Marjambar as a Symbolic Interaction of the Bunga Bondar Society in Sipirok District - North Sumatra

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Abstract
Bunga Bondar Village has a unique culture called *Marjambar*. *Marjambar* is held by distributing pastries typical of the local community during religious holidays, which are ahead of Eid al-Fitr for Muslims and one day before New Year for Christians. This study aims to analyze the multiculturalism model that exists in *marjambar*. This study uses Mead's symbolic interaction theory. The research method of this study is a qualitative descriptive approach, while data collection technique is conducted through observation, interviews and documentation. A total of eight research informants were interviewed, comprising two Islamic religious leaders, two Christian religious leaders, one traditional leader, one youth leader, two village apparatuses. This research found that in realizing the values of multiculturalism there is a philosophy of life "thick water is thicker, brotherly relations and we are one blood *(alkot aek alkotan dope mudar dan hita dongan samudar)*. The implementation of *marjambar* local wisdom reflects the value of cosmopolitan multiculturalism in which each individual is free with his cultural life, without intimidation and domination, thus creating an attitude of concern between people of different faiths and ethnic groups. In conclusion, intercultural life which exists side by side shows equality between people. The researcher suggests that local governments through schools provide formal and informal education to educators who stay at the forefront of the effort to disseminate local wisdom among students. It is necessary to provide bailout funds to preserve marjambar local wisdom, for example, for monthly meetings between religious leaders, community leaders, traditional leaders and the community.
Keywords: Multiculturalism, Symbolic Interaction, Marjambar, Inter-Religious Harmony, Bunga Bondar Village.

Introduction

Bunga Bondar is one of the villages in Sipirok District, South Tapanuli Regency, which has a unique culture called *Marjambar*. The life of multiculturalism is far from conflict and its members greet each other even though they have different religions and clans. *Marjambar* is held by distributing pastries typical of the local community during religious holidays, namely just before Eid Al-Fitr for Muslims and one day before New Year for Christians.

North Sumatra has various kinds of multicultural society. The largest ethnic groups consist of Batak, Javanese, Nias, Malay, Minang and so on, each of which has its own characteristics in terms of tradition, language, cultural system and religion. This diversity

often causes conflict. The cultural conflict that often arises is religious conflict. Religious conflicts with political overtones also frequently occur, for example in the 2018 election for the Governor of North Sumatra. At that time there were two pairs of candidates for Governor, namely Edy Rahmayadi-Musa Rajekshah pair and Djarot Saiful Hidayat-Sihar Sitorus pair. Edy Rahmayadi carried the voice of the Muslim community and his opponent represented the voice of the Christian community. Howver, the rivalry has led to divisions in social life.

The conflict arises due to a lack of public awareness of cultural diversity or multicultural life. For this reason, the ideology of multiculturalism must be instilled in social life so that people who have different cultures can cooperate, and assume that all cultures have equality and appreciate cultural differences. Azra (2007) said that "a multicultural society is a society consisting of several types of cultural communities with all the benefits, with slight differences in the conception of the world, systems of meaning, values, forms of social organization, history, customs and habits". The concept of multiculturalism which is expected to lead to people's lives becomes pluralism. The reference in building the concept of pluralism is that some people develop local ideas, values, views where all of these things are wise, full of wisdom, have good value that are embedded and followed by community members known as local wisdom.

Local wisdom that exists in people's lives does not appear immediately, but through a long process. North Sumatra has a variety of local wisdom traditions, one of which is *marjambar*. The *marjambar* tradition in Bunga Bondar village is a unique local wisdom tradition that has been adhered to by the people for generations.

Theoretical Framework

Intercultural communication is interpreted as a process of symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual communication carried out by a number of people who have different degrees of interest in providing different interpretations and expectations of what is conveyed in certain forms of behavior as meanings exchanged (Liliweri, 2004). In practice, intercultural communication in people with different cultural backgrounds tends to always encounter obstacles. The differences include differences in

habits, differences in religion, differences in perceptions and so on. So, to create a common perception of Samovar and Porter culture in Lubis (2018), he argues that there are five important characteristics of culture (1) culture is learned, (2) culture is a symbol (verbal and non-verbal), (3) culture grows and changes from one generation to the next, (4) culture is interchangeable, and (5) culture is ethnocentrism.

One of the cultures that exist in the Sipirok region is known as *marjambar*. *Marjambar* comes from the Angkola Sipirok sub Batak language. "Mar" means to do, to do while "Jambar" means to exchange or take turns. The Sipirok community has a tradition of giving various kinds of cakes ahead of Eid al-Fitr by Muslims to Christians, on the other hand, by Christians to Muslims before Christmas and New year.

Adherents of Islam will usually deliver various kinds of cakes packaged in such a way to their Christian relatives or neighbors. This cake packaging is usually arranged on special plates, trays or other kitchen utensils that are suitable as a place to neatly arrange several types of cakes. On the other hand, followers of Christianity do the same thing to followers of Islam, by packing the various cakes in a sterile place, so that their Muslim relatives or neighbors have no doubts about the halal status of the cakes that are given. The *marjambar* tradition in Sipirok has been passed down from one generation to the next, which occurs naturally without any command.

For adherents of Islam and Christianity, recognizing this tradition has made inter-religious relations more secure. Because, religious holidays (Idul Fitri, Christmas and New Year) are not only special days for one religion. Its influence is also very good on the social life of everyday people. With this local wisdom, the security forces don't have to bother securing places of worship ahead of Idul Fitri, Christmas and New Year. Because people have realized the importance of mutual respect and creating harmony between the multicultural communities that are there.

To see how multicultural society lives there, researchers identify it using the division of multicultural society, Hasan (2016) divides multiculturalism into five parts, namely (1) Isolation Multiculturalism. This type of society usually lives autonomously and is involved in interactions that know each other; (2)

Accommodative Multiculturalism. This society has a dominant culture, which makes certain adjustments and accommodations for the cultural needs of minorities; (3) Autonomous Multiculturalism. In this model, the main cultural groups try to achieve equality with the dominant culture and want autonomous life within a political framework that is collectively acceptable; (4) Critical/Interactive Multiculturalism. This type of multiculturalism occurs in a plural society where existing groups do not really demand autonomous life, but rather demand the creation of a collective culture that confirms their distinctive (differentiating) perspectives; (5) Cosmopolitan Multiculturalism. Life in this type of multiculturalism seeks to erase all kinds of cultural boundaries to create a society where each individual is no longer tied to a particular culture.

Meanwhile, to understand the meaning of the implementation of *marjambar* local wisdom, researchers used Mead's symbolic interaction theory. The theory of symbolic interactionism was developed by Mead in the 1920s and 1930s when he was a philosophy professor at the University of Chicago. The main references to the theory of symbolic interactionism are mind, self, and society.

Symbolic interaction is an activity that is characteristic of humans, namely communication or exchange of symbols that are given meaning. The symbolic interaction taught by Mead is that meaning emerges as a result of interaction between humans, both verbally and nonverbally. Through actions or responses that occur, a person gives meaning to words or actions, and therefore one can understand an event by -a certain way (Morissan, 2010).

The symbolic interaction perspective seeks to understand human behavior from the subject's point of view. This perspective suggests that human behavior should be seen as a process that allows humans to shape and regulate their behavior by taking into account the expectations of other people with whom they interact. In view of symbolic interaction, as Blumer emphasized, it is the social process in group life that creates and enforces the rules, not the rules that create and uphold group life.

According to symbolic interaction theory, social life is basically "human interaction using symbols". They are interested in the way humans use symbols that represent what they mean to communicate with each other, and also the influence that the interpretation of these symbols has on the behavior of the parties involved in social interaction (Mulyana, 2006).

Mulyana (2006) explains the premises underlying symbolic interactionism. First, individuals respond to a symbolic situation. They respond to the environment, including physical objects (objects) and social objects (human behavior) based on the meanings that these environmental components have for them. When they are faced with a situation, their response is neither mechanical nor determined by external factors, but their response depends on how they define the situation encountered in social interaction. Thus, it is individuals who are seen as active in determining their own environment.

Second, meaning is a product of social interaction, therefore meaning is not attached to objects, but is negotiated through the use of language. This negotiation is possible because humans are able to name everything, not just physical objects, actions or events (even without the presence of physical objects, actions or events). it), but also abstract ideas. However, the name or symbol used to mark the object, action, event or idea is arbitrary. That is, anything can be used as a symbol and therefore there is no logical connection between the name or symbol and the object it refers to, although sometimes it is difficult to separate the two things. It is through the use of symbols that humans can share experiences and knowledge about the world that meaning is subjective and very fluid.

Third, the meaning interpreted by individuals can change from time to time, in line with changes in situations found in social interactions. Changes in interpretation are possible because individuals can carry out mental processes, namely communicating with themselves. Humans imagine or plan what they will do. In this process, the individual anticipates the reactions of others, looks for alternatives to what he or she will do. Individuals imagine how others will respond to their words or actions.

Materials and Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach, which aims to explain a case in depth. The understanding of reality in this study was obtained based on the results of interviews with predetermined informants and field observations. Rakhmat (2009) said that descriptive research methods are useful for

describing situations or events. Besides that Neuman (2002) says: The principle of descriptive research is to present a detailed and accurate description of an object of research, build categorization and classification and describe the background and context of a situation. Descriptive research using a qualitative approach does not use numerical calculations, but describes the research object in the form of written or oral words based on the phenomena that occur. Moleong (2010) says describes research subjects as people who are observed as research targets. In a study the research subject has a very strategic role because from the research subject the data can be collected and analyzed.

Supranto (2000) said that, the object of research is a set of elements that can be in the form of people, organizations or goods to be studied or in other words the object of research is the subject matter to be studied in order to obtain data in a more directed manner. In this study, the object of research is multiculturalism that greets each other in marjambar in Bunga Bondar Sipirok Village. According to Arikunto (2008), data sources in research are subjects from which data can be obtained. The data sources in this study were selected using an emic perspective, meaning that they are concerned with the views of the informants, namely how they perceive and interpret the world from their point of view.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews are data collection in a direct way face to face with informants, with the intention of getting a complete picture of the subject under study, which is done carefully and repeatedly Bungin (2010). Research techniques using observation. Observers participate in carrying out two roles at once, namely as an observer and at the same time being an official member of the group being observed Moleong (2010). Observations in this study are made by observing the social life of the Bunga Bondar community in order to answer the formulation of the problem that has been formulated. Then, documentation study techniques were used to obtain data related to this study, including data sources obtained through photographs, voice and video recordings from the research location. Data analysis is a systematic examination of a matter in order to find out the relationship and parts of a study.

Bungin (2014) says, in drawing conclusions qualitative research using abstractive inductive logic. This means that in drawing conclusions, it is from the specific to the general. Data obtained in the field were analyzed using the Milles and Huberman model through the following stages (1) Data collection, data is grouped and arranged in the form of a narrative, so that a meaningful series of information is formed with the research problem; (2) Data Display interpreting data, namely interpreting what has been interpreted by informants on the problem under study; (3) Data Reduction, collecting data on important information related to research problems; (4) Drawing conclusions (Conclusion Verification) drawing conclusions based on the structure of the narrative that has been prepared so that it can provide answers to research problems; (5) Evaluation, verifying the results of data analysis with informants in order to avoid misinterpretation of the results of interviews with a number of informants which can obscure the meaning of the problem from the research focus (Pujileksono, 2015). The five stages are carried out continuously and cannot be separated until the end of the research in order to obtain research results that can be trusted and accounted for by researchers.

Result and Discussion

Bunga Bondar Village has an area of 542 hectares consisting of lowlands and hilly mountain areas, of which 15 hectares are community housing and the rest is agricultural land and plantations so it is not surprising that the air here is still cool and clean. The population structure of the Bunga Bondar Sub-District is relatively large compared to other sub-districts and villages in Sipirok District, namely 1242 people or 343 families. The age group is dominated by those aged 50 years and over. For details, see the table 1.

Tabel 1. Population of Bunga Bondar Village and Livelihoods in 2021

Age	Male	Female	Amount	Livelihoods of the Population
0-4 Years	46	47	93	
5-9 Years	44	43	87	
10-14 Years	45	47	92	
15-19 Years	55	57	112	
20-24 Years	62	64	126	Agriculture;
25-29 Years	54	58	112	Craft Industry;
30-34 Years	40	41	81	Services Field.
35-39 Years	38	40	78	
40-44 Years	36	35	71	
45-49 Years	35	32	67	
50 years and over	179	144	323	
Total	634	608	1242	

Source: Data from the Bunga Bondar Village Office, 2021

Most of the residents of the Bunga Bondar sub-district are male, but that does not mean that women do not have a share in making a living. From the observations conducted by the research team, the women also helped the men in the process of planting rice in the fields, planting other crops in the fields such as coffee, cocoa, cloves, cinnamon. There is no reason for women not to go straight down to the fields, given that the agricultural sector in these areas is still carried out traditionally, so it requires extra energy to work on the rice fields and they even tend to invite all their family members when the harvest season arrives in order to shorten the planting time for the next planting season.

There are three religions in Bunga Bondar subdistrict, namely Islam, Adventist Christianity, and Protestant Christianity, with the majority of the people adhering to Islam. Multiculturalism society refers to the life of a society which reflects harmony, tolerance and concern among communities, without any ethnic or religious domination in it. According to Taylor in Wattimena (2011), the idea of multiculturalism is an idea to regulate diversity with the basic principles of recognition of diversity itself (politics of recognition).

In the process of organizing *marjambar*, there are three meanings of multiculturalism values. The word *Marjambar* comes from the Angkola Sipirok sub Batak language. "Mar" means to do, while "Jambar" means to alternate or take turns. These multicultural values consist of (1) Caring, that is activities carried out voluntarily by the Bunga Bondar community as a form of caring relationship between communities; (2) Harmonization, that is   an effort to seek harmony in life; (3) Tolerance, that is, mutual respect between groups and between individuals in living their lives (Young, 2020).

According to the Raja Adat Bunga Bondar, Mangaraja Littong Siregar, the life of tolerance in Bunga Bondar is inseparable from the philosophy of life that is adhered to by the people there. Where the philosophy is *hita dongan samudar* which means that every Batak person is of the same blood and the second is known as *alkot aek alkotan dope mudar* which means that every human being needs water to live but brotherhood is more important above all. This philosophy implies a meaning that these fellow Batak people are brothers, regardless of what religion they adhere to, this is the business of each individual and their god (interview on 28 August 2021).

Hasan and Mubit (2016) said that, divide the values of multiculturalism into five parts, namely: (1) Isolated multiculturalism; (2) accommodative multiculturalism; (3) autonomous multiculturalism; (4) critical multiculturalism, and (5) multiculturalism cosmopolitan. Based on the research conducted by the research team, the value of multiculturalism found to reflect the life of the Bunga Bondar people is cosmopolitan multiculturalism. So that it breaks the other four values of multiculturalism. They are the value of critical multiculturalism where people's lives there are not forced to apply the dominant culture at the expense of minority cultures, the value of autonomous multiculturalism where cultural groups ask for equality and this is not found in people's lives there because the two cultures mingle with each other.

The value of cosmopolitan multiculturalism refers to life in a society that seeks to erase all kinds of cultural boundaries to create a society where each individual is no longer bound by a particular culture. It could also be the other way around, that is, each individual is free to cross-cultural lives or develop their own cultural life. In the context of this research, the value of cosmopolitan multiculturalism in public life in Bunga Bondar is reflected in the intensity of people communicating with each other. According to Effendy (2000), communication is the process of conveying a message by someone to another person to inform or change attitudes, opinions or behavior either directly or indirectly.

Tubbs and Moss in Lubis (2018) said that intercultural communication is communication between people of different cultures (both in terms of race, ethnicity and socioeconomic differences). Lustig and Koester in Liliweri (2004) says intercultural communication as a process of symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual communication carried out by a number of people who have different degrees of interest in providing different interpretations and expectations of what is conveyed in certain forms of behavior as exchanged meanings. Intercultural communication of the Bunga Bondar community covers various ethnic groups including Angkola Batak, Toba Batak, Nias, and Karo, the diversity of religions including Islam and Christianity, where Christianity has two streams, namely Adventist Christianity and Protestant Christianity, and the socio-economic community including various kinds of professions such as farmers, teachers, public transport drivers, cloth craftsmen and so on.

According to the observations of the research team, usually communication between men tends to take place at coffee shops or local palm wine lapo, whereas communication between women takes place at one of their houses usually in the late afternoon because from morning to evening they are busy working. The life of a multicultural society has existed for many years and until now it still exists and is well maintained. The value of cosmopolitan multiculturalism comes from the two philosophies of life of their previous ancestors, while the philosophy reads *hita dongan samudar* which means that every Batak person is of the same blood and *alkot aek alkotan dope mudar* which means that every human being

needs water to live, but brotherhood among them is more important than all.

The two philosophies of life above reflect that the people of Bunga Bondar place great importance on brotherhood which liberates each individual to carry out their own cultural life. This philosophy has a positive impact on social life. This is evidenced by the absence of conflicts that have occurred in Bunga Bondar from year to year, and the life of the community in the kelurahan is used as an example of a living reference for organizations, especially the organization of religious communication forums and communication forums between traditional institutions. Apart from that, other clear evidence is that although the majority of the population in Bunga Bondar Sub-District are Muslim, the customary leader elected is a Christian.

The social closeness between the people of Bunga Bondar breaks the stigma that people who have different cultures, be it different habits, different religions, different perceptions and so on, will find it difficult to communicate with one another. This is evidenced by the coffee shop owned by people from Christian circles, and visited by people from the Angkola Batak culture who are predominantly Muslim, because the air around the coffee shop which is located near the hills in the late afternoon is cooler so that drinking coffee and hot tea there is an alternative to warm the body.

Community life that has the same equality is reflected by Chirstians who are a minority group in the *kelurahan*, but they are free to carry out various kinds of activities without intimidation from the majority (Islam), In fact, the two groups work hand in hand to create a harmonious life. This happens because the society has far more advanced thinking, which considers that, regardless of what religion one adheres to, it is a matter between their respective gods, what is clear is that every religion must teach about the value of goodness, without any feeling of hatred between one and the other.

The implementation of daily activities is an illustration of the form of caring and helping the Bunga Bondar community which reflects the value of equality, one of which is evidenced by information from informants who said that the people there cannot see their siblings in distress even though they have cultural differences. For example, when there is a wedding, if the bride and groom don't have wedding dresses, then

other people will voluntarily lend the dresses. In addition, in the same context, if they can't help with material assistance at the event, then they will voluntarily help with non-material assistance, for instance, by becoming a cook, even donating agricultural produce from their garden. The point is that all the people there want to make the event as successful as possible.

The symbols that show the value of cosmopolitan multiculturalism in the lives of the people of Bunga Bondar are implied by the many religious symbols, for example mosques and churches that are built close to each other. There have never been any disturbances at the mosque during Eid al-Fitr and the church at New Year's, even though the police are on guard, only carrying out the leadership's instructions, because religious adherents maintain security and comfort in worship (Young, 2023).

To show the harmony of multicultural life, there is a cemetery where two graves of people who had different religions, namely Islam and Christianity, are found in the same site. This has never happened in other areas. To further strengthen the sense of tolerance, harmony, peace and equality among the people at Bunga Bondar, the local people bind themselves to the *marjambar* local wisdom tradition. According to Permana (2010), local wisdom is a creative answer to geographical-political, historical and situational situations that are local in the form of activities carried out by local communities in responding to various problems in their fulfillment. In a broad sense, local wisdom is spelled out in all cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible (Sedyawati, 2006). Local wisdom, according to Abdullah, Irwan et al (2008) is refers to various cultural assets that grow and develop in a society that are known, trusted, and recognized as important elements capable of strengthening social cohesion in society.

Due to the high tolerance of multiculturalism in Bunga Bondar, several cultures from the community were eliminated, especially in terms of religion. The cultures that were eliminated are those which are allegedly able to interfere in the tolerance of people's lives there, such as eating pigs and dogs for Christians. Eating pigs and dogs is the habit of Christians in the Toba area and has even become their culture. However, the Bunga Bondar Christian community do not eat these types of food for fear of disturbing the comfort of the Muslim community.

Conclusion

The value of multiculturalism carried by the local wisdom of *Marjambar* is the value of cosmopolitan multiculturalism, which is reflected in intercultural life that coexists with the same equality between one culture and another. Houses of worship that are close to each other and graves that are side by side are separate symbols of community harmony without any suspicion towards fellow people of different ethnicities and religions. In order to maintain the intensity of *marjambar* local wisdom, the role of the local government, especially through the *Kelurahan*, should provide education formally and informally, especially to educators who stay at the forefront of the effort to disseminate local wisdom to students in schools. The local government should provide bailout funds to preserve the local wisdom of *marjambar*, for example, for monthly meetings between religious leaders, community leaders, traditional leaders and the community, especially the younger generation while maintaining friendship between communities.

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