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Analyzing Religious Values of *Massempe* Tradition in South Sulawesi of Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to reveal the religious values of *the massempe* tradition of Bone society in Sulawesi Selatan. This research is a qualitative descriptive research using phenomenology approach. Observations and interviews were utilized in data collection. The results indicate that *massempe* tradition of Bone society is a form of gratitude for the harvests that have been obtained. This tradition is done by kicking each other's legs between one participant and another participant who is mediated by two referees. This activity is done without any anger and resentment even though his legs could have been swollen, sprained, and injured because it is considered as entertainment. Its entertainment level is similar to the pleasure when singing or dancing. Despite an entertainment, this tradition teaches the religious values to the younger generation. Among the religious values is to be grateful for the blessings of Allah, sharing the sustenance, and forgiving each other. Finally, this study confirms that the religious values contained in *massempe* tradition are in line with the concept of *panggaderreng* of Bugis society as the highest social law in society.

Keywords: *massempe*, South Sulawesi

1. Introduction

Local wisdom is often interpreted as local wisdom, knowledge, or intelligence. Local wisdom refers to life concept which is based on clear reasoning and right mind as well as containing positive things. Local wisdom can also be defined as the work of reasoning, deep feeling, attitude, the form of temperament, and the suggestion for human glory. Local wisdom contains several concepts, such as endless experience that is precipitated as a guideline of one's behaviour, is not out of the owner's environment, and is dynamic, flexible, open, and always adjusts to the times. At the individual level, local wisdom arises as a result of different cognitive processes of work in an attempt to regulate the values that are considered to be the right choice for them. At the group level, local knowledge is an attempt to find universal values as a result of pattern relationships established within an environment.

Massempe tradition is one form of local wisdom within Sulawesi Selatan's society. However, this tradition can be found almost in every district in Sulawesi Selatan with different names. In Makassar, this tradition is known as *a'sempak* or *a'batte* which means fighting or competing. In Tana Toraja, it is famous as *massemba*. Mandar people call it *malanja*, while the Bugis community, especially in Bone district called it as *massempe* which means kicking legs. Based on the history, *the massempe* tradition was originated from the way of the royal family having fun to entertain themselves as a response to the limited facilities of sports and entertainment at that time. *Massempe* is only played by those who stayed in the king's palace and aimed to entertain the royal family. The first kingdom that played *massempe* game was Bone and Gowa kingdom, where at that time, Hasanuddin who was still teenager often hanging out with his peers including La Tenri Tatta To Erung, Bone's king known as Arung Palakka Petta Malampee Gemmena. Sultan Hasanuddin did this not only because he was



interested in this kind of game to entertain, but also he wanted to build the friendship with the son of Bone nobility. However, over time, *massempe* is also done by almost all people in society to this day. *Massempe* can still be found in specific areas and played on special occasions or at big parties, in addition, to give thanks to God for the abundance of the provision that has been given as well as for entertainment. Its entertainment level is similar to the pleasure when we dance or sing. One of the significant events and parties is the harvest period.

Research on the tradition of thanksgiving during harvest period is found in various studies in Indonesia, for example in Banyuasin, Banyumas, Tojo Una-Una, Sukoharjo, Tana Toraja, Jambi, Gresik, Jogjakarta. This tradition is not only found in Indonesia, but also in America and Europe. Regardless of research on the culture of thanksgiving in Indonesia and the world, several related studies that discuss *massempe* tradition are also revealed, but they do not explicitly describe this tradition. They address only the political issues of multiculturalism, local content teaching materials, the silent negotiation through ritual and slightly related to this tradition. Thus, it can be implied that research on *massempe* tradition is still rare, especially when discussing the religious values within it.

2. Method

This research is a qualitative descriptive research using phenomenology approach. Phenomenology approach is an approach that seeks to investigate the essential meaning of *massempe* tradition that is hereditary undertaken by almost Bone society. Meaning understanding was obtained by investigating the participants who know and obey the tradition. Data collection was undertaken using interview and observation. To obtain scientific data, the data obtained is first checked its validity by using triangulation technique that is crossing the information obtained from various sources, so that, at the end only valid data is used to achieve the results of the research. Data was analyzed descriptively and qualitatively.

3. Findings and Discussion

As a dynamic social entity, Bone society defines local wisdom as a worldview of meaning in reality. The local wisdom which is a cultural representation of a community is articulated in the form of visible and invisible things. Many scientists classify five categories of local wisdom; (1) wisdom in the form of view of life; (2) wisdom of social life attitude, advice and lesson learned which is expressed in the form of proverb, parable, poetry or folklore; (3) wisdom in ceremony or traditional ceremony; (4) wisdom in the form of principles, norms, and rules of tangible form into a social system, and; (5) wisdom in the form of habits, everyday behavior in social interaction.

In the context of Bone community, its local wisdom is manifested as the concept of tradition which includes the practices, norms and demands of social life derived from the experiences passed on by the ancestors. The high values of a culture which have been inherited by the ancestors were able to integrate the community in the bonds of togetherness. The efforts undertaken in developing the noble values of a tradition include (1) generating moral values based on religious values in religion, (2) promoting mutual respect and appreciation among peers, (3) developing a habit to help each other, (4) developing a caring attitude among people, and (5) upholding the values contained in a specific tradition. Thus it can be said that the dimensions of local wisdom in Bone society are manifested in the fundamental cultural values that represent the philosophy and ideal characters to be achieved.

In general, the tradition plays a vital role in the life of Bugis community. Every person in the society should behave well which does not contradict with the prevalent custom. The obedience and compliance with the tradition are applicable due to the assumption that the culture is full of essential values for people. This is a social reality that exists in the lives of Bugis people and is a system of life sustained since the ancestors create the tradition. Moreover, this kind of tradition is not diminished by the times.

Massempe tradition is one form of the local wisdom of Bone society. Wisdom is an integrated use of intelligence, creativity and knowledge mediated by a set of values in the achievement of the common good through a balanced consideration between intrapersonal, interpersonal and extra personal interests that take place in a short or long time to adapt, shape or choose the environment. Local wisdom is a local knowledge created by the adaptation of a community derived from the life experiences communicated from generation to generation used by people to survive in an environment that integrates with the belief system, norms, culture and is expressed in the traditions and myths adopted over an extended period. Local clarification is a reflection of a growing view of life in a community. *Massempe* tradition is one of Bone's traditions undertaken from generation to generation, but no solid information tells which Bone's king who made this activity compulsory to do after harvesting. Indeed, the implementation of *massempe* to this day is because of the ancestors' legend. Based on the history, the *massempe* tradition was originated from the noble family's way to get fun and entertainment. This tradition was done at traditional ceremonies, such as marriage, the inauguration of kings and other traditional celebrations. The story also points out that *massempe* begins with a ritual performed by the community as a token of thanks to God who has given prosperity by bringing down rain after such a long dry season. In the history, this *massempe* tradition is routinely performed by some Bone people after each harvest as a sign of gratitude and thanks to God who has given prosperity and sustenance to society. *Massempe* is a kind of game in which the players kick each other's legs. *Massempe* is performed by two adult men and supervised by two referees. The referee of that choice must be considered as a respected person so that the players and audiences do not take any harmful actions to harm both parties. In carrying out the game, people make a big circle. They stand around clapping and cheering while enjoying the process of *massempe*. Then, when there are volunteers who want to play, they walk into the centre of the circle, facing each other. When the referees have permitted to start the game, they start kicking each other. The number of kicks in the direction of the opponent is not restricted; it also applies to which body parts kicked which is not regulated by the referees except the vital and sensitive part and face. They do not kick each other with anger or high tense, but they relax, laugh, and have fun. Since they feel happy, relaxed, full of jokes and laughter, they did not feel the pain of a kick directed against him. In fact, they are not afraid at all of the injuries, both minor injuries such as swelling and severe injuries, such as broken legs. In addition, they also have a firm belief that injury or swelling and sprain will not last long because what they do is a form of their gratitude to God and Allah who will not give *bala* or disaster to those who are good at appreciation. In fact, it can be a blessing for them.

One prominent scholar, Syamsuddin, argues that the game is considered stop when one of the participants confirms his inability to continue the game and step back. This is due to several possibilities such as his leg is swelling or broken or because of fatigue. Similarly, even though the legs are swollen, sprained and broken, the *massempe* participants do not show their anger or grudge against their opponents, but they enjoy the game. This is because there are *sanro* (shamans) who are ready to assist and cure the participants regardless of the severity of the injuries. The leg injury will also heal within two or three days after being treated by a shaman using traditional medicines, water, leaves and prayer. Indeed, in Bugis land, certain herbs can cure injury and leg fracture less than a week.

This game will be carried out in the vast field. The people will make circle or square to separate the players and audiences. The game can be played anytime either in the morning, at noon, or at night especially when the full moon comes. It depends on the agreement of the traditional leaders and then the society will just do it accordingly. After *massempe* is complete, the following activity is *mapperee* (swinging). The participants of *mapperee* are not limited by the committee because the event is considered as the closing event of the whole annual events of Bone society. The activity merely aims to express joy and happiness, is an expression of gratitude for the abundance of gifts that God has given, is a form of devotion to God because they have gained His favour, and is an entertainment event for the community after harvesting.

Massempe tradition preserved by Bone society is not only a game, but in practice, it also has many values, included religious values. The word "religion" comes from the word religion which means religion or belief in the existence of something which has greater power over man. Religious value is a form of human relationship with the creator through the teachings of the religion that has been internalized in a person and reflected in his/her attitude and everyday behaviour. Religious is the obedient attitude and behaviour in implementing religious teachings adhered to, being tolerant of the implementation of other worship, and living in harmony with followers of other religions. Religious values also mean the appreciation and implementation of religious teachings in everyday life. Religious value is a form of human relationship with the creator through the teachings of the religion that has been internalized in a person and reflected in the attitude and day-to-day behaviour.

The religious values formed about *massempe* tradition are (1) Religious belief which refers to the faith in God and everything related to the unseen world and the acceptance of positive things in religious teachings. (2) The religious feeling which means a picture of feelings that are felt in the religion and appreciation of someone in practical religious rituals. This is very visible in the procession of *massempe* tradition from the planning stage to the final stage of the activity. (3) Religious knowledge which refers to all aspects related to one's understanding and knowledge of his/her religious teachings to add knowledge about the religion he/she embraces. (4) The religious effect which is the application of what he/she already knows from his religious teachings is then applied through attitudes and day-to-day behaviour. Practically, the religious values contained in *massempe* tradition are being grateful for the blessings of Allah, sharing sustenance with the relatives and forgiving each other.

3.1 Gratitude for the God's Favors

Being grateful for the God's favours is the underlying religious value of this tradition. The harvest from little or big yields should be appreciated and been grateful. Bugis society has a firm belief that when they are thankful for the harvest in that period, then the next harvest of crops will be increased. Similarly, if the yield is accepted as it is and the people are not grateful at all, then the next year's harvest will not be an increase, it may even be decreased. Of course, an understanding of this concept is an internalization of their religious knowledge. Internalization of that opinion is derived from the firm understanding of Islam and tradition as embodied in *panggadereng* that includes Islam as the grip of life. In one of the *lontara*, it is said,

"Hai kalian pemangku adat! Pahamiilah benar-benar apa yang disebut adat. Pelihara dan hormati ia, sebab adat itulah yang disebut manusia. Jika engkau tak memahami yang disebut adat, maka tak jadilah orang disebut manusia. Karena tiadalah pokok pangkal adat itu melainkan kejujuran itu sambil engkau perkuatt akut mu kepada dewata dengan mempunyai rasa malu yang mendalam. Sebab sesungguhnya orang yang kuat takutnya kepada dewata lagi mendalam rasa malunya, dia itulah yang tak pernah terpisah dari kejujuran." (You are a customary leader! Understand what is called custom. Maintain and respect it for that is the people's custom. If you do not understand the so-called custom, then you will not be called human. Because honesty is the basic of the custom itself, we need to fear of God by deepening your shame. Those who have intense fear and deep pity are those who are never discrete from honesty).

3.2 Sharing Sustenance with the Relatives

The concept of sharing is the basic concept of this tradition. This can be seen when *massempe* tradition is held; people are shared their food and drinks to everyone who comes. People are all overflowing and very happy if the food they serve and prepare is acceptable. In fact, they will look for anyone who has not received food from his neighbours. All communities are directly involved in carrying out these activities. They make food, such as *sanggara*, *sokko*, *manu*, meat, and bring them to the field and give to everyone there. In fact, there is an impression to exchange food. What is clear is that the food should be given, even to the relatives, close neighbours, people who attend the activity or

who are absent. Sometimes, if they are unable to participate in the event due to specific issues, the food will be sent to his/her house. They believe that God has given them sustenance and as a form of gratitude, the sustenance must be given and shared with others, whoever they are. This is in line with the concept of sharing in the teachings of Islam. The Prophet said, "*Your sustenance will never be diminished only because you give it, but it will be increased, increase, and increase.*"

3.3 Forgiving Each Other

The concept of forgiveness is also found in *massempe* tradition. This forgiving concept has been internalized in each of them because they know that God is all-forgiving, why then human beings do not forgive others' faults. In the context of this tradition, people who are in either light or heavy injuries such as broken legs are ready to forgive their opponents that makes them injured. There is no hate and revenge in them. In fact, they tend to be happy and pleased. This is in line with the concept of the *pangdarrereng* and Islamic concept of how we forgive others.

Massempe tradition as a local wisdom of *Bugis* community in Bone of Sulawesi Selatan is a tradition of thanksgiving to God who has provided abundant sustenance when harvest period comes. The tradition is different from others because it displays happiness, pleasure, and cheerful situation within community although, during the game, some people might get injuries such as swelling and broken legs. Happiness and pleasure moods eliminate participants and audiences' fear. They even laugh at each other despite the pain they might feel. Since they are not afraid of anything, the courage comes. *Massempe* will stop if there is a participant who is fatigued and unable to continue. The expression of happiness through this tradition is similar to the mood when people express their happiness through song and dance.

In line with this research, research on gratitude for the harvest can be found in almost all regions in Indonesia. In Banyuasin, Sumatra Selatan, this tradition is called *malemang* tradition. This tradition is done in the form of burning red and white sticky rice flour with salt and sweet taste put into bamboo. Then in the morning, the filled bamboos are brought to the grave of *Punyang Burung Jauh* or the sacred grave to prevent any disasters or unfortunate things and ask for more favours. In Banyumas, Jawa Tengah, this tradition is known as *lengger* art. This tradition is done in the form of dance ceremony and is known as ordinary people folks dance. In Tojo Una-Una, Sulawesi Tengah, this tradition is known as *padungku* tradition. In Sukoharjo, Jawa Tengah, this tradition is popular as *rasulan* tradition. In Tana Toraja, Sulawesi Selatan, this tradition is known as *Rambu Tuka*. In Sumedang, Jawa Tengah, there is a tradition called *tarawangsa*. It is a kind of art performance in the form of dance accompanied by music with magic call. In Jambi, it is known as *Kenduhai Sko*. Gresik people know it as *sedekah bumi*. In Jogjakarta, the term *slametan* is famous for Thanksgiving tradition. The tradition of gratitude after the harvest is not only found in Indonesia, but also in America and Europe. Nevertheless, the form of appreciation is expressed in different ways.

In America and other European countries, gratitude is expressed in a more modern form of parades like the parade of vehicles, balloons, prominent balloon characters, clowns, marching bands, *cheerleaders*, famous bands/performers. They do such activity in the morning while having a banquet, sacral activity to bring the whole family, held in the centre of the city; New York City. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, it is expressed in a more traditional form according to the socio-cultural conditions of each community. In Tana Toraja, Sumedang, Tojo Una-Una, Sukoharjo, Jambi, Banyumas, the expression of gratitude is done in the form of dances. The difference lies in the participants who follow the activity. If in Tana Toraja, the participants are limited to members of the church congregation and held in a church, in Tojo Una-Una, Sukoharjo, Jambi, Banyumas, participants come from all members of the community who attend the event and are held outdoors. Unlike before, the results of research on the expression of gratitude after the harvest, Gresik and Jogjakarta people undertake the tradition by bringing the harvest to the sea and distributing them to the community. In Banyuasin, people carried out the tradition by burning fat and brought it to the sacred grave, while in Bone, Bugis people celebrate it in the form of expressing happiness and pleasure through kicking each other's legs which is

done face to face between one participant to another. Because of the happiness of the harvested harvest, the pain becomes more intolerable, the fear fades away, and so what comes up is only courage. Finally, this study confirms that almost all regions in Indonesia, America and Europe have their way of expressing gratitude to God. The embodiment of appreciation varies according to social, cultural, political and environmental conditions. Bugis Bone Society of Sulawesi Selatan expresses gratitude after the harvest is coming by conducting *messempe* tradition as a form of happiness and pleasure.

4. Conclusion

Massempe tradition as a local wisdom of Bugis community in Bone of Sulawesi Selatan is a tradition of thanksgiving to God who has provided abundant sustenance when harvest period comes. After harvesting, this tradition is almost applied in all parts of Indonesia. Because Indonesia is heavily influenced by the teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism, the way of expressing gratitude in all regions of Indonesia is still strong with traditional nuances and mysticism. Bugis Bone people express their gratitude by kicking each other's legs because it is regarded as a game. The situation during the game is so cheerful. They join the game with joy, full of jokes and laughter, no fear, looking very brave even though some of them were injured with minor injuries, such as swelling, or severe injuries like broken legs. However, this tradition expresses a form of being grateful to God, sharing, and forgiving.

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