

Learning Well Being from People of Mollo

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If you find time once to step foot in Timor Island, compel yourself to drop by Mollo. You have to believe that it will be less satisfy, if don't find the time to enjoy the beauty of Mollo. Though, it isn't a must. Actually, Mollo has cool air, woven clothes which bind up body, casuarinas trees, rocky hills covered by savanna rug, a herd of cows, wild horse clubs and also round houses. Also, use some of your time to visit several houses. The hosts will serve you conveniently, along with their destitution. It's a vulgar poverty in fertile land which can guide you to Timor Leste.

Mollo is the richest area in Timor Island because of natural resources which spread around foot of Mutis Mountain—the highest one in west side of Timor Island. Mollo borders on Mina River and Timau Mountain. About 90% of Mollo people engage in farming and also breeding at the same time. Generally, they farm land between 0.1 to 0.5 hectares in a certain tribal land with family ownership. The crops are for the purpose of one year need. Few of them are set aside as seeds. Mostly, their farmlands depend on rain water. Thus, there's only one cultivating season in one year.

The breeding was carried out through loose tending. The owner marks were stamped on live stocks' skins, such as cows, buffaloes and horses, and then let them out or tied them in tending fields. They're wandering freely around savanna plains. In addition, most of forest areas were penetrated by savannas there. The breeding and farming have been the way of Mollo people to earn their life, since long time ago. They realize deeply that they are alive from and together with the nature.

“When they (animals) were released from their nature, their life will be ended. And it really happened when the Forestry Department began to undertake the reforestation program in treeless savanna in their forest. Cassowary tree was planted in hundred thousands hectare of the indigenous land. In fact, based on Molo's experience, this tree made the landslide and hungry of water. After several years, Forestry Department fenced the savanna land and it caused the livestock facing the difficulty in getting the fresh water. Small lakes in the middle of savanna wiped its water and the fresh water for livestock was limited by fence. Therefore, a lot of livestock was death”

Forestry policy in 1967, which was followed by development projects, had impoverished people of Mollo. It was started from casuarinas reforestation, plant forest industry (Hutan Tanaman Industri- HTI), community forest which had been present in wavy manner since 1974, 1977, 1983, 1996 till now. Local government projects had plundered community lands of Mollo people basically, and then changed them into state owned land with various statuses, from Production Forest, Protected Forest, Nature Reserve up to National Park nomination. Consequently, people of Mollo living spaces are narrower. Thus well being is further from reality.

The people have tried many ways to regain the savanna plains, either through dialogue, negotiation, demonstration till sabotage. Sometime they win, but they are defeated excessively. Interestingly, they refuse to surrender. Even, beside land issue, they have

to face local government policy which allows mining activity on marble hills.

People of Mollo view the nature as parts of human body. Rock is stone, soil as flesh and water as blood, and forest as skin, lungs and hairs. Compare with other traditions, the unique characteristic in this view is stone. If the stones aren't available, then it is rickety, frail and without bones, and means that they have lost their life

As soil bones, stone functions to glue and strengthen soil. So it won't be slide, either through the rain or wind. People of Mollo believe that stone has capacity to absorb, retain and intercept water. It isn't a wonder if lots of water which come from behind the stone. Stone also maintains soil fertility, because it's able to retain water and so to maintain surround soil humidity. The forest, which is over the stone, will contribute humus and seresah to grow fertility on soil beneath it.

People of Mollo call the stone as Fautkanaf or Batunama. Mostly the name of Timor people clans are come from the stone, few of them are influenced by water. Thus the stone has culture and historical tie with eight main clans, they are: Seko, Ba'un, Fui, Sumbanu, Lasa, Nani, Toto and Tanisip.

From whole of stones in Mollo, Naususu is admired as the early and center of other stones. Naususu means mother suckling. The people also imagine Naususu as root and rocky mountain which surround it as stems and branches of tree. "The root supports stems and braches of tree. If the root is pulled out, the trees will collapse. If the stems are damaged, the tree will sink," said Thomas Ola when explaining relation between stones.

Nevertheless, NTS local government gives permission to a mining company to operate precisely in this Naususu stones. The company cut it into marble cubes with one meter cubic width. Arid Oematan, one of young men in Tune, counts that there are 19 marble mining spots in Mollo area. The marble supply or deposit in Timor Island and Flores is predicted reaching fantastic amount, approximately 3.5 trillion meters cubic!

The people themselves did not understand what marble and mining is. Initially, when mining socialization was occurring, they thought that marble mining was purposed to beautify the stones. They agreed the mining plan. However, after knowing that mining meant cutting and transporting the stones out from Mollo, they strongly refused it. Also they charged local government and company.

Till now, mining activities have tried to dig six rocky mountains. Five trials have been failed successfully by the people.

One last mining area is in Fatu Naitapan, which stands firmly in Tunua village. Since three years ago, Naitapan has been skinned. By seeing it, we will see bones which protrude out after tearing flesh and skin. Bad cases have been always come since then.

While, waste stone from digging process and landslides have covered foot of mountain. Even the landslides are spread up to village border.

Naomi Mnune, a mother in Tunua told that the landslides are still occurring. It slowly but surely moves and heaps people houses and farms. It is followed with the dry of three wellsprings when dry season comes: oel Tokseko, oel Tokseok, and oel Kuisfola. In

local language, Oel meant wellspring. This case has never happened before. "There are 48 families who use the wellsprings. We walk far away for two hours to neighbor village to get water, also spend two hours to get back," she said.

"Our life are more difficult since then. Lots of planted tubers are dead. Just the same with corns which are unable to endure the strong wind in Tunua. The live stocks' heads are puffy because of drinking river water which polluted by mining waste and then dead," said Naomi. Her live stocks, which consist of seven cows and eighteen pigs, had been dead since the mining activity. Not to mention, the neighbors who lost more than hers.

Bad experiences in Naipitan have convinced people of Mollo to refuse marble mining. They committed lots of self sacrifice, from dissension between tribes, threatened and hit by hoodlum, intimidated by the police, and also imprisoned. They are sure firmly that they must regained the nature which has been claimed by local government and have to keep it well truly.

Don't change your mind. I remain to suggest you to drop by Mollo. At least you're still able to enjoy the beauty. Together with it's destitution certainly. However, there's still an extra gift that you can gain, the spirit of Mollo people to admire the nature, to maintain and regain it. It's a hard work when well being is defended persistently.

When dropping by Mollo, you will see fence which is made from Ampupu timber with 5 kilometers length. It encircles rocky mountain of Naususu and Anjaf which have ever been dug. This fence is created by Mollo people to regain their stone and lands. Every time seeing the fence, I imagine it as Mollo people who are standing hand in hand merely to keep the water flowing and grass for their live stocks. It's a spirit to keep well being with them.