

Cross-Faith Communication and Practice of Tolerance through Cultural Approach in RakananGiyanti

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Abstract -RakananGiyanti is a traditional ceremony in Giyanti village that has been initiated long time ago and regularly carried out ever since. This ceremony is held on every 1st Syuro (Javanese calendar). Before the ceremony, people in the village visit each other's houses in order to tighten close relationship among them. There are several steps done during the procession of Rakanan and it is started by pilgrimage to ancestors' grave and carry offerings, tenongan creation, ritual held in village pavilion and it is continued with Rakanan and lengger graduation. When joining Rakanan, community of Giyanti dresses themselves up on Javanese traditional costumes as men put on beskap and blangkon, whereas women wear kebaya. They gather within the diversity of faiths like Islam, Christian, Catholic, and a belief called Pangestu.

This research discusses how cultural approach of Rakanan becomes the medium of cross-faith communication by practicing tolerance. Interpersonal communication that is well-established is able to unify various elements of faith so that it enriches the uniqueness of RakananGiyanti as well as gives greater value than many other similar Rakanan events in other places. By applying descriptive-analytic method, the result of the research shows how RakananGiyanti is able to become medium for cross-faith communication by practicing tolerance in preserving ancestors culture and it helps to preserve the existence of Rakanan tradition in Giyanti village.

Keywords - Rakanangiyanti, Cross-Faith Communication, Tolerance, Culture.

I. RAKANAN GIYANTI AS A MEANS OF CROSS-FAITH INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

An individual who lives within a society is able to absorb the values contained inside the social life. Those values and norms are achieved from the values and norms shared within the society chosen as a living place to live the social life. The absorption of norms and valued within a community where beliefs diversity is available can be done through communication and the communication built between the individuals is affected by pluralism whether it is faith or cultural pluralism. Faith or beliefs pluralism could be threatened by social conflict because beliefs or faiths are individual's way of life in viewing the world. Nawawi (2015)

pointed out that religion is a way of life that contains of human teachings in interacting with himself and other people together with the universe and everything in it and Creator. Religion is also stated as a way of life that can affect faith, value, behavior, time use, and other cultural aspects.

Giyanti village is inhabited by community that consists of four religions, they are Islam, Christian, Catholic, and a belief called Pangestu. The population of this village is 3014 people (BPS, 2019). Each religion shows different perspective in depict God. However these differences must be able to become a way to nurture tolerance among individuals. Therefore, individual who understand about religion diversity is an individual who realizes and respects differences. In Giyanti,

tolerance has highly upheld and it is practiced in daily life. For example, people with different religions work together during social service and *gotong-royong* (mutual cooperation) and they can finish their duty by making collaboration. Another example is seen during *kenduri* (moslem religious festivity). Guests invited to the event are also including people from different religions and they join the process of the event although it includes Islamic rules. It applies the same way when Christian people invite moslem to join their festivity, moslem will come and join the religious rituals as a form of respect and tolerance.

One of many important events that becomes another sign of tolerance practice in the Giyanti is 1stSyuro event that is usually held during 1stSyuro based on Javanese calendar. This event is held as preservation towards ancestors culture and it takes 3 days by involving all community in the village. This unites plurality into one cultural event. The even can be done successfully each year because of a good interpersonal communication among religions which is supported by all aspects of community in Giyanti.

The role of communication towards individual relationships in Giyanti has become an essential matter as it leads to the continuation of interpersonal relationship among religions. The cross-faith harmonious relationship is not merely created without effort, it needs mutual respect and appreciation towards differences among people. This effort can be shown through the understanding of communication symbols both verbally and non-verbally so that the potential conflict is avoidable. Tolerance between individuals in different religions in Giyanti is also shown through economic tolerance which is a respecting act toward content, teachings, and the individual of particular religion. The economic tolerance is also able to allow every individual to believe in existence of truth and mutual purpose of religions or beliefs they have today. Every person respects the content and teaching believed by other individuals (Azra, 2010).

II. CONCEPT AND THEORY TO IDENTIFY RAKANAN GIYANTI AS A MEDIUM OF CROSS-FAITH COMMUNICATION

One of the meanings of communication is the transfer of idea from one individual to another or more that is done to influence behavior. According to a communication expert, Everett M. Rogers as quoted by Mulyadi (2015), communication is a form of interaction shown by someone to another person and it is done to influence each other both on behavior or attitude intentionally or unintentionally. The process of communication is done through verbal and non-verbal languages, for instance through facial expression,

culture, and technological effects. Communication takes important role in cultural approach because it makes inter-individual interaction in the social environment easier especially in identifying and understanding the culture itself. Furthermore, culture is a tradition that emerges from the cultural originality of particular group of community which then becomes characteristics of that community (Mulyadi, 2015). Local culture wisdom is a local knowledge which merges with patterns of beliefs, norms, and culture that are realized into behavior or habits and it is a faith which is believed, understood, and conducted in a very long time (Wilda, 2015).

Eliade pointed out, as mentioned by Triwikromo (2016:13), that a religious myth can be altered into a pattern or style of attitude and performing the attitude is a way to connect with physical reality and the surrounding environment. The stated opinion and perspective may give impact to the existing and developing myth in society in order to obtain alternative to understand their own culture. As ancestor's heritage, culture in Indonesia is still remarkably attached in people's mind and it helps the existence and functions of culture well-maintained. One of the long-standing tradition exists in Wonosobo, Central Java, is Rakanan Giyanti. RakananGiyanti as cultural heritage of local tradition is believed to have been passed over from generation to generation in order to gain prosperity and peace especially for the local people in that village. De Jong as quoted by Herusatoto (2012:74) argued that in daily practices, every individual may show life attitude which does not differ from other individuals even though the only differences appeared tend to the difference in ways and thinking in viewing God, human, universe, and everything in it. Attitude shown by every individual can possibly be affected by many things such as espoused beliefs, adapting process towards the environment, cultural background, and national attitude as majority character.

Cross-faith communication is an interaction performed by an individual or more in different religious background and beliefs who are able to work together to build a worth community to improve their life. As quoted by Mawardi (2011), Hisym al-Fuwathi described that faith covers all aspects of behaviors that direct to obedience, whether it is obliged or recommended attitude. In this matter, the most important aspect in obedience is the spiritual confidence in God.

The vital part in RakananGiyanti procession is similar to other traditional rituals like *nyadran* where a series of ceremonies to express the gratitude to God and ancestors is held by all inhabitants in Giyanti. *Nyadran* derives from

sraddha of Sanskrit language which means faith. Rakanan has meaning of cleansing culture done by Javanese and this ritual is majorly carried out by people who live in villages. Originally, Rakanan comes from Javanese language consisting of *rakan* which means *keprung tenongan* (cultural ritual of eating meals together) and it consists of a series of traditional ritual like cleaning the ancestral graves, sowing flowers, and praying together in the graveyard which is known as *kenduri*.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is conducted in Giyanti Sub-Village as part of Kadipaten Village, Selomerto Sub-District, Wonosobo Regency, Central Java. Giyanti is a place where RakananGiyanti is regularly held. This study is a descriptive-qualitative research and the data is taken through purposive sampling technique that the samples are taken based on the determined criteria in order to achieve the research objectives. The criteria of the sampling include villagers in Giyanti who know and directly involved in Rakanan ritual. There are five (5) informants who contributed information and they were Giyanti Village Chief and religious leaders of Islam, Christian, and Catholic, and also a leader of local belief. These five persons have important roles in RakananGiyanti event.

Data of the research were collected through depth interview and literary study. The technique of analysis is descriptive-qualitative, a procedure that results in descriptive data in the form of written or verbal words obtained from individuals whose behaviors are observed and this approach is directed into the background and overall information related to the mentioned individual (Lubis, 2013). This method is a research method in social and humanities science especially cultural study.

IV. RITUAL PROCESS OF RAKANAN AND RELIGION DIVERSITY IN GIYANTI VILLAGE THAT CONSTRUCT CROSS-FAITH COMMUNICATION.

4.1. Series of Rakanan Giyanti Tradition

Giyanti Sub-Village is part of Kadipaten Village in Selomerto Sub-District, Wonosobo Regency, Central Java. In Giyanti, many tourism potentials found because most of the villagers are artists of stage art (*Lengger* traditional dance). RakananGiyanti has been done from generation to generation and it is held once a year for three days and takes place on 1 Syuro (Javanese calendar). According to village leaders, villagers in Giyanti routinely hold this ritual ceremony without giving concern on the difference of religious background or beliefs of the villagers. The main reason for holding this event is because villagers need a way to express their gratitude for the abundant prosperity and it also becomes a medium for

them to pray for safety for all people in the village. One day prior to the ritual of Rakanan, villagers in Giyanti pay visit to each other's house in order to tighten the bound among them.

"...this Rakanan tradition is a long-standing ritual and started since a long time ago, its function is to unite Njati people because there are people from different religions like Islam, Catholic, Christian, and Pangestu. In this village, misunderstanding which then changes into serious fight never happens. Even though villagers have different faiths, they keep together in social services, mutual cooperation, kenduren, what is important is that there is no difference at all..." (Interview with AT, 21 April 2019).

"...My religion is Catholic, my next-door neighbor is Islam, my neighbor across my house is Pangestu, but we can be together when there is Rakanan. When we are invited to selamatan we attend it without concerning about what religion they have, we invite each other even though the process of the ritual and the prayers based on the host's belief. It's just the same..during Rakanan we just think that we are one, work together in preparing everything, pray together, and have fun together. What matter is that we get along very well..." (Interview with ED, 21 April 2019).

The ceremony of Rakanan Giyanti consists of several stages as follows:

4.1.1 Pesusen Beras Festival

The first day of the Rakanan ceremony begins with Pesusen Beras (washing rice), it has purpose "*Ngalap Berkah* (expect blessings) for Fertility". This event start at 15.00 p.m. until the process is completed. The *pesusen beras* ritual is joined by women wearing traditional clothes called *kebaya*. They carry rice from home and wash the rice, the water of rice washing is put into a barrel which is then stored under banyan tree of the village pavilion. At the end of the ritual, a prayer of interfaith is held and led by Islam, Catholic, Christian religious leaders, and also the leader from Komunitas Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal or Pangestu (a local belief). Each of the leaders gives prayers according to their beliefs. The philosophy of *pesusen beras* means "we take the goodness from nature and the best is returned to nature in the hope that nature will give more to the community". The next day after the whole procession has finished the water of rice washing is taken by community and cross faith leaders to be splashed to the entrance of water (*sungapan*) or to the irrigation of rice fields.

4.1.2 *Merdi Deso and Pilgrimage to Ancestors Grave*

At 5:00 in the morning, community leaders (from all elements of the faith) do *merdi deso* in *petilasan* (historical site) of Kyai Darso by bringing *ingkung* (chicken cooked in a whole, without being cut into pieces), *bucu* (white rice along with side dishes and vegetables), and *wayang* (puppets). After completing the ritual in *petilasan*, the leaders proceed to the next process of visiting the tombs of the ancestors accompanied by a joint prayer by the whole community and cross-faith figures. The ancestors referred to here are the founders and the elders of Giyanti village, include the tomb of Adipati Suroloyo and his descendants (located in the north of the village), Kyai Mranggi (located in the south of the village), Kyai Monyet (located in the family tomb in the west of the village), and *petilasan* of Kyai Darso.

In this process, the villagers must bring offerings in the form of cone (yellow rice accompanied by complete vegetables and side dishes), chicken eggs, various kinds of local fruit, *jembawut* drinks (mineral water, milk, tea, coffee, *dawet*) and flower set (consisting of rose, jasmine, *kanthil*, *cananga*). Additionally, there are also eight people dressed in special Javanese costume (*beskap* in flower motifs, *batik* cloth, and *blangkon*) carrying stretcher replicas of founders of Giyanti village (Duke Suroloyo and Kyai Mranggi). The replicas are made of wood. This process is accompanied by *gamelan* and escorted by nine troopers (royal forces, dressed in *lurik*, carrying Indonesian flag, and spear). Javanese people have the typology of living peacefully, harmoniously, harmoniously and in balance where there is a tendency not to disturb and be disturbed. Therefore, despite being sure of the existence of God Almighty, the villagers also continue to believe and appreciate the existence of occult things that coexist in the real life.

4.1.3 *Tenongan and Rakanan*

Tenongan is a large food container made of bamboo which is woven in a round shape and it has lid made of bamboo as well. The function of *tenong* is as a place to bring traditional food or cakes and food belongs to *pala kependem* (food which its fruit is in the ground) such as cassava, sweet potatoes, potatoes, peanuts, taro, and other types of tubers. There are also various kinds of local fruit, rice accompanied with vegetables and side dishes, porridge made from rice flour, corn, tomatoes, cucumbers and also other varieties of food. Tenongan is carried by village women who are wearing *kebaya* and walking hand in hand towards the Kertajanti village pavilion.

The next process is a ceremony at the Kertajanti village pavilion which begins with the laying of offerings (rice which is served with vegetables and side dishes, various kinds of traditional pastries, *jembawut* drinks, and flower set). This event is carried out under a banyan tree located in front of the village pavilion. This procession involves the water of rice washing that has been rested the day before, 3 large buckets of clean water, and a replica of buffalo made from the heart of a banana. Afterward, three traditional leaders sit nearby and start to deliver prayers to the Creator. The three traditional leaders consist of cross-faith leaders in the village of Giyanti.

After the ceremonial procession, the event is continued with Rakanan, it is distributing the food in *tenongan* provided by Giyanti villagers to all people who attend the ritual. The food distribution is done freely and people who attend usually take the food by fighting over food but in a fun way, it is called *rayahan*. They also fight for the water in the bucket to be drank or washed over their faces, whereas the water of rice washing is usually taken home to be poured into their own rice field irrigation.

The last event of this series of activities is the graduation ceremony of *Lengger* (a traditional dance consisting of several female dancers). The stages of graduation *Lengger* begins with a *jaman* ceremony (the *Lengger* dancers bath their overall bodies in the village spring), then they do *larung* (releasing various kinds of offerings by washing them away on the Serayu river in Giyanti village). Afterward, they return to the village pavilion to do *simpuh lengger* (bow down) in front of community and cross-faith leaders who have sat on the stage in the village pavilion to execute the graduation.

4.2. Faith Difference in Giyanti Village in Wonosobo

The differences in Giyanti Wonosobo village have become very common, including the differences in faith (belief), social status, perspective and thought. The majority villagers in Giyanti village are Islam, but the differences do not lead to the division of majority and minority groups. There is no longer a tendency for partisanship towards certain groups that are more dominant. This can be seen during the Rakanan ceremony where in every prayer process all beliefs have the opportunity to pray. As stated by an informant, EH, in the following statement:

“... there is no muslim majority in here, although the fact is that many of the villagers are moslem, all religions and belief have the same opportunity, so during praying process in Rakanan everyone has the same chance to lead the prayers, it is done alternately, so there is no impression of distinguishing people, when there is an

invitation of kenduren we go together although it is an invitation from someone with different religion to ours, we are brothers and sisters in here..." (interview with EH, 10 April 2019).

Pluralism in Giyanti village often becomes a model for other villages because of the high level of tolerance. Although this grave pilgrimage event (part of Rakanan procession) is generally carried out by moslem, the implementation shows that both of the pilgrimage and the procession are done by all, it means that cross-faith leaders and followers were given the same opportunity. With communication behavior applied in each activity, each individual is able to apply mutual respect and appreciation to each other.

4.3. Cross-Faith Communication in Giyanti Village

Communication that occurs between religious communities that have been established for years in Giyanti village is carried out and applied in their daily lives. Not only in preparation for Rakanan and other special events, but at the RT or RW meetings, discussions for the commemoration of Independence Day, and other village activities the communication is implemented.

"...all programs are discussed together, whether during RT or RW meetings, Independence Day celebration, or other activities. For Rakanan, we always hold meeting and it is not just one or two meetings for discussion. Rakanan is a prestigious event because many international tourists come to see it, so we need to prepare our strength as well as other preparation such as fund, we need massive fund because we can spend hundreds of millions for the event..." (Interview with RT, 21 April 2019).

From what had been conveyed by RT as an informant, there is a message can be taken that the process of communication is very important because it is an effort to maintain cultural existence and togetherness between religions and beliefs so that any activities are always discussed together. Communication among several beliefs in religious life can be well-built without causing significant conflicts. Harmony and togetherness also do not influence one or another's faith, so there are four places of worship in Giyanti village based on to the number of religions that exist. Each religious community can worship freely according to the established schedule.

"...in our village, there is no event that is done without working it together. As pangestu follower, I joined the social service like cleaning mosques and the surrounding, also when there is cleaning church and

its environment, the moslem villagers came to join in. For Rakanan event, people voluntarily give a hand, even those who work in out of town come home to help the event. We also involve ourselves in cleaning the graveyard, we make contribution when fund is needed for the event. We join the praying process in the graveyard as well because we pray for our own ancestors, if it is not us preserving the tradition then who else will..." (Interview with ID, 10 April 2019).

"...definitely, in here, whenever there is activity, fund contribution, or anything as long as it involves villagers, discussion is held because it has become habitual to discuss everything. Just send invitation and everyone will surely come. Difference in giving opinion is common matter, but there is always agreement in the end because people usually accept differences. When there is different opinion during discussion, someone will come forward to mediate the misunderstanding..." (Interview with EH, 10 April 2019).

The results of interviews with informants EH can illustrate that interpersonal communication patterns that have been built for a long time are able to shape the behavior of individuals who can accept differences. The powerful strength of cross-faith interpersonal communication is inseparable from the support of a conducive and complementary environment. The role of cross-faith leaders is very important in embracing existing differences to stay side by side and join hands.

Related to the RakananGiyanti tradition, there is also a process of cultural acculturation in which at the beginning this confession was a Javanese cultural tradition where all of the people were Hindu. Afterward, in its development, the culture of Rakanan was acculturated by several beliefs that grew in Giyanti village especially Islamic teachings. It proves that RakananGiyanti is always held by taking purpose of preserving the traditions that have existed since the period of their ancestors.

4.4. Values, Norms, and Cross-Faith Tolerance in Rakanan Culture in Giyanti Village

The values and norms of diversity in Rakanan culture in Giyanti is viewed from the process of grave pilgrimage. Below is the result from interviewing informant who is not a moslem.

"The truth is that we do not have grave pilgrimage in our religion, but we pay respect by coming into the grave, sowing the flowers, and bringing the offerings provided by the villagers, we just come along with them. Moslem lead the prayers and as non-moslem we

do not object that because it has become tradition in here...” (Interview with AT, 21 April 2019)

“When Rakanan takes place in the graveyard, those who are praying are moslem only, and the rest of us stay silent respecting the process. Whereas in another event, there are cross-faith prayers, in the end of the event, for example when tenongan ritual almost comes, we are praying together. During the pesusen beras ritual, we also pray together. The one who leads the prayer is changing over time, we just respects everything...” (Interview with ED, 10 April 2019).

The statements from the informants above expose a high sense of tolerance towards different beliefs by joining grave visit but not participating in special rituals carried out because there are no such rituals in their belief even though it is not prohibited. The community leaders who have different faiths with Islam are assigned to carry all the offerings taken to the grave and help to sow flowers. In this process, interfaith leaders other than Islam maintain their religious values by participating in the event without reducing the solemnity of their religious rituals by maintaining existing norms.

“...everyone joins in the praying process during Rakanan event, so the praying is carried out four times based on each belief, except when the grave pilgrimage is only done by moslem. The example of tolerance act shown by local community is when Rakanan is done on Friday, moslem men must pray Jum’at and we use the time to take a long rest because moslem must do the Jum’at pray first...” (Interview with RT, 12 April 2019).

“...during Rakanan, all people get together and become one, no one is left behind. At that time, we do not see people based on religion, etc. What we see is that we are together to do the works, people bring tenong, dance, carry the replicas, become the troop, bring the offerings, and many more. We also work together to build the stage, provide the Rakanan equipment, until the end of the Rakanan ritual. In the end of the event we take apart the stage, clean up the streets and more, there are so many things to do so when we work together everything feel lighter because sometimes we make fun during the work too and it helps us not to get tired easily.” (Interview with ID, 10 April 2019).

The descriptions from the two informants above show that the people in Giyanti Village, which consists of multi-religions which are also automatically multi-traditions, could unite and cooperate without distinguishing religion and social background. Tradition becomes a means for villagers to unite the different religions and social backgrounds by maintaining the sense of mutual belonging to the tradition so that it is able to survive until now.

The meaning of this Rakanan Giyanti procession includes the preservation of historical value by promoting togetherness, harmony and respect, mutual cooperation, and both energy and economic sacrifices. Those overall feelings can be created through the existence of a communication process that is well-established so that the goal can be achieved together.

V. CONCLUSION

Rakanan is an annual event held on the 1st of Syuro (Javanese calendar) which aims to maintain the traditions of the ancestors. The series of activities of RakananGiyanti are: 1) *Pesusen Beras* festival; 2) Pilgrimage to the ancestral tomb by bringing a complete offer in the form of *tumpeng* (yellow rice cone) accompanied by *ingkung* (whole cooked chicken) and vegetables, fruits, *setaman* flowers or flowers set (offerings flowers), *jembawut* drinks, and stretcher replicas of the founder of Giyanti village; 3) Village women make *tenongan* containing food and *pala kependem* (cassava, sweet potatoes, peanuts, taro, potatoes, and other tubers), local fruits, rice with side dishes and vegetables, traditional porridge, corn and various other foods to be taken to the village pavilion; 4) The peak of the event is the ceremony conducted at the village pavilion; 5) Rakanan which is the distribution of food in *tenongan*; 6) *Lengger* Graduation;

From the results of the discussion about Rakanan Giyanti as well as all the processes and all available components, it can be concluded that the cross-faith interpersonal communication process with various backgrounds, both social and cultural, can work well when accompanied by good communication attitudes and behavior. Cultural preservation that has been existing for a long time will only survive if the community respects each other and appreciate the identity of the ancestors. The implementation of Rakanan as a means to preserve the traditions and ancestors of Giyanti which is acculturated by religions other than Hindu is always executed without any conflicts that occur within the community. They always maintain the harmony in diversity, agreement, and togetherness. They also share economic contribution together and work together to achieve the expected goals. Each procession (other than pilgrimage to the tomb) always ends with cross-faith prayer (Islam, Christian, Catholic, Pangestu)

led by their respective leaders in order to keep recognizing the existence and mutual respect for each other. The Rakanan tradition has the meaning as a bridge for the difference of faith that exists in the community by always prioritizing good communication patterns.

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