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# “Ma’ Sembong” as a Living Tradition of Tompasso’s Society

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**Abstract**—This study aims to examine a tradition that exists in the familial community of Tompasso Minahasa, Ma’sembong. It is an activity of togetherness that has profound philosophical meaning. The Tompasso tradition is very different from what is known as Mapalus. Ma’Sembong is one of the auxiliary traditions that are inspired and lived up from one generation to the next generation of the Tompasso community. It may also be from also the philosophy of life of the Minahasa people “Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou” and is closely related to the North Sulawesi motto “Torang Samua Basudara”. They are increasingly echoing in the application of the order of life which refers to mutual cooperation but Ma’Sembong philosophy is more profound than just being together. In this study, researchers conducted data selection and validation process using qualitative ethnography approach

**Keywords**— *Traditional Values; Modernism; Philosophy of Ma’Sembong*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In each of group of people, an interaction-interrelation must be built; and the group of people is known as the term community. In the interaction-interrelation of the people, an order which accepts one another is created through mutual agreement. The agreed order sometimes is established through an empirical process (real experience) from the interaction process. The empirical process causes the existence of formal habits called tradition. Each culture possesses its own norms, where it can be seen from the various customs born from different cultures. Anyhow, the value of a culture should be preserved since culture is an inheritance from the ancestor. The culture and the value of customs should be legally protected since they are an identity of a nation that distinguishes the nation from the other nations.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

In this present research a qualitative method was adopted. The object of this research was the people of Tompasso village, Minahasa. The objective of this research is to understand how Ma’sembong as the living tradition adopted by the Tompasso community is preserved. Some resourceful persons were involved in this research namely Rev Dr. Jimmy MR Lumintang., MBA., Ph.D; Noldy Paendong (Advisor of the Tumompasso Family Association, Jakarta). Rev. Herdi Ratu;

Mr. Recki Supit (Native Inhabitant of Tompasso); Mr. Jootje Kawulur (prominent figure of Tompasso).[1]

## III. RESEARCH DISCUSSION

### A. Ma’ Sembong Tradition

Ma’sembong is from *Toniemboan Makela’i* language, namely from the word *Sembong* which means *Help*. It is a language which is used by the greatest number of people in Minahasa. Totenboam language has two dialects namely Matana’I and Makela’I where each has its own area of speakers (Warokka, 2004). The word *Ma’sembong* means mutual help (ask someone to help others...’ *Mamasembongan*: mutual help without any hidden intention, without any sanction. *Ma’sembongan* is different from *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation). The *gotong royong* tradition means doing something together. *Gotong royong* is a term from Indonesian language which means doing something together to attain a common result through deliberation, verses, Pancasila (Five Basic Principle), customary laws, Divinity, and kinship.

*Ma’sembong* is also different from Mapalus. Mapalus means doing an activity together with the same quality and quantity among the members and the activity is well coordinated in an institution. Mapalus is a system of mutual help and is a social institution which is commonly possessed as a form of a social dignity. The members of the community really respect the Mapalus entourage and its members because each person must get a turn to be helped when one faces an obstacle such as sickness and cannot join in the Mapalus entourage as determined. And he is obliged to look for and assign another person to substitute him or he should pay some money or something with equal value. If the person cannot fulfill the obligation, he will get some sanctions for examples, he will be scorned by the people in the village, expelled from social interactions, disgraced, and he will not get his rights and obligations (Kaunang, 2011).[2]

From the results of an interview, it is known that the *Ma’sembong* tradition has long been practiced. It has been being implanted and practiced by the prominent figures in the village up to now.

*“Kalu mo bilang kamari mo baktutulong ba iris babi, orang nda segan mo datang , Kebudayaan ini sejak dulu tu tete nene oma opa, masih berlaku turun temurun di Tompasso*

*apa lei di talikuran Memang so dari dulu orang tua karu so ator itu e!, Toure; Tonsewer; pinabetengan; Liba; Tempok; Kamanga en kanonang lei masih ada tu Ma 'sembong, Apa lei kalo ada orang mati, adooh nyanda ada yang mo kase iinggal, apale tu orang muda ba jaga sampe amper siang (jootje kawulur).*

*Ma'sembong* tradition has been being conducted by the people in Tompasso: Kamanga– Talikuran – Sendangan - Toure – Tonsewer – Pinabetengan – Kanonang – Liba – Tempok – Tolok – Tember villages which are empirically expressed in their daily life:[3]

1. Respecting One Another. Each person should respect others. For example, when one meets a person who is older than he is in the street, he should greet or salute him first. This is called *ma'sirih/ma'pokey*

2. Sharing. When a neighbor lacks of something, the neighbor can tell the other to ask for something needed, for example, when one is cooking something and she needs some tomatoes or pepper, but she doesn't have tomatoes or pepper, she can ask them to her neighbors by saying, *awe'an tomat ico (ada to?... awe'an ya! Serene mange (lia kasana jo!) sa awe'an indonem (kalo ada ambe jo!)*

3. Caring each other. The simplest thing to practice is for example one well may be used together. Or if there is someone who is unintentionally passing by one's house, the host (of the house) should immediately stand up and call for the person to join in a lunch or breakfast. The call is not a lip service. The people of Tompasso greatly like to serve and have guests (*Menyem tumuli kuman...! – mari jo singgah makang!*)

When a member of a family dies, for example, the people certainly will do *ma'masembongan*. The condolence is usually known from the sound of drum or the bell of the church. Hearing the sound, the people without any command will come and make some actions to help the concerned family. Usually, men directly put up a *sabuah* (a tent from wood/bamboo), even, including making a coffin. Women directly moves from their houses to bring with them anything (coffee-sugar-rice) to the family. The youth also take part in the *baku tulung* activities.

The activities in the family (funeral home) not only last when the corpse is still in the house, but the *ma'masembongan* tradition will still be done up to the 40<sup>th</sup> day. For about 40 days, the family will not feel lonely since there are always people who come to the family and bring foods or snacks which will be cat together in a relax way.

#### **B. Knowing Tompasso**

Minahasa people have a lot of uniqueness and the uniqueness refers to their cultural uniqueness and identity (Kaungan, 201). Minahasa (in the past it was called Tanah Malesung) is a peninsula area located in North Sulawesi province, Indonesia. This area is known to have fertile land where various types of plants and animals (either land or sea one) live in. Various plants such as coconut and clove tress

and also fruits and vegetables can be found out there. The fauna living in this area includes among others rare animals such as Maleo bird, Kuskus, Babirusa, Anoa and Tangkasi (*Tarsius spectrum*) ([hardysaerang.wordpress.com](http://hardysaerang.wordpress.com))

Etymologically, the word “Minahasa” is actually from two words, *Mina* that means *has been conducted/occurred* and *Asal/Es*a that means *One*. Therefore, *Minahasa* means *a unity has been established* or those who have been unified. When the event of unity was established, it is called “*Minaesa*,” meaning, “unified. The first *Minaesa* was established in Watu Pinawetengan to determine the area for settlement, the second *Minaesa* was made to oppose the expansion made by the *Bolaang-Mongondow* kingdom, the third *Minaesa* was made to settle a dispute between the family of *Walak Kakaskasen* with the homebase in Lotta (Kakasen, Lotta, and Tateli) and the family of Bantik, who are all from the line of descent of *Toar-Lumimuut*. [4]

Tompasso is a cool area where at average the people work in the field (*kobong*), Tompasso sub-district is one of sub-districts in Minahasa regency, North Sulawesi province. Before Tompasso was established to become a sub-district in 1962, this area consisted of 13 villages namely Kamanga I – Kamanga II – Talikuran II – Sendangan II – Tompasso II – Toure – Tonsewer – Pinabetengan – Liba – Tempok – Tolok – Tember. A wide land was called *Kepolistan* – under the government of Kawangkoan district. Tompasso was called District under the Kawangkoan and the head of the district was called Kumbesar (Hukum Besar the name given for Head of District – and Hukum Tua was for head of Kampong/Village).

Based on the Decision Letter of the Regent of the Head of the Second Level of MinahasaNo. PEM. 1/I/27/62 dated on March 15, 1962, up to July 2008, the area of Tompasso sub-district consisted of 11 (eleven) villages namely *Tember, Kamanga, Sendangan, Talikuran, Liba, Tempok, Tolok, Tompasso II, Pinabetengan, Tonsewer, and Toure*. But, in July, 2008 through the local regulation of Minahasa regency, two new villages were established namely *Kamanga Dua and Pinabetengan Utara*.

The aspiration to establish new villages had been developing under the nuance of local autonomy. As a result, in 2011, 7 areas in Tompasso sub-district fulfilled the requirements to be expanded into new villages so that Tompasso sub-district would have 20 (twenty) villages. But, the expansion was considered to have reached the principle of efficiency and effectiveness in terms of the excellent services if it was not to be followed by the expansion of sub-district.

On the basis of the aspiration of the people by referring to the prevailing regulations, Tompasso sub-district with the area of ± 3.020 Ha and 5.398 households consisting of 17.992 persons could be expanded into 2 (two) sub-districts:

1. **Tompasso sub-district** (main sub-district) would consist of 10 villages, namely: *Tember, Kamanga, Kamanga Dua, Sendangan, Talikuran, Liba, Tempok, Tempok Selatan, Tolok, and Tolok I*.

2. West Tompaso sub-district would consist of 10 villages, namely: *Tompaso II, Tompaso II Utara, Pinabetengan Utara, Pinabetengan, Pinabetengan Selatan, Tonsewer, Tonsewer Selatan, Toure, Toure Dua and Pinaesaan (combination of 1 Jaga from Talikuran and Tempok villages.)*

(sumber:

<http://kecamatanompasobarat.blogspot.com/2013/06/>)

### C. *The Development of Ma'Sembong*

There are a lot of reflections of morality and cultural identity that have been being preserved by the Minahasa, especially Tompaso people. Ma'Sembong is also conducted when a family moves their house where the people in the area will be voluntarily involved in moving *baku tulang angka rumah* (the wood house) into a new place. Such a house will be put up in the new place (namely the wet land or *sawah*) from the rice planting into the rice harvesting time. This tradition will not incur wage materially. [5]

According to them, this tradition still exists up to now, especially among the old and big families. However, recently when the practices of social activities have been leading to modernization, vendors have provided with complete and modern services for any programs with determined costs such as caterings for parties, complete services for funeral completed with decoration; permanent houses and the like.

### IV. CONCLUSION

Human beings cannot live alone, and *Ma'Sembong* is part of the values of life and customs as the reflection of the unified Tompaso people (*minaesa*). *Ma'Sembong* tradition slowly but certainly will be shifted from the social order by the movement of modernization wave. If the people are not introspective and ready in this global era, these teachings and tradition will also be influenced. Therefore, it is necessary to have someone serving *tou Sompaso* with high morality values in order to keep the spirit of togetherness and the traditions values, and to live up the values of *Torang samua basudara* and *Si tou timou tumou tou*.

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