Conflict Resolution Based on Chinese Customs in Pontianak, West Kalimantan

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Abstract—The aim of this research is to describe conflict resolution based on Chinese customs in Pontianak, West Kalimantan. This research used qualitative approach. The informants comprised of the executives, public figures and grass roots of Chinese society. The techniques of data collection were direct communication and documentary study while the instruments used interview guide and record of documents. Data processing was carried out in data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The research findings are: (1) Conflict resolution based on the customs of Chinese society in Pontianak consists of Tau Kiam, and Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka, (2) Conflict resolution through Tau Kiam refers to the custom of asking for and giving forgiveness through mutual consensus, which is applied to cases that revolve around misunderstanding, verbal quarrel or miscommunication, (3) Conflict resolution through Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka refers to the custom of asking for and giving forgiveness, which are applicable to cases of slandering, disgracing someone else’s good name, damaging someone else’s dignity, theft, adultery, and divorce, (4) The two customs of conflict resolution are considered sacred because they were derived from Chinese religion and belief system which have been handed down from generation to generation.

Keywords: conflict resolution, chinese customs

I. INTRODUCTION

Harmonious life and peaceful co-existence are the ideal desired by every society. However, it is a fact that this life is never free from any conflicts, both personal and social conflicts. Like harmony, conflict is able to provide dynamics if it is managed well, or if it is transformed into lasting peace. By contrast, a conflict could be highly destructive if it is not resolved properly. The question is: How could a conflict be managed and transformed into lasting peace? One of the possibilities is through the empowerment and application of local customs. Local customs are deep-rooted local wisdom that originates from a society’s culture and belief system. It has strong legitimacy if used as a medium to bring about harmonious life and peaceful co-existence. The research findings of Salahudin (2002), Satia (2003), Repaliano (2004), Bahari (2007 and 2008), Suprapto (2013), reveal that, as an alternative way, conflict resolution, which is based on a society’s local custom is effective enough to resolve both intra- and interethic conflicts. This research on conflict resolution based on Chinese customs in Pontianak, West Kalimantan is to complement and expand previous researches as well as an attempt to continually empower local customs, which serves as a kind of social asset for sustainable development

Thus far, intra and interethnic violent conflicts in West Kalimantan have been resolved through litigation and non-litigation (negotiation, mediation, conciliation, and arbitration). In fact, conflict resolution through the above-mentioned two ways, often causes dissatisfaction among various parties, including the parties involved in conflicts. The dissatisfaction was caused by the fact that the resolution resulted in a winning party and a losing party. To overcome the shortcomings, an alternative conflict resolution is needed. The alternative could be obtained from the culture and belief system that exist in a customary society. Like other ethnic groups, the Chinese ethnic group also possesses customs which are capable of resolving personal and social conflicts. How the rules could be applied in conflict resolution is the question to be answered in this research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Metharman’s study (2002) on Conflict Resolution through Litigation and Non Litigation reveals that conflict resolution through a law court (litigation) contains many weaknesses [1]. The findings were which reveal that society got so fed up with conflict resolution through litigation that they attempted to seek an alternative dispute resolution (ADR). This alternative dispute resolution exists due to widespread reaction against the many weaknesses inherent in conflict resolution through litigation.

Abdurasyd (2002) states that in general there are four types of conflict resolution outside of a law court, namely: negotiation, mediation, conciliation, and arbitration [2]. While according to Nasikun (1995), there are three types of conflict resolution, namely: (1) defeating enemies through physical violence based on one’s own unilateral will, (2) bargaining, in which the power to put pressure is psychological and symbolic instead of physical violence in nature, which could be carried out directly through negotiation, or indirectly through mediation, (3) turning over the matter the party who has an authority, or who is considered impartial, which could be carried out through arbitration (considering his integrity) [3]. Alternatively, it could be turned over to a law court. In line with Abdurasdy, furthermore Nasikun (1995) states that overcoming a conflict could be carried out through three alternative methods, namely: conciliation, mediation, and arbitration. The above three methods proposed are related to one another based on the conflict situation at the place of conflict [4].
Furthermore, all reveal that every society and region have their own way of resolving a conflict. This particular way of society is a reflection of their local wisdom, and constitutes an alternative dispute resolution (ADR), in addition to other ADRs that already exist thus far (the studies of Salahudin [5], Satia [7], Repaliano [8], Bahari [9], Haba [10], Jati [11] and Suprapto [12]).

Therefore, the way we handle a conflict is a matter of custom and choice. In making any choice of conflict resolution, we are supposed to take into account the suitability of the culture and region where conflict resolution is to be carried out, so as to avoid cultural and social barriers.

III. METHODS

This research used a qualitative approach with ethnographic method (Spradley, 1997) [13]. The design of the research took the form of multiple side ethnographic study with analytical induction approach (Bogdan, 1992; Muhajir, 2000) [14].

The informants of this research comprised of the executives of Chinese Customs and Culture Assembly (MABT), Chinese public figures (executives of social foundation), and members of Chinese society who are knowledgeable about Pontianak Chinese culture. The techniques of data collection were direct communication technique and documentary study. The instruments of data collecting were interview guide and record of documents. All information given by the informants was recorded meticulously and thoroughly, and was confirmed with the informants in case the data lacked details.

Data processing in this research was carried out in three stages, namely: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Sugiyono, 2014) [15]. Data validity was ensured through extended observation. The researcher did extended observation by revisiting the research venue to re-interview both former and new informants. In addition, data validity was also ensured through resource, technique, and data triangulation.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the data collected and analyzed, the researcher found several forms or concepts of conflict resolution based on the customs of Chinese society in Pontianak, namely: (1) The Custom of Tau Kiam, and (2) The Custom of using Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka.

Tau Kiam is the custom of asking for and giving forgiveness between the parties in conflict. Usually Tau Kiam is carried out through mutual consensus. Both sides involved in the conflict would sit at the same table to talk about the cause of the dispute. This meeting was presided over by a Lau Tua. A Lau Tua is an elder who functions as a customary leader. By an elder we mean a person who is respected, feared, and who is deemed to be influential in every customary activity. Usually a Lau Tua is an elder who is capable of resolving conflicts since the judgment he made is based on justice or fairness, and impartiality.

A Lau Tua serves as a mediator who gives fair judgment so that it is always obeyed and followed up by the two sides involved in the conflict. A Lau Tua plays an important role in accommodating the conflict by serving as a mediator and arbitrator who acts as a neutral third party having an authority to mediate and give a fair judgment in conflict resolution. The status of the third party (Lau Tua) is higher the two sides involved in the conflict.

Conflict resolution through the custom of Tau Kiam is applied in conflicts that do not embarrass or disgrace the good name of an individual or a group of individuals. The nature of the conflict usually only revolves around misunderstanding or verbal quarrel. Conflict resolution through Tau Kiam can be applied not only to conflicts within Chinese society, but with non-Chinese society as well.

The custom of using Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka is concerned with conflict resolution related to slandering, disgracing someone else’s good name, damaging someone else’s dignity, theft, adultery, and divorce. Such custom is usually used only to resolve domestic intra-ethnic conflicts. It is seldom used to resolve inter-ethnic conflict. Kim Hue Ang Tiu is a kind of golden flower decorated with red color, and made of golden paper arranged with tiny wire. Its main function is for ancestor worship. Chinese society firmly believes that golden flower (Kim Hue) is the most special flower among all flowers. Such ‘flower’ is used as a realization of the highest respect to the ancestors’ spirit during their worship ritual.

The sacred use of Kim Hue (golden flower) is then used as a symbol of asking for forgiveness in conflict resolution. It means that those involved in conflict earnestly seeking forgiveness as earnestly as in ancestor worship.

While Ka refers to oranges. Oranges are also used as a token of asking for forgiveness since it is believed that oranges would bring goodness to their recipients. According to Chinese customs, Ka or oranges are used as an offering to the ancestors during ritual worship, with the expectation that the ancestors would bless the worshippers back with goodness, health, wealth, and being kept safe from all harms in daily lives. Such belief is handed down from generation to generation, and becomes internalized value. If oranges are not there in a ritual worship, it is believed that all kinds of negative things would befall them.

Therefore, Ka or oranges are included in the custom of asking for forgiveness since by receiving Ka or oranges it is believed that the other person would receive goodness and blessing. Bad things that happened during the conflict would go away, and would be replaced by positive things.

Ka or oranges used in the custom of asking forgiveness should be odd in number. The number of oranges commonly used is five (5), seven (7), or nine (9). The use of odd numbers in ritual worship and asking for forgiveness signifies something alive. It means that everything originates from spirit so that worshippers are able to sense that they are conducting a dialogue with the Almighty God with pure hearts. It is all the same with the act of asking for forgiveness. The oranges given to the aggrieved party signify that the troublemaker earnestly seeks forgiveness from the aggrieved party.

Both Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka should be given simultaneously to the aggrieved party in the conflict. In this case, the aggrieved party is the recipient. After receiving Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka, the aggrieved party...
Conflict happened between residents having different clan names. For example, if a resident with the clan name Gouw or Tan was involved in a conflict that disgraced his good name, or damaged his dignity, he could seek the help of a Lau Tua in a forum where Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka as chief, or citizens association chief was unable to mediate between the two sides, they came to a Lau Tua to carry out the custom of Tau Kiam. Whenever the case has come to the stage of Tau Kiam presided over by a Lau Tua, the decision or judgment made by the Lau Tua must be accepted by the two sides involved in the conflict without questioning it. This is due to the fact that the status of the Lau Tua is considered higher than those involved in the conflict. In addition, the Lau Tua is considered to be an elder whose words must be obeyed, since according to Chinese customs, a Lau Tua can be likened to a judge who represents God in this world, and has had a lot of experiences in his life.

Conflict resolution among Chinese society thus far was carried out under the auspices of customary foundations, and association of Chinese residents having the same clan name, as well as under the auspices of Chinese Customs and Culture Assembly (MABT). Conflict resolution is usually carried out with the help of a Lau Tua in a forum where Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka as chief, or citizens association chief was unable to mediate between the two sides, they came to a Lau Tua to carry out the custom of Tau Kiam. Whenever the case has come to the stage of Tau Kiam presided over by a Lau Tua, the judgment made by the Lau Tua must be accepted willingly. The party declared guilty should ask for forgiveness from the aggrieved party by giving him/ her Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka as a symbol that the apology comes from the bottom of his/ her heart, and a sincere desire to make peace.

When the party declared guilty handed Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka to the aggrieved party, the Lau Tua witnessed the occasion. It means that the two sides earnestly asked for and extended forgiveness to each other so that there would be no more conflict or hostility between them in the future. If the two sides meet each other intentionally or unintentionally, there should be no hard feelings between them. They are expected to have the right attitude of loving each other as taught by Buddha who is full of compassion.

Referring to the above exposition, it is obvious that conflict resolution based on customary value has positive correlation with Chinese religious teaching and customary beliefs in general. In other words, religion influences the process of conflict resolution.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Conclusion
Based on the research findings and discussion stated above, the following conclusions could be drawn:

- Conflict resolution based on the customs of Chinese society in Pontianak consists of the
custom of Tau Kiam, and the custom of using Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka.

- Conflict resolution through the custom of Tau Kiam refers to the custom of asking for and giving forgiveness through mutual consensus preside by lau tua, which is applied to cases that revolve around misunderstanding or verbal quarrel or miscommunication.

- Conflict resolution through the custom of Kim Hue Ang Tiu and Ka refers to the custom of asking for and giving forgiveness by giving golden flower and oranges, which are applicable to cases of slandering, disgracing someone else’s good name, damaging someone else’s dignity, theft, adultery, and divorce.

- The two customs of conflict resolution are considered sacred because they were derived from Chinese religion and belief system which have been handed down from generation to generation.

B. Recommendation

- The study of customary values with all their underlying aspects including the study of customary values regarding conflict resolution should be carried out in order to dig into the cultural wisdom in it that existed over a period of time.

- In the future more profound scientific study should be conducted with cultural wisdom regarding ethnic Chinese conflict resolution in other places, as well as other society’s ways of resolving a conflict in order to widen the horizon of scientific knowledge.

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