wedge of “divide and rule” between them. To achieve this, our leaders must understand the absolute necessity of political solidarity against anything which lies outside the ideology of Indonesia unity. On the other hand, it is equally *necessary that they recognize the right of every ethnic group to retain its autonomy* within its own ethnically defined region (*Nationale Commentaren*, 26-11-1938, translated by Henley, 1996: 132, italics added).

There are many proponents of nationalism and ethnic autonomy for Minahasa. We should note that Minahasans have been involved in many arenas for political debates as well as creating democratic institutions as part of Indonesia’s nation building process. Minahasans have

pushed for collective ethnic-based negotiations in order to build a nation-state of Indonesia not as an Islamic state, but a “secular state”.

On the other hand, Minahasan elites have advocated a discourse of cultural autonomy based on the cultural and regional diversities of Indonesia. According to Minahasan leaders, Indonesia was created to uphold ideals of equality of ethnicity, regions, and religious groups. At that time, it was considered an affront if the existence of ethnicity and religious diversity were denied. Political movements in Indonesian history, thus, have a strong connection with ethnic and religious groups. In the political arena of contemporary Indonesia, “political scrape” between “Muslim radicals” and “Christian radicals” are said to occur on many occasions. Many public debates show that ideas based on religious interests has become an interesting phenomenon. However, there are some overlapping areas where objective issues such as economic development, public goods and services can take precedence over issues of faith (e.g. Bertrand, 2004).

Although inter-religion interaction in Indonesia at the grass root level is still harmonious, in certain areas of outer Indonesia where certain religious communities are dominant, there are social and political tensions. In pursuing matters of communal interests in such regions, it is the elites who should be instrumental in bringing together religious leaders and their organizations to iron out their differences. The domain of religious tolerance can bring about productive interactions if elites promote nationalism on the one hand, and articulate identity politics and group interests on the other. Given the long history of harmonious interaction despite differences and diversity, I argue that the future of Indonesian politics depends on this quality.

Nationalism and regionalism can be very productive in a democratic society, particularly in achieving equilibrium between the central government and the local interest groups. It is productive in the sense that the regional aspect is naturally objective for Indonesia in the context of an “Islandic country” (Canor, 1994: 104). The flip side of this is

that regionalism can become problematic where the process of globalization is likely to shift political ideas of local interest groups and reorient their desire to be self-governed. Globalization may also have the tendency to weaken the legitimacy of the state causing it to become less autonomous and powerless in serving its citizens effectively. This observation may be speculative but it is relevant in the context of contemporary politics of identity economic imperatives. A few examples come to mind such as the cases of Aceh, West Papua and East-Timor. These cases represent a combination of problems usually associated with (but not limited to) local resistance, state failure, international pressure, and political imaginary. These areas also happen to epitomize questions of identity associated with region, religion and ethnicity.

Social science literature recognizes the position of nation construction, the move toward nationalism and ethnicity as a dialectical configuration of contemporary society. In fact, the concept of nation is constituted by talking, thinking and acting (Calhoun, 1997:5). There are widespread commitments when actions produce and spread an imagination and understanding of collective identity. This conception motivated people to engage in collective projects and practices to achieve or reinforce a burgeoning identity created through declaration of and practice in collective rituals and other activities as a nation. During this process, heroism, sacrifice, solidarity and legitimacy come together as national narratives, and later on become the raw material of political socialization and ideology. The concept of nation-building originated with Benedict Anderson who stated that a nation is an ‘imagined community’. In *Imagined Communities*’ (1991), Anderson describes the roles of print media (newspaper) and other “*language instruments*” in facilitating distribution of information and narratives from elites to the masses.

The nationalist movement is an identity construction phenomenon particularly seen during nation-building. It is connected with the proposition that nationalist collective actions are important as a pillar supporting government legitimacy (Rogowsky in Chai, 2001: 182). This fact is

complementary between action and reaction among the elites and masses (Castells, 1997: 31). However, nationalism has effected the formation of ethnicity and localities. Shanahan (1997) proposes that “the salience and significance of ethnicity are inextricably linked to the ‘style in which (nations) are imagined and historical process by which nation is invented,” (p.2). Moreover, according to Shanahan’s explanations, “political institutions facilitate the contemporary representation and expression of ethnic identity...ethnicity as a political construction by defining ethnicity as cultural expression of the self...the essence of ethnicity lies in the expression, irrespective of how it is marked” (p.2).

The social processes of identity articulation in some extent are mediated through media and the new media. In traditional perspective, media have associated with the news media, electronic or printed media. In contemporary perspective, the conception of media has extended to the new forms of media such the Internet and others audio and visuals media. However, essentially, all forms of media are realized the same function which is a mean of communication of human interaction and a tool of expression and action.

This study used media perspectives in exploring identity politics and its dynamics in postcolonial Indonesia. I have chosen Minahasa as a case study. This study was looking at particular media which are books, identified as “ethnic books”.

It is argued that the media’s role in constructing and maintaining Minahasan identity is significant for various reasons. Firstly identity articulations are essentially mediated and are located within certain cultural and political domains. These domains can be identified through dissemination of ideas, social action, narratives and cultural reproduction. Secondly, Minahasan media can be seen as unique in terms of its timing and actors. This study argues that Minahasan media tended to connect forms of Minahasan ideals and images into the contemporary social life courtesy of national discourses and local circumstances.

Thirdly, Minahasan media have a tendency to support their elite's roles and at the same time criticize Minahasan progress in general in postcolonial Indonesia.

5. Ethnic media: The case of Book production on Minahasan identity

Generally, books are contained more detail information of something, include for certain live dimension of society like Minahasan. Book is also shown particular attention from the authors where factually and intellectually have situated by structural conditions of certain society or event in social affairs in general. In fact, through books we can learn more details for specific issues as well as to verify objective texts and its implications in society.

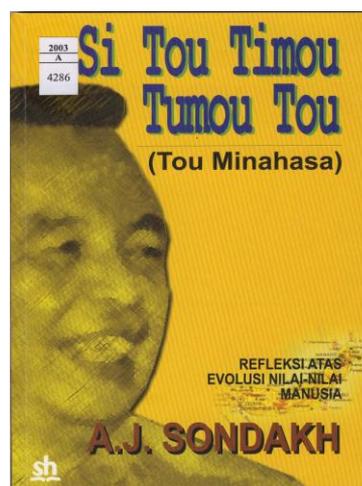
I was identified several books that I used as data sources for this study. The books are about Minahasan and their cultural and social aspects. There are four books: "Si Tou Tomou Tou" (*Reflection towards the evolution of Minahasan Values*) by Adolf Jouke Sondakh (2003), "Etnik Minahasa" (*Minahasan Ethnic in Accelerated Change*), edited by Roy E. Mamengko (2002), and "Cahaya di Timur" (*the Light of the East, the Ideas of Dr. Sam Ratulangi*) by Lucky Sondak and Reiner Ointoe (2004).

**"Si Tou Tomou Tou" (*Reflection on Minahasan Values*)
by Adolf Jouke Sondakh (*Sinar Harapan*, 2003. ISBN:
979-416-757-6)**

The book of "Si Tou Tomou Tou" presents cultural meanings among Minahasans. Firstly, it was written by Adolf Jouke Sondakh, a governor of North Sulawesi province (2000-2005). It is really unusual for a governor to be an author of an ethnic book in Indonesia. Sondakh is also well-known as a fighter of Minahasan culture revivalism since 1980s when he was as a national parliament member in Jakarta. Since 1980s Sondakh is one of the prominent Minahasan political elites in national level. Sondakh also represents Minahasan's vision in combining Minahasan images as an egalitarian

community as well as a well-educated people. He involved in preserving Minahasan based-festivals and seminars in Jakarta during 1980s and 1990s. At that time Sondakh is still as parliament member by representing the “Golkar” party –a leading party in Indonesian politics— (1987-1992). In fact, the background of Sondakh’ activities are not purely in politics because he was a faculty and elected as a Dean of social and political science faculty of the Sam Ratulangi University at Manado, North Sulawesi province (1967-1987).

Secondly, the book of “Si Tou Tomou Tou” has printed in a significant number of copies and republished for two editions with contained about 252 pages. There are about 2000 copy for each edition of this book. The book was published by one of the Jakarta’s popular publishing companies, named *Sinar Harapan*. The editors of this book are Richard Siwu, PhD dan Drs. Reiner Ointoe, leading cultural analysts in North Sulawesi. It is also important to know that the of “Si Tou Tomou Tou” is written at the moment when Minahasan in Minahasa homeland and outside need to reflect its collective interest in Indonesia politics where minority group such Minahasa needs political bargaining to gain positions both in government administrations and in development policies. It is clear that through the moment of this book, when it was launched and discussed in Jakarta, Minahasan have been tried to reorganize its cultural capitals and its glorious memory in claiming “Minahasan identity” through its history and cultural values.



In general, the content of this book is basically about reflection of “Minahasan soul” which is rooted in a conception of human achievements in Minahasan history and culture. The author of this book claimed that Minahasan identity has reinvented in early twentieth century by Dr. Sam Ratulangi, the Father of Minahasans and as one of the Indonesian national heroes. In short, according to Dr. Ratulangi, Minahasan values should be and always remains the consciousness of conception of “Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou” which means “*man lives to educate others*”, and some Minahasan elites explain it in more philosophical meanings that “*man lives to sustain others lives*”. Arguably, Sondakh book is one of the Minahasan elite efforts to reinforce such understanding of ethnic values and reflecting some contemporary contexts of Minahasan’ values challenges both in Indonesia and global life.

Sondakh has identified key concepts of Minahasan values on human being. It means that Minahasan should able to show these values which are individual achievements, rationality and spirituality, egalitarianism and human pluralism. Sondakh is strongly push these conceptions as Minahasan characteristic which will imply on societal levels on building dignity, criticism, objectivity, creativity, progressivism and prosperity. However, these conceptions more provoke Minahasan’ self-consciousness for being a progressive and critical people. And to support Sondakh’s reflection on Minahasan values, he refers all heroes and great mean among Minahasan since 1920s as examples on how values influenced Minahasan through long history in pre-colonial period, western influences and during the nation-building period of Indonesia (post-colonial period).

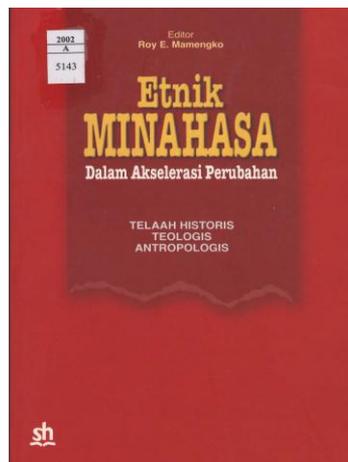
In addition, when the book launched and published in Jakarta, it definitely shows identity meanings, which are a need of public and national recognition as well as mean of socialization of Minahasa as group that have a different identity, cultural images and characteristics. It seems that Minahasan utilizing its “intellectual heritages” as a part of its identity for two possible purposes: to build a sense of proud and identity building duties among new generation of Minahasan where “identity crisis” seems faced youth

Basri Amin (Gorontalo State University, Indonesia)

Minahasan; and to pull attention and respect from other groups among Indonesian people.

“Etnik Minahasa” (*Minahasan Ethnic in Accelerated Changes*) Edited by Roy Mamengko (Sinar Harapan, 2002, ISBN: 979-416-733-9)

The “Minahasan Ethnic” book was published in 2002 by one of the famous publishing company in Jakarta, *Sinar Harapan* (the light of hope) with about 3000 copies. The book was distributed to the public through national book stores and libraries. The editor of this book, Roy E. Mamengko, is a lecture in Indonesian state university, Sam Ratulangi University. Mamengko has obtained his MA from the University of Murdoch, Australia. He also has attended in several trainings on education from Southern Illinois University, U.S. and now he is pursuing PhD in theology studies at Apollos Theological Seminary, Jakarta.



This is an edited book which presents a compilation approach on Minahasan. The chapter authors came from different fields and backgrounds. Majority of the authors are Minahasa historians and anthropologists, and others are business practitioners and Minahasan cultural activists from the Assembly of Minahasan Culture organizations. So far, this book is one of the very serious books of Minahasa in terms of its variety of contents and authors, particularly because almost all chapters on this book came have

presented in a national seminar in 1999. This book has about 450 pages which contains 13 chapters. The chapter authors of this book are Minahasan and they wrote about Minahasan life and its dynamics, historically and sociologically.

It is interesting to remember that in the 2000s Minahasan have produced several ethnic-based books. And it is also important to know that some books are published, launched and celebrated in Jakarta, the capitol of Indonesia, and not in Minahasan homeland. Before the papers appeared in a book edition, named "Minahasan Ethnic", the papers have presented in a Minahasan national seminar in Jakarta, which held on 8-9 April 1999, which titled "*Cultural Changes and Minahasan Ethnic Traditions in the Third Millennium*". This seminar was organized by a joint committee between the Minahasan ethnic organization, *the Kerukunan Keluarga Kawanua (the Solidarity of Minahasan Families)* and Institute of Research and Development of Regional Culture (*Lembaga Penelitian dan Kebudayaan Daerah*), North Sulawesi province.

The significant contribution of this book is its ability to present a compilation of multi-perspectives on Minahasa in the light of "change and continuity" of its identity development. A well-known historian, Prof. Andri Lapian, is the author of book introduction. In this book, he claims some statements of Minahasan natures on leadership which is intellectualism and progressivism are highly respected.

Another important part of this book is that the authors have successfully shown an outline of Minahasan development in its identity through western influences in education, entrepreneurship culture and diaspora. Alex Ulaen, a Minahasan anthropologist for example, presents issue on Minahasan diaspora in Europe, particularly in the Netherlands and in the U.S. One of the Ulaen's conclusions is that Minahasans have mainly used its family network to establish its economic resources and others mutual aids systems. Unfortunately, there is no appropriate data about how "Christianity network" become a recent development of

Minahasan life today, especially for those who live in the U.S mainland (Borckenhagen, 2005).

Essentially, the book of "Minahasan Ethnic" was presented to the public to revitalize Minahasan images as a committed ethnic community to participate to build Indonesia as a modern nation-state. Despite Minahasan as a minority group in terms of religion and ethnicity, it can not be denied that Minahasan have contributed intellectual traditions and regional nationalism as well as political ideals in Indonesian history. Although Minahasan typically different with other ethnic groups because its connection to the Western, particularly the Dutch, but Minahasan have criticized the Dutch domination to change Minahasan traditions and its right to achieve Minahasan' aspirations on prosperity. This book is also present a special chapter Minahasan' wars with the Dutch dominations, include Minahasan's political petitions, named March 31 1877 petition.

Through this book, Minahasan definitely need to speak out about their identity by representing its history and its progress. It had multi meaning, symbolically and substantively. What I mean by symbolic meaning is more about a form of collective images and ideals which represent certain characteristic of such group like Minahasa. As we need to remember that in the beginning of 2000, Indonesia faced a serious problem in communal conflicts, both in terms of ethnics, race or religions. Many areas where religions and ethnicity overlap each others, there is high tensions of communal conflict, in Maluku and Kalimantan region for example.

In contrast, although Minahasa region contains a multicultural society but, fortunately, there is no significant communal conflict. Minahasa seems immune from conflicts. Of course, even though this situation is always very crucial for Minahasan, but Minahasan want and need to present their "peace" records and images to the Indonesian society. Minahasan tend to use a claim as a peace region and have interest to present Minahasa land and its people as an excellent example on social pluralism and democracy in Indonesia. In fact, Minahasans remind both the world and

Indonesian that Minahasa can be an excellent model of modern society where democracy, religious pluralism and diversity are compatible each others.

However, in pragmatic levels, Minahasan are not only present their national contribution on national agendas, but Minahasan also consistently request national attentions and demands in terms of Minahasan local development, transfer of autonomy and another state resources on development such local budgets, revenues, as well as governmental positions for Minahasan elites and any kind of political representations in political parties and organizations.

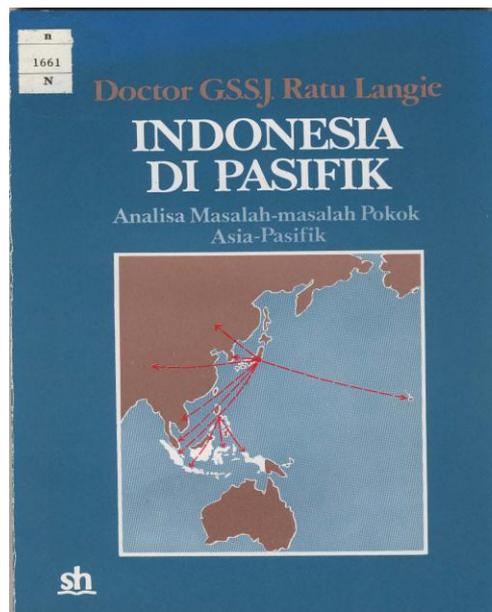
**“Cahaya di Timur Merambah Pasifik:
Pijar-Pijar Pikiran tentang Dr. G.S.S.J. Ratulangi”**

***The Light of East in Visioning the Pacific: The Glares of
Dr. G.S.S.J. Ratulangi's Ideas***

**Edited by Lucky Sondakh and Reiner Emyot Ointoe
(Unsrat Press & Media Pustaka, Manado-Indonesia. ISBN:
979-3687-06-1).**

This book has published by the University Press and local publishing company and launched in Manado, North Sulawesi. However, event the launching ceremony not in “national place” like Jakarta, but the university has invited national speakers and commentators.

“The Light of East” is a book about the visional ideas by Dr. Sam Ratulangi, a national hero from Minahasan. Sam Ratulangi is also known as the “Father of Minahasan”. Ratulangi is an intellectual, nationalist and journalist. He obtained his doctorate from Swiss in natural science. Ratulangi has written a very famous book, titled “*Indonesia in the Pacific: An Analysis of major Problems in Asia and the Pacific*” in 1937. This book was originally in Dutch language and finally translated in Indonesia in 1981 (167 pages).

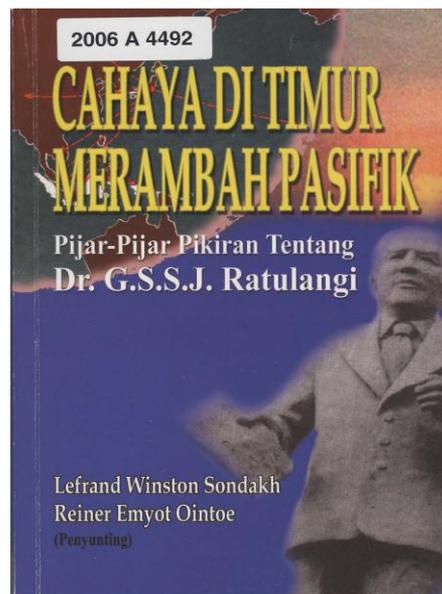


Since 1966, there are at least 5 national books about Dr. Sam Ratulangi which have covered different issues of Ratulangi's life and his works during the colonial period and after Indonesian independence 1945. Almost all books are presenting Ratulangi as a nationalist and intellectual figure who worked in issue of international affairs and political diplomacy as well as economic-political battles in Asian countries where Indonesia seek its roles and national destiny. To support Ratulangi in disseminating his ideas his establish a national magazine, named "*Nationale Commentaren*", a national commentary, in 1937 and it published until 1942 which successfully reached at 215 editions during its publication period for 5 years.

But what is then momentous issue why this book became an important part of Minahasan identity development until now. I will argue it is because Ratulangi is a symbol of moral, political model, cultural authenticity and intellectual resources for Minahasan to define the ideals of being Minahasan. Ratulangi has accumulated an excellent roles model of Minahasan in playing positions and narratives in a multicultural society like Indonesia. Morality and intellectuality as well as integrity and dignity are complementary aspects that Minahasan really imagine to be.

Despite any great images of Ratulangi, according to Klinken, “Ratulangi was a traditionalist” and although he was intensively involved in nationalist movements, but Ratulangi has actually realized it more as a “political exercise” (2003: 111-113).

The book of “the Light of East” presents comprehensive sides of Ratulangi’s life and his achievements both in Minahasan homeland and in outside Minahasa, particularly in Java. However, this book is a product by long seminars and discussion material, include from Ratulangi’s commemorations in Jakarta and in Minahasa. Ratulangi has established a democratic institution for Minahasan in 1929, named the PM, “Persatuan Minahasa” (the United of Minahasa). At the same time, Ratulangi also has assisted Minahasan community to conserve a sense of collectivity as a distinguished nation or as an ethnic group. The PM is a local-based Minahasa institution which acting as a local parliament, a legislature. The PM provides participatory mechanisms in decision making, such as for local elections, tax and other local policies.



Going back to the book of “Light of East”, essentially Ratulangi has much paid attentions, intellectually and politically, to the economic opportunities and political

dynamics in Asian Pacific countries, particularly for East Asian countries, especially the economic progress of Japan and China. Since 1937 Ratulangi suggested to Indonesia to participate actively and strategically in economic interactions (trades and partnership) with these countries in the regions.

In short, this book covers themes of Ratulangi's brilliant ideas on the region of Asia Pacific in a light of Indonesian roles and challenges within the region. It was provided intellectual analysis and political outlines in early time of Indonesian history where other national leaders and nationalist still discussed the issues of independence itself. Ratulangi has moved forward to see the "international atmosphere" of Indonesia as a new independent nation-state. However, for Minahasan itself, Ratulangi's ideas and his roles provide a role model and push a collective confidence for Minahasan to make a strong claim regarding its identity as a committed people for progress within Indonesian state.

Although this book is an edited book but its content is more complete than other books as far as I know. It was published in 2004, printed about 2000 copies and contained 328 pages with 20 chapter authors. The editors are Prof. Lucky Sondakh, the president of Sam Ratulangi University, and Reiner Ointoe, a cultural analyst, university lecture and author in North Sulawesi. This book also has a different meaning because it was published and launched by the University of Sam Ratulangi, a national university which is located in Minahasan land in North Sulawesi province.

In my reading, this book was published in the purpose to reinforce a new sense of nobility of Minahasan through remembering and contextualizing Minahasan prominent intellectual and heroes such Sam Ratulangi. It should be note that soon after the book launching, just a few months after the event, the university built a statute of Ratulangi in the middle of campus areas. It is not only reflects as an intellectual symbol or as a moral respect but it might also be a sign for a kind of "Minahasanization" of the local state university. In fact, there are still many critics to the university because for long time the university looks like just

using Ratulangi's name but without appropriate efforts to realize his dreams and intellectual heritages.

Therefore, I will argue that in the case of "the Light of East" it can be seen as a part of new dynamics among Minahasan elites in using institutions and other opportunities to revitalize its claim as an ethnic groups that have exceptional in terms cultural and historical achievements. It seems that book productions and things that connected to that matter are a sign of a need of identity reinforcement. And in practical issue, through this matter Minahasans articulate one important aspect of its cultural dynamics which is ability to transcend its history to answers new life challenges, both in contemporary Indonesia and today's globalized-world.

6. Conclusion

Postcolonial Minahasa of Indonesia illustrated that identity is created through a complex of historical experience, social forces, conditions and processes. This paper examined the idea that identity construction is based on meaning formation, life experience, and boundary definitions; therefore it needs a medium for articulation. I have shown that historical records and media are cultural medium of identity articulation in the context of Minahasan in postcolonial Indonesia. Print media provides a significant range in identity articulation, rather than only supplying images or stereotypes. Ethnic books in particular offer significant depth by presenting descriptions and exploring identity. Space and the mode of articulation of identity are the key points to understanding the role of media in identity construction. Book production is one of the significant methods of symbolic construction by promoting and recognizing identity as we have learned from a South African case (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998:136). Books offer an arena of resistance, assimilation, negotiation or articulation of identity.

I argue that books as a media has significantly mediated identity articulations both in terms of cognitive meanings, collective claims and subjective understandings. This

phenomenon is not proof of what Harry Redner states that “the book is a commodity, and as part of global culture...” (2004: 54-55). Book can be a symbol of ethnic action and reflect how particular ethnic group reproduce their identity. Using books and other media are also can interpret as a realization of a identity “dialogue” to others, as Taylor pints out that identity is about “dialogue” to the self or with the others (Taylor, 1994: 32-37).

Finally, what I found in exploring Minahasan media, particularly about ethnic-book productions is that book is absolutely not as a commodity. Rather as a mean of identity articulation as well as mean of identity socialization and recognition. Books are also “represent” certain aspects of Minahasan life, and others cover particular issues of being Minahasan such as Minahasan biographies. It can be claimed that through books, the people like Minahasan, bridges its collective commonality as well as its values and meaning of being Minahasan through period of time where global world and any cultural constraints and political environments rapidly changes in a multicultural society like Indonesia.

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Basri Amin (Gorontalo State University, Indonesia)

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