

Slametan as One of Local Wisdoms for Conflict Prevention

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has many races and tribes. Such multicultural condition potentially increases ideological differences. Many people with their cultural identity cause domestic conflict in the society, while the existence of ritual decreases the conflict in the society. Meanwhile, cultural identity becomes stronger and a threat of national disintegration. However, such tribes differences can be overcome in Java which enables various tribes live together. One of the ways to keep togetherness is through the existence of *Slametan* as a cultural ritual and habit of Javanese people. *Slametan* is a harmonization activity between people. The word of "*slametan*" in Javanese refers to the word of "*selamat*" (congratulation). There are two agendas in *slametan* which are eating together and praying. Peacebuilding builds as a stage in peace. This exists to keep conflict or its escalation away. The target of peacebuilding is a long-term process for peace and a method to keep the peace. This can be seen based on the characteristics of *slametan*. *Slametan* is a mixture between Javanese *kejawan* culture and Islamic teachings. This research was conducted aiming to explain the role of *Slametan* in keeping the peace in Java, Indonesia. This research was performed qualitatively by analyzing secondary data, expecting that it can provide legitimation on local culture as one to ways of peacebuilding.

Keywords

Slametan, Local Wisdom, Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding

Introduction

Indonesia is a country with various ethnic groups. This diversity is characterized by the quantity of heterogeneous Indonesian people who live throughout the regions from rural to urban areas. Some of these factors have the potential to cause social conflict. In addition to the reduced sense of nationalism, Indonesian people currently face social inequalities such as social stratification. This social stratification does not only aim at fulfilling economic needs, but usually at a political character as well.

The more difficult it is to find jobs, the more absence the equal treatment in the field of law and the more number of pro-people rights violations, the greater the social inequality occurs. Various social movements have emerged to respond these conditions in various forms, for example: nuances of TRRA the desire to separate from Indonesia, and so on. These social movements cause problems in overlapping ideology, politics, economy, socio-culture, and security.

This condition triggers conflicts both between community members and with other community groups. Conflict is generally motivated by different characteristics that individuals carry in

an interaction. The differences among them are related to physical characteristics, intelligence, knowledge, customs, beliefs, and so on. Conflict is very contrary to integration, because integration operates as a cycle in society. Controlled conflict generally results in integration, but on the other hand imperfect integration can create conflict.

Methodology

In this study, the author used data obtained from library studies, where this study is interpreted as a series of library data collection activities, reading and recording as well as processing research material (Zed, 2003: 3). In this study, part of data collected were about the main principles of peace building, the theory of peace building, and local wisdom theory. The empirical data was in the form of important secondary data about the condition of Indonesian society which were obtained from scientific papers written by several previous researchers.

This research design used qualitative methods. Qualitative research is a method exploring and understanding meaning ascribed to social or humanitarian problems (Creswell, 2012: 4). In addition, Moleong defined qualitative research as a type of research that emphasizes drawing

conclusions based on interpretations of phenomena or facts (Moleong, 2004). Based on the two definitions above, this research can be categorized as a qualitative study because the problem raised was derived from social phenomena and conclusions were drawn at the end of the discussion based on the phenomenon problems solving associated with the theories used in the research methodology.

In this study, the researchers themselves were the main data collection tool, so that some adjustments can be made when collecting data and analyzing the data (Moleong, 2001: 5). Data obtained were analyzed using inductive analysis aiming to discover multiple realities contained in the data, which then enabled the researchers to describe the setting in full, find shared influences that sharpen the relationship, and calculate values explicitly (Moleong, 2001: 5). In this study, the application of this analysis was done by confronting the current community condition with the threats that will be faced.

Results

Slametan

Early Javanese People Beliefs

The ancient Javanese people are known to carry out beliefs combining various teachings and traditions. Everything joins into one combination practice consisting of beliefs of Animism-dynamism, Hindu-Buddhist teachings, mysticism, worship of ancestral spirits, and guardian creatures of the holy place. The Javanese people's understanding of supernatural beings and cosmic power of the universe is very strong and reflected in life practice. Animism is the most ancient belief adopted by Javanese society. This teaching worshiped a single power called *Sanghyang Tunggal*. *Sanghyang Tunggal* has two fused contradictory characteristics, those are good and evil. The nature of goodness is known as *Sanghyang Wenang* and his opponent is *Sang Hyang Manimaya*. In order to worship *Sang Hyang Tunggal*, Javanese animist people offer "*Sesajen*". In addition to worshiping a single occult power, offerings are also offered to spirits who occupy a place, item, tree, or certain items.

The ancient Javanese people believe that these magical and cosmic powers determine the good and bad things in their lives. Success, safety, and happiness can be achieved if they do good and respect supernatural beings and the surrounding environment. Conversely, bad things and disasters will occur if they do not respect spirits and the universe. This concept is inherent in the characteristics of Old Javanese society. Their form of respect for these forces is manifested through abstinence from doing something as well as giving offerings containing food and certain objects called *Sesajen*. When Hinduism and Buddhism came and the concept of gods was introduced, Javanese society did not erase the animist-dynamic beliefs previously held. They synchronize both of them, so that the term Javanese Hindu-Buddhist appears, which combines all elements of ancient beliefs with Hindu and Buddhist teachings. After the rise of Islam in Java, the change in their beliefs did not lead to being a homogeneous Javanese Muslim, but allowed them to be diverse in interpreting Islam and its teachings along with their previous or existing beliefs.

Syncretism with Islam

The interaction between Islam and Javanese society begins with trade relations that occur in the northern coastal region of Java. Muslims who were migrants from the Gujarat and Arab regions settled and interacted with native Javanese. They traded and married local women, forming Muslim families under the rule of Hindu or Buddhist kingdom at that time. They live side by side with other Javanese people. The beginning of Islam spread on Java Island cannot be separated from the role of the saints group called *Wali Songo*. *Wali Songo* is a *da'wah* system consisting of Islamic religious leaders, of which the majority come from countries in the Middle East. They lived on the northern coast of Java Island from the beginning of the 15th century to the mid-16th century.

Wali Songo spreads Islam on Java Island using Sufism approach. This approach was considered suitable with the characteristics of Javanese people at that time who had combined the teachings of animism-dynamism with Hinduism-Buddhism. Sufism is variously defined as "Islamic mysticism", which learns about the nature and way of purification of the soul for inner and outer eternal happiness and has similarities with the objectives of Hinduism listed in the Vedas. The relationship between *Wali songo* and Javanese people is more directed towards a cooperative rather than competitive process. As the theory states, cooperative situations are only possible if each party has a common goal where the goal can only be achieved if the two parties work together. *Wali Songo* with his mystical approach has managed to understand that both Islam and Hinduism have the same purpose, namely to attain the highest purity of the Soul and happiness.

This assumption among Javanese people is also influenced by the communication patterns of *da'wah*. *Wali Songo* preaches in a different definition from the concept of *da'wah* in his native country. *Da'wah* in Arabic means inviting, but preaching carried out by the *Wali Songo* is not an invitation, but rather as communicating a new culture that plays an old tradition that already exists in Java. One of *Wali Songo's* approaches which can be said to be successful is by changing *Slametan* ritual. As already mentioned, *Slametan* ritual which contains food offerings was originally offered to ancestral spirits and guarding creatures of an object or a holy place. After *Wali songo* arrived and Islam was introduced, the meaning of the ritual was shifted. It was no longer in the form of offerings for spirits, but is shared with people who need food, including relatives in the neighborhood. In the end, there is no differentiation between being Muslim and being Javanese with the old believes. The two of them can simultaneously occur in the Javanese Society. (Martiana, et al :2019)

The Evolution of Slametan

Slametan is a classic example of marriage between Islam as a migrant with Hindu-Buddhism and Animism which was first adopted by the

Javanese people. It can be said that *Slametan* is a Javanese version of what is generally done in religious ceremonies in the world, which consists of eating together and having elements of mystical and social unity among the participants. *Slametan* comes from Javanese word of "*Slamet*" and most probably from Arabic "*Salam*" as well. It means wellbeing, peace, safety, health, goodness and in essence it refers to the state of stasis simply 'nothing happens' to one person or to people. Being *Slamet* also means that people can avoid difficulties or troubles derived from natural and supernatural condition. The function of *Slametan* is to ask the Higher One to prevent unwanted events happening. There is nothing which will make someone or a society suffer physically and mentally or become sad and ill because of certain unwanted and horrible events.

Slametan generally deals with important events in the lives of Javanese people. Important moments such as pregnancy, birth, marriage, death, new home, are generally celebrated by holding a *slametan* with the aim of obtaining blessings and salvation from God. Geerts, sees *Slametan* as the core and most essential ritual of Javanese people as an animistic ceremony that aims to bond relations between community members. Geerts (1976), highlighted two important aspects in *Slametan*, namely the existence of spiritual ideas and social integration to sustain each other in the community.

According to Geert's (1976), *Slametan* can be categorized into four groups:

- 1) *Slametan* covers the check point or periods of the most crisis of human life, such as: birth, marriage, circumcision, and death
- 2) *Slametan* is carried out at important times of Muslims, otherwise known as the "calendrical *slametan*", such as the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.
- 3) *Slametan* is related to the social integration of villagers in order to clean the village. The context of cleaning the village in this case is cleaning the village from evil spirits. Generally, traditional types of *slametan* are

served, such as *apem*, *tumpeng*, etc. The food is offered to the village *danyang*. Village *danyang* is a village ancestral spirit which in its lifetime was an important and honorable person.

- 4) *Slametan* is carried out by a small number of families in order to achieve certain goals at irregular times, depending on the event that happened to him. This type of *slametan* is called intermittent *slametan*.

Furthermore, according to Mayer and Moll, *slametan* can be categorized into two types. The first is *slametan* which is carried out during important times/crises in Javanese human life, such as birth, marriage, and death. Second is *slametan* which is carried out related to agricultural events, such as planting and harvesting rice.

This is an activity that harmonizes the ritual aspects (vertical) with relations aspects between humans and nature (horizontal). The term relates to the origin of *slametan* before Islam came. At first, *slametan* was a dish offered to the ancestor spirits and guardian spirit for holy places to ask for the safety and smoothness of everything. After Islam arrived, the meaning of *slametan* was shifted. The essence of the ritual for invoking salvation on spirits and watchmen, is transformed into a request for salvation to the Almighty God. Food offerings that were originally for invisible creatures were shared with relatives and those in need. However, the purpose of salvation remains the same, namely to ask everything to be smooth, safe, secure, and that there is no harm whatsoever.

A. Conflict Resolution

Empirically, conflict resolution is carried out in four stages, namely:

Phase I: Seeking Conflict De-escalation

At this stage, the conflicts occur are generally still characterized by armed conflict, so the conflict resolution process has to be carried out in collaboration with military orientations. The conflict resolution process can be started if there are indications that the conflicting parties will reduce the level of conflict escalation. In fact,

currently conflicting parties are more open to accepting negotiations with the aim of reducing the burden of the rising costs of violence. However, this is not in line with the thought stated by Burton (1990: 88-90) that “*problem-solving conflict resolution seeks to make possible more accurate prediction and costing, together with the discovery of viable options, that would make this ripening unnecessary*”.

Phase II: Humanitarian Intervention and Political Negotiation

When conflict de-escalation has occurred, the second stage of the conflict resolution process can be started simultaneously with the application of humanitarian interventions to alleviate the suffering burden of conflict victims (Crocker et.al, 1996: 38). This principle, which is one of the basic changes from humanitarian intervention in the 90s, requires humanitarian intervention to no longer move in the periphery of armed conflict, but must be able to approach the central point of war. This is based on the fact that the greatest civilian victims and potential human rights violations are at the center of the war and at no one can carry out rescue operations that location other than a third party. These humanitarian interventions can be carried out simultaneously with the efforts to open up opportunities for negotiations between elites.

Phase III: Problem-solving Approach

The third stage of the conflict resolution process is problem-solving that has a social orientation. This stage is directed at creating a conducive condition for antagonistic parties to transform a specific conflict into a resolution (Jabri, 1996: 149). Conflict transformation can be considered successful if two conflicting groups can reach a mutual understanding on how to explore alternatives to conflict resolution that can be worked on directly by each community. Alternatives to conflict solutions can be explored if there is a conflict resolution institution that seeks to find the fundamental causes of a conflict. For Burton (1990: 202), these fundamental causes can only be found if the conflict occurs is analyzed in a comprehensive context (total environment).

Rothman (1992: 30) offered four main components of problem-solving process, namely:

1. Each party recognizes the legitimacy of the other party to undertake an entry-level communication initiative;
2. Each party provides correct information to the other party about the complexity of the conflict which includes the causes of the conflict, the traumas occurred during the conflict, and structural constraints that will hinder their flexibility in carrying out the conflict resolution process;
3. The two sides gradually find the desired patterns of interaction to communicate signals of peace;
4. The final component is a problem-solving workshop which seeks to provide a conducive atmosphere for conflicting parties to carry out the process (not directly seeking outcomes) of conflict resolution.

Phase IV: Peace-building

The fourth stage is peace-building which includes the transition stage, the reconciliation stage, and the consolidation stage. This stage is the hardest stage and will take the longest because it has a structural and cultural orientation. Ben Reily (2000: 135-283) has developed various mechanisms of democratic transition for post-conflict societies. The transition mechanism includes five processes, namely:

1. selection of state structures;
2. delegation of state sovereignty;
3. establishment of a trias-politica system;
4. establishment of a general election system;
5. selection of national languages for multi-ethnic communities;
6. establishment of the justice system.

Reconciliation needs to be done if the deepest potential conflict that will be experienced by a community is the fragility of the social cohesion of the community due to various structural violences occurred in the community historical dynamics. Meanwhile, the consolidation stage requires relevant actors to continuously intervene in peace against social structures with two main

objectives, namely preventing the recurrence of conflicts involving armed violence and constructing a lasting peace process that can be carried out by the conflicting parties on their own. (Miall: 2000, 302-344).

B. Local Wisdom

In the English-Indonesian dictionary of John M. Echols and Hasan Syadily, local wisdom consists of two words, namely wisdom and local. It can be understood as local ideas that are wise, full of wisdom, good value and are funded by members of the community. Haryati Soebadio in Ayatrohaedi (1986: 18-19) said that local wisdom is a cultural identity and a national cultural identity/personality that causes the nation to be able to absorb and cultivate foreign cultures.

Meanwhile, Moendardjito in Ayatrohaedi (1986: 40-44) said that regional cultural elements have the potential as local wisdom because their ability to survive until now has been tested, characterized by:

1. having the ability to survive against outside culture,
2. having the ability to accommodate elements of outside culture,
3. having the ability to integrate elements of external culture into the original culture,
4. having the ability to control, and
5. having the ability to give direction to cultural development.

Local wisdom can be considered as a human effort that uses cognition in acting and behaving towards something, object, or event that occurs in a certain space. Local wisdom is explicit knowledge that emerges from a long period of time evolving together with the community and the environment in a local system that has been experienced together (Tiezzi, 2011).

One of the local wisdoms that can be used as a means of conflict resolution is submarine. *Selametan* itself is a ritual tradition carried out by

Javanese people. *Selametan* is also practiced by the Sundanese and Madurese people. *Selametan* is a form of thanksgiving event by inviting some relatives or neighbors. Traditionally, the *selametan* event begins with praying together, sitting cross-legged on a mat, and circling tumpeng rice with side dishes. (H.Th. Fischer, 1953)

The practice of *selametan* ceremony, as expressed by Hildred Geertz, is generally adopted by Abangan Muslims, while for Putihan Muslims (*santri*) the practice is not completely acceptable, except by removing striking elements of *shirk*, such as the designation of gods and spirits. Therefore, for the *santri*, *selametan* is a praying ceremony with a leader or *modin* which is then continued by having a meal together with the aim of obtaining safety and protection from Allah Almighty (Koentjaraningrat, 1984).

The submarine ceremony by Javanese community is carried out to celebrate almost all incidents including birth, circumcision, marriage, death, Islamic celebration, cleaning the village, moving house, changing names, healing illness, healing from the influence of magic, and so on. There are people who believe that immersion is a mandatory spiritual condition and if it is violated it will result in inconvenience or accident. Economically, these ritual ceremonies require very large funds.

Selametan ceremonies as a form of culture always undergo changes and developments. This is due to a change in mindset of the culture, technology and religion stakeholders. Changes in mindset, technology, and religion will directly affect the facilities and processions in the *selametan* ceremony. Even so, it turns out that there are still some Javanese people who maintain traditional values. Some of these people, are afraid to leave habits that have rooted in their life aspects, and are still loyal to the traditions inherited from their ancestors.

Efforts to achieve community development goals require deep and sustainable thinking. Therefore, in carrying out changes in the ritual culture of the community, it should pay attention to some of the impacts and the financing that the community

must pay for these activities. Some of the criteria that can be used to determine the impact of rituals is the family economy, children's education, and the surrounding community.

C. Local Wisdom for Conflict Prevention

In fact, the Indonesian nation has always had one way of resolving conflicts, namely by means of local wisdom. Conflict resolution with local wisdom can be introduced by developing local wisdom-oriented insights. Apart from being useful as an alternative to conflict resolution, local wisdom also maintains and holds fast to the national identity. The four stages of conflict resolution that have been described in the conceptual framework must be seen as a unit that cannot be carried out separately. Although not everything can be done using local wisdom, these stages show that conflict resolution places peace as an open process that never ends. All parties involved in utilizing local wisdom for the resolution of social conflicts are responsible for both the process and implementation of the resolutions.

The multidimensional conflicts that often arise in Indonesia are an accumulation of public disappointment with the implementation of policies that are considered to have not placed their rights and obligations properly. Its application is not easy because many factors are difficult to predict, especially regarding values, culture, geographical conditions, and the developing local context. It can be said that conflict is a friction occurs between two or more camps due to differences in values, status, power, scarcity of resources, and unequal distribution, which ultimately create gaps in various fields of life.

Conflict in human life is impossible to separate, because in order to meet the needs of life, people generally make various efforts in which they are always faced with a number of rights and obligations. If the placement of these rights and obligations is carried out properly, there is little possibility of conflict and vice versa. In relation to this, every region in Indonesia certainly has quite

potential for conflict. Local wisdom is considered as one of the alternative solutions to problems in conflict resolution. Local policies that are rooted and considered sacred, cause their implementation to be more efficient and effective because they are easily accepted by the community.

Local wisdom has the potential to encourage people's desire to live in harmony and peace. Local traditions and culture generally teach peace to live in harmony with their social environment. This is in line with the opinion stated by I Ketut Gobyah, that local wisdom has been a basic tradition from one generation to another generation. It contains norms that teach harmony and togetherness in social life. The approach to local wisdom cannot be equated from one region to another. However, local wisdom still has the core of a cultural approach, by utilizing the local values and culture that the local community already has. As stated by S. Swarsi Geriya, local wisdom does consist of traditionally institutionalized values, ethics, and behavior. This indicates that people who live together in the guidance of a value system, will complement their rules with a number of cultured local policies. The goal is of course to anticipate various problems caused by misunderstandings.

Local wisdom is the most powerful medium for finding solutions in conflict resolution. This condition is carried out by inviting the people involved in the conflict to discuss and negotiate the wishes of each other against the other. This will have an influence on the form of resolution that is deemed possible and appropriate, and can serve as a conflict early warning system.

The application of local wisdom is indeed not easy, because there are so many external values

Limitations and Future Studies

Limitation from this research are the data and geography. This research use an secondary data from another research and literature. This scope of this research only in Java Island, Indonesia. Researcher expected that the the next research can prove that local wisdom especially Slametan

that are currently being adopted by the Indonesian people. However, there are still opportunities to prioritize local wisdom as conflict resolution. This is in accordance with the opinion presented by Moendardjito in Ayatrohaedi (1986: 40-44) that regional cultural elements have potential as local wisdom because their ability to survive until now is proven. In the case of *selametan*, it can become a media for peacebuilding or a medium for maintaining relations between communities. In addition, when a person invited cannot come to the scene, it that he can be suspected of having a problem with himself or other people.

Conclusion

Slametan is a socio-religious system that is already entrenched in Javanese society. *Slametan* is basically a community ceremony or ritual which has spiritual and social aspects. The program of praying and eating together, which blends in *Slametan* is considered the best and most important form in Javanese society. In addition to functioning to invoke salvation, Slametan at the social-religious level also serves as a means of maintaining the harmony of relations between community groups. *Slametan* acts as an "theological bridge" that connects different groups. *Slametan* acts as a place to build social contact between groups, creating a symbiotic mutualism relationship, so as to create equality between groups. If the feeling of equality has been established, it will be easier to form cooperation between groups, and the potential for conflict in it will be successfully diminished. In the above context, *Slametan* can be considered as one of the peacebuilding efforts in Java. This is in accordance with the definition of peacebuilding itself, namely as a process of preventing conflict in a peaceful situation that has been built.

can be used in other places or prove that local wisdom can be used as one of Conflict Prevention

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