

Conservation and Development of Gorontalo Local Culture: Case Study of Wedding Ceremony

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Conservation and Development of Gorontalo Local Culture: Case Study of Wedding Ceremony

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Abstract

This study aims (1) to substantially analyze the tradition of giving sadaqah at Gorontalo traditional marriage ceremony, and (2) to create a new concept for uniformity in giving sadaqah to avoid social inequality. For this purpose, a legislation and historical approach were carried out. In addition, descriptive approach was also used where the primary and secondary data were collected through interviews and literature studies. The result of the research shows that giving sadaqah has always been inseparable from the hereditary culture of Gorontalo which has been done until now. Furthermore, this study indicates that this tradition is also inseparable from the rules of Islamic teaching. This research is limited to Gorontalo people who are Muslim and traditionally lives in Gorontalo peninsula located in the northern part of Celebes. In this regard, the sampling area covers 3 out of 6 districts. This paper shows that being a philanthropy is in accordance with Islamic teaching, tradition and culture of Gorontalo people. However, its practicality does not represent the economic strata of the community.

Keywords— Sadaqah, conservation, wedding ceremony, culture, Islamic law

Introduction

The development of modern world leads Gorontalo people to follow the progress and changes, including in marriage. Take a closer look, the sequence of the marriage process in the past has changed throughout years with various developments. One of the changes is related to the ceremonial order, equipment and accompaniment arts, while principle and meaning remain the same. These changes are caused by some factors such as to save time and money, the dynamic people's mindset, lifestyle and changes in the economy level of the society.

From a sociological perspective, local wisdom that has been embraced by Gorontalo people as a

way of life is actually a form of Islamic acculturation to local culture. Basically, it is a creative and innovative process in order to expand Islamic cultural treasures. However, Gorontalo people only understand the customs partially and take Gorontalo customs for granted that sometimes leads to a regressive reaction. Nevertheless, traditional leaders and observers in Gorontalo seem to provide space for the creative process and acculturation of Islam through cultural offerings, so that Gorontalo customs and culture will be more widely known and understood by the society (Rahman, 2012:452).

Marriage is considered sacred, majestic, joyful and memorable moment. Thus, the essence of

marriage must be experienced by both the bride and groom. They should not assume that marriage is easy and simple, because it can be easily led to divorce. According to local custom, marriage life ends only because of death. The tradition expects that husband and wife relationship will be eternal; as they live in harmony and peace. For this reason, the marriage process is not only called *lenggota lo nika* (marriage process) (Martam, 2017: 56).

In Gorontalo, some people still hold marriage ceremony by fully following customs while some others only use several parts of the customs. Holding the marriage ceremony is closely related to giving *sadaqah* to people who have helped the ceremony since the beginning to the end of the event. Giving *sadaqah* is varied based on the duties and positions in the local customs.

Gorontalo people highly respect their customs as a form of embodiment of the chastity and nobility of culture that have been inherited from their ancestors. This custom has been well laid out so that the successors only need to preserve it by practice it in daily life. It is relevance with the motto of "*Aadati Maa Dili-Dilito Maa Hunti-Huntingo, Bolo Mo Po Dembingo. Aadati Maa Dutu-Dutu, Bolo Mo Pohutu.*" which means the custom is already arranged, you just need to connect it, the custom is already hanging, you just need to stick it, the custom is there, you just have to implement it." (Medi Botutihe & Parha Daulima, 2003: 235).

Sadaqah means more than just material, because material is only a tool to deliver its purpose to give respect or appreciate others for their doings based on their specialties. For the family, *sadaqah* or giving is a means of prayer. The joy and sincerity of the people involved in the event is a form of prayer that cannot be valued by material things. It is different from *sadaqah* in

Islam that is solely aimed at the *mustahiq* or people who are economically incapable.

The problems in Gorontalo customs are not only limited to *sadaqah* in marriage, but also on the absence of women's involvement in the awarding of Gorontalo traditional honorific titles. The traditional honorific title is given to someone who has achieved high position and has involved in the development of Gorontalo. There are many traditional titles such as "*Bate*" and "*Pulanga*" that are only granted for men. It shows that there is discrimination and injustice against women regarding the awarding of traditional honorific titles (Kasim, 2017: 3). With these various emerging problems, the government as a policy maker should make clear regulations to regulate the existing problems so that it can be the basis for the Gorontalo people to act and behave according to the applicable regulations.

The form of *sadaqah* that have been regularly practiced in the society can lead to gratification if it is not regulated. However, giving *sadaqah* is the tradition has been passed down throughout generations in Gorontalo though the form of *sadaqah* is changed. It potentially created problem in the society that a clear regulation of giving of *sadaqah* is needed. Hence, *sadaqah* can be applied equally to the people of Gorontalo.

Gorontalo is rich in traditions or culture, and these traditions are deeply embedded in the society. Various traditions ranging from joyful to mourning events, such as marriage, male circumcision, pledge, funerals, delivering dowry (*dutu*), *aqiqah*, lemon baths and so on. The people who hold these ceremonies must give *sadaqah*. On the other hand, in Islam, *sadaqah* means a medium to get salvation. It refers to the Prophet SAW saying: "Charity rejects danger" (Kau: 2019; 136).

The cultural and traditional diversity in Gorontalo as the implementation of the customary region should receive optimal attention so that everything related to customs can be always referred to the principles of Islam. As this is in line with the statement of Maheasy & Sofiah (2018:167) that the tradition in Gorontalo has always been implemented based on *fiqh* or Islamic rules, that is proved by the implementation of *dutu* tradition in marriage which procedure is to deliver a dowry package and traditional attributes to the bride's house. In the *dutu* tradition which is combined with modernity, the social status of the family and the bride's social achievement becomes a measure of the dowry value for the bride-to-be. The higher the social value, the higher the dowry value is. This tradition is in accordance with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. While based on the discussion of *maqashid al-syari'ah*, this tradition belongs to the category of *maqashid hajiyyat* which means to maintain its *maqashid dharuriyyat*. Marriage is a form of *hifz alnasl* which is Allah's order. The amount of dowry is in the position of *maqashid tahsniyyat* which means to appreciate a woman for maintaining her religion, soul, mind, descendant, and property.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gorontalo Custom is Influenced by Islamic Teaching

Gorontalo region is included in the 19th customary law area which is an inseparable part from the Republic of Indonesia. Before Islam is spread in Gorontalo, Gorontalo people had already well-known as a friendly indigenous people in their speech, attitude and action. The behavior (*popoli*) became the system and basis for evaluating people's life. Therefore, the legal basis that underlies the Gorontalo traditional marriage procession is the Qur'an and hadith, Law Number 1 of 1974, and the compilation of

Islamic Law. It is clear that Gorontalo customs, especially marriage customs, have a meaning to honor. Thus, that it needs to be carried out regularly according to custom and clearly based on Islam.

The majority of Gorontalo's population is Muslim (96.82%). Most people believe that Islam as one of the most powerful religions in Gorontalo. Several traditions hold Islamic elements, that prove that there is a unification and harmonization between Islam and local custom. In Gorontalo, custom is seen as an honor (*adab*), norms, and even guidelines in the implementation of government. This is stated in an expression of "*Adat Bersendi Syara', Syara' Bersendikan Kitabullah*" which means that custom is carried out based on regulation, while regulation must be based on the Qur'an. Hence, it can be understood that the life of Gorontalo people is very religious and full of noble values that people's daily life and behavior must be referred to the Islamic teaching in the Qur'an.

According to Baruadi (2013:295) Islamic values in Gorontalo culture and civilization, including literature, have been integrated with the customs. These values underlie the knowledge and behavior of the people. The important values taught in Gorontalo culture are (a) wisdom; (b) honesty; (c) piety; (d) holiness; and (e) moral.

In line with the previous statement, Tine (2017: 58) stated that the cultural values of society manifested in tradition are the result of a process with past, present and future dimensions. It is in accordance with the self-concept and subjective awareness of Gorontalo people which presents along the time and caused by interrelated forces. The combination of social and religious elements is connected into actual unity which is made into traditional rituals, because they were born after an adaptive and integrative long process. This reciprocal

relationship proceeds in an adaptive manner and integrates with each other in the social structure of the Gorontalo society in general.

Marriage is a part of human life cycle, with the aim of creating a happy, peaceful, loving and blessed family. Hence, a learning media is needed for someone who wants to prepare themselves for marriage life. The marriage customs in Gorontalo contains several stages that are very rich of local values, that are juxtaposed with religious teachings (Syarifudin, 2016:62).

Marriage law is an internal part of Islamic law that is inseparable from the dimensions of Islamic faith and morals. Based on that reason, the marriage law wants rule Muslim to have monotheistic and moral marriage as this kind of marriage can be expected to have transcendental and sacred values to achieve the aim of marriage which is in line with the goals of Islamic law (Anshary, 2015:10).

In terms of custom procession, Rato (2015:40) believed that the procession means to announce the public that a legal event and legal act have taken place, namely marriage. The marriage is carried out either in a simple or festive manner, also invite many guests to witness the procession in *akad* and wedding reception. They witness the changing of status of the bride and groom for the bride who will become wife and mother-to-be and groom who will become husband.

***Sadaqah* as a Conservation of Gorontalo Culture in Marriage Procession**

Sadaqah known by the society as something given to the poor with sincerity. On the other hand, *sadaqah* in traditional events in Gorontalo has a meaning to give something to the people who have contributed or assisted in the event, for preparation to the main event. Related to this tradition, the interview was done to Mr. Karim

Pateda in 2019 who said that *sadaqah* should be given directly by the host of the event. It is not given and regulated by traditional leaders to avoid misleading and commercialization. In addition, traditional leaders are supposed to be have good behavior and mentality.

According to Soleman, *sadaqah* is a good deed because it aims to help other people and smaller the gap between the rich and the poor. Allah's order about *sadaqah* is continuously mentioned in Qur'an and Hadith, for example in surah An-Nisa verse 114 and Al-Bawarah verse 262. It is clearly stated in Qur'an and Hadith that giving *sadaqah* is encouraged, and Allah and Prophet Muhammad loves Muslim who helps other people. Qur'an and Hadith suggest Muslim for *sadaqah*, but it is not obligation such as prayer and zakat. *Sadaqah* does not have certain rule that set the quantity like zakat, and rule for its practice like prayer. There is no sin if someone cannot perform *sadaqah*, unlike prayer and zakat (Sami, 2014:209).

Giving *sadaqah* is a good deed that is beneficial to the society (Latief, 2014). *Sadaqah* is considered one of the solutions to overcome the problem of poverty (Qasim, 2016). In this study, *sadaqah* in the dimension of psychological measurement are constructed into two components, namely sincerity and affection. Being sincere in giving *sadaqah* is indicated by not showing off to other people (General Authority of Islamic Affairs Endowments, 200). Therefore, *sadaqah* is preferably to be given secretly. Sincerity in *sadaqah* is also shown from its form; it is not a less-valuable assets (al-Dihāmī, 2005). The affection for *sadaqah* is indicated by self-awareness start giving *sadaqah*, as one of the characteristics of generosity is one's love to help and give (ibn Miskawaih, n.d). These two components are the basis construction of the measurement of *sadaqah* (Rusdi et al, 2018: 60)

Another benefit of *sadaqah* is a harmonious relationship with other people. This positive relationship is not only limited to have family or friends, but also positive relationship with the people around. The positive relationship will be created when there is a social support that makes an individual is able to develop their dignity, minimize psychological issues, develop adaptive problem-solving skill, and being physically healthy.

Sadaqah given to other people should be with the intention to seek the blessing from Allah SWT, and the things given should be in a good quality, and the sufficient amount is one-third. There are various religious activities that can be categorized as *sadaqah* such as saying *tasbih*, *tahmid*, *tahlil*, *takbir*, doing *ma'ruf nahi munkar*, performing *dhuha* prayers and others. *Sadaqah* should be prioritized for ourselves, our family, and people who are under the responsibility and supervision of someone else including guests. *Sadaqah* should be mainly carried out by the richest first. In addition to that, the comparative advantages of *sadaqah* are obtaining a salvation prayer to their life in this world and a blessing for the assets has been given as *sadaqah*, also have proof of identity as a person who sincerely believe in Allah and Prophet Muhammad that will then be a comparative advantage (happiness in the world & the hereafter) (Slamet: 2011:59)

Giving *sadaqah* with all its meanings and intention is a religious teaching that is performed by Muslim wherever they are. It is an implementation of piety to Allah, as well as a form of understanding religious teaching. The entire Qur'an verses which discuss about *sadaqah* can be classified into several parts which are elaborated into five main segments, namely: (1) *sadaqah* associated with zakat, (2) sincerity, (3) *riya'* or showing off, (4) bad deeds, (5) growing social sensitivity. Although it will not be described in detail, it will be explicitly

mentioned in the interpretation of the verse (Firdaus, 2017:95).

Wedding Ceremony in Gorontalo and Its Challenges during Covid 19 Pandemic

The practice of giving *sadaqah* during *dutu* in Gorontalo traditional marriage is actually an embodiment of the hosts' sincerity to fulfill their obligations. It is line with Barman and Barman's (2017) that generosity is very important to be implemented in the social life especially in the procession of Gorontalo traditional marriages. It is due to the importance of generosity for Gorontalo people, that it is closely related to giving *sadaqah*. Similar to Hanis and Hanis (2014) who stated that the implementation of *dutu* in the Gorontalo traditional wedding procession undergone a very significant change due to social, economic, political changes, as well as information and technology which has been greatly affected the local culture, especially in Gorontalo. This influence is undeniable and has been proven by the decline in cultural values including in Gorontalo. *Dutu* used to be a symbol of cultural values in social life in Tabongo community. Unfortunately, its practice has been decreased because of the rationality, practicality and modernity of mindset. If it happens continuously, the values of local culture and nobility can disappear.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was done in Gorontalo province because this region is a customary area covering six areas. Gorontalo has rich tradition and custom where the society practice it in daily life including in wedding ceremony that uphold Islamic principles.

The informant of this research involved Gorontalo customary council and traditional figures, that directly involved in the interviews. They are the figures who understand the practice and implementation of *sadaqah*.

This field research collected the data by using questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data and information regarding the issue of this research.

After data were collected, the data were analyzed carefully. Data analysis is a next stage in data processing that needs optimal accuracy. The knowledge and methodological mastery of the researcher is very crucial because the results of the study are highly dependent on the results of data analysis. Data of this study are analyzed qualitatively, with the objective to describe empirical facts about the culture of giving *sadaqah* in Gorontalo traditional wedding ceremonies. While qualitative descriptive approach was used to understand the phenomenon that cannot be measured precisely. Basically, descriptive qualitative research used inductive approach that consisted of data collection, data analysis, and data abstraction to produce theories as the final product of qualitative research.

FINDINGS

Gorontalo is famous for its motto “*Adat bersendikan syara, syara bersendikan Kitabullah*” (custom is based on sharia, sharia is based on Quran), that becomes the philosophy of Gorontalo people. Thus, local people highly respect the custom and tradition that have been maintained and preserved.

The existence of *sadaqah* in Gorontalo is also implemented in traditional events such as *dutu* (giving dowry) or other traditional events. *Sadaqah* in *dutu* is given to public figure, who are actually prosperous people, such as head of the district, head of the village, community leaders, traditional leaders, or respected people who presents at the ceremony. The amount of *sadaqah* also has been determined. It means that this practices the Islamic teaching to give

sadaqah to those in needs has shifted to a tradition to give something to respect the people with high position. The following figure shows *dutu* procession in wedding ceremony.



Figure 1. Delivering dowry in the bride's house



Figure 2. Momu'o Ngango ceremony attended by Head of the District and Sharia officer, that united in stages called *Modepita Maharu* or procession of giving dowry



Figure 3. Giving *sadaqah* from guardian of the bride to *Hulango* (domestic officer) after the wedding proposal, as a form of gratitude of raising and educating the bride



Figure 4. The custom functionary gave *sadaqah* to Head of District and Head of Village

Regarding the principle of *sadaqah* in the life of Gorontalo people, Mr. Alim Niode (Secretary of Gorontalo Customary Council) stated the needs of uniformity of *sadaqah* in customary procession in Gorontalo because there is always a probability of misunderstanding. He also stated that *sadaqah* has become a commodity for the customary functionary because there is indication of being commercialized. To avoid misunderstandings in the practice of *sadaqah*, it takes people who have strong economic capabilities to back up these customary functionary so they won't depend on the *sadaqah* (Interview on 19th of August 2019). Mr. Karim Pateda as Chairman of Gorontalo Customary Council stated that *sadaqah* is essentially given without expecting anything in return. However, *sadaqah* in Gorontalo is given based on someone's service in ceremony. In addition to that, the amount of *sadaqah* have not been determined by the customary council (Interview, 20th of August 2019).

DISCUSSION

The practice of *sadaqah* in every traditional event such as *dutu* or marriage in Gorontalo needs to be regulated by a rule. Not only that its practice can be deviated from Islamic teaching, but it can also cause problems for lower class people who want to hold the ceremony. In addition to the cost needed to make wedding ceremony, the lower-class people will be

burdened more with the amount of *sadaqah* given to the public figure who attend the ceremony. This phenomenon can lead to negative habit, gratification and corruption. Hence, it is expected that Gorontalo Customary Council or the Regional Government can make a regulation on giving *sadaqah* in the traditional event hold by Gorontalo people.

CONCLUSION

Sadaqah is an act of charity from a Muslim or society to others which is given voluntarily and sincerely, without being limited by a certain timeline and amount. According to Islamic teaching, *sadaqah* is given only for people in needs or the unfortunate. However, over time the existence of *sadaqah* itself, especially in the culture of Gorontalo people, is also applied in traditional events such as *dutu* or traditional wedding ceremony. The giving of *sadaqah* in these traditional events seems to have its own standard by determining the amount of the charity and the receiver. The receivers of *sadaqah* are intended for certain groups such as the Head of District, Head of Village, public figure, customary figure, or other respected people with high position. Thus, it can be concluded that the essence of *sadaqah* that is supposed to be given to people in needs has been shifted to be the tradition in customary ceremony to respect and given to public figures or upper-class society.

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