

Thanksgiving: Dynamics of Interaction Studies in Inter-Religious Life in Amurang, South Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi

Maryam Lamadirisi

Sociology Education Study Program, Faculty of Social Science, Manado State University, Tondano, Sulawesi Utara 95618 Indonesia

Abstract: This study aims at elaborating the dynamic of interaction of inter-religious life in Amurang, North Sulawesi during thanksgiving. The People of North Sulawesi who called themselves “Manado People” consist of different ethnics and religions. Their daily life is based on respect for each other. One of the celebration that catch the interest of many Manado and Minahasa people is the thanksgiving celebration (*pengucapan*). The conclusion related to the focus of this research, are: First, The background of thanksgiving that became a habit of the Amurang, South Minahasa Regency people that lasted until today is based on imitation from what was done by their ancestors that was passed down generation after generation. Thanksgiving has been held since Minahasa People’s ancestors as a manifestation of faith in God in accordance to the people’s comprehension at that time. After Christianity comes, then the faith to God as the almighty shifted to Christian thought that is Jesus Christ. Thus, the meaning of thanksgiving still the same which is giving gratitude for what God has bestowed, but the foundation itself has shifted. Blessing in the past was focused on crops. Nowadays, blessing is every good thing that was bestowed by God. Second, Thanksgiving ritual in Amurang, South Minahasa Regency, North Celebes Province, is the thanksgiving ritual that held by the Christian Community in Minahasa, but the guest to the meal reception can come from different ethnics and religions. The thanksgiving celebration has two different dimensions. The vertical dimension is the interaction between individuals with their God, in the form of Sunday prayer according to the schedule set, while the horizontal dimension is the interaction between local individuals and their guests who came to celebrate the thanksgiving that marked with meal reception. Third, The social meanings that contained in thanksgiving ritual in Amurang, South Minahasa Regency, North North Sulawesi Indonesia, is a symbol of social interaction between people from different ethnics and religions in friendly atmosphere that symbolize the slogan: “*torang samua basudara, baku-baku bae deng baku-baku sayang*”.

Keywords: Dynamic interaction, *pengucapan*, religious life, thanksgiving

INTRODUCTION

North Sulawesi people that call themselves as "the Manado" consist of various ethnic and religious. Their everyday life is guided by mutual respect for one another. Activity most eagerly awaited by the people in the city of Manado and Minahasa is a celebration of thanksgiving. According to history, the celebration of thanksgiving (*pengucapan*) was formerly held by the Minahasa ethnic communities when farmers finish harvesting once a year. The ceremony was held on Sunday, beginning with worship at the church and after that each family bring food, perfunctory to the Church. In the Church they ate together and collected some of the food they set aside to be auctioned to raise funds for the management of the Church. Today, the celebration of thanksgiving in Manado and Minahasa region is still held every year at about the middle of the year (between July and August). Thanksgiving day in a region is different from other regions and remains held on Sunday. In Amurang region (South Minahasa),

thanksgiving day is done at the end of the school holidays, before comencing a new school year.

The existence of this thanksgiving is received by the government and society. Thanksgiving is continuing every year that involve the community and local government as well as the guests who come. According to statistics, the cost incurred for thanksgiving every year for the entire district of Minahasa is billions of rupiahs. It is estimated that in South Minahasa itself, the cost incurred is 19 billion rupiahs, with the calculation that average spending per family is one million rupiahs. Thanksgiving is a local culture that will be retained as customs (*adat istiadat*) and even be defined as a yearly event in the tourism calendar in North Sulawesi.

Thanksgiving in the Minahasa region generally has been going on for generations before the entry of the VOC, which is a mission based on the teachings of Christianity, which is manifested in the form and manner as it is today. This study is a phenomenological study of how Amurang society in South Minahasa Regency interprets the implementation of thanksgiving.

The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze how people act and behave towards thanksgiving, which is related to the harmony of life. Of course understanding and interpretation done in the emic perspective, because the reflection moves from phenomenology, that studied a variety of efforts, measures and application of common knowledge in the community group that produced and on the subject, the reality and the course of action that could be understood together (Kuper, 2000 in Basrowi and Sudikin, 2002).

METHODS

This research is a descriptive study aimed to describe the phenomenon, both state that exists at present time and existed in the past. This study does not hold manipulation, nor retrieval of independent variables, but describes the condition as it is and can be individually and groups depiction and it can also use numbers (Sukmadinata, 2007: 54).

This study describes the group that became the subject of research, namely the religious leaders, the people who carry out the celebration, as well as guests who come at the time of the celebration of thanksgiving. Similarly, their response to a thanksgiving celebration in the past and present. Then an analysis of whether the phenomenon of implementation of thanksgiving in the past the same with thanksgiving today was also conducted. Also about the relationships that occur in the community, as well as the social meanings in the thanksgiving ceremony.

Grounded theory was implemented using a variety of data collection techniques, checks and re-checks in the field was held, comparative study between categories, phenomenon and situation assessment, inductive, deductive and verification to the point of saturation. At this point the researcher choose between core and not core phenomena. Of the core phenomenon, flow concept (story line) is developed and matrix condition (condition matrix) is created, which describes the social, historical and linkages with the phenomenon (Sukmadinata, 2007:64). Research was conducted in Lower Kawangkoan Village, West Amurang Subdistrict, South Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi. Data collection techniques used were participation observation, in depth interview and documentation study. In depth interview was done in an indirect way at the root of the problem. Interview guidelines are used to obtain accurate data and maximum. The interview method is also consistent with the paradigm of social facts suggested by Durkheim (Ritzer, 1992).

The main instrument in this study is the researchers themselves. Therefore, a questionnaire was not used. However, researchers are guided by the core question, which is then developed according to the needs of the field. The researcher acted as an instrument as well as data collector. Besides human, the instruments used are

camera and voice recorder, but their function are limited as a supporter.

The data analyzed consisted of two kinds, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data is the result of the interview. To obtain accurate data, competent people was encountered to explain thanksgiving. Secondary data was obtained through a search of written data or documents, for example the data of religious development in South Minahasa and forms of thanksgiving worship. This data is useful as a reinforcement of the primary data information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study is a phenomenological perspective with a qualitative approach and Grounded Theory research analysis strategy developed by Strauss and Corbin, the Coding procedure (emic perspective). The study that chooses emic approach which its theoretical orientation has a social definition paradigm, including the theory of social interaction (Gillin and Gillin, *Cultural Sociology*, 1954 in Lawang, 1986) and symbolic interactionist theory of Herbert Mead and Behavior theory developed by Ajzen 1988 in (Azwar, 1997) as the supporting theory, as a social phenomenon is not enough just to be seen from a macro perspective. Phenomenological perspective represents all views of social science, which considers consciousness or the human soul and subjective meaning as a focus for understanding social action or social behavior patterns. Therefore, researchers are trying to describe and discuss a number of findings related to the research focus, as has been stated above.

Background of thanksgiving custom implementation covering history, ethnic, religious groups, motivation, execution time and the purpose of the thanksgiving.

History of thanksgiving: Results of interviews with a number of informants indicate that thanksgiving has been a long celebrated. Since they were small, thanksgiving was already held by their parents. Thanksgiving point is the belief in God. Thanksgiving in the Western culture is known as Thanksgiving Day. This culture was then introduced to the Minahasa people who had accepted Christianity.

Although the Minahasa people today do not know exactly when and where a culture of thanksgiving was started, but they still celebrate it, as used to be celebrated by their parents.

Even lately thanksgiving celebration, when viewed from a number of people involved, can be said to be fantastic. The road to and from Amurang become jammed. In social interaction, the process mimics what is done by the parents is called imitation. Imitation factors have a very important role in the process of social interaction. One positive aspect is that imitation

can encourage a person to comply with the rules and prevailing values (Soekanto, 1990). Therefore, a thanksgiving ceremony of the year to year is celebrated with great fanfare, but the content of ritual and eating feast, still like old times. However, imitation can also occur in cases where the replicated instance is not a good thing. In thanksgiving there is a habit that is copied from the parents, namely alcohol drinking (bier and *cap tikus* which has a very high alcohol content). Although many people who drink liquor, but the atmosphere of thanksgiving is usually under control. Liquor is usually only reserved for close friends who are also drinkers.

Ethnic and religious groups that celebrate thanksgiving: From the findings it turns out that all ethnic and religious groups can be found at the thanksgiving ceremony. From the observation and interview, the involved ethnic and religious groups in thanksgiving are classified as those who celebrate thanksgiving and participants. Those who are compulsory to celebrate are those who are Christians and of the tribe of minahasa. Celebrate for them is to follow the ritual worship at the church and prepare a feast. While those participants (cheerleaders) are limited to only attending a party. Why all ethnic groups and religious groups take part in thanksgiving?

Thanksgiving in Minahasa has two dimensions. There is a vertical dimension and a horizontal dimension. The vertical dimension is the relationship between the individual as a servant of the Lord. This relationship must be based on the belief or faith. Christian Minahasa people believe that God gives blessings and be grateful for the gift of gratitude through worship and hold together at the church on specified day. Banquet (feast) is a social dimension. The social dimension is not tied to belief in God, but rather based on how close social relationship between the host and guests (participants) on the thanksgiving day. So during the banquet, there no religious or ethnic condition. Basic social interaction here is the proximity between the host and guest. Social contact that occurs is the primary social contact, where a direct relationship occurs and meet face to face, shake hands, smile and so on.

Konsep kontak sosial primer ini akan digunakan sebagai landasan untuk memahami mengapa pengucapan syukur bisa langgeng, malah makin meriah dirayakan oleh masyarakat Sulawesi Utara umumnya, masyarakat Minahasa khususnya. In the primary social contact, intensive communication occurs between individual to individual.

Each of these individuals provide commentary on the message delivered by each party. Through the interpretation of the behavior of others, a person behaves, as a reaction to the purpose to be conveyed by the other party (Setiadi and Kolip, 2011). In the context

of thanksgiving, communication established by the host and guests, is communication, which embodies an expression of pleasure, a sense of camaraderie, a sense of brotherhood. Expressions often delivered by the host to the guest, among others: "*makang kua*"(please eat), "*kiapa Cuma makang sadiki*"?(why only eat a little?) "*Ini ayam kampung, ada sadia khusus*"(This is a wild chicken, specially provided for you), "*musti makang, biar sadiki, biar cuma bekeng kotor piring*"(you must eat, even only a little, even if only to make dishes dirty, "*rasa dulu ini cap tikus*" (try to taste this traditional liquor *cap tikus* (only for the drinkers), "*bawa pulang ini ole-ole*" (please take some home). Expressions conveyed by the host, forcing guests to not hesitate to eat and drink even though they are already full. Such communication behavior embodies mutual respect, mutual feeling brothers, that then encourage people to do the same in the following year.

Forms of social processes that occur in this thanksgiving, can be classified into associative forms of social processes, where cooperation, accomodation and assimilation occur (Setiadi and Kolip, 2011). Associative social processes is a social process which in the social reality members of the community are in a state of harmony which leads to patterns of cooperation. This social harmony then creates regular social condition (social order). Social harmony in turn will result in social integration, that is a social pattern in which the society members is in united states to build a cooperation.

Because of the slogan *torang samua basudara* (we are all brothers), *baku-baku bae* (reconcile with each other) *deng baku-baku sayang* (and care for each others), then for the people of North Sulawesi, ethnic and religious groups do not become a bottleneck in the interaction. An understanding of the involvement of ethnic and religious groups in the focus of the research is very useful to understand the behavior and attitudes in Amurang society interaction, especially with regard to thanksgiving. This is consistent with the approach of this study, namely phenomenology, which confirms that the main insights of phenomenology is "understanding and explanation of a reality that must be engendered by symptoms of reality itself" (Aminuddin, 1990 in Setyowati, 2012).

Further talking about people's behavior means also talking about the culture. In this case, Edmund Husserl (in Muhajirin, 2006) stated that the object of science is not limited to the empirical (sensual), but includes other phenomena consists of understanding, thought, will and belief of the subject, which requires a holistic approach, placing the object of study in a double construction, see the object in a natural context and not partial. Therefore, phenomenology uses logical thought system, rather than a linear causal. This can be seen in the analysis and problem solving in this study to find the steps and strategies that will be done.

The presence of other ethnic and religious groups other than ethnic Minahasa who are not Christians, is an interesting phenomenon to be studied. If thanksgiving is a tradition of Christian Minahasan, then why many of non Minahasan and non Christian attend the celebration? Judging from the feast, Minahasan cuisine is famous with spicy foods and pork as favourite menus, that do not support the arrival of other ethnics such as Java, Bugis, Sunda, Minangkabau, which are predominantly Muslim who do not really like spicy foods and poscribe pork.

Assimilation process might explain this phenomenon. Assimilation is a social process that is characterized by efforts to reduce the differences, contained between individuals or between social groups, which is followed the efforts to achieve unity of action, attitude and mental processes by taking into account mutual interests (Setiadi and Kolip, 2011). Thanksgiving involving different ethnic and religious, between the host and guest, bridged with things that facilitate assimilation, namely tolerance. Tolerance is an attitude and actions that each provide opportunities for others to do something, so that the seeds of conflict between individuals or between groups can be prevented (Setiadi and Kolip, 2011).

To find the answer to this phenomenon, the author interviewed a Moslem guest. She was invited by her friend (host). The invitation is a nonformal one. If the invitation is addressed to the Moslem friends, there is a guarantee that the host will provide halal food for them.

The timing of thanksgiving: In the past, thanksgiving is celebrated after harvesting rice in paddy field (*kobong peceh*). Today, it is no longer celebrated after harvesting, rather set by local governments and local Agency for Inter-Religious Cooperation. Turnaround time resulted in a paradigm shift of thanksgiving. Diversification of employment as a consequence of the development of the village/town resulted in the majority of people who formerly work as farmers now has switched professions to be civil servants, private, traders, entrepreneurs and so on. That means, they are no longer have income from the agricultural sector. Here the income becomes a symbol of harvest. Therefore, the timing is not a problem for celebrating thanksgiving. In 2011, people of South Minahasa Regency celebrated thanksgiving on Sunday, 10 July, while in 2012 was held on Sunday, 8 July.

Thanksgiving celebration that can bind to brotherhood include: The implementation process, the stages of thanksgiving, actors/hosts, equipment, text and narration, as well as the interaction behavior on thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving process and its celebration: The stages in holding thanksgiving is simple and straightforward and repeated from year to year. In the process of implementation of thanksgiving, there is an interaction

between government and society, in which the government together with local Agency for Inter-Religious Cooperation (AIRC) set a date of celebration. According to Lawang (1986), social interaction is the process by which people who communicate, influences each other in thought and action. Government as an executive group, communicate thanksgiving date of execution and this affects the thoughts and actions of people who will be celebrating Thanksgiving. Response or follow-back from the community, further influencing government groups, to prepare to facilitate the implementation of thanksgiving contributing factors, such as security. Furthermore, the community responds to the implementation of thanksgiving through the process of imitation. Preparation they do is mimic of what was done by parents for generations. When the date is set, then the preparation is done in stages, starting from the physical preparation in the form of fixing the house, preparing foodstuffs, clothes for church as they did in previous years. What they prepare on the day of thanksgiving is also a process of imitation of what was done by their parents. Therefore they never miss serving *nasi jaha* (ginger rice) and dodol (lunkhead) every year for dishes and to take home. This is consistent with the theory of Kluckhohn, which explains that the culture is also a blend of social relationships and cultural bias in the framework of the common life and the human relationship with the Creator and man's relationship to man. Thus, thanksgiving is an activity that is aided by the government in order to secure the celebrations and rituals that have been determined jointly by religious figures.

Concluding remarks: From the above descriptions, some findings were obtained as follows:

- Thanksgiving in Amurang, South Minahasa Regency is based on imitation from what was done by their ancestors that was passed down generation after generation
- Thanksgiving ritual in Amurang, South Minahasa Regency, North Celebes Province, is the thanksgiving ritual that held by the Christian Community in Minahasa, but the guest to the meal reception can come from different ethnics and religions
- The main actors in thanksgiving are the local community which is Christian Minahasan. Other non-Christian take part in the celebration
- The food serves at the thanksgiving party is the center of attention

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