

Collective Memory and State's Stigmatization of Ex-Political Prisoners on G-30S in 1965

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Abstract

The state as an institution that holds power has an obligation to protect the public interest. However, power is often used to shackle public interest. In the context of the Thirtieth of September Movement (G30S) in 1965, the state has the power to build a collective memory of the incident. The state even led the community to stigmatize the ex-political prisoners of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). Through an oral history approach, this research attempts to reveal the collective memory and stigmatization of ex-political prisoners of PKI, as well as how history must make peace with the G30S incident. This research elaborates on the collective memory of ex-political prisoners of PKI on the incident that has put them as political victims due to the state's stigmatization. The stigma destroyed ex-political prisoners, both politically and socially. The collective memory and stigma are very contradictory to the meaning of G30S built by the New Order. For this reason, ex-political prisoners of PKI and the state need to go through a dialogue process that results in an agreement that the incident should not be repeated. It can be done if there is a reconciliation of the past.

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Introduction

Collective memory and stigmatization are closely related to state power, if they are traced and studied in depth. The state as a social organization has the power and authority obtained through a collective agreement by the community. As stated by Hobbes (1588-1679) in Hadiwijono (1989, p. 39), the state was formed based on an agreement of community members. The community is subject to the agreement. The agreement is a deal that arises between the citizens themselves. For this reason, citizens collectively agree to obey authorities who rule them. Meanwhile, according to John Locke (1632-1794) in Hadiwijono (1989, p. 40), the community entered into an agreement and submitted the results of the agreement to a federation. The results of the agreement become law and the law is carried out by the authorities (government). Thus, the agreement does not create new rights, but those in power were restricted in accordance with the agreement.

In the context of state life, such understanding is accepted as a mutually agreed paradigm, where the state as a social organization has the legitimacy and power to

regulate society for the achievement of public interest (Katoppo, 1999; Luhulima, 2006). However, the power itself has two different influences. First, if politics is basically seen as a battlefield, in this perspective, power enables them to seize power, control, be in power and maintain power (Tjondronegoro, 1965); Second, politics is considered as an effort to establish order and justice for power, in this case, it is seen as a protection for public interest and welfare to counter the pressure and demands of various interest groups (Pitaloka, 2004, p. 14).

The debate over how a state power must be carried out to protect public interest and how the state power ultimately restrains and threatens civil liberties is a long debate. From time to time, the debate keeps going along with the changes of paradigm and interest (Abdullah, Abdurrachman, & Gunawan, 2012; Scott, 1985). This research focuses more on state power that later on has implications for producing collective memory and stigma of the G30S incident. From the perspective of power, the collective memory and stigma built by the state shows that power is not only in the territory of state institutions, but also extended to the community. Power invades daily life and enters social spaces that define subjects, objects, and reality. Power becomes omnipresent (Karlina, 2000, p. 41), it is everywhere and able to turn a discourse into a situation that changes the way people perceive reality as well as narrate it under the control of power. The power here then determines what is important and what is not, what is permissible and what is not, and what relationship patterns are displayed in reality. Power also determines the system of meaning and collection of values that enfold the possibility of thought and expression to exclude any disagreements. Further, Foucault stated that power is everywhere, but it does not cover everything. Since it comes from everywhere, power functions as a countless element. Power is not only repressive, but also productive and positive (Foucault, 1997, p. 113-114).

This kind of situation makes those who are stigmatized lose public space to tell their personal experiences. They feel that their personal experiences are not in line with the current reality, which makes them powerless to actualize their experiences into a discourse that does not contain their thoughts. This powerlessness becomes the success of the authorities in ordering a group of people to keep quiet. Foucault called it the archeology of silence (Kazmi, 1997). The silence of the victim is used as the front line of the perpetrator's defense, which is effective in denying and eliminating the victim. When the victim speaks, the perpetrator uses silence as a tool to defeat the victim. The perpetrator silences the victim. Such neglect dehumanizes people and labels speech as meaningless. At this point, power dominates the victim, so the meaning of reality in the community about the G30S incident is monopolized by power (Adam, 2019; Mortimer, 2006). Thus, the reality built by the state has a single interpretation as truth that must be accepted.

Those who are stigmatized in the dimension of power are positioned as marginalized groups to be forgotten. Elias Canneti compares victims with feces in human body (Hardiman, 2005, p. 23). According to Elias Canneti, feces is something that is kept hidden, but in fact, everyone recognizes that it is part of the community. What is actually from feces is the object that is clearly visible in plain sight, not in the

realm of nature. Thus, feces is considered to bear all mistakes. In feces, we can recognize what has been killed. Feces is the amount of luminous from all indications against humans (Zurbuchen, 2002). This comparison illustrates that the victim is originally part of the community, but in the end, the victim must be hidden and kept secret. If it is not kept hidden, the victims embarrass all human beings.

The study of victims' testimonies is important to get a balanced picture of the collective memory of state violence against people who are considered as PKI or ex-political prisoners of PKI through the victims' personal experiences (Adam, 1965). Victim study is basically an attempt to find a truth that is plural, as Derrida said, truth is not limited to a single, general, and universal truth because in reality truth is plural, particular, and relative (Hardiman, 2005, p. 252). With this balance, the past is not seen as a frightening specter and a generation's revenge. However, the past is a peace project to build the future.

To make the past a peace project, collective memory needs to be built. Building a collective memory through the victims' personal experiences does not aim to harm human beings nor to provide justification for violence, oppression, and persecution. Building a collective memory aims to justify hope. Hope that tomorrow will be better, that cruelty, violence and injustice will not be repeated. In this case, the state has the main task of holding a commitment to remember and recognize incidents of violence (state duty to remember) with efforts taken to rehabilitate and fulfill the rights of victims of violence. Based on the explanation above, this research wants to conduct an in depth examination on the collective memory of the ex-political prisoners of PKI on the G30S incident, the stigma inherent in the ex-political prisoners of PKI, and how history must make peace with the G30S incident.

This research used the phenomenological method developed by Husserl. Phenomenology is a thought assuming that meaning basically exists in the subject. In the implementation, the researchers discarded prejudices, theories and knowledge that they possess, then let the ex-political prisoners of PKI revealed their experiences and their feelings related to the G30S incident during interviews. Phenomenology is expected to find the truth that is intersubjective, instead of general truth. In order to obtain a variety of interpretations from the collective memory and stigma of the ex-political prisoners of PKI after the G30S incident (Husserl, 1999).

Collective Memory on G30S in 1965

French thinker, Ricoeur, revealed that memory has two types of relations with the past. The first is relation to knowledge, while the second is relation to action. Both relations appear not only in words, but also in the mind. Humans use memory in remembering or recalling, which is a kind of action. Since memory is an exercise, humans can talk about memory use, which in turn allows humans to talk about memory abuse. Ethical issues arise when humans begin to reflect the relationship between memory use and abuse (Ricoeur, 2005).

Not all ex-political prisoners who were stigmatized were involved in the G30S incident, in fact, those were people who had never been involved in practical political

activities. Thus, the G30S incident was far beyond the reach of their thoughts (Atmaja, 2012). A Chair of the Trade Union (SB) felt that he was nobody in the G30S incident. It did not even cross his mind at all that one day they would be arrested and imprisoned and linked to the Lubang Buaya (Crocodile Hole) incident. It was too complicated for him, who was only an elementary school graduate, to correlate between his involvement in the PKI mass organization and the killing of generals in Lubang Buaya. The only thing they have in minds was “not knowing” about the G30S incident. The ex-political prisoners were transferred from prison to prison, but they never knew the reason why they were arrested and for what reason they were imprisoned. The memory that is embedded in the mind of a former labor activist, for example, is based on their knowledge and experience of the G30S incident. The collective memory that is embedded in the minds of the ex-political prisoners on G30S is that the incident was a political event that bludged itself as a person who committed political crime. In fact, he had never been involved in practical political activities. Coincidentally, he was appointed as the chairman of SB before the G30S incident erupted. The appointment was made because he had literacy, not because he was actively involved in political and labor activities (Interview with Ks, August 16, 2009).

Another collective memory comes from someone who has been actively involved in the activities of the Indonesian Student Youth Association (IPPI), the Institute for the People's Culture (Lekra), PKI political family, and is married to a PKI member. The collective memory that is attached to him after the G30S incident is an incident that banned people who had come in contact with communism. This collective memory is based on his empirical experience before the G30S incident. He said that not all PKI members were involved in the incident. This is based on what he experienced and felt at that time. When the G30S incident erupted, he was totally confused. According to him, all information about the G30S incident was actually obtained from a growing issue in the community. Almost everyone concluded that PKI was the mastermind and perpetrator of the G30S incident and this conclusion was obtained repeatedly, starting from before he went to prison, was in prison, until he got out of prison. Political space such as the communist family does not provide much information about the G30S incident. Likewise with the IPPI and Lekra, which were considered as PKI mass organizations. The organizations did not help much to explain what actually happened with the G30S incident. As far as is known and in accordance to his experience, the activities of Lekra members in PKI mass organization were more related to cultural issues, such as dancing, singing, and social activities. They were not related to politics at all. Let alone knowing about the generals' assassination plans (Interview with St., April 30, 2009).

The perspective that not everyone involved in PKI mass organization must have been involved in the G30S incident was supported by two ex-political prisoners of PKI who happened to be civil servants. The similarity of perspectives is supported by a shared experience, they were both civil servants who only participated in the Indonesian Association of Engineering Teachers (PGTI). He was forced to spend two years in detention. In fact, his participation was only based on professional

background, without any political content (Interview with Sp, April 18, 2009). The same thing happened to a civil servant in the Agricultural Service. During his time as a civil servant, he was noted to have a good performance. Because of such achievement, he was seconded by his leader in the Military District Command (KODIM). Taking the PKI cadre course was his political sin that delivers him to Buru Island. The two civil servants not only received punishment, but were also dismissed from their position as civil servants. They were actually hunted down and arrested not because of their involvement in the murder of the generals, but rather because they had been in contact with communism. Therefore, the collective memory that is attached to him about the G30S incident is a political event that removed people who had been in contact with communism, regardless of the person's involvement in the G30S incident. They would be imprisoned as long as they were in touch with communism (Interview with Ad, August 18, 2009).

Meanwhile, another ex-political prisoner who had been active in developing "PKI Malam" revealed that he was a PKI member who had never known anything about the plot to kill the generals. He actually learned about the murder of the generals after the incident was reported through radio broadcasts and newspapers. Therefore, it would be excessive to assume that PKI members as a whole were aware of the plot to kill the generals. The ones who were aware of the story of the murder of the generals in Jakarta were the political elite who wanted to fight over Sukarno's power. The construction of thought is not limited to a collection of information obtained from outside, which is then taken without question, thus building a construction of the G30S incident. However, this way of thinking is an analysis of critical thinking, which is a combination of information received, partisanship to communist ideology, and involvement in the world of practical politics. These three aspects become the basis for those involved in the process of hearing, seeing, and feeling the G30S incident. In the end, the inherent memory of the G30S incident is a conspiracy of the political elite who fought for power from Sukarno's hands. Therefore, not all PKI members were involved in the G30S incident, only certain political elites were involved in the G30S incident (Interview with Sn, June 23, 2009).

Stigmatization of Ex-Political Prisoners on G30S in 1965

Based on the results of the field study, people who are stigmatized are not seen as individuals, but rather as discredited groups. They are harassed, insulted, become objects of hatred, and a source of problem. Moreover, people were indoctrinated that they were phobia of political prisoners. The doctrine was spread by perceiving political prisoners as a threat. Getting in touch with them is seen as tainting themselves and their speeches are considered as non-sense. In addition, they are considered as a threat to collective integrity in a conflict (Interview with Ad, 18 August 2009). This kind of construction of thought became the perspective of power in perceiving PKI members. Thus, power always produced mythical jargon, such as "latent danger of communism", "clean self", "clean environment", etc.

The myth that is built by power is basically an effort to create a classification of power in society (Adam, 2007). Mind manipulation is preserved through classification. Then, the community naturally accepts the idea of the need to treat groups that are different from themselves differently. They apply moral categories to the classification, for example: better, worse, more valuable, more right, wrong, and so on. In relation to PKI members, they were stigmatized as bad people, dangerous people, so they deserve to be hated. In this case, people's minds on PKI members were constructed with prejudice as a product of discourse built by the New Order authorities (Beise, 2004). In general, there are three types of prejudice: affective (related to negative feelings), cognitive (always thinking about a stereotype) and behavioral (acts in the form of discrimination) (Alo, 2005, p. 203). These three types became the perspective of the community in seeing the identity of PKI members.

The study of personal experiences and silent crime of state violence against PKI members is also related to the politics of stigma and prejudice against people who are considered as PKI. The stigma of being imposed as PKI members was felt by ex-political prisoners of PKI. The issue of political prisoners, not only exists when they are in custody but also when they have been released and returned to the community (Zurbuchen, 2002). It happens because the government still feels the need to monitor the activities of the ex-political prisoners. Supervision was carried out, among others by giving ET (ex-political prisoners) marks on their resident cards. For those who are labeled ET, many matters are more troublesome compared to ordinary citizens. For example, if they want to change addresses, they must get approval from the local security agency. Likewise, if they want to arrange a passport, they must go through the screening of the National Stability Coordinating Board (Bakorstanas). Even economic facilities such as bank credit seems almost impossible for people with ET resident cards (Interview with St., April 30, 2009).

Bad stigma was also found by members of the Indonesian Women's Movement (Gerwani). They must accept the stigma of being "immoral". For decades, members of Gerwani had to hide their identities because of endless hatred towards them. Gerwani members were described as figures of wild women who danced *genjer-genjer*, danced naked, then cruelly tortured, slashed, and cut off the genitals of the abducted generals in Lubang Buaya (Adam, 2007). The stigma of being PKI members apparently felt by the descendants of PKI. Those suspected of being children or grandchildren of PKI had to bear the sins inherited from their parents. The state discriminated them by not allowing them to become civil servants or members of the military. The stigma of PKI members is basically a product of collective memory built on state violence against PKI descendants, which places PKI members as second-class citizens or underdogs. Galtung in his study of violence states that a structure of violence leaves traces, not only in the human body but also in the mind and soul. There are four components that attempt to obstruct formation and conscious mobilization, they are: penetration, embedding topdogs in underdogs; segmentation, giving a very partial view of underdogs; marginalization, keeping underdogs outside the fence; and fragmentation, keeping the underdogs away from each other (Galtung, 2003, p. 437 -439).

Stigma and prejudice as a result of the construction of the mind built by the community continues to cling to the individuals and will not change as long as the construction of the mind does not change. Hardiman described how the Hexe puppet, which was originally sent to be a horrifying witch, eventually became a fantastic figure in children's fairy tales. As illustrated in the story, today, anyone who sees the Hexe puppet (witch) in Germany no longer found the true horrors inherent in this figure. Hexe is now a fantastic figure in children's fairy tales. She is considered terrible in those stories and supposed to be horrifying. After rationalism developed in modern times, it is clear that it is not Hexe who is horrifying, but how people tell about Hexe to other people. The horrors that emanated from her face were not *an sich*, but rather the reflection of the collective horrors of other people about her (Hardiman, 2005, p. 181-182). This description illustrates that the fear of the ex-political prisoners of PKI will never end as long as the construction of people's minds has not changed.

Make Peace with History

The process of being able to accept one another's understanding will only occur if there is a mutual agreement. In the context of the collective memory regarding the G30S incident, each subject doing the interpretation must accept that all the collective memories conveyed by the subject contain truth. Willingness to accept collective memories conveyed by other subjects is based on certain considerations (Sihombing, 2005). These considerations are not only limited to decisions or choices, but also contain an understanding analogous to sensory considerations. In-depth studies in this study show findings in the field about the subject's interpretation of state actions related to the G30S incident.

The diversity of memories itself cannot be separated from practical considerations based on experience. The diversity of collective memories of the G30S incident from the perspective of historical actors needs to be heard, understood and comprehended, not as a counterpoint to confront the meaning established by the state, but as materials for dialogue. The dialogue is expected to be used by the media to find collective agreements and make appropriate political decisions. Thus, the dialogue can also be used as a basis for resolving past events. For example, participants and victims should be given the opportunity to meet each other so that together they vow that the incident would not repeat itself and make peace with history for national reconciliation (Budiawan, 2004; Arendt, 1959). Recognizing the diversity of collective memories is expected to eliminate the stigma of certain groups that are considered different from others. Treating someone as a different person is the same as putting someone else as a party that is not equal to us. They are positioned as an inferior group, a group that is considered dangerous and needs to be removed.

For the past to become a peace project and political crime does not repeat itself, collective memory needs to be built. Building a collective memory is not just seeing traces of wounds, but re-knowing them (Adam, 2019). Many of the wounds in human memory are erased and forgotten. Memory is not the whole past, but a part of the past that continues to live in people or groups of people and is subject to present

representations and perspectives. Thus, building a collective memory through the experience of historical actors, neither evokes feelings of revenge for the past nor does it provide justification for political crime. A collective memory is built to justify hope (Adam, 2004), hope that tomorrow will be better and that crime will not be repeated. In this case, the state has the main task of holding a commitment to remember and recognize the existence of political crimes, with efforts taken to rehabilitate and fulfill the rights of those who are harmed.

A collective memory should be used to reconstruct what was experienced in the past, not to justify who is strong and weak, who wins and losses, and who dominates who. However, a collective memory should be used to arouse human dialogues, build self-awareness as human beings and ultimately find their true nature as human beings (Wagner, 1979). The beginning of history must be written. It means that written history must contain human values, not history that justifies the political crimes of the state. History written in such a way will only build hatred and revenge of the past. History that is written to repeat the discourse of past revenge will make this nation imprisoned in history. To allow ourselves to be imprisoned continuously in history is equivalent to repressing one's freedom and not being able to recognize the rights and freedoms of others. Thus, history cannot be used as a pedestal to determine what must be done and what should not be done in the future.

Conclusion

Historical events are texts that are free to interpret. However, interpreting history by not using the rules of truth as in classical hermeneutics can create a discourse that is interpreted based on the interests of each group. History that is interpreted based on the interests of each group will not make it as a peace project, but instead it becomes a source of debate that provokes hostility. Hostilities trigger conflicts. Likewise with the G30S incident, which was written based on certain political and ideological interests, it became an ongoing debate. Such debate can ultimately obscure human values, divide people into groups that are correct and those that are wrong, as well as keep the strong groups and get rid of the weak groups. Therefore, the G30S incident should be written as a peace project, by listening to and feeling what the historical actors experienced through their collective memories. By remembering, we have a moral responsibility to leave bad things in the past. In addition, this nation should also be able to take lessons from the history for self-evaluation and make it a pedestal for building the future by giving space to collective memory.

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