



Kuliwa: **A Cultural Identity of the Local People of** **Mandar, West Sulawesi**

Zuhriah

CRCS, Gajah Mada University, Yogyakarta
email: zuhriahrara@gmail.com

Abstract

Tola' bala means to refuse or to draw away the danger that might happen. In West Sulawesi it is called *Kuliwa*. It is being done by the wife of fisherman, *punggawa*. The people of Mandar are usually practicing *kuliwa* ritual before going to fishing or venturing to a journey through the sea. It is an obliged ritual, which is done for inaugurating or welcoming something as in object or through ceremonial acts. For instance, to inaugurate the use and first voyage of a ship, or to acquire machine or other tools used for fishing (*jala* and *gae*), and for the first time for fishing. It is requirement ritual for every fisherman before having a long journey into the sea. They believed that without practicing *Kuliwa*, something dangerous in the sea might happen during the sailing time. Hereby, this paper aims to explore more on what the way of the people of Mandar is still practicing and maintaining this ritual and how it becomes gather in tradition and religion? *Kuliwa* is not just talking about tradition, but also the life of religion in Mandar society and further believed as their cultural identity.

Keywords

Sea-Ritual, Local Tradition, and Cultural Identity

Introduction

Indonesia has 17.504 big and little islands, about 6000 among other things do not have dweller, disseminating around equator, giving tropical weather. Indonesia Position lay in coordinate 6°LU - 11°08'LS and from 95°BB - 141°45'BT and also located in between two continent that is Asian continent and continent Australia or Oceania. In the regional level,

Indonesia has Unfolding as long as 3.977 miles among of Indies and Pacific Ocean. While the wide of Indonesia continent is about 1.922.570 km² and its territorial water 3.257.483 km². Indonesia consisted of five big islands, namely Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua. Even though, the most populous Island is Java, where in the majority Indonesia's population live in this island (indonesianseafarer.com, 2009).

Even Indonesia has well known as the maritime country, but Indonesia has much of its natural resources. As maritime country, many tribes lived in Indonesia refers as 'fisherman' or '*Nelayan*', which just not only regard to livelihood per se, but also as cultural identity. Meaning, to the context of people of Mandar fishing has become part of their unique lived characteristic. Just like the life of Mandarnese people, as a tribe who is living in or near to the sea and working as *posasi*, or fisherman. It was in accordance to the Dawson (1959) statement as mentioned by Julianto (1981) that there were list factors that shaping certain people or community's action then able to be called as 'culture', as the following:

First, elements of regionalism: the physical object of nature, including human beings and its surrounding, region, local circumstances, have directly or indirectly influencing to shape certain actions to be culture. For example, the way of thinking of Russians who live in the cold climate, would be seen different with people who lived in the warm climate, like Sahara. *Second*, elements of the nation, like descents, race, and the rest of cultural function gained by the ancestors. *Third*, psychological elements: including behavior and temperament of nation, which meant caused by the two factors: (1) acculturation, taking elements of culture by peaceful diffusion and (2) with the violence of war, just like the impact of the imperialism, like the Philippines that has cultural pattern as like as the Spain. And *fourth*, the economic elements which have the fact meaning into the process of human adjustment and adaptation to their surroundings. Thereby there are various way of living of the people in different cultures,

such as peasant and fisherman.

According to Amartya Sen (2006) if a sense of identity leads to group success and able to make an individual betterment, those identity then may end up to be applied and promoted. Indeed, both of reflective choice and evolutionary selection, ideas of identity can be important, and mixtures of the two combining critical reflection and selective evolution, that can also obviously lead to the prevalence of identity influenced behavior (CRCS, 2009).

In this paper, the tribe's identity and its physical habitat, the sea and archipelagic location, used as an important factor in the process of making, maintenance, and the continuance of ritual. Based on the perspective built by Sen and Dawson, this paper will discuss on how the religious ritual, like *Kuliwa* or *tola' bala* practiced by people of Mandar in the West Sulawesi, Indonesia who are sea-faring and there are linked to their sea-life. This study is important but less attention from scholars. Atha'na (2010) viewed Mandar's aspects as a trail Shia teachings in Sulawesi and compare it to the tribe of Bugis and Makassar. While Ismail (2014) examined more on the elements of Islam which is constructed in the implementation of public rituals Pambusuang Mandar fishermen from the perspective of anthropology of religion. As sea-farers and fisherman or in local term, *posasi* (Mandar), 'nelayan' (Indonesia), it will attempt to show how the simple fisherman community expresses their cultural identity through their ritual. It will also show the changes that may happened, especially in the synthesis of tradition to local Islam.

Defining the Mandar

In the beginning, Mandarnese or Mandar is one of tribe who live in the South Sulawesi, together with Makassar, Bugis, and Toraja. But recently, on October 05, 2004, Mandar was separated from South Sulawesi and built new Province called the West Sulawesi. Mandar is

located in the Western part of Sulawesi Island. It has five regencies, such as Mamuju, Mamuju Utara, Majene, Mamasa, and Polewali Mandar. At the of the Sulawesi emperor, Mandar refers to the tribe union and culture for fourteen emperor that included in '*Pitu Ulunna Salu*' and '*Pitu Bagbana Binanga*' group (Seven emperor in upstream, and seven emperor in estuary) (Asdy 2008, 7).

Mandar is refereed to one of the tribes in Indonesian archipelago which is known with the sea-oriented culture. In addition, Mandar also widely referred to another tribe that is also having sea cultural orientation in general, such as Makassar, Bugis, Bajau, Madura, and Butun. Mandar not have a great fleet of war, or thick and large castle. Maritime's supremacy of mandar tribes can be found in three forms of technology they have developed, like *Rumpon* and boat *Sande*' (the name of boat). Mandar is the only maritime tribe that directly exposed to the open sea without a group of islands (Alimuddin 2005, 3).

The cultural aspect of Mandar's maritime, start with the activity before sailing; parting ceremony, free ritual time of boat with the main purpose to ask for permission to the continent in order to be given safety and success during the process of sailing.

***Posasi'* (fisherman)**

The sea is the life for Mandarnese people. They have principal that life is to live from and to the sea, since the sea has given the substantive meaning of their lives. They have not only working as the fisherman and selling the fish, but their main dishes was also fish. Indeed, the characteristic concept of their home, music, songs also referred to the water or the sea. There was also Mandar folklore, the Mermaid princes. It was the most favorite story for the people of Mandar, especially for the children. Zuhriah (2005) has noted an interesting Mandarnese cosmological origin that reflects the sea-life and the importance of fish to their subsistence:

one Mandar theory origin goes:

Once upon the time, a husband went out to sail across the sea to looking for fish. When he was out at the sea, he noticed that his wife and children do not eat fish in the roof (Mandar's house has a place near in the roof to put away things or food). After some days, the children asked to eat the fish that the fisherman has served in the roof, because their fish has ran out. And the mother (wife of fisherman) took the fish and gave it to her children. When her husband came, he became angry and directly took a big knife (*komi kayyang', parang'*) to split his wife into two parts (vertical). He threw one and half of the body to the sky and the other in the sea. The Mandarnese people believed that what he has thrown into the sky become Sky Queen, and what has been thrown to the sea become fish, as Mermaid Princes (Zuhriah 2005).

In Mandar, *posasi'* (fisherman) and *posasi'* (sea-man) are quietly different between one another. The first (fisherman) has a duty to looking for fish through sailing the sea, while the later referred to someone who did as merchant, because they have commercial boat to sell something (Asdy 2008, 69). *Posasi'* as fisherman divided into two kinds; i.e. *punggawa'* (leader, or chief of the boat) and *sawi'* (staff, or assistant to the chief in the boat).

Kuliwa, tola' bala

Tola bala means to refuse or draw away a danger which might happen. In the Javanese terms, kinds of *tola bala* are called as *larung*, *petik laut*, *slametan*, and so forth. While Gerard Rixhon (2007) defined *tola bala* as:

One of the most attractive religious rituals I witnessed, there was the cleansing ceremony called 'Tulak Bala' (from *tulak*, expel, and *bala'*, evil misfortune) or "casting out evil." According to the people, the evil cast out is one that affects the whole community and is manifested by misfortune, illnesses, pests, bad spirits, and all that goes wrong from over time. As the individual is subsumed in the community, his or her sins are included. According to the people, this ceremony has been performed for centuries by both

the Tausug and Sama groups as well as by various Southeast Asian Malay groups in Indonesia and Malaysia (Rixhon 2007).

In the West Sulawesi it was called *Kuliva*. It was being done by the wife of fisherman, *punggawa*'. Mandar people were usually practicing *kuliva* or *tola bala* before going out to fishing to the sea, or venturing to a journey through the sea for some times. It was an obliged ritual for every Mandarnese people and did for inaugurating or welcoming something as an object or through ceremonial acts. For example, to inaugurate the first use of the voyage of a ship, or on acquiring a machine or engine used for fishing (*jala* and *gae*'), and for someone who is the first time going out to fishing. It is required before fisherman going out to the sea for a long time journey. The Mandarnese people believed that if they did not do *Kuliva*, something dangerous in the sea might happen or might affect them during the sailing time (Silva, 2010).

Practically, the ritual of *Kuliva*'s ceremony combined many elements, from the house, boat, sea, and fisherman to be connected to God, which is further hoped that through this ceremony would be given safety and blessings in their livelihood. The main process of the ceremony placed in *boyang*, the traditional house in the afternoon time, wherein the leader's wife (*Baine' punggawa*) as a person in charge to prepare menu on tray and plate.

The menu which is prepared for the ritual placed in to the six trays. First tray is the largest tray, which is containing seven plates of *sokkol* (kinds of food made from glutinous rice, *beras ketan*), in which on the top of the each plate there is an egg. Second is a big tray placed or put nearer to the pillar of house (*boyang*). This tray contains six bunches of banana, fourteen *sokkol* wrapped in banana leaves, and fourteen *keucucur* (cakes made from eggs and brown sugar). Third, a large tray with a glass of water and three-plates of dishes, in which one of each plate are containing chicken, fish, and vegetables. Fourth, a tray which is containing four bananas that above

of it putting plate of *sokkol* and an egg. Fifth, a tray which is containing eight glasses of *Ule Ule* or green peanut porridge (*bubur kacang hijau*). Sixth, in the last tray there is a pack of *Barakka'* (food for prayer to get blessing and offered to all people joined the ritual) that containing cookies and bananas. While the menu given to the guests/visitors consisting of rice and water which were placed in to the six trays, each tray served for four persons. Each tray containing a plate for three pieces of chicken, a plate for two slices of smoked fish, a plate for four pieces of dried fish, a plate for four eggs, and a plate consisted for fried noodles, a bowl of vegetables, and a bowl of rice.

Practically, *Kuliwa'* begins with reading of *Barzanji'* (Alimuddin 2005, 42). It is praising book contained the lived history of Prophet Muhammad SAW. Each person (religious scholar or kyai in Javanese term) reading roundly, which is begin and ended by *panrita*, Moslem priest, including its prayer. According to Dawai Qolbu (2009) "Berzanji is a prayer, praise, and telling of the history of the Prophet Muhammad SAW used to sing to the tune, from the Prophet Muhammad's genealogy of his descendants, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, until appointed as apostles. Further, it also tells the noble qualities of the Prophet Muhammad possessed and various events for human precedent" (dawaiqolbu.wordpress.com, 2009)

After prayer has done, *punggawa'* or the leader of ship who will sail for fish, takes incense powder, which was gripped by *punggawa'* and slowly brought closer to the mouth, then begin to pray silently. The fragrant of the incense smelled after the *punggawa'* entered the coals. As they believed, the prayer is 'transferred' to the incense will be carried by smoke to the Creator, God. After all, the ritual continued with meal, which then followed by one crew to sail the sea while bringing the food. At this step, the *punggawa'* getting out to the boat (*lopi, sande'*) which is willing for sailing. He brought the cookies that have been read last time by religious scholar. The children around him are trying to take the cake he brought, while *punggawa'*

had to defend it until getting into the boat. After getting into the boat (*lopi, sande*) the cake maybe taken by children, and it was not prohibited, since people of Mandar believed that the joy of children become prayers for the fisherman's successfulness. After all, the boat pushed up to the sea. It is a sign that sailing process has ready.

Form the explanation above, the learning insight from *Kuliva's* ritual can be synthesized the interrelationship of religion (Islam) and culture which is believed as people of Mandar cultural identity.

Religion and Culture

According to Geertz (2009, 63) religion could be seen as a cultural system, a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. Further, Geertz also added that religious wrapped conception with an aura of factuality that the mood give of result seemed realistic and unique. In the simple language, religion marks as an area of life that has special status. What distinguishes religion as symbol system of cultural symbol systems that is religion claims to put man can touch with the real, reality beyond himself. These strong feelings can be felt primarily in the implementation process of a religious ritual. In this ritual, religion feels a power that forces of shape the mood and a strong motivation in itself (Setiawan, 2003, 42-43).

In Mandar, the ritual and magic is the important thing. When Islam is coming, it happened combined through negotiating each other. So, there was interrelationship between tradition and religion. The ritual is traditional order for social cohesion. Rixhon (2007) said that the "multiplicity of interpretations and ritual practices is due in large part to different ideas about the relationship of humans to God, and different ideas about social

relationships” (Bowen 2002:177). As in most religions, most practitioners go through the motions, unaware of the depth of their religious actions and behaviors. He or she will be rarely the holy person able to voices this deep meaning and personal interaction with the spiritual or whatever moves them unconsciously.”

The value of tradition is still there, within society’s ritual practice. Islam entered through Barzanji and prayer. It makes more holy and sacral, the synthesis between ritual and Islam are able to be seen from food, which is called *Barakka*’, the food eaten has got blessing, prayer, and incense from influences of dynamism and animism gather in *Kuliwa*. So, there was clear interrelationship among religion and culture.

The ritual as a ‘mirror’ of their executing confession and this is completing to each other. There are two sides, i.e. the internal side which is believed as confession and there will be “power and ultimate” basic of religion. While the external side, is seemed in surface as the belief of the expression’s symbol.

Conclusion

Tola’ bala means to refuse or draw away a danger that might happen. In the West Sulawesi it was called *Kuliwa* which is usually being done by the wife of fisherman, *punggawa*’. Mandarnese people practicing *kuliwa* or *tola’ bala* before they were going out for fishing or for venturing to a journey across the sea. *Kuliwa* is an obliged ritual and must be done for inaugurating or welcoming something as an object or through the ceremonial acts. For example, an inaugurating for the first using of ship or the first voyage, or on acquiring a machine or engine used for fishing (*jala* and *gae*) and for the first time going out for fishing. *Kuliwa* is the requirement before fisherman going out to the sea for a long journey. The Mandarnese people believed that if they did not do *Kuliwa*, something dangerous in the sea might happen when they were sailing. *Kuliwa* has just not spoken out about

tradition per se, but as their religious life and also the cultural identity of Mandarnese people.

References

- Alimuddin, Muhammad Ridwan. 2005. *Orang Mandar Orang Laut, Kebudayaan Bahari Mandar Mengarungi Gelombang Perubahan Zaman*. Bogor: Grafika Mardi Yuana
- Atha'na, S. 2010. *Jejak Ajaran Syiah (Persia) di Sulawesi: Studi Awal Kasus Suku Bugis, Makassar dan Mandar*. Jurnal Al-Qurba, 1(1), 82-113.
- Asdy, Ahmad. 2008. *Bunga Rampai Bahari Mandar*. Sulawesi: Yayasan Mahaputra Mandar
- Geertz, Clifford. 2009. *Religion as Cultural System*. Yogyakarta: Reading on Academic Study of Religion, CRCS Class
- Ismail, A. 2014. *Unsur-Unsur Islam Dalam Ritual Nelayan Mandar di Pambusuang, Kabupaten Polewali Mandar, Provinsi Sulawesi Barat*. Walasuji, 5(2), 277-287.
- Julianto, A. 1981. *Pengantar Ringkas Antropologi*. Jakarta: PT. Pradya Paramita
- Muin, Fathul. 2002. *Kesenian Tradisional "Pakkacaping" Dalam Masyarakat Suku Mandar di Kabupaten Majene Sulawesi Selatan (Sebuah Tinjauan perspektif Dakwah)*. Yogyakarta: Skripsi Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Masjid Syuhada.
- Rixhon, Gerard. 2007. *Fifty Years of Religious Change In Sulu: The View of A Sympathetic observer*. Manila: Departement of Sociology and Anthropology Ateneo de Manila University.
- Sen, Amartya. 2009. *Making Sense of Identity, Identity & Violence 2006*. Yogyakarta: Reading on Academic Study of Religion CRCS Class
- Setiawan, Mahbub. 2003. *Memahami Agama Secara Sosiologi, Pilar Islam Bagi Pluralisme Modern*. Solo: PT. Tiga Serangkai
- Zuhriah. 2005. *I Cicci dan Nenek Pemakan Hati*. Jakarta: Pusat Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan Nasional
- Silva, Ariel. 2010. *wordpress*, access on January, 2010.
http://.south_celebes.wordpress.com/2009/05/30/tola%E2%80%99_bala_in_south_celebes_traditiona
- NKRI, Indonesia: access on January, 2009

http://www.indonesianseafarer.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18&Itemid=1

Dawai Qalbu, Barzanji. Access on January 2010 <http://dawaiqolbu.wordpress.com/2009/10/14/sejarah-al-barzanji/>

West Sulawesi Province Map. PT. Karya Pembina Swajaya – Surabaya.