

## The 1998 Banyuwangi Humanitarian Case (*In Socio-Economic Studies*)

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### Abstract

*The change of power from the New Order era to the reform era was accompanied by various major problems, such as the problem of KKN (corruption, collusion, nepotism), the economic crisis, and cases of violence. One of the violence that occurred before the collapse of the New Order was the case of violence over the issue of witchcraft in Banyuwangi in 1998. Hundreds of people who were accused of being witch doctors had to die with unnatural deaths, such as; sharp weapon slashes and burns. The perpetrators are suspected to be not just anyone. This is because his features are like that of a ninja, dressed in all black, his face covered with cloth and leaving only a pair of eyes without a cover. The casualty toll exploded in August and September 1998 with 75 victims. This Writing Method uses descriptive method, which is a method that aims to describe or provide an overview of the object under study through data or samples that have been collected as they are without analyzing and making conclusions that apply to the public. Discussion, a) Social Studies, b) Human Rights and Case Studies (2017) c) Economic Studies. Conclusion. 1. The violation of Human Rights in the Massacre of Shaman Santet in Banyuwangi Regency in 1998 was a diversion of issues by the central government. 2. Violation of Human Rights in the Massacre of Shaman Santet in Banyuwangi Regency in 1998 could be a scenario carried out by the Old Order government. 3. Violation of Human Rights in the Massacre of Shaman Santet in Banyuwangi Regency in 1998 was the impact of the Monetary crisis. 4. Violation of Human Rights in the Massacre of Shaman Santet in Banyuwangi Regency in 1998 is one of the many cases of human rights violations in Indonesia that have not been or have not been resolved.*

### Keywords

Banyuwangi humanitarian;  
socio-economic; KKN  
(corruption, collusion,  
nepotism)



### I. Introduction

Indonesia under the New Order government ended on May 21, 1998. This event was marked by President Soeharto who resigned as President of the Republic of Indonesia at the Merdeka Palace and was replaced by Vice President BJ Habibie. The change of power from the New Order era to the reform era was accompanied by various major problems, such as the problem of KKN (corruption, collusion, nepotism), the economic crisis, and cases of violence. One of the violences that occurred before the collapse of the New Order was the case of violence over the issue of witchcraft in Banyuwangi in 1998. There are different opinions that make this study interesting, the mention of these cases is (structural violence), collective violence, and human rights violations without legal completion.

The economic condition of the population is a condition that describes human life that has economic score (Shah et al, 2020). The prolonged economic crisis finally touched the lower middle class people who had no jobs. If officials, members of the DPR, and

(a few) journalists start exchanging their dollars for rupiah, at an exchange rate that will remain high, the lower classes will begin to feel how difficult it is to reach basic needs whose prices have skyrocketed. Not only is the price high, the goods are becoming scarce. The anger of these little people was finally unstoppable. In Jember and Banyuwangi, for example, riots occurred. As usual, that afternoon several residents of Wirowongso, Jember, came to the shop to buy kerosene. But, by the shop owner, the oil was said to be non-existent. This answer was obviously very surprising because, in the afternoon, residents saw the shop owner filling 5 kerosene drums. Feeling that they were being bullied, angry people immediately turned the drums upside down so that the oil inside spilled onto the street.

According to HM Mushodiq Fikri, The action, which immediately involved around 100 people, frightened the other shop owners. They also closed the shop. And the action of the Wirowongso people became the trigger for the next riot. The next day, January 13, about 500 residents of the Mumbulsari sub-district stormed and removed merchandise from various shops, which were generally owned by non-private entrepreneurs. The shop's goods were distributed, some were even burned. At least, there are six shops that became the target of mass anger. "There are 14 people who were detained by officers,"

The shops belonging to this descendant of Indonesian citizens were attacked by the masses because they were caught hoarding basic necessities. Rice, for example, which is usually only Rp. 1,000 per kilogram, has doubled. The same thing happened to sugar and cooking oil, which rose between 100 percent and 300 percent. The increase in the price of basic necessities is indeed happening everywhere. However, in Jember, the price seems "out of the ordinary". January 14, in Kalisat sub-district, a convoy of about 60 motorcycles appeared to protest the price hikes. They shouted slogans for the price to be lowered. Until the night, the motorized action took place safely. However, suddenly, on Thursday morning, a huge fire broke out at the Sumber Mas Toserba, the largest supermarket in Jember, which was followed by mass riots in the Districts of Jenggawah and Bakung. About 300 residents ransacked the market. During the riot, at least three Bakung residents were detained by officers. As a result, the shops are even more closed. "In fact, Matahari declared itself to be completely closed for an indefinite period of time. This happened after the fire at the Sumber Mas Toserba people below can no longer buy basic necessities, this is dangerous. You see, it is the lower class people who directly feel the price increase. For this reason, local officials must be aware of fluctuations in price increases.

A wave of protests against price increases also hit Banyuwangi. Friday, January 16, 1998, in Purwoharjo sub-district, a convoy of about 100 motorbikes appeared, shouting slogans, "Lower prices". However, not long after, from the opposite direction came a number of police officers who immediately dispersed the convoy while firing shots into the air. The day before, there was also a demonstration in Muncar. Hundreds of fishermen there stormed and took out merchandise from various shops. In fact, until 02.00 in the morning, the destruction of shops belonging to non-primary entrepreneurs had not completely subsided. The fishermen's anger was apparently triggered by the drop in the price of the fish they caught. In fact, at the same time, the prices of basic necessities have skyrocketed.

Based on the explanation above, the writer argues that this series of events is the cause of the massacre movement against the Banyuwangi community. So, in this explanation, we will discuss the main issue of the humanitarian tragedy in Banyuwangi in 1998.

## II. Research Method

This writing method uses descriptive. Descriptive method according to Sugiyono (2009) is a method that aims to describe or provide an overview of the object under study through data or samples that have been collected as they are without analyzing and making conclusions that apply to the public. In other words, analytical descriptive research takes problems or focuses on problems as they are when the research is carried out, the results of the research are then processed and analyzed to draw conclusions.

## III. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Social Studies

Beginning in 1998, Banyuwangi was hit by the issue of witchcraft. Hundreds of people who were accused of being witch doctors, had to die with unnatural deaths such as; sharp weapon slashes and burns. The perpetrators are suspected to be not just anyone. This is because his features are like that of a ninja, dressed in all black, his face covered in cloth and leaving only a pair of eyes uncovered. The Banyuwangi Nahdlatul Ulama (TPF PCNU) Branch Fact-Finding Team, Abdillah Rafsanjani, said that the first case of the murder of a witch doctor occurred in February 1998. At that time, almost every day there were reports of deaths. However, four months later, the news of the murder disappeared. It was only then, in July 1998, that another incident of massacre of a person accused of being a witch doctor resurfaced.

Most of the executions took place at night. "Before there was a murder, PLN died for a few seconds. So if it is said that systematic action seems more likely, at that time HP rarely had HT, at that time the electricity went out. As soon as the electricity is on, there are victims. And it happens in almost all areas, the motive is almost the same. After that, one by one the killings of witch doctors became more and more widespread. Based on the report from the Banyuwangi branch of the Nahdlatul Ulama Management, the victims also spread to ulama, Koran teachers and managers of Islamic boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools. As a result, the big board of the East Java PWNU held a meeting, then friends from Ansor formed a team to investigate. After conducting an investigation, it turned out that the murder of the witchcraft was not only a witchcraft that led to the murder of the Koran teacher in terror of the kyai.

In fact, the teachers of the Koran and the manager of the Islamic boarding school do not have any influence, including in political parties. But for Banyuwangi historian, Suhailik, the massacre was deliberately carried out to bring down Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) who at that time was keen to criticize the New Order Government. Even the former General Chairperson of the Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU) Executive Committee once called the massacre as a green dragon operation.

There is no exact record of the number of people who died in this incident. Data from KOMPAK or the Justice Seekers Community, a fact-finding team from Banyuwangi NGOs and community leaders, said 174 victims had been killed. Meanwhile, the East Java Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Management Team (PWNU) recorded 147 people. While the Banyuwangi Regency Government, 103 people. So who is the culprit? "The murder of the witchcraft is the issue that there are ninjas. So after we behave, we will judge there is a ninja. What is clear is that the ninja does not exist and there is no evidence of an arrest related to the ninja. So that the Ansor board together with Pagar Nusa at that time protested against the security of the results, but it turned out that they could not be arrested. But the issue of murder shifted to the killing of kyai and Koran teachers at that time."

Meanwhile, the Banyuwangi Police could not reveal the identity of the perpetrator. Previously, the police had arrested 76 suspects. Of that number, 11 of them are confirmed to be the main actors, six are funders and the rest are perpetrators who only participate in massaging witchcraft. Meanwhile, an investigation into this case had already been carried out by the Minister of Defense and the then Commander of the Armed Forces, Wiranto. Even the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) stated that there were indications of gross human rights violations. Unfortunately, the investigation was stopped. So that the mastermind of the case was never revealed.

The people of Banyuwangi are already familiar with the term witch doctor. The Osing tribe, which is a native of Banyuwangi, often uses witchcraft to conquer the opposite sex. However, in its development, the science of witchcraft has shifted its meaning by being used as a way to hurt others, in the name of revenge, heartache, inheritance, and others. The practice of witchcraft, which often takes its toll, makes it difficult for the public and law enforcers to bring witch doctors to court. This happened because it was difficult to prove it, on the contrary, people who reported having been subjected to witchcraft were actually tried because they were accused of committing a crime of slander or spreading false news.

The casualty toll exploded in August and September 1998 with 75 victims. Responding to the question of who the real perpetrators of the murder with the issue of witchcraft were, the East Java Police Chief, Major General Pol. M. Dayat, MM. MBA. SH, explained the number of victims, arrested the perpetrators, intellectual actors, funders, executors, and also evacuated 227 people suspected by the local community as witch doctors. Furthermore, the Kapolda stated that the case of the murder of a witch doctor in Banyuwangi was a pure crime and an organized crime.

The East Java Regional Police Chief's statement received a reaction from the East Java PWNU, KH. Hasyim Muzadi rejected the Kapolda's statement that the case of violence with the issue of witchcraft was a pure crime. According to the results of the East Java NU investigation, apart from 14 NU residents who died in Banyuwangi, the incident spread to Demak, Central Java, an NU cleric named KH. Rahmadi was killed by a group of people dressed in black ninja-style clothes for being accused of being a witch doctor. The East Java Nahdlatul Ulama stated that the Banyuwangi case, which was similar to a wave of murders under the pretext of a witch doctor in Banyuwangi, was a conspiracy with the aim of destroying and dividing NU residents so that speculation arose among the congregation, but NU would not accuse anyone. Those were the statements of the East Java NU's stance delivered by the Chair of the East Java PWNU KH. Hasyim Muzadi at a gathering of about 3,000 Ulama and NU administrators throughout East Java at the Langitan Islamic Boarding School, Tuban.

Ninja attacks haunt people's lives. The windows and doors of the house are closed tightly after sunset. Siskamling which had been neglected became a mandatory activity for adult men at night. Every morning every family is anxious because they are afraid that the door of their house will be marked with a red skull image - which means they will become the target of the next ninja operation. After the collapse of the New Order government, in 1998-1999, hundreds of people who were considered shamans died, especially in Banyuwangi. In obscurity, Intan Andaru has recounted the incident in her work. Her novel, *Women Mixed in Red*, tells the story of the massacre from the point of view of a voiceless accused witch doctor.

Some people who make a living at night, even though they are worried, continue to work armed with small yellow plates (bamboo) hidden under their clothes. That said, the ninja became weak and helpless when hit by the yellow bamboo slash. There is also a

mention that ninjas will not attack a house where there is a Moringa plant in the yard. Some ninjas are also reportedly caught after accidentally seeing a woman's naked body, which destroys her magic. Even though it has weaknesses that are at first glance like a kid's joke, the issue of ninja attacks really makes the atmosphere tense. Until now the exact motive of this incident is still unclear.

### 3.2 Komnas HAM and Cases (2017)

Writing the history of violence often encounters obstacles in finding data. This is due to the concerns and silence of the actors to reveal the chronology of historical events. The process of searching for archival data is sometimes also not found in archival institutions. On the other hand, historians are not very familiar with the data obtained from the authorities. The history of the reconstruction of violence with the issue of witchcraft in Banyuwangi is also the same. Data investigation found many obstacles such as historical actors who did not want to tell the events that occurred. The role of the police and court archives is very important, because in the minutes of examination and court reports it has been written. Historians need to look at court archives as an alternative when historians have difficulty finding data. At this point, historians must be able to retrieve archives not only fixated on archival institutions, but can search archives through institutions such as courts to see the chronology of violence that has occurred and has been tried in the judiciary. Historians can go further for data analysis and can see the results of interviews conducted by prosecutors. This study will discuss the role of historians in seeking court data as the main source.

The manager of the Blambangan Regional General Hospital (RSUD) Banyuwangi, East Java, stated that the medical records of the victims of the 1998-1999 witchcraft massacre were not found. So the request of the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) could not be fulfilled. The director of the Blambangan Hospital Banyuwangi, Taufik Hidayat, said that the medical records of patients currently in the hospital are medical records from 2000 to 2016. Meanwhile, medical records prior to 1999 are no longer stored in the hospital. Do not dare to confirm whether the medical records of the 1990s were lost or stored in the Banyuwangi Library, Documentation and Archives office. Taufik said that to help Komnas HAM his party would try to find the medical record document at the Banyuwangi Archives office. However, the hospital cannot promise to be able to find the document. "Currently I have checked in the field, it turns out that the medical records in Blambangan Hospital are from 2000 to this year (2016). Taufik Hidayat, said "In the years prior to 2000 the data were no longer available in the hospital."

The massacre case in Banyuwangi with the motif of a witch doctor took place in Banyuwangi, East Java, in February-September 1998. At that time, the Banyuwangi Regent, Purnomo Sidik, asked the authorities to register and protect people suspected of having supernatural abilities supernatural. However, in the aftermath, there was a massive massacre of people suspected of being witch doctors. The perpetrator uses a ninja-style head covering. Meanwhile, most of the victims were not witch doctors, such as kiai and santri. It is unfortunate that the radio recording document was omitted, the Fact Finding Team (TPF) from Nahdlatul Ulama said the death toll had reached 147 people.

The Head of the Investigation Team for the Alleged Massacre of Shaman Santet from Komnas HAM, regrets the loss of medical records at the Blambangan Hospital in 1998-1999. Even though the medical record can add evidence to the investigation into allegations of gross human rights violations, during the massacre of witch doctors in Banyuwangi 18 years ago. Nurkhoiron said in the medical records it could be seen who were the victims of the massacre at that time. It is suspected that many victims of the

massacre of sorcerers were rushed to the Banyuwangi government's hospital. Although it has not yet received the medical record document, Komnas HAM will continue its investigation into the massacre of witch doctors in Banyuwangi. The investigation is targeted to be completed by next year 2017. The National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) has reopened the case of witch doctors in Banyuwangi, East Java, which occurred in 1998-1999. Komnas HAM assessed that the case of the massacre of sorcerers was a violation of human rights.

### 3.3 Economic Studies

Various analyzes regarding the case of the mass massacre of witch doctors in Banyuwangi, East Java, in 1998, were dismissed by the results of the research of Dr Douglas Kammen. The doctor who graduated from Cornell University, United States, concluded that the case of the massacre of witch doctors in Banyuwangi, and then spread to various areas in a limited way on the island of Java, was motivated by land issues. According to Kammen, who is also a visiting professor at Hasanuddin University Makassar, his research shows that the dissatisfaction and anger of sharecroppers towards landlords or land-owning farmers became the most dominant factor in the massacre under the guise of eradicating witchcraft in 1998. Douglas Kammen revealed the results of his research in discussion on "Violence and Mass Media" organized by the Institute for the Study of Social Change (LSPS).

According to Kammen, previously developed analysis of the massacre of more than 100 people in Banyuwangi and its surroundings is indeed diverse. What sticks out the most from his observations of the news in the mass media is that there are high-level political conspiracies behind it all. "There is an analysis that this is all a scenario of former President Suharto to destabilize the country. There is also a theory about the involvement of Kopassus loyal to Prabowo. There is also an analysis of the PKI's revenge against NU. There is even a link to the PDI-P Congress in Bali," said Kammen. . According to him, all these analyzes are very difficult to trace the truth. That's why he developed another analysis with an approach to the economic crisis and defense issues. Kammen started his analysis by observing the impact of the monetary crisis (krismon) which was directly felt by the people of Banyuwangi and its surroundings. Prices immediately skyrocketed and purchasing power fell by 40 percent. "This disaster, which we understand as krismon, is understood by the Banyuwangi people as witchcraft, and they are not wrong with that understanding," said Kammen, adding that there was also a weather factor, namely by El Nino and La Nina storms caused crop failure.

The dominant factor is also the transfer of land functions. Since the 1960s, landowners and tenants have divided the proceeds 70:30. However, in its development, land owners do not want to take risks such as crop failure or weather. The owner then leases the land to other parties whose orientation is for profit. "Unfortunately, land tenants often don't use the old tenants," said Kammen. In fact, Kammen got the fact that the profit sharing between the owner/tenant and the tenants is no longer 70:30, but becomes 90:10. "But there is a fixed wage compensation for smallholders in the amount of Rp. 5,000. This value is still insufficient for smallholders and their families,". Land ownership, of the three factors above, the most important factor being the "key word" is land ownership.

In Banyuwangi and its surroundings, the land ownership model is controlled by the landlord or land-owning farmers. There are also facts and understandings in Banyuwangi and its surroundings that the kiai who care for Islamic boarding schools and santri are land owners. So, said Kammen, the kiai who are landlords are threatened by the people who are smallholders. So, in the general sense of the Banyuwangi people, the sorcerers are not

always witch doctors, but also landlords. However, because they did not dare to kill the kyai, those who were hunted down and killed were the landlords, whose social strata were below the kyai's. Data from the Banyuwangi Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Branch Office, he continued, clearly shows this. "Most of the victims are land-owning farmers. Many of them are over 57 years old. Kammen believes his analysis is close to the facts because other massacres with almost the same escalation as Banyuwangi district against "santet witches" also occurred in Jember, southern Malang, Situbondo, Probolinggo, and Pasuruan. The pattern of land ownership in these areas is similar to that of Banyuwangi.

The same pattern of massacres, although on a smaller scale, occurred in southern Ciamis, Tasikmalaya, southern Garut, and Cianjur. his land ownership is similar to that of Banyuwangi. At the end of his description, Kammen said, he believed the tragedy of the 1998 massacre was indeed motivated by a land case. "Two-thirds of the victims were farmers who owned the land. The rest, it is possible for people to take the opportunity to take revenge or vent hatred, by taking advantage of the momentum of the massacre of "shaman witchcraft,"

## IV. Conclusion

The case of human rights violations in the massacre of witch doctors in Banyuwangi Regency in 1998 is one of the clear evidences of serious violations of human rights that have occurred. carried out by the government as a means of maintaining power. Based on the results of the research analysis, the authors can draw several important points as conclusions of the research, namely: 1. Violations of Human Rights in the Massacre of Shaman Santet in Banyuwangi Regency in 1998 were a diversion of issues by the central government. 2. Violations of Human Rights in the Massacre of Shaman Santet in Banyuwangi Regency in 1998 could be a scenario carried out by the Old Order government 3. Violations of Human Rights in the Massacre of Shaman Santet in Banyuwangi Regency in 1998 were the impact of the Monetary crisis 4. Violations of Human Rights the massacre of Shaman Santet in Banyuwangi Regency in 1998 is one of the many cases of human rights violations in Indonesia that have not been or have not been resolved.

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