

BUILDING INTERFAITH SOLIDARITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THROUGH CELEBRATION OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS IN INDONESIA

Maftukha

Universitas Gajah Mada (UGM)

Email: mafamaftukha@mail.ugm.ac.id

Abstract

Physical distancing policy has forced religious people in Indonesia to carry out worship at home and celebrate religious holidays with following a strict health protocol. This situation has affected for a loosening of solidarity in society, especially at the beginning era of pandemic. However, there are religious groups that modify some of the practices of religious rituals on their religious holidays, and adapt them to the rules of physical distancing, including Muslims and Christians in North Sulawesi. This article intends to discuss about Lebaran Ketupat and Thanksgiving, which are Muslim and Christian holidays in Sulawesi Utara as a means to strengthen community solidarity during the pandemic. This article was compiled based on a qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews with Muslim and Christian communities in Ratatotok, Southeast Minahasa and Poigar Bolaang Mongondow in North Sulawesi. The results showed that the practice of Lebaran Ketupat and Thanksgiving can create social solidarity among interfaith groups. In addition, modifications to the practice of Eid Ketupat and Thanksgiving during the 2020-2021 pandemic have become a local resilience in dealing with the various impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Their ability to modify the Lebaran Ketupat and Thanksgiving rituals allows Muslim and Christian communities to create their solidarity as "torang samua basudara" (we are all brothers), in both idea and practice.

Keywords: Religious rituals; Pandemic; Solidarity; Interfaith

Abstrak

Physical distancing memaksa umat beragama di Indonesia melaksanakan ibadah di rumah dan merayakan hari besar keagamaan dengan protokol kesehatan ketat. Hal ini berimplikasi pada merenggangnya solidaritas di masyarakat. Namun demikian, terdapat kelompok keagamaan yang memodifikasi praktik ritual keagamaan di hari besar keagamaan mereka, dan menyesuainya dengan aturan physical distancing, diantaranya adalah umat Muslim dan Kristen di Sulawesi Utara. Artikel ini membahas Lebaran Ketupat dan Pengucapan Syukur yang merupakan hari besar umat Muslim dan Nasrani di Sulawesi Utara sebagai sarana memperkuat solidaritas masyarakat di masa pandemi. Artikel ini disusun berdasarkan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara mandalam terhadap masyarakat Muslim dan Kristen di Ratatotok Minahasa Tenggara dan Poigar Bolaang Mongondow di Sulawesi Utara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik Lebaran Ketupat dan Pengucapan Syukur dapat menciptakan solidaritas sosial diantara kelompok lintas agama. Selain itu, modifikasi praktik Lebaran Ketupat dan Pengucapan Syukur di masa pandemi pada tahun 2020-2021 telah menjadi local resilience dalam menghadapi berbagai dampak pandemi Covid-19. Kemampuan mereka untuk memodifikasi ritual Lebaran Ketupat dan Pengucapan Syukur memungkinkan masyarakat Muslim dan Kristen untuk menciptakan solidaritas mereka sebagai "torang samua basudara" (kita semua bersaudara), baik dalam ide maupun praktik.

Kata Kunci: Ritual keagamaan; Pandemi; Solidaritas; Lintas agama

A. INTRODUCTION

The Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic becomes the focus of global attention. Its rapid and widespread transmissions in the world have enormous impacts on human life, including health, economic, social, and religious lives. In religious lives, the Covid-19 has affected religious practices in various ways. The government urged people to stay at home and perform worship in their homes. Religious followers were prohibited from performing religious rituals at the houses of worship and from visiting each other during religious holidays. To prevent the spread of the Covid-19, religious groups modified several practices of religious rituals. They adjusted their religious rituals to those restrictions of social contacts.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shaken social structures, and consequently, solidarity among people may decrease (Alwi 2020). Religious meetings like collective worships observed together arguably build social relationships that foster solidarity among (religious) people (Machendrawaty et al. 2020). Worship observed at homes due to the pandemic causes less interaction among religious followers. Such restrictions may cause stress. Stress and anxiety due to the pandemic can foster selfish behaviours. Many people who gathered in shops and cafes and did not apply social distancing illustrated selfish behaviours (Cappelen et al. 2021). It is in that situation that solidarity is needed. Therefore, during the pandemic, solidarity is a significant ethical value for social relations and public health (Tehrani, Asghari, and Saeedi Tehrani 2020). Durkheim argues that emotional experience may strengthen solidarity among people. Through rituals, people may obtain the emotional experience (Johnson 2008).

The social dimension of ritual has an important role in strengthening cohesion and binding communities together (N. Funay 2020). Rituals also help people to remember their past, cultivate their present, and prepare for their future. In Maluku, ritual and the meaning of myth have become the common ground that binds a community (Lattu 2019). In Toraja, the ritual of Sorrow (*Rambu Solo*) and the ritual of Happiness (*Rambu Tuka*) establish Locus Communes (equality) for social solidarity outside religious boundaries.

Through sharing stories of kinship, these two rituals become a space to create mental and moral togetherness to involve religious communities in Toraja. Even though they come from different religions, these local cultural relations encourage Toraja people to participate in other religions' rituals. Rituals in Toraja also signify a collective memory that gives a sense of longing to the community or system of solidarity with an understanding of the local culture (N. Funay 2020). Therefore, religious rituals can be used as events to develop community solidarity and prevent conflicts, especially in areas with multicultural backgrounds such as North Sulawesi, considering that this area is prone to conflicts between religious communities (Lengkey 2019; Sumampouw 2015; Syuhudi 2017).

North Sulawesi is known for its plurality, and it is also known for its local cultures, including *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* (Thanks Giving). *Lebaran Ketupat* is a tradition practiced by Muslims as gratitude after carrying out fasting in the month of Ramadan and fasting in the month of Shawwal. In North Sulawesi, people started to hold *Lebaran Ketupat* on the seventh day of Shawwal or seven days after Eid al-Fitr. Every family in one village held an open house (prepared a lot of food in front of their house) and received anyone (Muslims and Christians) who visited their homes. Thus, *Lebaran Ketupat* in North Sulawesi is one of the traditions where various religious people meet (Mantu 2015). Whereas, *Pengucapan Syukur* is a ritual performed by Christians to show their gratitude to God for the harvest event. In the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur*, Christians held an open house in their homes after carrying out worship at church. In addition, they also invited people whether they are Christians or Muslims to eat together. By holding an open house, people could together enjoy the blessings they received. *Pengucapan Syukur* as an identity for the *Minahasa* people is also a means of establishing relationships between people who have not seen each other for a long time (Zelika, Koagouw, and Tangkudung 2017).

Although *Lebaran Ketupat* was an Islamic religious ritual and *Pengucapan Syukur* was a Christian religious ritual, both became events to do *silaturahmi* for all the people in North Sulawesi. People from different religious backgrounds could participate. During *Lebaran Ketupat*, Christians also came,

did *silaturahmi*, and ate together and vice versa. During *Pengucapan Syukur*, Muslims could participate in open house. It was a form of mutual respect between religious communities. In the celebrations of *Ketupat Lebaran* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, people held an open house, provided various kinds of food and ate together. They called this activity as the culture of “*makan besar*”. For people in North Sulawesi, *silaturahmi* and *makan besar* were the essence of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. Then, how are the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* during the Covid-19 Pandemic? Considering the government prohibited religious followers to practice religious rituals and celebrate religious holidays?

The Covid-19 Pandemic had great impacts on the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. Even though the interaction during the Pandemic was limited, people celebrated the two rituals in limited conditions. In 2019, before the Pandemic, people in North Sulawesi held *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* hilariously, but in 2020-2021 people in some villages held them in simple way. Muslims only celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* by eating together at the mosques. In some areas, where people usually celebrate *Lebaran Ketupat* every year, they even postponed it. Christians in some areas also celebrated *Pengucapan Syukur* in churches. There were also people who celebrated it only with residents in their village. People were not allowed to hold open houses. The government did not allow the residents to invite other people. Ronald Bob, a Pastor in Nonapan village said that the spirit of *Pengucapan Syukur* during the Pandemic did not change. Actually, the Pandemic had no effect, but there was a factor of obedience. People did not dare to break the limiting instructions. There was no term “because of corona”, but because of the factor of obedience.

The restrictions on the celebration of religious holidays have the potential to reduce people’s solidarity. Therefore, religious followers were challenged to build solidarity during the pandemic. It is because during the pandemic, social structures were shaken, social solidarity was in need but surely challenged. In response, religious groups in some areas in North Sulawesi modified several practices of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* and adjusted them to those restrictions.

Lebaran Ketupat and *Pengucapan Syukur* were chosen as the site of this research because the two rituals were carried out based on initiatives of two religious' groups (Muslims and Christians) to interact and gather together for religious tolerance and mutual respect. *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* that were open to all religious communities made everyone could participate regardless of their religious background. The culture of "*makan besar*" during the celebration of the two rituals strengthened the relationship between religious communities. Through *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, religious communities could interact and build solidarity between them. Solidarity between communities is needed when they face the times of crisis.

During the pandemic, *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* could be a moment to achieve solidarity. Furthermore, solidarity created in *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* could become local resilience and created a space for transformation in people's lives during the Covid-19 pandemic. The modifications of the two rituals during the pandemic supported by solidarity in the community could inspired people to change their way of life and they also could fulfil their needs during the Pandemic. Therefore, this article aims to analyse how *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* produced and reproduced social solidarity and how they adjusted to the pandemic.

B. METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative research based on 2-month field work in the sub-district of Ratatotok, Southeast Minahasa and the sub-district of Poigar, Bolaang Mongondow, North Sulawesi where *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* were conducted. Those rituals were also parts of the author's personal experience. The author was involved in those rituals several times before the Pandemic. This fieldwork used a face-to-face interview method to gain data. The author conducted in-depth interviews with 12 informants, consisting of people and religious leaders in the sub-district of Ratatotok, Southeast Minahasa and sub-district of Poigar, Bolaang Mongondow. The author chose these 12 informants that participated in *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. Before conducting the interview, the

author made a list of questions related to the research theme to obtain the required data. By using face-to-face interview method, the author was able to collect necessary data, gestures and expressions of the informants during the interview that helped the author in illustrating their emotions and feelings when they participated in the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. Their emotions and feelings were important in this research. The author also used documentation method to search for data. This method is helpful as a support for the accuracy of the research results. After collected all the research data, the author carried out data analysis of the research results.

The author used qualitative data analysis. Data obtained from interviews, literature research, and documentation are described in the form of descriptions, so that the data can be understood and the results of the research can be communicated to others. After the author reduced and collected the data, the author processed the data to provide information that is easier to interpret and analyse further.

Theoretical Framework

The author used Interaction Ritual theory of Randall Collins to analyse the process of building solidarity in *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* that are observed annually. Interaction Ritual is a meeting where people involved focus their attention on an object or activity. By communicating with each other, each person also realizes the focus of its attention (Collins 2004). Collins explains:

“An interaction ritual is an emotion transformer, taking some emotions as ritual ingredients, and turning them into other emotions as ritual outcomes” (Collins 2004).

Ritual ingredients in the interaction ritual theory are the materials or initiating conditions that make rituals happen. Ritual ingredients then transform into ritual outcomes such as totemic symbols, individual energy, and solidarity (Collins 2004).

Key elements of IR theory are ritual ingredients, ritual outcomes, and collective effervescences. When people perform a ritual, the following conditions are included (Collins 2004):

1. In a place, two or more people gather physically, and they mutually influence each other, consciously or unconsciously.
2. Participants have a sense of who is taking part and those who are excluded. There are strong boundaries to outsiders.
3. Participants' attention focuses on common objects or activities. They realize the focus of their attention by communicating with each other.
4. They share moods or emotional experiences.

Ritual interaction produces four main outcomes such as group symbols, Emotional Energy (EE), feelings of morality, and solidarity. Successful ritual interactions will foster a spirit of togetherness and increase social solidarity. Successful rituals will also produce Emotional Energy (EE) which consists of a feeling of solidarity within the group, feeling enthusiastic, looking at themselves positively.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. *Lebaran Ketupat*

Lebaran Ketupat in North Sulawesi also called "*Hari Raya Ketupat*" is a tradition that Muslims practice it as gratitude after fasting during the month of Ramadan and fasting for six days in the month of Shawwal, the tenth month of Islamic calendar. This tradition has involved not only Muslims, but also non-Muslims, especially Christians. *Lebaran Ketupat* has therefore functioned as a medium of encounter for diverse communities in North Sulawesi. *Lebaran Ketupat* that was open to everyone make it attracted more people to participate and provided opportunities for non-Muslims to join the celebration.

Lebaran Ketupat started on the seventh day of the month of *Shawwal* or one week after Eid al-Fitr. This ritual was carried out alternately from one village to another village. *Lebaran Ketupat* started after people performed *salat Dzuhur* (midday prayers) at the mosque. After performing *salat Dzuhur*, many guests came and were ready to participate in the celebration. Before the

celebration began, the *Imam* of the mosque led a prayer before eating together. The prayer was recited loudly with loudspeakers in the mosque so that all residents and guests who came could hear it. After finishing the prayer, *Imam* opened the event and invited the guests to enter the arena where the celebration was held. This was a sign of the start of *Lebaran Ketupat*. Guests started visiting the homes of residents, be their family, friends, or people they just met. Each family in one village held an open house and welcomed anyone who visited their houses, whether they knew them or not, both Muslims and non-Muslims. They apologized to each other and then talked to one another while enjoying the food served by the host¹.

In the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat*, the food always served by the host were *Ketupat*, *Nasi Jaha* or *Nasi Bulu* and *Dodol* which were special foods made by *Jawa Tondano / Jatun* people. *Nasi Jaha* and *Dodol* were also prepared as gifts for the guests. The hosts allowed their guests to pack the food and took it home. A lot of food served to guests made *Lebaran Ketupat* very attractive to the public's attention. The food was a kind of appreciation to the guests who were willing to come. The event of *makan besar* (eating together) in *Lebaran Ketupat* was a bridge for the community to interact with each other. *Lebaran Ketupat* was an event for all levels of society to meet and gather to strengthen relationships between people and foster a spirit of unity.

The people of North Sulawesi were open to show their proactive attitude in establishing good social communication. They established interactions between individuals and communities from various religious, ethnic and social class backgrounds. This ritual not only strengthened social relations between communities, but also created joy and peace for diverse communities. *Lebaran Ketupat* was a very important tradition in maintaining tolerance and togetherness between religious communities in North Sulawesi because it was held not only for Muslims but also for everyone.

Even though many of the guests who came to participate were not known by hosts, they were warmly welcomed and treated like their own relatives or friends. This attitude showed that people materialized the slogan "*Torang Samua Basudara*" (we are all brothers/sisters) which is a jargon for

¹ Personal interview with Jasman Patamat, Ratatotok Muara, December 6th, 2020

the people of North Sulawesi. Regardless of the differences in their religious, ethnic, social and economic background, all the people of North Sulawesi are brothers/sisters.

2. *Pengucapan Syukur*

The ritual of *Pengucapan Syukur* originates from *Foso Rummages* tradition. The word *foso* comes from old language of Minahasa people which means ritual while the word *rummages* comes from the word *rages* which means an offering given sincerely to *Empung Wailan Wangko* (God Almighty). For Minahasa people, *Foso Rummages* is a traditional way to communicate with God which aims to express their gratitude to God for always caring for and accompanying them in their daily life. Besides, being an effort to be closer to God and as a form of gratitude, this ritual also implies respect for the ancestors.

Initially, *Pengucapan Syukur* was carried out during the harvest period. However, because people regularly hold *Pengucapan Syukur* every year, people still hold this ritual even though it is not in a harvest season. All districts in Minahasa carried out *Pengucapan Syukur* in July. Because people in this area regularly hold it in July, whether there was a harvest or not, they celebrated this ritual at that month. There were also several regions that carried out it in June or in August.

Before carrying out *Pengucapan Syukur*, Christian communities made *Nasi Jaha / Nasi Bulu* and *Dodol*. These two foods were special foods that must be served during the ritual. People generally prepared their own meals because guests visited each house. Even though each family cooked their own food to be served for this ritual, there were some residents who asked Muslim for help to cook the food they served. They asked their Muslim neighbors for help to give confidence and dispel doubts to their Muslim guests that the food they served was halal food. Thus, Muslim guests did not hesitate to eat the food that they served.

Pengucapan Syukur started with worship in church in the morning. Christians did worship in the church exclusively. When worshiped at church,

people brought and collected their harvests such as rice and banana as offerings or people called them as "*Korban Syukur*". According to the times, the harvest could be replaced with money that was put into envelope. People gave *Korban Syukur* to express their gratitude to God. The ceremony of *Pengucapan Syukur* at church ended at 12 noon. After that, people continued the celebration by holding open house. Ronald Bob, a Pastor in Nonapan Village said that the ritual of *Pengucapan Syukur* was known as "*Makan Besar*" or feast tradition for Christian communities in North Sulawesi. The guests visited the residents' houses to eat together. They came to the homes of their families, friends or acquaintances.

Although *Pengucapan Syukur* was identical to the ritual performed by Christians, but in its practice, it was not only Christians who participated, Muslims also participated and came to visit Christians houses. *Pengucapan Syukur* becomes moment to do *silaturahmi* between people who come from different religious backgrounds. Christians and Muslims who have known each other for a long time invited each other to celebrate religious holidays as a mutual respect. They did *silaturahmi* to foster a sense of togetherness.

3. *The Production of Solidarity*

Collins defined interaction ritual as a meeting that makes all ritual actors focus their attention on a common object or activity. By communicating with each other, individual realizes the focus of his/her attention (Collins 2004). Collins stated that interaction ritual has a role in conceptualizing emotion as positive energy in its social appearance as an outcome of successful rituals (Collins 2004). He argued that a successful ritual produced ritual outcomes as follow:

a. *Symbols of Social Relationship*

Lebaran Ketupat was identical with ketupat. Muslim families should serve ketupat at the celebration of this ritual. Ketupat was a symbol of hope for Muslims to admit their committed mistakes. They were expected to forgive each other and forget each other's mistakes (Arif and Melki 2019). Rice that was united in ketupat also had the meaning of brotherhood and unity

(Djojuroto 2013). *Lebaran Ketupat* as an event to forgive one another was a moment of establishing a sense of brotherhood and unity in North Sulawesi. Meanwhile, *Pengucapan Syukur* was identical with *Nasi Jaha* (rice cooked using bamboo) and *Dodol* wrapped in palm leaves. Both foods were made from glutinous rice. Glutinous rice is a harvest that is identical to worship of God. The food that should be served during *Pengucapan Syukur* were made from glutinous rice because this ritual aimed to express gratitude by serving the best food for the guests. *Nasi Jaha* and *Dodol* which were used as offerings or *Korban Syukur* in church services were symbols of people's gratitude to God. Therefore, *Nasi Jaha* and *Dodol* as symbols have a role in fostering individual emotions as the part of "*basudara*".

The success of a ritual depends on the interaction between participants and the strength of their commitment and belief in the symbols of the group. When a group arranges activities for religious practices that bond its members and makes certain symbols as the basis of activities that lead them to always obey their beliefs, their identity as a group will emerge. Muslims in North Sulawesi carried out *Lebaran Ketupat* by using *Ketupat* as a symbol that had meaning. They realized the meaning of *Ketupat* by doing *silaturahmi* and apologizing to each other. Christians performed *Pengucapan Syukur* by making *Nasi Jaha* and *Dodol* as symbols of gratitude to God. They gave *Nasi Jaha* and *Dodol* to their guests as a symbol of sharing blessings with others by giving the best food. These symbols then represented their identity as "*basudara*" (means brothers/sisters) that guide their behaviour and actions. Shared belief as "*basudara*" was created by visiting each other during the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. People did not consider religion, whether the guests who came are Muslims or Christians. Therefore, in the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, people became aware of what they should do to others in their social life.

Ketupat, *Nasi Jaha* and *Dodol* as symbols created in the ritual of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* had meanings that became moral orders which people used as guides in their social life. Emile Durkheim and Erving Goffman stated that ritual as a mechanism that focuses on emotion and attention among group members produces a shared reality that will create a

totemic symbol (Collins 2004; Goffman 1967). The symbol then triggers strong emotions towards morals in community (Hausmann, Jonason, and Summers-Effler 2011). Moral order that is produced limits the behaviour of members of a group and becomes a guide for them in behaving and acting following the meaning of the symbols the group has.

b. Moral Order

Durkheim stated that ritual is the source of a group's standard of morality (Durkheim 1984). According to him, individual will feel that he/she is a moral person when he/she uses emotional energy from shared experiences as a guide in his/her actions. This standard of morality is an increase in emotional strength and intersubjectivity in a ritual performed by a group that creates the concept of what is good and what is bad. The morals that produced by a ritual impose limits on people's behaviour. Moral concept is transferred or moved into symbols that are considered sacred (Collins, 2004) likewise *Ketupat*, *Nasi Jaha* and *Dodol* which are considered important objects in the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*.

Ketupat, *Nasi Jaha* and *Dodol* in the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* had meanings that became moral order and gave guidelines and limits on people's behaviour as members of "*basudara*". As the part of "*basudara*", people are encouraged to give alms or share their sustenance to people in need when they get abundant sustenance and try to give the best to others. People should thank to God for the blessings or sustenance that has been given.

c. Emotional Energy

Lisa Schirch defines ritual as an emotional and sensual communication (Schirch 2005). Collins also argued that ritual gives a special energy to individual which is called emotional energy. For Durkheim, emotional energy is a feeling of confidence and the courage to take initiatives and actions (Collins 2004). Emotional energy then triggers individuals to interact with each other during rituals (Turner 1991). When the ritual produces high emotional energy, people's initiative to take action and practice the ritual is getting

higher. Therefore, the emotional energy also affected people in North Sulawesi in doing activities during *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. In addition, this emotional energy created emotions that aroused the spirit of "*Torang Samua Basudara*" (we are all brothers/sisters) among people who participated in this ritual. When they were involved in both rituals, they felt that they were the members of "*basudara*".

From the social aspect, *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* increased the relationship between religious communities. They became event to build new relationships. People felt that they were the part of "*basudara*" because they built relationships with new people. The guests also confidently visited the residents' houses which held an open house even though they did not know each other because the host happily welcomed anyone who came to visit. People also participated in the rituals with great enthusiasm, even though it need a lot of energy and money to hold an open house. Their tendency to repeat *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* is getting bigger because they felt they got emotional energy and the benefits. *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* which were open to everyone attracted other people to participate in this ritual and made them to be part of "*basudara*".

Torang Samua Basudara is the motto which has strengthened the relationship between religious communities and has become the belief system of the people of North Sulawesi. It is the result of a process of interaction between communities including interactions when people celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. This belief system then becomes a social system and moral values that have a big influence in arousing the spirit of brotherhood in people's lives. Belief as "*basudara*" has become a social capital for the people in North Sulawesi which contains moral norms that create social trust among the people.

d. Social Solidarity

Social solidarity is a condition of relationship between individuals or groups that exist in a community based on moral feelings and shared beliefs which is strengthened by shared emotional experiences (Johnson 2008). The forms social solidarity created during the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and

Pengucapan Syukur include *Mapalus* (Cooperation), Mutual Cooperation (*Gotong Royong*), and sharing with each other.

People carried out mutual cooperation to prepare the foods needed for the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. Muslims helped Christians to make food such as dodol and nasi jaha which were served during *Pengucapan Syukur*. During *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, people gave the best service for their guests, especially regarding the food. The essence of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* was eating together so the participants could feel the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* after they visited and ate together. They would remember and got an impression on their memories. By eating together, people build solidarity among them.

4. *The Pandemic, Ritual Modification for Solidarity*

The Covid-19 Pandemic had great impacts on the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat*. Before the pandemic, this ritual was held hilariously by people in North Sulawesi, but during the pandemic in 2020-2021 people in some villages held it simply in the mosques. In some areas, where people usually celebrate *Lebaran Ketupat* every year, they even postponed. In Ratatotok Muara and Ratatotok Timur village, people only celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* by eating together at the mosques. They brought food and ate together. It was because residents were only allowed to interact with people in this village. Djan Adabo, a resident in Nonapan Satu village explained:

"During the Pandemic we felt no freedom because we had to wear masks. If we wanted to leave this village, we had to get permission. So, we prevented the spread of the virus. We did not want to get sick. So, we only communicated with our family members by phone, my relatives asked "Why did not we meet?" I answered "we had to be patient". If the Pandemic period ends, we would hold the celebration of Lebaran Ketupat" (Personal interview, Nonapan Satu village, December 11st, 2020).

During the pandemic, people had restrained their desires to meet their family and friends during the time of *Lebaran Ketupat*. Even though the

communication during the pandemic was limited and people were not allowed to hold open houses, they celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* in limited conditions. Based on the results of the interview, some informants said that if the pandemic period was over, they would celebrate *Lebaran Ketupat* as usual.

The celebrations of *Pengucapan Syukur* also changed during the pandemic. The celebrations of this ritual were varied. There were people in some areas that only celebrated it in churches. There were also people who celebrated it with residents in their village. It was because the government prohibited guests from outside the village to visit. Those conditions caused the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur* was not as crowded as previous years. Not all regions celebrated *Pengucapan Syukur*. Jane Tantohe, a resident in Ratatotok Dua village said:

"Covid-19 had great impacts because we could not worship at church. We could not go to other's houses. We could not go to the neighbours' houses" (Personal interview, Ratatotok Dua village, December 5th, 2020).

When the author asked "what did you feel when people did not celebrate *Pengucapan Syukur* for this year?", she answered "there was no togetherness". Santy Seidyregar, a resident in Ratatotok Dua village also said:

"We could not get together. Usually, we gathered to chat. We felt stressed. We wanted to gather and tell our stories but we were forbidden to do it" (Personal interview, Ratatotok Dua village, December 5th, 2020).

When people could not celebrate *Pengucapan Syukur* they felt something was missing. Because they could not meet and gather like the previous years, they could not feel togetherness created during the celebrations of the two rituals. There were also people who felt stress because they could not gather together and chat with others as usual. The statements above show how important *Pengucapan Syukur* is in people's lives. Because people feel that *Pengucapan Syukur* is an important event in their lives.

People in Wineru village also changed their activities to celebrate *Pengucapan Syukur*. Before the pandemic, Christians usually brought food as offerings or sacrifices to the church and ate them together. However, during the pandemic they collected offerings and harvests such as rice to be distributed to people in need. Pastors and church administrators also helped to distribute them. Jefta Makapela, a religious counselor in Wineru village said that before the pandemic, they did not think about this activity during the celebrations of *Pengucapan Syukur*. Finally, even though the time for the ritual celebration had ended, church administrators and the people continued to distribute the harvests they had to people in need. What people in Wineru village did in celebrating *Pengucapan Syukur* showed that *Pengucapan Syukur* could give contribution for the people in facing the pandemic.

Catherine Bell in her book entitled *Ritual Theory Ritual Practice* states that ritual is a strategy or the way of acting that is different from one's daily life. This way of acting is created because of the construction made by the community to deal with problems that exist in their life (Bell 1997). Sense of ritual that exists in people's lives also produces this way of acting. Sense of ritual that exists when people face special social situations and conditions creates some actions that are different from the usual actions. Ritual is seen as an activity that is unique and different from other activities. Therefore, ritual is more than a strategy on how people act in special social situations.

Bell argues that if society undergoes social changes, organizations, economic activities, and other ideas, then people will see changes along with changes to the ritual system and its meaning. The phenomenon of changes or modifications of religious rituals in several areas, including changes in the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* supports Bell's statement. During Covid-19 pandemic, people could use the modification of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* as a local resilience during the Pandemic.

During Covid-19 pandemic, people practiced religious rituals in limited conditions. They have to implement health protocols. Therefore, in 2020-2021 Muslims and Christians in North Sulawesi chose to change or modify the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. Muslims held *Lebaran*

Ketupat in a different way. Christians also changed their activities during the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur*. They modified the two rituals in order to celebrate *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* without breaking the government's instructions. The modifications of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* during the Covid-19 pandemic then could be collaborated with social solidarity to achieve common interests. This collaboration also could be used as local resilience in facing Covid-19 Pandemic.

At the beginning of the pandemic, many people were worried. They thought about their life in the future during the pandemic. They worried about not being able to fulfil their daily needs during the Covid-19 pandemic. Because of feeling worried, people in Wineru village, sub-district of Poigar, Bolaang Mongondow had the initiative to save or store the harvests they got. When they wanted to grind the rice, they were worried that they could not fulfil their needs during the pandemic. Therefore, they stored the rice until the next harvest period. They grind the rice sufficiently for their daily meals. People then used their harvests as offerings (*Korban Syukur*) when they celebrated *Pengucapan Syukur* during the pandemic.

Before the pandemic, Christians usually brought offerings or *korban syukur* to the churches when they celebrated *Pengucapan Syukur*. However, in the pandemic period, they collected offerings and harvests they saved, then they distributed them to people in need. Pastors and church administrators also helped distribute the offerings. Heski Gosal, a pastor in Wineru village said:

"The sense of caring for one another became stronger during the Pandemic. Before the Pandemic, the congregation usually brought korban syukur to the church. For this year, we brought offerings and shared them with people in need. Pastors also helped to distribute them. Other churches in this village also did this activity" (Personal interview, Wineru village, December 12th, 2020).

People modified the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur* by distributing the offerings to the people in need and the children in the Child Development Centre (*Pusat Pengembangan Anak*) in their village. They also did not hold an

open house as usual because they were prohibited from gathering. Jefta Makapela, a religious counselor in Wineru village said:

"I did not think it would become like this (share the offerings), next time when we had harvests such as rice, priests and people in this village distributed them to the people in need" (Personal interview, Wineru village, December 12nd, 2020).

The collaboration between *Pengucapan Syukur* and the solidarity movement by sharing the offerings and changing the way of life of the people by saving their harvests during the pandemic could be a local resilience. This modification also created a space for transformation in people's lives during the pandemic. Jefta Makapela said that church administrators and the people still shared the crops they had with people in need, such as older people and widows, even though the time of the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur* ended.

People in Ratatotok Muara and Ratatotok Timur also changed the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat* during the pandemic. In 2020-2021 people celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* at the mosques with limited access. They brought food to the mosque and then ate them together. Even though they celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* in limited access, the spirit of building togetherness remained. They celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* without breaking government regulations by not having open houses and inviting people outside their villages. The obedience of the Muslims in following government instructions was a form of their solidarity during the pandemic. Djan Adabo, a resident in Nonapan Satu village said that during the pandemic, Muslims in his village did not hold an open house because they prevented the spread of the virus. Therefore, they only communicated with their family members by phone. They also encouraged each other to be patient in facing the pandemic².

Their obedience to following the instructions was a form of collective consciousness. For the common good, they refrained their desire to gather with their family and friends at the time of *Lebaran Ketupat*. Solidarity of the people, both Muslims and Christians, could eliminate individualism during the

² Personal interview, Nonapan Satu village, December 11st, 2020

pandemic. Muslims decided not to do *silaturahmi* with their families to prevent the spread of the virus. They did not want their family members to get infected by the virus. Meanwhile, Christians distributed the harvests to people in need. Their moral feeling and shared belief as the members of “*basudara*” encouraged them to do those activities during the pandemic. Solidarity united them by a sense of kinship. The emotional energy as “*basudara*” made them care for each other and shared their sustenance.

Almost everyone in the world feels stress during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result of the changes that suddenly occurred, people feel frustrated, anxious, and afraid. This condition requires people to be able to adapt to the changes around them. Through *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, people can help each other in reducing the negative impacts caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, community solidarity is urgently needed to reduce the pandemic’s negative impact by giving moral or material support. Heski Gosal, a pastor of Immanuel Church, Wineru village said:

“During the Pandemic, people could feel community solidarity. At the beginning of the Pandemic, people could not leave the village. Some people found it difficult to get a job, so we helped them. There were many ways to help each other. There was a high level of solidarity here” (Personal interview, Wineru village, December 12th, 2020).

He also explained that from April to May 2020, people were prohibited from going out of their villages. This condition made people unable to leave the village for work. However, by helping each other, the people’s economy in his village was relatively stable during the pandemic. Their village, which is an agricultural area also supported the stability of people’s economy during the Pandemic. Pastor Heski Gosal said:

“Not only to be a disaster, but the Pandemic also caused people’s economy increased. It was because the Pandemic made people motivated. They were worried about their life in the future. So, they saved their harvests. When they got harvests, they were worried about grinding the rice, so they saved them until the next harvest time. They grind the rice only for their daily meals. They were

also looking for side jobs” (Personal interview, Wineru village, December 12nd, 2020).

The change in people’s way of life during the pandemic in consuming the rice to fulfil their daily needs positively impacted their economy. During the pandemic, people also showed their solidarity with others. They helped each other. Viali Tampi, a resident in Wineru village said:

“There is a Child Development Centre here, so we distributed the crops to them during the Pandemic and also for elderly people and widows. People from this village who have been successful outside this village also gave money to people in need” (Personal interview, Wineru village, December 12nd, 2020).

Solidarity also can be realized by giving moral support. Through the moment of *Lebaran Ketupat*, people could ask each other about their condition and encouraged each other even though only by telephone. Caring for each other and giving encouragement is also part of solidarity. Thus, people can get positive emotional energy.

The collaboration between *Pengucapan Syukur* and solidarity could be a local resilience in facing the negative impacts of the pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, people in Wineru village saved their crops and ground the rice sufficiently for their daily meal. This method made people became economical in consuming the rice they had. People got the inspiration to give the harvest they saved as offerings at the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur*. They distributed the offerings to people in need. The activity of sharing the harvest kept going even though the time of *Pengucapan Syukur* had ended. Therefore, Heski Gosal, an informant in Wineru village said that the people’s economy in his village was relatively stable.

Turner argued that ritual has several roles in people's lives, including building integrity in the community and becoming a source of motivation (Turner 1998). Through the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, people could motivate each other. Pastors could give motivation to their congregations when they held *Pengucapan Syukur* services at church.

People could also use *Lebaran Ketupat* as a moment to do *silaturahmi* and gave motivation to each other by phone.

Family members could remind each other to be patient in facing the pandemic. Thus, they could think positively and eliminated negative thinking that can cause stress during the pandemic. Therefore, *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* had a role in making people think positively in facing the Covid-19 pandemic. Through these two rituals, people could give moral support that could improve mental health. People also could manage negative emotions and minimize stress through the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* by praying or listening to religious lectures.

D. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Lebaran Ketupat and *Pengucapan Syukur* were events to communicate and do *silaturahmi* for Muslims and Christians in North Sulawesi. Christians and Muslims not only met and interacted with family members and friends, but also built up relationships with people they just met regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds. People may create a peaceful and harmonious inter-religious life. Activities carried out in the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* also had produced and reproduced solidarity among people.

This research show that the modifications of religious rituals create a shared vision and mission and encourage everyone to think critically and progressively in facing times of crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Religious rituals can give inspirations for the people in finding a way out of the problems they face together. The production of solidarity in the celebration of religious rituals during the Pandemic can reduce individuality especially related to the fulfilment of personal needs during the pandemic. The modification of religious rituals could become local resilience in facing the negative impacts caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, This study describes the dynamics of religious ritual practices that exist in a community, especially regarding rituals related to inter-religious tolerance and solidarity.

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