

# The Continuity of Gandong Bond as Reflection of Maluku Identity Post Human Tragedy in Maluku 1999

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Abstract: This study is directed to the effort in remapping gandong bond in Maluku particularly in Ambon island, as part of Maluku ethnic civilization. This study with phenomenology approach result in scientific analysis about the continuity of gandong bond as community harmonization and its vitality after suffering from human conflict in Maluku 1999. The human value which is alive in gandong bond is still existed and become civilization symbol which is timeless and will not extinct as consequence of conflict. Therefore, it is expected that the result of study is made to become basic in formulating policy and road map for regional and national development, particularly in the effort to preserve gandong culture as safeguard for its community who support it and to create nation integration and social harmonization which are rooted in local culture wisdom.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The research with this theme is interesting to be studied in depth because of some basic reasons. First, human tragedy in Maluku is a paradox reality, bearing in mind that the philosophy of *pela* and *gandong* bond with jargon *potong di kuku rasa di daging* (if the nail is cut off, it is felt in the flesh) which has been for a long time become the binding factor of strong plurality and advocate tolerance values in community with different religion in Maluku. Since long time, diversity in Maluku has been inclusive and pluralist. It is in viewpoint of *pela* and *gandong* philosophy which is mono dualistic that Maluku people ancestors with lofty common sense lay the civilization base which is quite high but modern namely by making social contract such as *pela* and *gandong*. That cultural system become social glue between Islam and Christian, even the social cultural identity of this society give spirit for human bonding among religions and among brothers.

Speaking about *pela* cannot be separated from the word *gandong*. The custom and tradition of *pela* and *gandong* is cultural heritage of Central Maluku people, particularly indigenous people of Seram Island, Ambon and 36 Lease Islands (Haruku, Saparua and Nusalaut). *Pela gandong* are traditional and old social institution if it is seen from historical perspective. Its function is to regulate society life in social relations. The meaning of *pela* as the meaning

from many another word cannot be known exactly. There are some people who argue that its meaning should be searched in tribal languages in Seram Island, but there are some who give meaning separately in accord with the forms of *pela*. But in general, Central Maluku community consider it as brotherhood relation or union among two or more *negeri* or villages, whether in Muslim villages and Christian villages. This brotherhood relation is known also as *gandong* relation or siblings' relation because these two-village people admit that they belong to one common ancestor/*datuk*.

The word *gandong* in Ambonese language can be compared to the word *kandung* in Indonesian language. *Gandong* or *kandung* is womb or lap, a central and origin of living things. So, it means that siblings, little brother and big brother make a treaty ties to love each other because they are sibling or look like sibling. Therefore, *gandong* has territorial and genealogical meaning. From territorial aspect, *gandong* is a union among villages whereas from genealogical aspect, *gandong* is true sibling brotherhood.

Second, Maluku conflict had destroyed the essence of *pela* and *gandong* culture which become part of Moluccan identity. Conflict is inherent part of a community development. There is no community who are fully free from conflict and clashes as a result of interaction. One of massive social conflict which is supposed to give significant influence toward

stability of country is human conflict occurred in Maluku and North Maluku since 1999. Pieris for example, mentioned that human conflict in Maluku is civilization crisis (Pieris, 2005).

Third, there are some earlier studies about *pela* and *gandong* such as a study conducted by Hehanusa, which address the meaningfulness of *pela* and *gandong* from religion plurality aspect by making dichotomy between religion and custom. Bakri view *pela gandong* as conflict resolution approach in Maluku and there is some another study about *pela gandong* (Bakri, 2015). There is tendency that *pela gandong* is seen just for its existence as local wisdom and its usefulness. On the other side, there is threat toward the existence of *pela* and *gandong* in reality of modern generation post conflict in Maluku. This part which become the focus of this study is which differentiate it from earlier studies about *pela* and *gandong*. This study is focused on continuity of *gandong* relation among villages with the same and different religion in Ambon Island and its surrounding post human tragedy in Maluku.

Maluku community since long time had recognized *gandong* as identity which describe tolerance or respect to community pluralism. *Gandong* is the bond weaved among villages which have differences in religion and socio-cultural condition in Maluku, generally in Central Maluku region, such as in Ambon Island, Lease Island and Seram Island. The *gandong* bond can be weaved based on consensus among those villages, with its own history and origin. As for law and another consensus such as Pancasila and 1945 Constitution of Republic of Indonesian, the power of *gandong* had been since long time believed and understood as socio cultural relations in community. Until the beginning of 1999, Maluku people had never recognized the word conflict with SARA nuance and another conflict because they feel bounded by *gandong* ideology.

It is in this conflict event that ideology difference can be seen to become social friction and turned into real social conflict. *Gandong* which contain lofty values cannot serve its vital function as customary institution which bind community who have difference in religion in togetherness. In the other word, that conflict had changed drastically the community order including philosophical values of *gandong* culture which since long time believed as the glue which maintain social harmonization. After the security condition in Maluku is condusive and slowly but sure all aspects of community life are improved, the existence of *gandong* as the glue of brotherhood relation which become identity of Maluku people is questioned.

The result of this study contributes to give description about the continuity of *gandong* in its relation to resolution of human tragedy in Maluku

1999 in the period of post conflict. It is intended to obtain data and fact about relevance and the existence of *gandong* itself as social-cultural bonding among Maluku people as its owner in the present time. Peace needs the effort to continuously do identification and elimination toward the potential of structural violence to occurs in a community.

Therefore, this study will be around some stages, namely: *first*, to describe the reality of *gandong* bond in current situation (post conflict), *second*, to find out the community's perception about the continuity of *gandong* bond in relation to the effort in minimizing the potential of conflict in the future. Therefore, the result of study is expected to become mindset to formulate the policy of regional and national development, to create nation integration and social harmonization rooted in local culture wisdom. Besides, this study offers the reflective room for all stakeholders who so far play role in conflict resolution about the extent of that conflict resolution reach whole people who are involved directly in that conflict. This become important because nowadays custom values tend to be eroded by community life which is increasingly developed and experience very significant dynamics so it can potentially trigger conflict which is finally resulted in disintegration and disharmonization in its community. Social-cultural and custom bond in Maluku community had been rooted; *gandong*, since long time has been regarded as a bond which tie the community pluralism which is very strong. *Gandong* as a glue and maintain relation harmonization among villages become concrete solution as the effort to maintain diversity in Maluku.

The problem studied in this study are: (1) How is the reality of *gandong* bond among customary villages in North Maluku and Ambon City and the completeness of recovery discourse and the effort of conflict resolution which touch all aspects and dimensions of community life post Human Tragedy in Maluku? (2) How is the continuity of *gandong* bond as local wisdom which reflect Moluccan identity? The aim of this study is to show the reality of *gandong* bond post Human Tragedy in Maluku and to find out people perception about the continuity of *gandong* bond which reflect Maluku ethnic civilization as cultural heritage.

## 2 METHODS

The design of this study is qualitative descriptive study by using phenomenology approach. The main concept in phenomenology is meaning as important content occurred from human awareness experience to identity the essential quality from awareness

experience in depth and thoroughly (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology let the reality to reveal itself naturally which aims to raise deepest awareness of one's experience. Phenomenology believe that reality is a result of social construction and reality also is a result of sharing experience in interacting between one person with another person. Data was obtained in field or site of study from in- depth interview with informant and direct observation.

The subject of this study are people in customary villages or *Negeri* which have *gandong* bond, among others are, Negeri Laha- Negeri Amahusu and Negeri Tial, Negeri Lima-Negeri Hattu, Negeri Rumah Tiga-Negeri Wakal- Negeri Hitumessing. The location of study from those eight *gandong* villages, comprise two regions of central government in Maluku Province, namely Ambon City (Negeri Laha, Rumah Tiga and Amahusu) and North Maluku Regency (Negeri Tial, Wakal, Hitumessing, Negeri Lima and Hatu) in which all those five *gandong* villages are located in Ambon island.

This study use conceptual induction approach which based on fact or empirical information to make interpretation in the form of impression, opinion or theoretical view in the form of data. Data which is obtained through data collection instrument then analyzed qualitatively descriptively.

### 3 DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 The Reality of Pela Gandong Bond and Completeness of Recovery Discourse and the Effort to Resolve the Conflict Root

Ambon island itself has two regions or peninsula coverage, in which its regional division was done based on governmental region of two big kingdoms in the ancient time in Ambon island, namely *Leitimur* peninsula under the kingdom government/Negeri Soya and *Leihitu* peninsula under the kingdom government/Negeri Hitu. The study which was conducted in *Leitimur* peninsula, comprise the governmental region of Negeri Amasuhu and Tial, whereas in *Leihitu* peninsula comprise the governmental region of Negeri Wakal, Hitumessing, Negeri Lima, Hatu, Laha and Rumah Tiga. Based on data of study result obtained through interview with customary leaders from those *gandong* villages, then there is explanation about that *gandong* relation, as explained as follow:

#### 3.1.1 Negeri Wakal – Negeri Hitumessing – Negeri Rumah Tiga

Negeri Wakal, Hitumessing and Rumah Tiga are three villages which are located in Ambon city, which were formed originally from sibling relation. In kinship relation, Negeri Wakal is the oldest sibling (the oldest brother), followed by Hitumessing as second oldest brother, and Rumah Tiga as the youngest sibling (the youngest brother). Negeri Wakal and Hitumessing then become Muslim villages and Rumah Tiga become Christian village until now.

#### 3.1.2 Negeri Lima – Negeri Hatu

Negeri Lima and Hatu as two sibling villages, which are formed due to blood ties or sibling. This *gandong* relation is formed from three siblings who were separated and formed new village in the ancient time, namely one brother form Negeri Lima and another brother go up and go down the mountain toward Negeri Hatu, whereas the youngest sister goes to Negeri Alang, but she was disappeared, according to historical explanation from local custom leader. Today, Negeri Lima is Muslim custom village, whereas Negeri Hatu is Christian custom village.

#### 3.1.3 Negeri Laha – Tial – Hualoy – Amasuhu

Negeri Laha, Tial, Hualoy and Amasuhu are four sibling villages which are formed due to sibling ties. These three villages are formed originally from the separation of these three villages, in which the oldest brother go to Laha, the second brother go to Tial, the third brother go to Hualoy (Seram Island) and the youngest brother go to Amasuhu. As the religion entered the villages, then the religion believed by those four villages until now are Negeri Laha, Tial and Hualoy are Muslim, whereas Negeri Amasuhu is Christian.

*Gandong* relation among villages or *negeri* in Maluku is not new phenomena created by Maluku community today, but it is cultural heritage incised by their ancestors and inherited for generations in centuries. The *gandong* relation which is maintained among Muslim village and Christian village give an explanation that almost all respondents know about that *gandong* relation, and all respondents agree that *gandong* bond still maintained well. This reality proves that social conflict which raise SARA issue in Maluku in 1999 not entirely destroy *gandong* relation among the villages which have different beliefs.

The result of study shows a cause-effect pattern of the problem occurred during human tragedy. This problem cause *gandong* relation among villages

which have different religion, Muslim and Christian become loose and rather disturbed. This disturbed relation is not caused by indigenous people of gandong villages, but caused by the immigrant people who are not indigenous people of Maluku. This disturbed relation result in less intensity of meeting frequency among the people of gandong villages due to security. The power of gandong essence become filter to resist various kind of provocations which are potentially result in new conflict in the future. The basic things which become threat and challenge which should be faced by this gandong bond is incitement and provocation which raise ethnicity, religion, race and inter-group relation issue from some people come from outside (external factor), who do not want peace and want to destroy the life pillars of Maluku community. The brotherhood relation formed caused by blood ties or sibling is the power for Maluku community to be able to reawake and improve themselves post human tragedy. Therefore, Maluku community today are not easily provoked by various incitements which aimed to disturb brotherhood relation which has been built so far.

Raharyono explained that gandong bond as a local wisdom is human intelligence owned by certain ethnic group acquired through community experience (. The tradition values which reflect the entity of Maluku community civilization had been inculcated and form custom and politeness, because that value had been processed through long journey in the history of Maluku community. Furthermore, Marwing, 2015) said that gandong had fulfilled six significances and function of local wisdom if it is utilized in conflict resolution (Marwing, 2015). First, as identity marker of a community. Second, glue element (cohesive aspect) of cross-citizen, cross-religion, and cross-belief. Third, local wisdom is not coercive but inner consciousness. Forth, local wisdom gives the color of togetherness in a community. Fifth, the capacity of local wisdom in changing mindset and reciprocal relation of individual and group and put it above common ground. Sixth, local wisdom can drive appreciation process, participation and also minimize the analyzer who destruct solidarity and integration of community.

The indigenous people of villages which have gandong relation between Muslim and Christian entirely desire to preserve that gandong relation, so its relation become tightened and continued for next generation. This need is urgent due to the rapid of era development which is potentially produce instant generation who do not understand anymore and care about the forms of gandong relation inherited by their ancestor as part of local wisdom.

### **3.2 The Continuity of Gandong Bond as Local Wisdom which Reflect Moluccan Identity**

Indeed, gandong bond is full of positive values which reflect the natural custom of Maluku community. Ruhulesin (2005) said that, the notion of gandong and orang basudara in pela bond is key definition to understand that traditionally, Muslim and Christian people in Maluku believe that in the context of Nunusaku religion and also in kakehang tradition, they are gandong or siblings which is literally means come from the same womb (Ruhulesin, 2005). Maluku community develop civilization as a community in all activities of cross-individuals, cross-religions and cross-villages which are framed in a religious customary order which aims to realize cosmos harmonization as the goal of Mollucan.

Moluccan identity can be seen from human values which live in social relation among gandong villages. Kinship values by using clan or marga as marker, form a life pattern which respect each other in a collective community. Equality value which treat the other people equal with themselves. Respect the dignity which is described through treatment in social relation. The value of peaceful life as brothers is important thing which should be maintained as basis to effected on nation security. The value of mutual cooperation is seen from spontaneous treatment without expecting the reward when another gandong need help in building worship places and baileo (traditional house) (Hehanusa, 2017).

Based on data of interview result with custom leaders in gandong villages, and data obtained through questionnaire, it is obtained that, gandong relation among villages in Maluku not a new phenomenon created by Maluku community today, but culture heritage incised by their ancestors and inherited for generations in centuries. The gandong relation which is maintained among Muslim village and Christian village give an explanation that almost all respondents know about that gandong relation, and all respondents agree that gandong bond still maintained well. This reality proves that social conflict which raise SARA issue in Maluku in 1999 not entirely destroy gandong relation among the villages which have different beliefs.

The result of interview of King of Hattu Village revealed that community knowledge of gandong relation, and the intimacy of that relation of course not detached from the king, the role of local custom leader and the older people who understand about gandong to capable to continue that cultural heritage. Subsequently, the result of study shows a cause-effect pattern of the problem occurred during human tragedy. This problem cause gandong relation among

villages which have different religion, Muslim and Christian become loose and rather disturbed. This disturbed relation is not caused by indigenous people of gandong villages, but caused by the immigrant people who are not indigenous people of Maluku. This disturbed relation result in less intensity of meeting frequency among the people of gandong villages due to security. The entire village communities who have gandong relation between Muslim and Christian desire that gandong relation is preserved, so the relation is increasingly tighter and continued for next generation. This need is urgent bearing in mind the rapid of era development which is potentially produce instant generation who do not understand and care about the forms of gandong relation which is inherited by its ancestor as part of local wisdom.

In customary law jurisprudence, the term used to describe the nature of four customary law which is the same with supernatural is religious-magic. It means that the community who support customary law including gandong villages believe that what is bounded in the world, also bounded in front of God so the violence of customary treaty will deal with God, *tete nene moyang* (ancestor) as one cosmos unity. That men and women from same gandong are forbidden to marry each other reflect the natural life regularity because they are genealogically bounded.

Based on the study result obtained, it is described that continuity of gandong bound post human tragedy in Maluku give opportunity to more strengthened kinship relation among Muslim and Christian villages particularly in Ambon Island. Conflict make community of gandong in Ambon Island aware that they are brothers and need not to fight each other, in contrary they should protect each other. Besides, gandong bond is still potentially to become filter in the effort to maintain peace in Maluku provided the government pay serious attention to preserve gandong relation. The concrete action which can be done is by realizing the desire of community from the villages which have gandong relation to hold the custom ceremony of *panas gandong*, as media to refresh and preserve gandong culture.

One important thing which become weakness in gandong relation is the lack of understanding of community from gandong villages today, particularly young generation about the story and historical story of how those gandong villages are formed. This lack of understanding is caused by some custom leaders and old people thinking that it is a family secret for generations which should not be known by community in large, so it cannot be told and should be kept until dead.

This external factor is the source of weakness, so it is the reason why historical story about that gandong bound only known by some people in

community. Another factor is the present of outsider who do not understand the meaning of story about gandong relation so they are lack of bounding as brothers who should love and protect each other. The development of era in globalization and reformation era today with various science and technology advances raise various problems which can erode life pillars in nation and state including life as nation and state in this land of a thousand islands (Maluku), particularly concerning the existence and continuity of gandong bound which has been formed for centuries.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

The researcher finds that cultural social bounds in Maluku community which had been known since long time as a holder and upholder of cultural and social values which tend to fade away, and begin to be ignored by the community who indeed own these values are caused by various factors. Those factors among others are: (1) stagnation of effort in preserving cultural social values, as a result of disparity among generations; (2) dislocation in the function of customary institutions; (3) by various components of community, cultural social bound based on custom values which only viewed as historical fact.

The mapping of *gandong* relation in Ambon island which is done in this study then can become theoretical and conceptual base to conduct follow-up studies or researches about *pela* and *gandong* and also the cultural social situation post conflict in Maluku. For example, the study of discourse about people relocation post conflict, conflict resolution, economic, cultural and social gap of community post conflict, relation among religion, custom, and culture, etc. Post human tragedy in Maluku, *gandong* relation in Ambon island is still existed. The community from villages which have *gandong* relation are strongly aware of the importance of this customary institution as relation glue among brothers in plural social community. The community need contribution from government to refresh and preserve again *gandong* relation in *panas gandong* ritual as the vehicle of cultural value inheritance.

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