

The Indigenous Politics of Justice: the Case of the Sedulur Sikep Movement in Central Java

Ronald Adam ^{1*} and Zainal Abidin Bagir ²

¹ Center for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta

² Universitas Gadjah Mada and Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies, Yogyakarta

*Corresponding Author: adamronald46@gmail.com

ABSTRACT The struggle by indigenous people to protect their land from capitalist expansion is often reduced by scholars to two contrasting models: class politics and identity politics. This reduction has partially come from how scholars separate between the cultural/spiritual and the political-economic dimensions of these struggles, which are often more complex in reality. Based on an empirical study of the Sedulur Sikep movement in Pati, Central Java, the purpose of this article is to understand what the indigenous politics of justice looks like in practice as they defend their land and way of life against the cement mining industry. This study uses a qualitative approach combining four months of field observations with two Wong Sikep households and interviews with 20 Wong Sikep individuals from 15 households in Baturejo Sukolilo Village, Pati Regency, Central Java. This article discusses two findings from the study. First, the cultural/spiritual and political-economic dimensions are inseparable in the lives of Wong Sikep. Such inseparability is manifested through the agricultural system as the core of Wong Sikep life, derived from the teachings of their ancestors (culture/spirituality) as well as their practical needs (political economy). Second, this inseparability forms the basis of their adoption of both the politics of recognition and redistribution in their resistance to cement mining. The article concludes with recommendations for future studies about the Sedulur Sikep movement in particular and for indigenous justice movements more broadly.

KEYWORDS *Indigenous Movements; Politics of Justice; Politics of Recognition; Politics of Redistribution; Social Movement Theory.*

INTRODUCTION

The struggle by indigenous people to protect their land from capitalist expansion is often reduced by scholars to two contrasting models: class politics and identity politics. This reduction has partially come from how scholars separate between the cultural/spiritual and the political-economic dimensions of these struggles, which are often more complex in reality. This article uses observations of the daily activities of one indigenous community, Wong Sikep,

to understand the inseparability of the political-economic and cultural/spiritual dimensions in their political struggle against the cement industry in Pati, Central Java. This article addresses two main questions: 1) what is the relationship between the cultural/spiritual (identity) dimension of Wong Sikep regarding the teachings of their ancestors with their political-economic dimension for subsistence (class)? 2) how do these two dimensions together shape their social movement of resistance against cement mining plan?

A major issue motivating the resistance movement by *Sedulur Sikep* against capitalist expansion by the cement industry in the Pati Regency is defending their ancestral and sacred lands (Amin, 2018; Aprianto, 2013; Asrawijaya, 2020; Asrawijaya & Hudayana, 2021; Kristianto, 2009). In the past two decades, many such movements have emerged throughout Indonesia and other countries in response to increasing large-scale land-based mining on land claimed by indigenous peoples (White et al., 2012). Scholars of social movements have conducted special studies on these movements to explain why a local community would coalesce around resistance to mining (Conde, 2017; Conde & Le Billon, 2017; Hufe & Heuermann, 2017; Prause & Billon, 2020).

Scholarly explanations for these movements are commonly divided into two differing perspectives. Political-economic perspectives consider such resistance as an expression of class politics (Banks, 2002; Bebbington, 1996, 2012; Horowitz, 2002, 2010; Martinez-Alier & O'Connor, 1996; Silva-Macher & Farrell, 2014; Walter & Martinez-Alier, 2010). Cultural/spiritual perspectives consider such resistance as an expression of identity politics (Andolina, 2003; Haarstad & Fløysand, 2007; Padel & Das, 2010; Rumsey & Weiner, 2004; Schippers, 2010; Urkidi, 2011).

The basic argument of the political-economic perspective is that capitalist expansion targeting indigenous people's land is understood as a process of proletarianization where indigenous peoples (most of them being peasants) are treated as labor, and their lands are considered to be capital (Whitehead, 2003; Hvalkof, 2008; Baird, 2011; Mkodzongi,

2013; Pacheco, 2017). From this perspective, the political struggle of indigenous peoples against capitalist expansion on their land is always understood as defending the source of their livelihoods, as part of class politics (Bebbington, 2012). In discourses of political justice, these struggles are categorized as issues of redistribution or class (Fraser, 2003)

In contrast, the basic argument of the cultural perspective is that capitalist expansion targeting indigenous peoples' land can be understood as a process of loss by indigenous peoples of their distinctive identity, cultural values, rituals, or other religious practices that are directly connected to their lands. Accordingly, the political struggle of indigenous people to defend their land is often understood as the struggle for the existence of their identities, rituals, values, and cultures (identity politics) (Collins, 2003; Gilbert, 2006, 2015; Holden et al., 2011; Maarif, 2017; Northcott, 2015; Trope, 1991; Vinueza, 2005). In discourses of political justice, these struggles are categorized as issues of recognition or identity (Fraser, 2003).

Fundamentally, in understanding the relationship between indigenous peoples and their land, class politics tends to pay careful attention to the political-economic dimension, while identity politics tends to give more space for cultural/spiritual explanations. The class politics perspective insists that the political-economic dimension is the basis for all relations between indigenous people and their lands, while identity politics insists that the cultural/spiritual dimension explains this connection. These contrasting viewpoints have led to an

assumption that there is a clear separation between the political-economic and cultural/spiritual dimensions.

This supposed separation has significant implications for reductive analysis, often leading to polarization between class politics and identity politics. Both explanations have been constructed in such a way that we must choose between class politics and identity politics, between the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition, and between social equality and multiculturalism (Fraser, 1998).

This article argues that *Sedulur Sikep*'s efforts to defend their land cannot be separated into two different political struggles: class and identity politics. If this is true, then how can this movement be reinterpreted? How might scholars describe the complex relationships between class and identity politics in such a political struggle? What perspective is needed to break out of this reductionism? To explore these questions, this article uses primary data about the daily life of *Wong Sikep* to understand how this indigenous group engages in a political struggle to defend their land. This study views *Wong Sikep* as an indigenous people who have a connection to a specific geographic area with sacred places connected to ancestry, value systems, ideology, and identity (Acciaioli, 2007; Christina, 2012; Moniaga, 2007; Sangaji, 2007).

This article takes as a conceptual starting point Fraser's theory of the politics of justice to understand the relationship between the political-economic and cultural/spiritual dimensions in the political struggle of indigenous peoples. For this study, Fraser's

theory helps to reveal the relationship between these two dimensions (Fraser, 1997, 1998, 2003). Following Fraser's approach, this study explores separately each of these two dimensions as expressed in the lives and beliefs of *Wong Sikep*, and how those dimensions illuminate the political struggles of their movement against cement mining.

However, the finding of this study goes beyond Fraser's framework. Although Fraser's theory can accommodate forms of class and identity simultaneously, it still views class and identity, political economy and culture/spirituality, as separate dimensions. Instead of placing the two dimensions as fundamentally separate categories, this study finds that the political-economic and cultural/spiritual dimensions are inseparable categories in the relationship between indigenous peoples and their land. Using class and identity perspectives simultaneously is much more helpful in this study to understand the complex relationship between class and identity, political-economic, and cultural/spiritual dimensions.

This point is important because in some types of social movements, such as the movement for gender equality discussed by Fraser, the dimensions of class and identity can be analyzed simultaneously but remain fundamentally separate. The implication is that social movements in general are seen as targeting two separate issues of justice—redistribution and recognition—and the fulfillment of their goals may also require separate struggles.

In this article, however, the case of indigenous people claiming lands includes dimensions of class and identity are

analyzed together but are not fundamentally separated. The implication is that the dimension of justice in the struggle of the movement cannot be segregated into two separate issues. These movements have a shared aim and a shared process to achieve both redistribution and recognition together.

This study uses Fraser's theory to reflect upon the inseparability of political-economic and cultural/spiritual dimensions for the struggle of indigenous peoples for their lands. Building upon that perspective, this article challenges historical accounts of the *Sedulur Sikep* movement by reconstructing their political struggle against cement mining in the Kendeng Mountains. Scholarly understanding of this political struggle has implications for how scholar study social movements in general, and indigenous peoples movements in Indonesia in specific.

This article reports on a qualitative study conducted in 2021 that used two data collection techniques: field observation and interviews. These two techniques were not applied separately or sequentially but proceeded side by side and relied upon each other. The field observation was conducted for four months in Baturejo Village, Sukolilo Sub-district, Pati Regency, in the province of Central Java. This area is where the *Wong Sikep* community lives, close to the Kendeng mountains. During this study, the researcher lived with the family of Karman one member of *Wong Sikep*. The field observation focuses on the agricultural life of *Wong Sikep* to explore the political-economic and cultural/spiritual dimensions of *Wong Sikep* life where the family is the unit of analysis. Two families— the Ninas and the Karmans—were

the main subjects in this observation to understand the dependence of *Wong Sikep* families on the agricultural system in the countryside.

Meanwhile, extended interviews were conducted with 20 *Wong Sikep* from 15 households to explore the cultural/spiritual dimensions of *Wong Sikep* life as a peasant. The selection of informants used a purposive strategy combined with the snowball method to find new respondents. The use of interview techniques was flexible and carried out like daily conversation, not through structured questions. Interviews were used more to reveal the respondents' cultural/spiritual understanding of the role of agriculture in the lives of *Wong Sikep*.

DISCUSSION

The Inseparability of the Political-Economic and Cultural/Spiritual Dimensions

Since the beginning of the emergence of the Samin movement in the early 20th century, members of *Wong Sikep* have shown extraordinary obedience to adopting the identity and life of a peasant (King, 1973). This identity influences the whole life of *Wong Sikep* living in Sukolilo, Pati, who are completely dependent upon the agricultural system. In Sukolilo, the approximately 350 *Wong Sikep* families economically rely on the agricultural system, though several other side jobs outside the agricultural system exist. This dependence can be explained in two ways: 1) the livelihoods of *Wong Sikep* and 2) the specific teachings of the *Sikep* religion (called the Religion of Adam).

For *Wong Sikep* families, the agricultural system is their main economic support,

following the character of other agrarian societies in Java. Agricultural work occupies a central position, even though it is not the only source of the economy. For example, Karman—one of *Wong Sikep* in Sukolilo—fulfilled his basic family needs outside the agricultural system, such as fishing in fields when they are flooded and by raising livestock.

Wong Sikep engage in other side jobs, such as collecting snails in the fields and working in trades such as construction and carpentry. These short-term jobs sometimes arise due to the absence of job opportunities in agriculture, unavailability of land, being outside the planting period, or as a result of flash floods that can make fields unproductive for months. However, when the planting season arrives and there are job opportunities, *Wong Sikep* return to agricultural work. They still see agricultural work as their main job, and agricultural works tend to take precedence over other jobs.

For example, Karman and his four younger siblings often earn a lot of money through those side jobs, but for them such side jobs do not guarantee income certainty. Conversely, agricultural work provides wage certainty despite working as a farm laborer. When the farming season comes, Karman and his siblings fully devote their family labor to agricultural work and cease all activities that are not related to agriculture.

The livelihoods of the Karmans and many other *Sikep* families primarily comes from this agricultural work. Economically speaking, the dependence of the *Wong Sikep* family on the agricultural system has no significant difference from other agricultural

societies in rural Java. What makes their lives different from other Javanese peasants is the cultural/spiritual dimension that provides meaning to this identity as the way of life of *Wong Sikep*.

According to some *Sikep* members in this study, there are at least three basic tenets of the *Sikep*'s teaching of Adam's religion that explain why agriculture is the main way of life of *Wong Sikep*: 1) the prohibition of trading; 2) rejection of formal schooling, and 3) the cosmology of mother earth.

The first tenet is the prohibition of trading. Takashi Shiraishi (1990) has noted that this teaching has existed since the beginning of the Samin movement in the early 20th century, when the mercantilist economic system had not yet become the dominant economic feature in rural Java. The basis for this prohibition comes from the *Sikep* concepts of *Lugu* (saying what it is) and *Mligi* (doing something based on intentions and what they speak). Both of these teachings require *Wong Sikep* to speak honestly and to keep their promises (Wibowo, 2011). According to Gunarti (*Wong Sikep*), the very activity of trading is connected to fraud and lies, meaning that it will violate *Sikep* teachings. When traders buy something Rp1.000 and sell it for Rp1.100, this is considered detrimental and dishonest. Although they are honest that they bought it for Rp1.000, they still sell it for more than they paid, which is dishonest (Gunarti, Personal Communication, Mar 18th, 2021).

Many *Wong Sikep* share this idea. Refraining from trading is one of the qualities that distinguishes *Wong Sikep*. According to Supardi (*Wong Sikep*), people can identify

Wong Sikep by noticing whether or not they trade. If someone claims that he/she is Wong Sikep, he/she should not trade and must become a peasant. In the field site of Baturejo village, none of the 300 Wong Sikep families work as traders.

Furthermore, Supardi explained that Wong Sikep must sell items under the purchase price:

“It [the prohibition to trade] has been from our ancestors so long ago. It is from the era of Mbah Samin [Ki Samin Surosentiko]. You can trade, but if the price is Rp100, you must sell for 80. Do not get more. Selling it with the same price as you buy is also not allowed. It must be under it.” (Supardi, Personal Communication, January 11th, 2021).

The second tenet is a prohibition from formal schooling. Children from the Wong Sikep families in Pati are not sent to formal schools. There are at least four reasons that cause Wong Sikep to reject formal schooling: 1) they do not want to be “smart” (in the sense of having formal knowledge obtained from school) because, for them, this intelligence will tend to be used to outsmart others; 2) formal schools were historically founded by the Dutch colonial government, so not sending children to formal school is part of their resistance to the colonial government; 3) school should be held at home where both parents are teachers because the goal of schooling is to improve the actions and speech of the students; and 4) school should involve learning how to farm in keeping with their peasant identity, and not learning in the sense of formal schooling. This final reason is related to the next tenet on Mother Earth discussed later.

This prohibition on formal schools has kept Wong Sikep from gaining basic literacy skills. As a consequence, they have limited opportunities to pursue work outside of agriculture and other short-term jobs as described above. For example, Nina (Wong Sikep) shared her experience that:

“Because I did not go to school, [I] could not read and write. So, working here and there [works outside the agricultural system, which does not have a trading element] is impossible. So, the only possible work is just like this, the [work of a] peasant” (Nina, Personal Communication, January 15th, 2021).

The study found that a few Wong Sikep have gained some literacy skills from interactions with non-Sikep outsiders, but their usage is very rare.

The third tenet is the belief in honoring Mother Earth through farming. According to Sikep teachings, becoming a peasant is not merely an alternative for trading to meet food and clothing needs, which relies on individual work. It also demonstrates a respectful relationship with Mother Earth through farming. This cosmology of ‘Mother Earth’ (*Ibu Bumi*) plays an important role in explaining why Wong Sikep must be peasants.

In their concept of Mother Earth, the land holds a central place in Sikep beliefs. *“Lemah podo duwe, banyu podo duwe, kayu podo duwe”* (Land is common property, water is common property, wood is a common property). It means that land, water, and wood [forest] belong to humans and all humans have the same rights to it (Widiyarsono, 1998).

This concept was explained by Gunarti (Wong Sikep in Sukolilo):

“The word ‘mother’ means an honor to the earth as we would respect our mother because the mother is an older person. The mother earth is the womb that gives birth to everything. That understanding was taught from the ancestors of the Wong Sikep. The earth cannot be replaced and viewed materially (use-value) but it is seen as a human figure (subject) who must be honored and respected (Javanese: ‘diajeni’).”

Gunarti continued with an explanation of the interconnectedness between people and Mother Earth:

“It is not only the earth that needs human labor [to be cared for], but also, we need it [to cultivate]. That is why [we call it] ‘gundel-ginondol’ [interconnected and inseparable]. I am ‘you’ [referred to the earth as subject], you are I. We [Wong Sikep] cannot be separated from the earth. The Earth is also inseparable from me. As long as both are not separated, there will always be life. If there is no one, there will be no life.” (Gunarti, Personal Communication, March 18, 2021).

This conception helps to answer the question of how the peasant identity has become a way of life for Wong Sikep. This idea can be found from the early emergence of the Samin movement (King, 1973; Korver, 1976; Shiraishi, 1990).

In principle, according to Sikep beliefs, the marriage relationship between a man and a woman and the building of a family are the basis of the Sikep order (*tatanan Sikep*) of which sex is an inherent part. Becoming Wong Sikep is acknowledging the Sikep order that includes the marriage order (*Sikep rabi*). A person can only be called a Wong Sikep when married. Philosophically, the concept

of “Sikep” refers to a hug (*menyikep/sikep*) (Alamsyah, 2015). Through the marriage concept, basically, “Wong Sikep” can be interpreted as “a person who hugs his/her partner.”

Accordingly, the Sikep order (marriage) is a crucial concept that cannot be separated from their conception of Mother Earth (Shiraishi, 1990). Takashi Shiraishi (1990) divided the two central concepts in the teachings of the Religion of Adam to understand the Mother Earth concept: 1) *tatane wong* (human order); 2) *toto nggaoto* (how to work). Briefly, the first refers to the relationship between men and women, sexual intercourse. The second refers to the relationship between humans and nature (cultivating the land) to fulfill basic needs. Those two concepts mean making a relation with a partner (for continuing the life and making family as Sikep order) and cultivating the land (working with their land). These two concepts of marriage become the basic concept for a person to build his/her life as a Sikep (Shiraishi, 1990). By such conception, Wong Sikep is not only “a person who hugs her/his partner” but also “hugs her/his earth (Mother Earth).”

In summary, the concept of Mother Earth is highly important to Wong Sikep. It explains how they should relate with their partners (with sexual intercourse—*tatane wong*) and with the land (cultivating their land—*toto nggaoto*). The second point leads to the understanding that Wong Sikep must be peasants. According to Gunarti:

“Farming becomes an activity with a more significant and direct relationship to Mother Earth than any other type of work

outside agriculture that does not violate Sikep's teachings. In farming activities, there is also defending, respecting, and showing devotion to Mother Earth. It is the same with taking care of Mother Earth. They care for the earth as they care for their mother. Cultivating or working with the soil is devotion because the soil needs humans to be fertile. Not only does the land require human labor, but humans also need the land. Earth cannot be separated from me either because Wong Sikep means hugging their land (mother earth)." (Gunarti, Personal Communication, March 18th, 2021)

This quote and the preceding discussion demonstrate that for Wong Sikep, being a peasant includes both political-economic and cultural/spiritual dimensions that are inseparable. Farming cannot be reduced to a political-economic activity because it relates to specific values and teachings. It cannot be reduced to a cultural/spiritual phenomenon because the life of the Sikep family shows their dependence on the agricultural system in Sukolilo to meet their basic needs.

From the explanation above, it is clear that becoming a peasant is a way for Wong Sikep to meet their economic needs, and at the same time, to embody their founder's teachings. In the following two sections, we discuss the limitations and inadequacy of the previous two paradigms (the political-economic and cultural/spiritual paradigm) in explaining two phenomena: (1) the emergence of the Samin movement; and (2) the ongoing struggle of the *Sedulur Sikep* movement against capitalist expansion by the cement industry in Pati Regency.

The Emergence of the Samin Movement as Both Political and Cultural

In explaining the emergence of the Samin movement, there are two main explanations. The first is the political economy factor (about social class, distribution, and access). The second is the cultural/religious factor (about religious teachings and cultural values).

In the political-economic paradigm, several works by H. Benda (1965), T. S. Giap (1968, 1969), Benda and Castles (1969), and James Scott (Scott, 1977a, 1977b) considered that the best way to understand the Samin movement's emergence was through the perspective of political economy. This paradigm stated that the political-economic issue played an important role in various peasant movements in Southeast Asia, including the Samin movement as a peasant movement. These peasant movements were positioned as class struggles responding to the political-economic conditions causing political-economic injustice. This perspective places cultural/spiritual issues as derivative of the political-economic issues.

Conversely, in the cultural/spiritual paradigm, several works, such as Justus M. van der Kroef (1952, 1959), Victor King (1973, 1977), and A. Pieter E. Korver (1976), considered that cultural/spiritual issues were the most salient problem in the emergence of the Samin movement, while the political-economic dimension is derivative. For example, in some cases, King saw the Samin movement as a cultural/spiritual response to Dutch colonialism which tried to separate Wong Sikep from their Mother Earth which is a part of their religious life (King, 1973). For King, such a condition must be understood

religious, although in particular cases political-economic factors played roles in the emergence of the Samin movement.

More fundamentally, both paradigms placed political-economic and cultural/spiritual factors as separate dimensions. We argue, based on the evidence above, that the *Samin* movement should be considered as a movement motivated by those two dimensions that cannot be separated in principle or practice. The movement is at the same time a cultural/spiritual and political-economic movement.

The Inseparability of the Politics of Recognition and Redistribution in Resistance to Cement Mining

Turning to the present day, the cement industry since the early 2000s has been growing massively. The Indonesian government granted at least 77 cement mining permits in Java, spread over 23 regencies, 42 sub-districts, and 52 villages with a total mining permit area of 34,944.90 hectares (Murtadho, 2016; Subekti, 2016a). Semen Gresik Corporation is one of the many cement industries that expanded in 2005, in this case to Sukolilo, Pati, Central Java, to mine the Kendeng mountains. The company held a 40% foreign ownership and offered a capital investment of USD 250 million to the Pati Regency Government to establish a new cement factory in the Kendeng mountain area in Sukolilo (Subekti, 2016b). The expansion received government support because it was considered to provide significant revenues for the local government of around USD 3.5 million per year (Kurniawan, 2014).

The cement factory development plan covered four sub-districts, namely Sukolilo,

Kayen, Gabus, and Margorejo, divided into fourteen villages covering about 1,800 hectares. Of those areas, 85 hectares was to be used for the construction of a factory in Kedumulyo Village. Around 900 hectares of the main mining area were to be spread across several village areas, including Tompegunung, Summersoko, Kedumulyo, and Gadudero Villages in Sukolilo. An additional 500 hectares were designated for clay mining in Gadudero, Kedumulyo, Baturejo, Kasiyan, and Sukolilo Villages (Subekti, 2016b). Finally, 85 hectares were designated for transportation infrastructure and 230 hectares were designated for other mining activities (Novianto, 2018; Subekti, 2016b).

Geographically, the cement industry mining plan in Sukolilo was planned in a productive agricultural area with rice and corn as the main crops. Approximately 85% of the planned mining area is corn farming land. Other land planned for mining and road construction is a fertile rice field where the land ownership status includes individual rights for village members, common village land (*bengkok* land), and forestry land managed by the community (Kristianto, 2009).

In addition to farmland and forestry, the designated area in the Kendeng mountains included a network of caves, springs, underground rivers, lakes, water sources which fed many groves of teak trees. Ecologically, these caves include an ecosystem of animals including swallows, snakes, and bats. In addition, karst areas, being made of porous limestone, can absorb and store water that functions as the main irrigation source for agriculture

and water reserves during dry seasons. The water reserves are derived from absorbed rainwater dripping into the caves, forming abundant amounts of groundwater. The local relies upon these water sources from the Kendeng mountains. This water also sustains some areas in Pati and Grobogan (Kristianto, 2009), the field site of our study. There are at least 71 springs spread across several villages in Sukolilo District utilized by the local community for their farming (Kristianto, 2009). As much as 90% of the local water supply comes from such springs (Pratiwi, 2017). More than 91,688 people in Sukolilo use these water sources to irrigate an agricultural area of approximately 15,873.9 hectares of rice fields (Subekti, 2016b).

The ecology of the Kendeng mountains is often described by local residents as a sponge where the pores or fractures of the rocks absorb and store water needed for daily life. In 1997, the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) encouraged the protection of karst ecosystems throughout the world, specifically mentioning karst mountains in Java (Paramita & Islahuddin, 2017). Some ecological experts proposed that once the karst land in Kendeng is damaged, it would be difficult to restore due to its feature as a natural formation for 470 million years. The damage will have a lasting impact on the environment and ecology both in the immediate areas and throughout Java due to how these natural reservoirs are connected to other districts (Pratiwi, 2017).

For the *Wong Sikep* community in Pati, their resistance to mining was connected to their understanding that the Kendeng Mountains are vital to their agricultural

system in Sukolilo, and their shared concern about the damage that cement mining would cause to the ecological health of the area.

According to Karman, "*Wong Sikep have depended on the Kendeng mountains for a long time as a water supply*" (Karman, Personal Communication, January 17th, 2021). It was insisted by Gunretno (*Wong Sikep*) that "*spring sources will be in danger of being lost if a cement factory is built. And it threatens people's livelihoods.*" (Gunretno, Personal Communication, February 21st, 2021). Gunarti also said that "*Wong Sikep only want to farm; therefore, they need water and land*" (Gunarti, Personal Communication, March 18th, 2021).

Ruslan (*Wong Sikep*) described their close connection to being a peasant:

"I confess to being a Wong Sikep and do not want to be a wage-laborer, a police officer, or anything else. I only want to be a peasant. I think no one Sikep has the dream to become a teacher or work other than a peasant. Surely all I want is to be a peasant." (Ruslan, Personal Communication, January 21st, 2021).

He worried that losing their land would cause them to lose their livelihoods:

"As a farmer, Wong Sikep will lose the agricultural land when the land is built for a cement factory. Losing agricultural land means we will lose our profession as farmers" (Ruslan, Personal Communication, January 21st, 2021).

The agricultural system is a prerequisite for them to live as peasants. As explained above, being a peasant is both a livelihood and a form of cultural expression that comes from the teachings of their ancestors. Land is a means of actualizing labor and cultural/

spiritual actualization of *Wong Sikep*. It is undeniable that the Kendeng mountains are no longer just a mode of production but rather a kind of “mode of cultural/spiritual expression.” Without their land keeping them connected to Mother Earth, their lives would be meaningless because being a peasant is related to their livelihoods and their values.

For *Wong Sikep*, protecting the Kendeng mountains has a cosmological implication for their direct relationship to the land. Ruslan described this historical and spiritual connection:

“Since ancient times, there has been imagination on Sikep’s mind that East Java, Central Java, West Java are like our bodies. East Java is like the head, West Java is like the legs, and Central Java is like the stomach. It is the same now that Central Java is a food barn (lumbung pangan). It means that Kendeng is a source of food. My ancestors used to say that. Because Central Java is the source of food and clothing, if this food and clothing are shuffled, it is like our stomachs being ruffled. How does it feel? Will you feel sick? That is the message from our ancestors” (Ruslan, Personal Communication, January 21st, 2021).

From this perspective, defending the Kendeng mountains must be understood as preserving simultaneously: 1) political-economic dimension as the source of their livelihood (Amin, 2018), and 2) cultural/spiritual dimension as it embodies their beliefs about farming and their connection to Mother Earth which makes their lives meaningful.

Returning to theories of political justice, *Wong Sikep* are seeking political-economic justice (politics of redistribution)

and cultural/spiritual justice (politics of recognition (Fraser, 2003). Both are equally fundamental, not separate and contradictory.

The politics of redistribution in this case includes the political struggle responding to political-economic conditions regardless of the state mechanism. “Maldistribution” may motivate this political struggle (Fraser, 2003), but maldistribution itself does not always originate from and may only be resolved by the State. Furthermore, maldistribution itself can be defined more broadly by a community as a political-economic condition in which the community experiences political-economic injustice. Once a movement emerges based on certain political-economic conditions, it is seen as part of the politics of redistribution. Thus, the political struggle of the *Sedulur Sikep* movement, by rejecting the cement factory, can be understood as an expression of politics of redistribution demanding their political-economic rights (rights to fulfill livelihood) threatened by the cement industry development. This political-economic issue played a significant role in the emergence of the *Sedulur Sikep* movement against the cement industry.

The *Sedulur Sikep* movement also includes elements of the politics of recognition. Their rejection of cement mining is a cultural/spiritual issue giving their movements a fundamental “power” to mobilize support (Amin, 2018; Aprianto, 2013; Kurniawan, 2014, 2018; Putri, 2017. Their connection to the Kendeng mountains is part of their connection to Mother Earth, essential for their cultural survival. Gunretno explained the connection in this way:

“Sedulur Sikep is one of the communities choosing the way of life to be a peasant as part of their teachings as well as their dedication to mother earth. Therefore, the plan to establish a Semen Gresik factory will threaten the Wong Sikep culture so that it becomes the starting point for rejection.” (Gunretno, Personal Communication, February 21st, 2021).

Such an expression can be read as politics of recognition in which theoretically a person becomes a constitutive individual subject only because they recognize, and are recognized by, another subject (Fraser, 2000, 2003). Fraser and Honneth (Fraser & Honneth, 2003) placed these politics as part of normative social philosophy, which they call the “politics of difference”. These politics are often expressed in Indonesian through a “politics of multiculturalism.” They see a risk that recognition claims, such as identity politics based on self-realization, may be sectarian and could encourage social fragmentation (Fraser, 1998, 2000).

However, this article finds that in this case the politics of recognition needs to be seen as an encouragement to recognize differences for the sake of the authenticity of a community. This appeal to culture/spirituality does not stop at celebrating differences but accommodates these differences, even to the level of granting privileges or different treatment, serving as a reminder of the injustices experienced by some groups (Bagir et al., 2011).

In this context, the politics of recognition is not only oriented to ask the state to recognize their cultural/spiritual rights, but beyond that, it includes the political struggle to maintain differences and existence of values,

status, and culture/spirituality in the social structure of society also. “Misrecognition” may be the cause of this political struggle (Fraser, 2003), but misrecognition itself does not always originate from and may only be resolved by the State. Misrecognition can be defined more broadly by a community as a condition where their identity and specific values are slowly eroded so that the community experiences cultural/spiritual injustice. Once a movement emerges to maintain cultural/spiritual values, it can be understood as the politics of recognition.

Furthermore, in the Sikep community, misrecognition is precisely the result of a fundamental separation of the economic-political and cultural/spiritual dimensions. As soon as the two dimensions are separated, being a farmer is considered political and loses the cultural/spiritual dimension. Meanwhile, when the existence of farmers is threatened, it may appear as if it is only a political-economic issue, without any accompanying cultural/spiritual dimensions.

From Two Dimensions of Justice to the Inseparability: On Fraser’s Limitation

For Fraser, in reality, of course, the cultural/spiritual and political-economic dimensions always intersect; and if properly understood, almost every political struggle against injustice implies a demand for both redistribution and recognition (Fraser, 1997). Furthermore, according to Fraser, for heuristic purposes, such analytical distinctions are indispensable, and only by abstracting those two dimensions from the complexities of reality can we design conceptual schemas to dissect them.

Therefore, Fraser proposed a series of analytical differences, for example, cultural inequality versus economic inequality, recognition versus redistribution. By distinguishing redistribution and recognition analytically and exposing their peculiar logic, we can clarify some of the political dilemmas in both and thereby seek to resolve them (Fraser, 1997).

Fraser's argument assumes that justice today requires redistribution and recognition, and it examines the relationship between the two. Fraser argues that cultural recognition and social redistribution are connected in forms that support rather than undermine one another (Fraser, 1997). However, at this stage, Fraser still separated the two dimensions and concluded that those two separate political struggles must be integrated (Fraser, 1997).

Following the findings of this article, there is no need for scholars to undertake this process integration. According to *Wong Sikep's* resistance, the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition are an inseparable part of their movement because the political-economic and cultural/spiritual dimensions in this case are inseparable. As explained above, *Wong Sikep* fought for *Kendeng* mountains and agriculture as a source of livelihood (class) on the one hand, and as a cultural/spiritual prerequisite for becoming a peasant (identity) on the other.

The fulfillment of their movement also cannot be separated into two separate processes of redistribution and recognition. When the state is trying to recognize them (their identity and values including their attachment to *Kendeng* mountains), the state must also redistribute their access to

Kendeng as part of their life and vice versa.

This inseparable politics of justice (the political-economic and cultural/spiritual dimensions) display the uniqueness and character of this indigenous movement, because in principle, class and identity are inseparable in the case of indigenous people and their land. Fraser's separated political framework may still be useful to explore the different dimensions, as long as its aim is to realize the inseparability of class and identity struggles.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that the political struggle of *Wong Sikep* against capitalist expansion by the cement industry can be best understood by inseparability of the politics of redistribution and recognition. The empirical study has two major findings. First, the relationship between the political-economic and cultural/spiritual dimensions cannot be separated in the peasant identity of *Wong Sikep*. Farming is a political-economic activity to fulfill the basic needs, as well as a cultural/spiritual activity that has been taught from the ancestors and related to their cosmology of Mother Earth.

Second, this inseparability of both dimensions forms the basis of *Sedulur Sikep's* political struggle. Their struggle against capitalist expansion includes two inseparable political struggles, namely the politics of recognition and redistribution. On the one hand, maintaining the agricultural system is their effort to fight for redistribution justice so that they can meet the needs of life as farmers. On the other hand, maintaining the agricultural system is their effort to maintain

the teachings of their ancestors as well as their responsibility as guardians of Mother Earth.

By moving away from the debate between class and identity politics that separate the political-economic and cultural/spiritual dimensions, this article explores those perspectives not to separate them, but to better understand the inseparability of political justice. The two cannot be separated because they operate as a unified whole in the character of the *Sedulur Sikep* movement against the expansion of capitalism by the cement industry development plan.

This conclusion is methodologically relevant for studying social movements in general and indigenous movements in particular. By tracing the formation of social movements with closer attention to the daily lives of their members, empirical researchers of social movements can better understand to what extent these movements are simultaneously political, economic, cultural, and religious.

This inseparability may take similar or different forms in various indigenous movements in Indonesia, such as the recognition of *Ammatoa* customary land or the *adat* movement by *Mollo* people in East Nusa Tenggara, or in other countries such as the *Chipko* movement in India and the *Zapatista* movement in Mexico.

Additionally, scholarly understanding of inseparability could be deepened by including other dimensions such as race, gender, and caste, among others. Studying how these different elements work together would likely inform other distinctive theories on the politics of justice. Such studies would add to the important effort to move away

from analyses of social movements which are reductive, simplistic and determinative. They could open up new possibilities for explanations of social movements that are both more diverse and more accurate.

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