



THE TRADITION OF CUTTING THE FINGERS OF THE DANI TRIBE AS A SYMBOL OF MORNING LOCATED IN PAPUA

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Abstract :Adat is a habit or it can also be called a culture that has been carried out continuously and repeatedly, which has become the hallmark of a place or area that contains cultural values, norms, institutions, and habits. Customary law itself regulates all behavior carried out by people in a particular community group. Adat itself is divided into 2 (two) kinds, namely custom which if someone does it and is said to have violated it and ends up giving sanctions it is called customary law, while adat which if someone does it and does not include violating activities is called habit. Customary law is a habit carried out by a community that has various binding rules and also includes unwritten law because it is not included in the legal record that arises from habits carried out for generations. Causing legal consequences if someone's behavior is said to be in violation, such as the iki paleg tradition carried out by the Dani Tribe. The conclusion obtained is that the tradition can be said not to violate if the person does it voluntarily, and can be classified as a violation of human rights if the person does it under coercion.

Keywords: Customary Law, Human Rights (HAM), Dani Tribe.

1. Introduction

Humans in the development of their lives have various types of traditional cultures. The traditions of the people have their own characteristics that are unique where every ethnic group in Indonesia has a different tradition. By definition, tradition is a habit that is carried out continuously by the ancestors and then inherited and applied in people's lives to this day.¹ In this case, a tradition certainly has noble values that are required for meaning and will continue to be firmly held by the community, especially indigenous peoples. Basically, tradition has a symbolic

¹ S. I.Dan, "Universitas darma persada," vol. 3, no. 021, p. 8649057, 2014.



and religious nature. This is because there is a certain meaning that is the background in the implementation of a tradition. Tradition is a social habit that is passed down from one generation to another through the process of socialization. The tradition is carried out to maintain harmonious relations between communities or groups, because with the existence of traditions, people become more appreciative of each other.²

Indonesia has millions of traditions in it. Each region has its own traditions that are different from other regions, both in terms of implementation and meaning. One of the areas of Indonesia that are rich in tradition is the land of Papua. Papua is an island with thousands of tribes and traditions contained in it, but the Asmat and Dani tribes are the original tribes of Papua. Talking about tribes and traditions, the Dani tribe as a native Papuan tribe has various types of traditions which are inherited from previous ancestors.

The Dani tribe has several traditions, including: the mummy tradition, which is a tradition carried out by preserving the corpses of deceased ancestors in a unique way, namely drying and putting it in a cave, the age of the mummy is quite long, up to 300 years; the second is the tradition of a stone-burning party where this stone-burning party is carried out to welcome a birth or marriage as well as a celebration of victory over war, in the stone-burning process does not use matches and so on but by rubbing both sides of the stone until a spark appears; third, namely the tradition of war by the Dani tribe where in the Dani tradition war is symbolized as a form of self-esteem that must be maintained in ancient times, but for now this war is only used as a show to tourists visiting the Baliem Valley area; In addition to the three traditions above, the Dani tribe also has a tradition that can be considered dangerous, namely the tradition of cutting fingers or Ike bulge found in the Dani tribe, Papua. For them, this tradition is a tradition that has its own meaning as a symbol of mourning when one of the family members dies. The pain of losing one finger is enough to symbolize that a death becomes a deep sorrow for the bereaved family that has been passed down since the time of the ancestors.³

However, along with the development of increasingly advanced science and technology, the moment of this iki paleg tradition in the Dani Tribe community is slowly being eroded. Although this tradition is starting to fade, clear evidence of the tradition of iki paleg or finger cutting as a symbol of mourning can be found in the traditional elders, most of whom lost their fingers to be cut off. The fading of this iki paleg tradition is because this tradition is considered to violate human rights, especially for women, where here mothers are required to carry out the tradition. Problems generally arise due to an activity or strength that has not been used optimally, weaknesses that cannot be overcome, opportunities that are not utilized properly, and threats that arise suddenly. To achieve success is usually based on the existing problem factors, including critical factors, performance results, and other factors that can realize the success of a business. Meanwhile, issues or conditions where there are things that must be considered and put forward

² Ibid.

³ Lena Nirbela, "Reformasi dalam Regulasi Hukum Adat Potong Jari Papua", 2020, hal 6.



because they can have a significant impact that is important, urgent, long-term, and plays an important role in the implementation of better affairs in the future.

2. Method

The type of research in this writing is the normative legal research. Normative legal research is research that examines document studies, using various secondary data such as laws and regulations, court decisions, legal theory, and can be in the form of opinions of scholars. The things studied in normative legal research include several things such as legal principles, legal systematics, the level of legal synchronization, legal comparisons and legal history.

3. Findings And Discussion

Papua is one of the regions in Indonesia that is still very strong in using customary law in their daily lives, even though several cities in Papua such as Jayapura and Sorong have started implementing a modern lifestyle. One of the areas that apply customary law is the Dani tribe, which is located in the Baliem Valley, Papua. The Dani tribe is a tribe that has inhabited the Baliem Valley since the early 1900s, which is located in the central mountainous area of the Irian Jaya region. Most of the indigenous people of the Dani Tribe make a living as farmers. In addition, in carrying out their activities, the Dani has several tools to help their work, such as stone axes, bamboo, spears, and knives made of bones. There are so many traditions that are owned by the Dani tribe, one of which is the tradition of iki paleg or finger cutting.

The tradition of cutting fingers or iki paleg itself is a tradition that symbolizes the sadness resulting from the death of a family member. According to the Dani indigenous people, crying alone is not enough to describe the feelings of sadness they feel.⁴ The Dani people have their own way of expressing their feelings, namely by cutting their fingers which is called the iki paleg (finger cutting) tradition. Cutting these fingers is an emotional act due to the pain that is in the mind that is visible in the physical actions they do. Another meaning behind the ritual can be interpreted as an effort to avoid disasters and calamities that are considered to have been a factor in the death of relatives so that they do not come back to befall the others.⁵ This tradition must be done if there are family members or close relatives, such as mother, father, sister, and brother who died.⁶

According to Neale (1985) regarding grief as a sense of loss and a method of transitioning from a state of shock and inability to get rid of past circumstances to a sad state, and using the values contained in it as the foundation for a new form of useful relationships (pp. 469-470). In the tradition of iki paleg, it is believed that the cutoff of the family's fingers is considered a protector

⁴ Bagaskoro Bisono Putro, Ananda Salsabila Nadira, "Makna Dibalik Tradisi Niki Paleg Suku Dani di Papua", 2019, 3 (2), hal, 159

⁵ *Ibid*, hal, 163

⁶ *Lena Nirbela, op.cit, hal 6*



of the spirit of the deceased so that they remain at home. This tradition is done by cutting off one part of the finger except the thumb. Although the tradition of iki paleg or finger cutting is one of the extreme traditions, indigenous peoples, especially the Dani tribe, have maintained their culture since the time of their ancestors. This tradition of iki paleg or finger cutting is mainly done by women, namely mothers, but family members from men can also carry out this finger cutting tradition.⁷ The women are the main objects in the finger cutting process.

This tradition is a form of deep sorrow for the Dani people who are born from deep feelings that are intertwined throughout life. That is how the love that exists makes you give up or be able to hurt yourself physically and this represents the deep sadness experienced by the Dani Tribe community and remembering that death is a real thing that cannot be avoided by humans, so many ways are done by the community. To overcome his grief.⁸

The traditional act of cutting fingers or iki paleg is a form of deep sorrow for the Dani people who are born from deep feelings that are intertwined throughout life. By preserving the iki paleg tradition, it means showing respect for previous ancestors, a sense of love, and a sense of obedience to one's own traditional traditions.

In addition to doing the finger cutting tradition, the Dani tribe also performs another ritual, namely mud bathing. This should be done as a meaning that all living things will eventually return to the ground.⁹ The iki Paleg procession itself is rarely carried out by the Dani tribe, although it is still sustainable and of course you will find many mothers with fingers that are no longer intact. People will think that this tradition is terrible, but Indonesia has many unique cultures and must be respected.

The state recognizes the existence of indigenous peoples, as regulated in Article 18B paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution which reads "The state recognizes and respects customary law community units and their traditional rights as long as they are still alive and in accordance with community development and the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which is regulated by law". Customary law is generally unwritten, this is because customary law originates from habits that live in a society which makes customs (habits) unable to be removed even though the development of modern times has only had to follow the process of developing the civilization of the nation.

⁷ *Ibid*, hal 8

⁸ B. B. Putro, "Makna Dibalik Tradisi Niki Paleg Suku Dani di Papua," *Commed J. Komun. dan Media*, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 159, 2019

⁹ Kendita Agustin, Tradisi Potong Jari Mengerikan Tapi Penuh Makna, diakses dari <https://www.goodnewsfromindonesia.id/2019/07/02/tradisi-potong-jari-suku-dani> pada tanggal 13 November 2021



Seeing the development of an increasingly modern life, the iki paleg tradition is considered not to be in accordance with the times. The tradition of cutting fingers is classified as a dangerous act, where in the process of cutting fingers the only tools used are traditional tools such as axes made of stone; sharp stone slabs; and banana leaves only. Apart from the equipment used in the finger cutting process which is still considered traditional and should not be used, the iki paleg tradition also involves organs, namely the fingers which can cause a change in a person's physical condition. After doing the finger cutting tradition, the wound caused by cutting the finger will only heal in approximately one month, during that one month period of course there are limitations in carrying out daily activities. Considering and seeing the sophistication of technology that is getting more and more advanced, which often requires fingerprints to complete data or open a device, of course it becomes difficult for the Dani people to keep up with technological advances if the tradition of this iki paleg is still maintained. It can be said that this iki paleg tradition is no longer in accordance with the times.

a. The Effectiveness of the Finger Cut Tradition or Iki Paleg According to the Dani Suku

Effectiveness comes from the word effective which means having an influence or effect. While effectiveness means the state of being influential or memorable for a certain action. If it is associated with the Iki Paleg or finger cutting tradition, this tradition actually has a great influence. The tradition of Iki paleg or finger cutting is considered very effective as a representation of the grief or sadness felt because according to the beliefs of the Dani indigenous people, the tradition can have a big impact which results in a physical disability. According to the Dani tribe, the family is a complement in living life and kinship is an important aspect in carrying out the functions of life in the social environment. Fingers are symbols in describing kinship relationships. Kinship is built on the basis of harmony, unity, cooperation, and complement each other. So that it becomes a source of self-strength or motivation in carrying out various activities of our lives. The meaning of family for the Dani can be analogized as five fingers with one use of the same motion.

Death is something we cannot avoid, because everyone will taste death. All humans have different expressions of feelings. However, for the Dani Tribe cutting their fingers is one of the actions that are considered appropriate in expressing the sadness of being left by their family members. The fingers were originally complete, but when one finger is cut, the completeness of the finger will be lost. For them this is the same as when we lose a family member who is a complement to life.

They think that crying alone is not enough to convey their deep sadness. In addition, they consider that the finger is a symbol of unity and strength. People in the area may still hold fast that togetherness, whether it's family, friends, relatives, is something that must be maintained in their lives. Sadness due to the departure of someone who died will only heal together with the wound on the finger that was cut. Generally, this tradition is only borne by women who are usually mothers. Togetherness does not only exist when they are still alive, but also continues when they die.



b. The Iki Paleg Tradition in the Perspective of Human Rights (HAM)

Human rights are basic rights that every citizen, both nationally and internationally, have to protect and respect. Human rights include the right to life, the right not to be disturbed, the right to be free from slavery, torture, discrimination and other rights that reduce human dignity. In Indonesia, Human Rights (HAM) are regulated in Law Number 39 of 1999 which states that "Human Rights are a set of rights that are inherent in the nature and existence of humans as creatures of God Almighty and are His gifts that must be respected, upheld and protected by the state, the law, the government, and everyone for the sake of honor and protection of human dignity", it can be concluded that human rights or basic rights are universal. The proof is that this basic right is owned by every human being and cannot be separated from the person of anyone from where and whenever the human is located.

In general, when a family member dies, people will be sad, cry and some will even become hysterical. However, unlike the Dani Tribe, they symbolize sadness, not enough by shedding tears, but by cutting their fingers which are called the iki paleg (cutting finger) tradition. Cutting these fingers is an emotional act due to the pain that is in the mind that is visible in the physical actions they do.

Another meaning behind the finger cutting ritual can be interpreted as an effort to avoid disasters and calamities that are considered to have been a factor in the death of their relatives so that they do not come back to happen to others.¹⁰ This tradition must be done if there are family members or close relatives, such as mother, father, sister, and brother who died. In general, this tradition is carried out by women who have to experience unimaginable pain.

Developments in modern times, the tradition of iki paleg or finger cutting carried out by the indigenous Dani tribe is considered to be an indication of human rights violations. As is well known regarding human rights, it has previously been stated in Article 28I of the 1945 Constitution, precisely regulated in Chapter XA concerning Human Rights. The article explains that everyone is free from the right to life and the right not to be tortured.

The tradition of iki paleg or finger cutting is a tradition carried out by cutting the limbs, namely the fingers which can be categorized as a violation of Human Rights (HAM) because when members of the Dani Tribe community, they will lose one of their fingers. In addition, the women cannot do anything because this tradition has become a tradition inherent in the Dani tribe and is an obligation that must be done. If they refuse, then they will be subject to social sanctions by the surrounding community and gradually will be ostracized by others because they are considered to bring many disasters. However, when viewed from a cultural perspective, this tradition is something that is usually done and can be accepted by the Dani people. It is said to have violated human rights when the Dani people objected to doing this iki paleg tradition. On

¹⁰ Bagaskoro Bisono Putro, Ananda Salsabila Nadira, op.cit.



the other hand, if it is done voluntarily, then it will not be a problem. More specifically, the iki paleg tradition is a ritual which is symbolic or shows a very deep feeling of sorrow for the person closest to him who has died but this action is considered very extreme because this action can cause a permanent disability in the person's body, indeed this is very considered in several points of view that lead to further and detailed studies considering that the action can be said to be very extreme because the action involves one member of the body which can cause a permanent disability.

In doing cultural preservation, this iki paleg tradition is a tradition owned by the Dani tribe and continues to be passed on to the next generation, in this case, of course we also need to preserve our culture in the future, but in this case it is a very difficult dilemma. Where in this iki paleg tradition is a tradition that is owned by the Dani tribe performing a ritual where they cut their fingers which is called the iki paleg (finger cutting) tradition. Cutting these fingers is an emotional act due to the pain that is in the mind that is visible in the physical actions they do. This is certainly a very extreme act because the action involves one of the body's limbs which can cause a permanent disability, the tradition is certainly if brought to this area will certainly cause a consideration in responding to the tradition, and also if you look at it from the perspective of human rights., the tradition iki paleg or finger cutting is included in human rights violations as stated in Article 28I of the 1945 Constitution in particular. However, when viewed from a cultural perspective, the iki paleg tradition is a common practice and can be accepted by the indigenous Dani tribe.

Cutting fingers can be categorized as a violation of human rights, this is because when members of the Dani tribal community carry out the iki paleg tradition, they will lose one of their fingers. Fingers, which are members of the body that support life and are a form of the right to life, as stated in Article 28I of the 1945 Constitution, so when viewed from the point of view of Human Rights, the tradition of iki paleg or finger cutting is declared a violation of human rights.

4. Conclusion

Looking at all this discussion, it can be concluded that from the iki paleg tradition, which is a tradition which is performed as a symbol of sadness as a result of the death of a family member. This tradition may be studied more deeply from various points of view, especially from the point of view of the law itself. With studies based on the point of view of customary law itself, the basic principles are generally not written because customary law originates from habits that live in a society which makes customs (habits) unable to be eliminated even though the development of the times is modern. However, the thing that must be considered is that this tradition cannot be adapted to today's conditions. This is because the tradition of cutting fingers is very dangerous if it is done without medical supervision, but it also involves organs that can cause a change in a person's physical condition.



If you look at the point of view of Human Rights (HAM), this tradition can be said to indicate a violation. As is well known, Article 28I of the 1945 Constitution is precisely regulated in Chapter XA on Human Rights. In the article it is explained that everyone is free from the right to life and the right not to be tortured. However, the women who are the main objects in this tradition cannot refuse because this tradition has become a tradition inherent in the Dani tribe. Moreover, if they refuse, then they will be subject to social sanctions by the surrounding community and their existence will not be recognized which will gradually be ostracized by the community because it is considered that it will bring many disasters and disasters to the Dani tribe. If it is related to its effectiveness, the tradition of iki paleg or finger cutting is considered very effective as a representation of the grief or sadness felt because according to the belief of the Dani indigenous people, the tradition can have a big impact which results in a physical disability. According to the Dani tribe, the family is a complement in living life and kinship is an important aspect in carrying out the functions of life in the social environment. Fingers are symbols in describing kinship relationships. Kinship is built on the basis of harmony, unity, cooperation, and complement each other. So that it becomes a source of self-strength or motivation in carrying out various activities of our lives.

Considering the tradition of iki paleg is a tradition that comes from the Dani tribe, Papua, where the tradition is a legacy from our ancestors that continues to be passed down to the next generation, but this must be considered carefully, because the tradition is an action that involves an organ of the body. So that the need for intensive supervision and the need for detailed studies from various points of view related to these traditions so that people will think that these traditions are terrible, Indonesia will still have a variety of unique cultures and must be respected. So that the tradition can have a conducive impact on aspects of the surrounding environment. According to several sources, the iki paleg tradition has now begun to disappear, eroded by the times and as one of the impacts of the development of science and religion that entered the territory of Papua.

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