

GAUNG KMAN II

Tanjung, 20 September 2003

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Contents:

Main report: Gendang Bele' welcomes the participants of AMAN's second congress

Article 1: AMAN's second Congress will determine political choices

Article 2: When all from Aceh to Papua gather in the land of Selaparang

Interview: The meaning behind the symbols

Main report

Gendang Bele' welcomes the participants of AMAN's second congress

At around 10 a.m. on 19 September 2003, Supersemar Square, Tanjung, West Lombok, was filled with the clamour of the dancer's steps, the beats of the *gendang* and the jingle of the cymbals played by the *gedang belé* [a special kind of gamelan - *trans*] "troops". Do not be mistaken. This is not about the military. These are the music and dances played according to local tradition to inspire courage. The participants of AMAN's second congress, from different regions, all in their colourful traditional dress go through the gateway into the *Pesamuan Agung* Hall. These groups, representing West Kalimantan, Aceh, Malays of East Sumatera, Badui, Luwuk, East Nusa Tenggara, Riau, Jambi, Bengkulu, East Kalimantan, Orang Rimba, North Sulawesi, and other regions must step through the main gate before passing the *Brugak Pepaosan*. They are accompanied by musicians and dancers in front and behind. Meanwhile, another group of musicians is already standing near the gateway, waiting. All these places have their *adat* significance.

Brugak Pepaosan is the place for meetings and deliberations for all representatives of the *Wetu Telu*. 'Telu' means 'three' and refers to the adherence to the three elements of social leadership, which are the *penghulu* as the religious leader, the *pemangku* as the *adat* leader and the *pamusungan* as the representative of government. The leaders of each of these three elements still sit in the *brugak* as if in deliberations. Amongst the dancers there are already representatives of these three elements to welcome the guests and lead them to the meeting place. According to local tradition, if a guest has already passed the gate and walked past the *brugak pepaosan* towards the *pesamuan agung*, it means that the guest has been officially received by all elements of the local customary leadership.

The welcoming of the guests that morning was only a "warm up" for the official inauguration ceremony in the afternoon. There were quite a lot of Tanjung villagers who came to witness the morning ceremony. And fortunately this ceremony, which lasted about two hours, proceeded smoothly and safely. Since it was a Friday, the ceremony ended before 11 a.m. so that the Muslim participants still had time to attend prayers. Finally, the congress' programme on this first day continued at 3 p.m. with the welcoming ritual called *upacara mendakin*. (*Gaung/ eml*)

AMAN's second Congress will determine political choices

Friday, 19 September 2003, Tanjung village, West Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. The congress is officially inaugurated. The opening session was preceded by the traditional Lombok *Pedamaian Gawe Rapah* ritual, which is considered sacred within the *adat* system of the Sasak people of Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. The "Rapah" ritual can also be used to settle a conflict where different members of the community have quarrelled and still suffer from bitter memories, and humiliation – once the ritual is performed, these things must not be mentioned or remembered any more.

After the *adat* ritual came the opening session by Nazarius (Coordinator of AMAN's Council). In his opening speech, Nazarius said that during their second congress, AMAN (Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago) will determine the direction of the indigenous peoples' movement over the next 4 to 5 years, agree on changes to its organisational structure, and elect and install the AMAN leadership for the next period.

With a view to the upcoming general elections, the congress will also determine the political choices of indigenous peoples. "We don't need to determine which party to choose, but we do need to vote for those who will represent the interests of indigenous peoples", said Abdon Nababan, Executive Secretary of AMAN.

To this purpose, the political choices of indigenous peoples must adhere to the principles of life as one nation and one state, returning to the spirit of Unity in Diversity (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika), and resisting any form of oppression and destruction across the archipelago.

This opening ceremony was also attended by the head of West Lombok district, Drs. H. Iskandar who gave a speech; the regional secretary to the governor, Nanang Samodra, replacing the governor Drs. H. Lalu Serinata, who could not attend since he had to go to Jakarta to meet the president; the head of Mataram University; the head of Lombok Utara subdistrict and others.

The total number of participants was 544 people, consisting of representatives of indigenous communities, observers, and organisers. Some participants had not yet managed to arrive due to technical constraints such as difficulties with transport and transits in Surabaya and Jakarta.

Tomorrow, on the second day of the congress, the programme will continue with a series of workshops for indigenous peoples on different topics such as "Village reform as a means to redefine the relationship between state and the people", "Strengthening the rights of indigenous peoples to land and natural resources", "Community/ Adat-based certification and the implementation of FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) principles 2 and 3". This series of workshops will be offered by various NGOs such as WALHI (Friends of the Earth Indonesia), HuMA (Association for Community Based and Ecological Legal Reform), Jatam (Mining Advocacy Network), KARSA (Circle for Agrarian and Village Reform), INSIST (Institute for Social Transformation) and others. The workshops will go on for two days.

We hope that the congress with its various activities will proceed smoothly and safely! (*Gaung/hnp*)

MISCELLANEOUS

Tasty and affordable snacks from the market

By 5 pm the heat of the day in Tanjung village, West Lombok – the location of AMAN's second congress - fades in the cooler evening air. This is also the time for a break, before sessions start again at 7pm. The participants of the congress use this time to take a bath, look for some local food and go for a walk.

Not far from the congress venue – about 200m from the small bus terminal – there is a line of food stalls run by local women selling traditional Lombok food. There are all sorts of food such as grilled fish *sate*, *beberok* (cooked eggplant with fresh onion and chili sauce), *plecing kangkung* (water spinach with tangy tomato sambal), fried salted fish, stir-fried tiny *teri* fish with chili sauce, as well as various local market sweets. All of them are affordable – at around Rp 200 to 250 each.

Ibu Samsiah sells steamed cup cakes. She said that these food stalls operate every day. “We have been here for a long time, every day from 4 pm until late at night” says ibu Maryah with her strong Lombok accent.

All those participants who have not yet visited this little food market should give it a try. It is not far, it's affordable and delicious. (*Hnp*)

MAKE AMAN'S SECOND CONGRESS A SUCCESS

Article 2

When all from Aceh to Papua gather in the land of Selaparang

AMAN's second congress (KMAN II) was officially inaugurated by the region's Secretary (*Sekda*) representing the governor of the West Nusa Tenggara province.

It was 3:30 pm in Supersemar square of Tanjung village, close to the meeting place called *Brugak Pepaosan*, under a casuarina tree, not far from the Selaparang Hall, known locally as the *pesamuan agung*, that the gathering of the indigenous peoples of the archipelago was officially inaugurated.

As if competing with the opening ceremony that had taken place in the morning, the afternoon ceremony was merrier, noisier and more colourful. Led by a group of gamelan (*gendang bele'*) players in black uniform, all participants formed a long procession. After the first group of indigenous peoples participating in the congress, came another gamelan group in purple uniforms acting as a link in a chain with the next group of indigenous people and so on until a gamelan group in green uniform closed the procession. Starting under the gateway of the *brugak pepaosan*, the procession moved out of the square and onto the main road in the village, turning

towards the west for just under a kilometer and then returning to the square to be welcomed by a shower of yellow rice. This was the opening ceremony, followed by the opening speeches and the killing of a buffalo.

Local indigenous people call such a ceremony *mendakin*, which means an official *adat* welcoming ceremony for guests who will enter the *pesamuan agung*. This time, the guests were indigenous peoples all the way from Sabang [Aceh - *trans*] to Merauke [Papua - *trans*]. As if to remind us all of the song “...from Sabang to Merauke there is a line of islands. Connected to each other they become one...” the parade showed the heterogeneity of the indigenous peoples who live between Sabang and Merauke. And seeing them thus aligned in a procession seems to show that now they are all connected in one movement of joint struggle within the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (AMAN). Today, indigenous peoples from Aceh to Papua have gathered in the land of the ancient Selaparang kingdom. There are 470 congress participants from different communities across the archipelago, 177 observers from Indonesia and abroad, not counting the colleagues from the press, sympathizers and other people who join in to witness the congress. Crowds of local people gathered around the square to watch this very rare ceremony.

A woman from a food stall near the Tanjung bus terminal described the novelty of the situation quite clearly: “We often see people from all over the place stop over or pass through Tanjung. But it is the first time that I’ve seen so many people from so many different places wearing their *adat* costumes and having a big meeting here.”

Apart from the visual impression, this gathering of representatives from different indigenous peoples of Indonesia also conveys a new message: village people who live according to their *adat* can meet, have a congress and make important decisions. (Gaung/eml)

Interview

THE MEANING BEHIND THE SYMBOLS

Interview with Djekat, Member of AMAN’s Council from Lombok

The series of rituals in the opening ceremony of AMAN’s second congress was more than just a lively celebration. There is a meaning behind the different symbols seen by the participants. According to Bapak Djekat, a member of AMAN’s council from Lombok, the meaning of these symbols reflects the attitude and social spirit of West Lombok’s indigenous Sasak people. Editorial staff of Gaung KMAN succeeded in obtaining the following interview with Pak Djekat in the midst of the bustle.

Question (Q): is there a meaning behind the series of rituals *mendakin* celebrated this afternoon?

Answer (A): The *Gendang bele’* or *gamelan bele’* is actually a piece of music intended to motivate the guests. In ancient times, this music was performed for the troops that were due to go to war and also for those troops returning from the battle-field. Whatever the result of the war, win or lose, the troops must be in high spirit so that they can fight better the next time. Nowadays the music has been adapted to the needs of current times and is only used to welcome guests and motivate them.

Q: Why is rice sprinkled in front of the guests and why do you kill a buffalo? Why not a chicken or goat which would be much more affordable?

A: The shower of yellow rice means that rice is the staple food and also symbolizes social unity. One for all and all for one. The killing of a buffalo shows that - in order to honour the guests - the host is prepared to spill blood. It does not need to be a buffalo, the choice depends on the situation of the host and the guests. Social rank must be observed and maintained, even with blood and lives. It is friendliness that the Sasak people want to convey to their guests. It is even believed that the whole Sasak cosmos is of a welcoming spirit towards guests and that it respects their dignity. Hence they are prepared to sacrifice their animals for their guests. Most extraordinary!

Announcements:

The plenary meeting of the organising committee will be held every day at 8 p.m. in Baruga Bapak Datuk Artadi. Attendance is compulsory for: division representatives, Lombok organising committee, consolidators.

All observers who haven't finalised their administrative procedures please contact Susi Fauzia (Uci).

All volunteers, please get in touch with your respective divisions.

A pair of black rimmed spectacles has been found in the secretariat (contact Rainny).

(Translated from the Indonesian by Eva Castaner for DTE)