

Hybrid Religiosity and the Politics of Piety as a Survival Strategy: *a case of the ritual of “Cuci Negeri” in Soya, Ambon*

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Abstract— The main purpose of this paper is to show that the hybrid religiosity and the politics of piety phenomenon are one of the realizations of the survival strategy by religious community that faces multicultural, dynamic and accelerative context. The phenomenon is essentially a natural tendency inherent in all human existence as a social creature and religious beings. As a socio-religious community, it is generally inevitable for the human community to always be correlated with the environment. This research is conducted by using qualitative approach and case study about traditional ritual of the “Cuci Negeri” by the Soya Christian community. One of the results obtained is that the phenomenon of hybrid religiosity and the politics of piety by the Soya community is a manifestation of their survival strategy, facing the context of the encounter between traditional beliefs with the doctrines of Christianity, as well as other missionary religions (Hinduism and Islam) and the influence of globalization-modernization.

Keywords— religious identity, politics of piety, survival strategy, ritual

INTRODUCTION

A church historian, Th. van den End in his review about the history of Maluku found out that there was a tendency that influenced the religious identity of Christian Ambonese which was quite phenomenon as a hybrid religiosity. According to him, in colonial era, European called this phenomenon as “The Religion of Amboneese,” which is characterized by a combination (or hybridization) between Christian values and tribal religion values [1].

The strong influence of the religious and local cultural character of the Ambonesse-Christian people, contributed to the emergence of a “cynical appellation” from Hendrik Kreamer, a pastor conducting his dissertation research in the field of missiology in Ambon-Maluku, citing the Christian religion of Ambon as the religion of “cloves” (cengkeh) [2].”

After Christianity has been living for more than 400 years in Ambon, this issue is interested to be researched and discussed again. The hybrid religiosity is considered to be one of big challenge for the local church i.e. the Protestant Church of Maluku (GPM) nowadays which had not been done yet.

Based on the hybrid religiosity phenomenon, I decide to choose the cultural rituals of “Cuci Negeri Soya” as the example and entry point of my research. Moreover, there are also several consideration followed namely:

(1) Soya’s government is one of the oldest cultural-based hierarchies of the government which located in Sirimau, Ambon, the capital city of Maluku. The history of Ambon City can’t be separated from the influenced of Soya Reign in the past.

(2) Christianity in Soya was one of the oldest and most influenced of the Christian development history in Ambon, Maluku.

(3) On December 2015, Republic of Indonesia through the Ministry of Tourism claimed the rituals of *Cuci Negeri* Soya as the “Immaterial Cultural Heritage Objects” in Indonesia. It is obvious that being rewarded by the government means it’s very important one. It’s reported that this ritual contained very rich values for social life, culture, environment and religiosity which is worth to be maintained.

(4) Dieter Bartels in his newly translated book and launched in Ambon in August 2017, when describing the “Early Maluku History of the Ambonesse Glasses”, explicitly mentions that one group of people who migrated from the Seram Island to Ambon Island was a Soya community. As a group of people who have genealogical-historical perspectives with some other groups of people out of Nunusaku Seram, the Soya can be considered as one of the traditional customs societies that represent “Ambonism or Ambonesse” on the one hand that goes beyond the territorial-administrative boundaries, and on the other can be a reference to see its association with Seram, which is commonly called *Nusa Ina* (lit. Mother Island).[3]

METHODOLOGY

Through the perspective of sociology of religion, my research conducted to answer two main questions, namely: (1) Referring to the Soya’s ritual of *Cuci Negeri*, whether Hybrid Religiosity and Politics of Piety is a manifestation of the survival strategy of religious identity of Soya-Ambon-Christian people? (2) What evidence can be identified as manifestation of the survival strategy of the Soya-Ambon-Christian religious identity?

By using case study of rituals of *Cuci Negeri* in Soya, the collected data will be analyzed descriptively with qualitative approach. It was realized also that in qualitative research, the theory generally emerged at the end of the study as the conclusion of an empirical data analysis. But, if there are theories used, then the nature of those theories is only as “a tentative conceptual framework,” which is not meant to test the

theory used but to develop it in its encounter with inductive reality.[4]

The steps of collecting data as follows: (a) participatory observation by researcher himself, (b) in-depth interviews of key informants and some local leaders and actors, selected through purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques, and (c) research selected literatures and documents related to topic of study. Finally, the data were analyzed and interpreted qualitatively.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Survival Strategy

This term refers to Talcott Parsons' theory. He argues that there are four functional imperatives which necessary to be applied to any system to survive, popularly so-called AGIL's Schemes, namely: (1) Adaptation (A); (2) Goal attainment (G); (3) Integration (I); and (4) Latency or pattern maintenance (L).

According to Parsons, the four schemes take place as follows: First, adaptation is carried out by organisms by carrying out adaptive functions by adapting and changing the external environment. While the function of goal achievement or Goal attainment functioned by the personality system by setting the goals of the system and mobilize resources to achieve it. Furthermore, the function of integration is done by the social system, while the function of latency is run by the cultural system. The cultural system provides a set of norms and values that motivate actors to act.

The main component of Parsons thinking is the process of differentiation. Parsons argues that every society is composed of a set of different subsystems based on its structure as well as its functional meaning. As society changes, it will generally grow with better capabilities. Referring to Parson, in his view of the evolution of religion, Robert Bellah addresses the differentiation of religion that religious symbolism tends to change over time, in a more differentiated, more comprehensive and more rational way. [5]

Hybrid Religiosity

I adapt this term from the hybrid identity initiated by Homi Bhabha in his writing [6]. Hybridity basically describes the cultural and ideological conflicts that give rise to tension but ultimately results in a new space of negotiation and also manifests itself in social practice in the context of space and time.

Bhabha uses culture as a "survival strategy" that is "the production of uneven and incomplete meanings and values that often consist of unmatched demands and practices." In defining the cultural context, Bhabha highlights the position of 'in-between,' characterizing it as something positive.

In contrast, the third space provides a symbolic space for the colonized to perform cultural maneuvers by freeing itself from the binary paradigm. Rather than consider this "resistance" attitude merely as a rejection of the identity given by the colonists, this situation actually shows the dynamics of the formation of an ever-changing identity and the "survival" strategy of the dominant cultural strikes.

Politics of Piety

Politics of piety is different from political piety. The political piety tends to be a hypocrisy or camouflage. The terminology of Politics of piety appears first in a book written by Saba Mahmood. [7].

Mahmood himself did not provide a specific definition of what the Politics of Piety was, but through her intense ethnographic research on the mosque women's movement with their worship activities in Cairo, Egypt, Mahmood provided some notes on the Politics of Piety, that I summarize as follows:

- a) Politics of Piety is not in the context of political transformation of the state, but rather as a movement of moral transformation;
- b) There are efforts to build, maintain, and seek piety (taqwa) by cultivating hope, love and fear as a triad in religiosity. Those phenomena could be compared by the concept of *mysterium et tremendum* and *mysterium et fascinans* from Rüdolf Ottö;
- c) The existence of ethics and morality are built to realize an identity;
- d) There is a process of self-discipline through ritual performance;
- e) There is a discursive mechanism.

The Formulation about God and ancestors (tete-nene moyang)

From many examples that can be traced, one example that identifies the religiosity of the Soya-Ambon-Christian, is reflected in the customary prayer (*pasawari*), containing belief, confession, hope and supplication, spoken by the head of the traditional group (*soa adat*) at the time of ritual *Cuci Negeri* in front of the sacred stone (*batu pamali*), among others as follows:

Local Traditional Language	Translation (Adaptation)
Kapua Upu Ilah Kahuresi Lebeh Habua, Kedua Tuhan kami Isa Almaseh Ketiga Rohul Kudus, Upu ama Upu Wisawosi Upu Latu Selemau Agam Raden Mas Sultan Labu Inang Mojopahit...	Our Almighty God The Creator of Universe, Secondly our Lord Jesus Christ, Thirdly Holy Spirit, Upu ama Upu Wisawosi Upu Latu Selemau Agam Raden Mas Sultan Labu Inang Mojopahit...
Kene anak maheru yang sekarang berdiri di dalam istana Latu Selemau... Kalo-kalo sasou pusala pamanisa oh sasou manisa ampong ilah-ilah karena inilah bukan barang areha amanhia urung sakakenu menyembah berhala-berhala bukanlah sekali-kali...	On behalf of these people who are standing in this Latu Selemau Palace, I beg the blessings and if we do sins, please, forgive us, because we are not people who worship gods....

It is clear that in the customary prayer, there is a formula which expresses a hybrid religious identity from Soya-Ambon-Christian People. And regarding the hybrid religiosity of the divine formulation, some anthropologists who do research on

religion and culture in Ambon, Maluku, give their opinion, among others:

- (1) F. L. Cooley [8] outlines that the concept of *Kapua Upu Ila Kahuressy Lebe Hanua* is already a combination or translation between traditional Trinitarian formations of Christianity with gods in the custom of the Soya community.
- (2) M.C. Boulan [9] mentions that in the *pasawari* (prayer) there are also remnants of the beliefs of the original religion owned by the *Alifuru* people in the area of West and Central Seram, such as the mention of *Kapua Upu Ilah Kahuresi Lebeh Hanua*.

Therefore, it can be argued that the mention of the Trinity of the Soya version followed by another ancestor known as the communal ancestor (*Upu Ama Upu Wisawosi*) clearly shows a hybridization between Christianity and traditional belief.

Besides *pasawari* (traditional prayer), some examples in ritual of *Cuci Negeri* that revealed the evidence of survival strategy from Soya religiosity, through hybrid religiosity mechanism and Politics of Piety, indicated among others:

- 1) Clothing, such as:
 - (a) Portuguese style: Long black dress (*Borci*)
 - (b) Traditional handkerchief (*Lenso badasi*)
- 2) Musical Instrument: Adaptation with *tifa-gong* and *tahuri*, also modern instrument like group-band, and solo electone;
- 3) Traditional Poetry (*kapata, suhat*): The form of cultural monologue;
- 4) The pattern of discipline of ethics: fasting and *matawana* (stay up all night long) by some youth was elected at the top of Sirimau Mountain;
- 5) Traditional dances and modern party: *Badonci* with *badendang*;
- 6) Eating and drinking (called: *Makan Patita* with 15 values [10]: Equality, Equity, Prosperity, Justice, Loyalty, Simplicity, Acceptance, Friendship, Openness, Honesty, Share, Hospitality, Joy, Distribution and Competition.

The whole expression of socio-cultural-religious identity of the ritual of *Cuci Negeri Soya*, summarized in the 12 Ritual Stages, as follows: [11]

- Stage -1: Open Large Meeting: King, Board of Cultural Leaders (*Saniri*) and all people in Soya
- Stage -2: Broken (*Pica*) Affairs
- Stage -3: Cleaning the Country
- Stage -4: Up to the Mount of Sirimau
- Stage -5: Get off of Sirimau Mountain
- Stage -6: Welcoming at *Rulimena*
- Stage -7: Up to (*Nae*) *Baileo* (a sacred and central place)
- Stage -8: Visit to the Water Spring
- Stage -9: Ceremony of Unity Fabric (*Kain Gandong*)
- Stage-10: Return to King's House (*Upulatu*)
- Stage-11: Party of the Country
- Stage-12: Washing Source of Water.

If we observe the findings of field research and theoretical and literature studies related to the focus of the study, several critical-analytical notes can be put forward as follows:

- (1) Humans are essentially social beings who have the ability to adapt and survive in their environment, both as social (*homo socius*) and religious beings (*homo religious*). Even Bourdieu argues that, humans are creatures that multiple fields. In addition to being religious and social beings, humans also are *homo academicus*, *homo poloticus*, *homo ludens*, *homo eroticus*, *homo numismaticus*, and so on [12]. In that connection, man as both individual and communal, seeks to always be able to develop a survival strategy, so that through it humans can survive in the midst of various challenges and struggles of life.
- (2) Indigenous peoples of Soya are a group of people who have their traditional customary-cultural heritage and beliefs, which have been passed down from generation to generation from their ancestors. As a group of indigenous peoples experiencing historical encounters from time to time, generations across generations, the Soya community has finally met other communities, both traditional and modern. The history of Soya society encounters with the reality of the influence of religious, political and economic power has resulted in phenomena, as seen in the expression of the religiosity of the Soya-Ambon-Christian people. On the one hand, the indigenous peoples of Soya who live in the central city of Ambon, maintain their own cultural and religious identity (character) and cultural identity, but on the other hand, it is inevitable that the Soya society must undergo the process of adaptation, with various variables of encounter that surround it, such as Christianity, the influence of colonial civilization (West), and other intersections with other local community groups, both in Maluku itself and in Indonesia.
- (3) The expression of hybridity seen through customary prayer formulas, and the various cultural, religious and art symbols raised during the *Cuci Negeri* ritual, has clearly demonstrated a Survival Strategy of the Soya-Ambon-Christian group of people. The influence of Western fashion, the use of the musical instruments of *Gong*, the celebration of the culture with the feast of eating and drinking, dancing and song, has proven the phenomenon of hybridization and politics of piety at the same time. It is recognized that the phenomenon of survival strategy is very dialectical among Soya society, between efforts to maintain identity and religious identity the politics of piety with openness or willingness to accept also external cultural and religious influences adapted through a cultural process of hybridization. Indeed the dialectics between hybridization and politics of piety is the manifestation of the Soya-Ambon-Christian survival strategy in showing its identity.

- (4) The Ritual of *Cuci Negeri* is a customary arrangement of Soya society which has finally gained official recognition by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, as "a nonobject cultural heritage." As a traditional event that takes place once a year, the ritual has now received a touch of modern modification and has even become one of the economic commodities in the development of local tourism. Participants who follow the ritual, are no longer confined to the local community of Soya, but are open to attend by anyone, including tourists or whoever want to participate. The series of ritual events that lasted almost one week in the first and second weeks of December, has been deliberately scheduled to become one of the ritual agenda that has a spiritual-cultural significance on the one hand and at the same time have economic, political, and of course ecological impact.

The phenomenon of modernization-globalization with the science and technology of its communications and its influence in the life of the church and ecclesiastical ministry, has contributed to the contemporary life of the Soya people. In the sphere of Christianity itself, for example, as a church which, although located in the direction of the mountains and not far from downtown Ambon, the impact of global-modernization is felt deeply in the stewardship of church life. Modern information-technology facilities, such as television-parabolic, internet with gadgets, electronic print media, and connected and accessible land transportation routes resulted that people and all congregation not entirely isolated from the various impacts of modern life. In such a context, in the same way with the global-capitalism-modern cultural trend, for the ecclesiastical minister, the phenomenon poses a serious challenge for the church, to equip the congregation, so that on the one hand it is not "out of date" others are also not "easily dragged by the times" that can destroy their spiritual and cultural life. Structuring church services and worship for example, is familiar enough with the use of multi-media facilities and modern musical equipment, but by no means ignore the potential culture and traditions that exist in the congregation. As seen from the facilities of the church today, such as: band equipment, multi-media and soundsystem that support public worship.

- (5) When interviewing with the king (community leader) of Soya (*bapa raja*) and Pastor (leader of GPM Soya congregation, *bapa pandita*), I found the same awareness and spirit to develop the traditional cultural values and wisdom of the Soya people on one side and contextualization of gospel (Christianity) values on the other side. In relation to the maintenance of the cultural and cultural values of the lands of the Soya state, including the rituals of *Cuci Negeri*, according to the pastor, the church always sustains and even contributes to the development of the whole customary cultural order and local wisdom. Because for the church, each of them (the gospel and

traditional customary or *adat*) has its own existence, but it does not need to be contradicted, but it is necessary to support each other in a dialogical and conducive manner, as long as the customs and traditions are not contrary to the evangelical truth. Even such customs and traditions can actually become a means of contextualizing the gospel itself. Therefore, in moments of celebration of worship, there is often a cultural packing of cultural nuances of Soya-Ambon, in which the order of music and dance art and cultural symbols (such as language and dress) is also used in the worship. Particularly with regard to congregational involvement in the ritual of *Cuci Negeri*, it is acknowledged that up to now the majority of the citizens involved are from "native" people. But from year to year the participation of "immigrant" residents began to show awareness to participate actively as well. Moreover, the momentum of the implementation of the Ritual of *Cuci Negeri* is in the nuances of the celebration of the weeks of adventus before Christ's Christmas, the celebration of the end of the year (*Konci Taong*) and New Year. So that the meaning of the ritual of *Cuci Negeri* itself for the church to be very correlative, as a spirit to cleanse, restore and re-arrange the relationship of life between people with God and also between people with each other and the natural environment. And that too, according to the pastor and also by the king of village (*bapa raja*), *The Cuci Negeri* became the spirituality of the adventus weeks and Christmas Celebration and also to end the Old Year (*Konci Taong*) and enter the New Year.

CONCLUSIONS

In short, it can be concluded that the people of Soya is not in a vacuum of influence, both to their traditional customs, to their beliefs and their Christianity, to the whole of their life in the midst of the present-day existence era. Instead, it experienced a dynamic dialectical process of input and output from various traditional custom factors as well as from Christianity and modernization that influenced and shaped it. Through the ritual of *Cuci Negeri* which has been going on since the ancestral era until now, Soya expresses its survival strategy, both through hybrid religiosity mechanism and politics of piety mechanism, so that in turn also colorize the religiosity of Soya with its differentiation in the context of space and time.

After explaining all the phenomena associated with the rituals of *Cuci Negeri* in Soya, it can be underlined that the Hybrid Religiosity and Politics of Piety is a manifestation of the survival strategy of the religious identity of Soya-Ambon-Christian people. This phenomenon can be clearly seen through the symbolic expressions of religion and culture of the Soya-Ambon-Christian people, as through the clothing worn, the series of ritual stages, the preservation of religious-cultural values that are maintained, especially through the rituals of *Cuci Negeri*, inheritance of the ancestors.

Furthermore, the religiosity also undergoes a process of religious differentiation since the past (the ancestors) up to now

even into the future, and will continue to take place in a dialectical formation spiral, amid the changing and dynamic context of space, time and man (agents) its habitus. This dialectical spiral refers to Peter Berger's social construction with his conception of externalization, objectification and internalization, amidst a nonsingular and rigid social reality, but plural, dynamic and dialectical. [13] In its significance, the phenomenon of hybridization and politics of piety behind the ritual phenomenon of *Cuci Negeri* became a survival strategy of the Soya-Ambon-Christian people in shoring up their religious identity, amid various factors that influence it, across the ages and generations.

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