

Sharing Pieces of Meat: A Cultural Practice of Anti-corruption of Toba Batak

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Abstract

Corruption is a problem of civilization which at the end, it can be a cultural problem. This corruption problem must be confronted with reviving the cultural values of anti-corruption. Learning from anti-corrupt, local cultures can be a powerful weapon to fix corruption tendencies of a state. Beliefs in the high local cultural values become the basics of these efforts. The whole value of it can be a basic reference against the tendency. In other words, the culture will form the human beings who live in that civilization. One of the activities in traditional ceremonies of Batak Toba is *mambagi jambar* (sharing pieces of meat to certain parties). This article aspires to offer an overview of these activities, as unitary of the cultural activities of the anti-corrupt. By basing the writing on ethnographic interviews, and analysis of any related text, the author describes this discussion in a systematic paper. The first part is, the introduction of global corruption as in an issue and the issue of corruption in Indonesia as an example of a major problem. In the second part, how the activity *padalan jambar juhut* in Toba Batak culture leads us to understand the position of the activity in the local Batak Toba culture. Then, in the last part in addition helps us to know about these activities and their contributions in an effort to revive the cultural values of the anti-corrupt.

Keywords: *Jambar*, culture, corruption, anti-corruption, relation

Introduction

Corruption is not just a material problem, but it is a very fundamental problem in humanity because Human is a relational creature. This essence of humanity will be broken when there are certain parties intent to break the relation between human and human. In this sense, corruption has always meaning as relationship destruction. When corrupt action happens or it has been created, at the time the relation among human will be broken. In the other words, corrupt activities are negation of relation.

Every human life is always overwhelmed by the process of relation. Nobody lives without any kind of relation. Indeed, we can say, one of human's life purposes is to build and to maintain their own relationship. When people move on business realm, he is in a networking with many people (net-work). In term of religion, relations become very clear especially in the dogma, Holy Bible, and human

activities. Thus, the essence of religion speaks about relation between human and The Almighty, human and human, and human and nature. Indeed, when people stand up alone, he/she comes to relation with him/herself. Relation is the real world of human.

In the history of human civilization explain that relation had been managed well in the culture. Cultures became products of human relation and at the time has purpose to keep that relation. When human was created in a womb and came in to a certain system of culture, he/she directly came into a relational universe. Human shaped that culture and culture shaped the human to be a cultural human. In other words, human cultured is he/she who totally fights to keep the relationship to stay awake and getting better. Thus, culture became one of the very efficient ways to prevent the occurrence of corrupt character or the development of anti-corrupt characters of a nation¹. In this article, corrupt activities are analyzed as a part of human action as cultural agents.

In Indonesia civilization, there are some cultural activities inspire people to be not corrupt. Toba Batak Culture can be a good example, especially “*mambagi jambar juhut*” (sharing meat) activity. This cultural activity appeared in every traditional ceremonies of Toba Batak. This activity is regulated in such a way that the relations between some parties stay awake and more closely. *Mambagi jambar*, in other words, is the maintenance relationships activity among several parties involved in the ceremony. What kind of relationship fought in this activity? does culture of *mambagi jambar* just have meaning in the ceremony? Or, are there any other values that directly revealed from that cultural activity?

In this article, the author will analyze how *mambagi jambar* becomes one of cultural activities that build several anti-corrupt values in Toba Batak culture. When they implemented in deep appreciation, the culture would shape the characters of anti-corrupt in every person in the ceremony. Moreover, how to prevent corruption also appears in *mambagi jambar* culture. Overall, on this analysis will be

¹ In this article, the authors rejected the term "culture of corruption". Culture in se always aim for the common well. When there is an element in a culture harmful to the *bonum communa*, it must be changed. In other words, elements that are corrupt must not necessarily saying that culture is corrupt. Thus, the term culture of corruption is illogical because the there is inter-contradictory in term.

summarized in the form of new findings from both of major theme of this, and the local wisdom anti-corrupt of Toba Batak in *mambagi jambar* activity.

Identifying Corruption

Corruption is not a new phenomenon. The new one is its modes. It has been existed since human existed. Indeed, the Holy Bible of several religions have reported about corrupt activities although did not use corruptions as a term. Leo V. Ryan (2000:331-338) argued that in Old Testament, “corruption is characterized by widespread bribery”. In the Old Testament God tells Moses “Neither shalt thou take bribes which blind the wise and prevent the words of the just”. John T. Noonan (1984: xx) also have analyzed about the history of bribery, “it has a history, divisible into discernible epochs”. From this historical research, since 3000 BC, Noonan indicated that corruption in all its forms has occurred for a long time in human culture. Until now, its developing is the ways (modes). In this article, the author is not willing to analyze the forms of corruption in detail. The main focus is to find ways to erode this systematic crime of human civilization.

Etymologically, the corruption comes from Latin word “*corruption* or *corruptus*. Corruption itself is derived from *corrumpere*: corrupt, destabilize, twisting, and bribe. Then, it was appearing in English and French word as *Corruption*, in Dutch *Korruptie*, then in Indonesian as *Korupsi* (A. Hamzah, 1985:2-3). Weber (1964) developed a typology of corruption on the basis of subjective intentions that have or expect the individuals such as gaining power and influence, economic and business success, self-enrichment, social motives, opportunism, etc. (Jose G. Vargas-Hernandes,2010:132). This etymology and typology is matching to confirm that corruption is a harmful and damaging act to the social order by personal interests. In other words, corruption is a crime that involves a lot of people as victims. Jeremi Pope (2003:3) asserted the disordering of corrupt acts,”corruption undermines economic and social health as well as life at any time and in any country occurs, and whatever stage of development that has been achieved.”

In recent decades, when the mention of "Third World" appears, corruption has become rampant in those countries. The Third World countries that are undergoing the process of development become a very good land for the blossoming

corrupt properties. Robert Klitgaard (1998:8) asserted that “the corrupt practices spread in developing countries. Obviously we cannot generalize, but corruption by government officials is probably one of the three or four most detrimental issues facing the Third World.” In that process of development, the government and/with their colleagues are very easily to legalize the practice of social corrupt in the name of development. Indonesia's history has become a real proof of the phenomenon of corruption in developing countries is.

In fact, Pranoto (2008: i) called it “congregational corruption”. This is confirmed by Transparency International (TI) (Juma Darmaputra, accessed at April 30th 2014) in Berlin by crowning Indonesia as 6th most corrupt nation of 133 countries of the world are studied. In 2004, Indonesia re-named as the most corrupt nation No. 5 of 146 countries. Indeed, Indonesia has a distinct law on corruption. In article 2, Law no. 31 year 1999 jo. Law no.20 year 2001 was declared, “(1) Anyone who illegally commits an act to enrich oneself or another person or a corporation, thereby creating losses to the state finance or state economy, is sentenced to life imprisonment or minimum imprisonment of 4 (four) years and to a maximum of 20 (twenty) years, and fined to a minimum of Rp200,000,000,- (two hundred million Rupiahs) and to a maximum of Rp1,000,000,000,- (one billion Rupiahs). (2) In the event that the criminal act of corruption as referred to in paragraph (1) is committed under certain circumstances, the person concerned can be sentenced to life imprisonment.

This ironic situation emerged a question, why Indonesia is still in the 5th level on corruption although it has had a law on corruption? Haryatmoko (2010:60) gave an answer, because “corruption in Indonesia have become a structural crime, that is, violence as a result of repetitive and pattern social interaction that inhibited many people to be able to meet their basic needs.” The existence of corrupt practices in Indonesia has a very large impact to the nation. The distance between the rich and the poor are extravagant and the abominable of government become a real evidence of this social crime.

From this description, it can be concluded that corruption is the destruction of relationships. Every act of corruption will have an impact on the relationship between several parties. All of the corruption typology whether it economic, social

and public administration always leads to the aggrieved parties. In fact, in the case of any bribe, there are injured parties and will be harmed. Unconsciously, corruptors have also been detrimental to their dignity as the agent of corruption. Then, it is very true if corruption be set as one of the three biggest crimes in this country other than drugs and terrorism. Thus, it can be said that, corruption is one of the biggest disgrace that break the prestige of man. It can also destroy the relations with him/her.

Sharing Meats in Toba Batak Culture

One of the main characteristics of Toba Batak society is their community system called the “*Dalihan Na Tolu*”. This cultural custom always appears in some cultural expressions of Toba Batak people. There are three parties included in this system: *hula-hula* (wife-giving group), *boru* (wife recipient group), and *dongan sabutuha* (group originating from a “same” womb or one clan group) with the village’s king as a unifier. All parties must be present in any traditional ceremonies customary to be considered as a valid ceremony. Every person who is present in a traditional ceremony must have known his position, if he is *hula-hula*, *dongan tubu* or *boru*. This Toba Batak philosophy shape the relationship of those third-parties, *Somba marhulahùla* (worship act to *hula-hula*), *Elek marbòru* (be persuaded to Boru), *hormat mardòngan tubu* (be careful to people from the same clan). This is the philosophy that animates *padalan jambar* activity too.

Term of *jambar* is very important term in Batak Toba culture. According to the Batak-Indonesian electronic dictionary (www.batak.com), "*Jambar* is part, the distribution in which a person is entitled to receive according to custom; *marjambar*, got the part, can ration; *parjambaran*, rationing the meat of animals slaughtered is entitled person; *manjambari*, split into parts, ration". This definition asserted the existence of rights and obligations is the reason why that share is happened. All of the rights must be fulfilled in order ceremony *mambagi jambar* activity that can take place properly. Thus, *jambar* is a necessity in a traditional ceremony of Toba Batak society. Moreover, according to A.A. Sitompul (2000: 338-341), there are two main reasons why *jambar* become very important in traditional ceremonies. *First*, *jambar* determines one's position in social status; and *second*, in the sharing *jambar*, rights and obligations should be manifested as a sign of solidarity of togetherness

(community) and cooperativeness indigenous peoples. Based on those reasons, *jambar* became one way to demonstrate the presence of DNT as a group. When a process of traditional ceremony till the sharing *jambar*, that's when the manifestations of solidarity in togetherness emerged in real. The attitude of worship to the *hula-hula*, *boru* and *dongan tubu* materialize when their rights or portion are given well in the right portion.

In the Toba Batak culture, there are three types of *jambar*, first: *jambar juhut* (right to get portion on animal sacrifices in the cultural ceremony; *second: jambar hata* (the right to get a chance to speak; *third: jambar ulaon* (a person's right to get a role and duty in a public work or community). Within these divisions, the rigid separation does not occur because all of those still have relevance. That linkage became very evident in the personality of the Batak people formed by this activity. In everyday life, they have always awareness that he/she has those rights: right to speak, the right to obtain the source of life, and the right to have a role in society. Accordingly, the definition of term *jambar* to be the realization of rights, recognition of other personal and relationship affirmation is a more precise definition.

From those types of *jambar*, *jambar juhut* is more relevant in response to corrupt habits. *Jambar juhut* was done in traditional ceremonies of Toba Batak in which there is animal slaughter. In *patik* and *uhum* (command and law of Toba Batak), it was defined well about what the parts of animal that will be given to each party: *hula-hula*, *boru* and *dongan tubu*. For example, *rungkung ni pinahan* (pieces of meat the animal's neck) should be given to *boru*. In the wedding ceremony, this distribution rules sometimes differ from the other areas. This difference, before the ceremony, the king, the groom side and the bride side will meet in the *mangalap ari*² event. Everything that was agreed at this meeting will be conducted in a traditional ceremony.

Padalan jambar juhut will be implemented before the event *manghatai adat* (events in which all parties sit down together to discuss the purpose and contents of a custom implementation). *Parhobas* (waiters party) and *pambagi jambar*

² *Mangalap ari* means a meeting between several kings as kings of custom, king of the owner of the party, king of village to discuss all matters of custom events. One important thing to talk about is the division of *jambar*. And, if one of the parties comes from the other regions, then the rules in force in the area where the ceremony have to be followed.

(jambar divider or protocol) has a very important role in this event. They will distribute the meat in front of all the people who present at the party. The phrase “*Jolo sineat hata asa sineat juhut*“ (first announced the jambar to certain parties before cutting meat), became very important principle both these roles. The protocol of the party usually announce, “*jambar tu hula*” (meat for the bride giver group). After announcing, the waiter will cut the part that should be given to the *hula-hula*. The waiter will give the meat to the protocol and the protocol would indicate that meat as he announced, “*on ma jambar tu hula*” (this is the meat for the *hula-hula*). So then they conducted until all sides get *jambar* respectively.

According to A. Simbolon³ “*Dang boi asal mangido jambar. na patut tu hita do sijaloonta, alana ingkon tahargai do jolma na lebih patut manjalo i*” (we should not carelessly accept *jambar*. We have to take which is our inappropriate for, because we have to respect the person who is worthy to receive it). This statement affirmed that in the distribution of *jambar*, everyone should be honest and should not be indiscriminate in accepting what is not appropriate to be accepted. Sometimes, the protocol makes a guilty. In this case, all the people in the party were invited to be the witness. Thus, all parties must be honest with his role in the party.

Learning from this case.⁴ According to A. Simbolon, in several parties mistakes ever happen in the process of *padalan jambar*. The first case is when the protocol of party gives *jambar* to one of the *hula-hula* side. In that party, there are some *hula-hula* presents who came from a clan. However, protocols provided *jambar* to the third child of the family whereas there was the first child. When *jambar* is given, several people who attended the party were immediately shouted that it was wrong. In this case, the role of *paniroi adat* (custom advisor): the rules of the kings of village and elder-old (parents) become very important. In other words, when an error occurs in this process, the people in the party will act as witness.

The second case is *marhomi-homi* (secretly) take the meat for himself. In a party, one of the *dongan tubu* cooperated with a waiter to take a meat feast. *Dongan*

³A. Simbolon is an indigenous actor who frequently participate in traditional ceremonies of Toba Batak particularly in Regions Pakkat, Humbang Hasundutan, North Sumatra. He also included a *raja hata* (people who often invited to speak at the party). This information is obtained through direct interviews, Saturday, March 29th, 2014 in the village of Siambaton Pahae, Pakkat, Humbang Hasundutan, North Sumatra.

⁴ These cases had been told by A. Simbolon to make sure about the process of *padalan jambar*.

tubu gave the tea kettle to *parhobas*. Then, *parhobas* returned the kettle and put some meat feast into it. Their action uncovered when one wanted to take the water from the same kettle. When he poured the water, the blood of the meat came out. Knowing the incident, the both of them were punished by custom. According to A. Simbolon, their behavior is called “*na mambagi jambar di na homi* (split meat clandestinely). This case explained that *padalan jambar* must be transparent and must not take part were not part of it.

Jambar in Toba Batak culture became a very important part because it symbolizes some important subject: the relationship the parties DNT, human existence, as well as the customary status of the principle of fairness and honesty. A Toba Batak man never separated from all these things because it is based on the philosophy of DNT. For a Batak, kinship is a very important relationship. In fact, this concept underlies view of the Batak of death. "Kinship is the breath of our lives. Death separates only physical relationships but not family ties "(Togar Nainggolan, 2012: v). This bond makes the recognition of the inherent dignity and the customary status become very central. When the *padalan jambar* ceremony was done, all of these entities appeared directly and simultaneously. When there is an error or omission in this activity, the dissolution of the relationship and the failure of traditional ceremonies are very likely to occur.

Mambagi Jambar and anti-corruption

Padalan jambar activity Toba Batak ceremonial is the result of creativity of the human mind to base it on custom. Its main purpose was clear to govern public relations. When these activities are included in traditional ceremonies, this activity becomes very important to be reflected. Moreover, it is very important rule in the custom showed that the existence of cultural values to be emphasized in the spirit of all members of society. In other words, there is an expectation that these values are also ultimately shape the character of the person who is always doing it. Was not the character born out from a habit that is done in everyday life? Based on that argument, the question is how the forms of anti-corrupt cultural values to be instilled through *padalan jambar* activities?

a. Jambar and recognition of rights

Jambar juhut always pointed recognition of the right of each person who is culturally defined in a traditional ceremony. Their rights are to get a part of the resources of life. In a traditional ceremony, the slaughtered animal is an animal that has been blessed or sanctified without or with the use of a special ritual. It means, when a particular animal is inserted at the level of traditional ceremonies, the animal was blessed. Meat produced from these animals is believed to be the source of life or blessing of *Debata Mulajadi Na Bolon*. The presence of divine grace in the meat making it an important symbol and must be obtained in accordance with the rights.

Recognition of rights in these activities is a fundamental act for Toba Batak society. This recognition directly raised the dignity of a person culturally. Please note that customs is essential entity. A Batak will be recognized if he was married and did traditional party. The struggle to get the dignity of cultural life is the spirit of the Toba Batak. Thus, when an individual customary right is not recognized in the traditional ceremonies especially in *jambar*, its impact can be predictable.

From this description, the value of respect for the rights of the person was stressed in *jambar*. This also happens in the government. All citizens earn in getting the resources of life. States have an obligation to give the right for every citizen. Every citizen has the right to get a proper education. When there are people who do not get this right, this case is an indication of corrupt behavior in the community. Resources of life are not shared equitably. The dignity of the subject is not recognized as citizens. Education must be provided as *jambar* should be distributed according to the respective rights of the subject.

b. *Jambar* dan transparansi

Why should a party protocol shout in the process of *padalan jambar*? In terms of work efficiency, the process of *padalan jambar* is not effective. *Padalan jambar* usually takes a long time and cause noise pollution. Moreover, when an error occurs in this process, some people would yell to remind. However, from the point of fairness in the distribution of living resources, this process upholds the values of transparency. All of the processes are clearly visible without being hidden. The process is clear, states parties will receive, which will announce the obtained, giving the already announced, all people to be witnesses, and parties who have received their share show it to the people that he has got his portion.

In the area of governance, transparency is also becoming a necessity. Resources whether they are money, goods, services, power and thoughts should be shared openly. “Open” means that acts not done in hide. All people must also bear witness to the distribution of all the entities. The phenomenon that often occurs is the dirty games when there are distributions of rights for the society. One of the common secret that is often spoken about the state budget are funds that must be given to these areas have been cut anywhere. The amount set in the center is not equal to the amount received in the local area. In addition, a few years later, the media containing the cases of corruption in the distribution of funds. Society can only hear and anger to the government although rarely revealed. In fact, their rights apparently had been stolen by the officials. All of these situations happened because of the lack of rigor of the laws of transparency in the distribution.

In a report book of Transparency International Indonesia (TII) explained, “The procurement of goods and services is a wetland for the bureaucracy. There is also the biggest corruption in this country. A World Bank study estimated that leaks state money from this sector reached 40% of the overall project” (Ilham B. Saenong, 2013:12). This report confirmed that occurs apparatus measures the procurement of goods and services on a large scale. The distribution of goods and services became a process that provides a large space for the attendant bureaucracy to destroy the rights and dignity of the society. It is clear that all these corrupt actions occur in hide. The truth of this case revealed no attention to the principles of transparency and accountability. Financial statements are only to the extent the report without any inspection.

c. *Jambar* and the strengthening of relations

Toba Batak society is one of the cultural communities that emphasized the relational aspect. Revealed in DNT system, this aspect becomes the primary goal that always implied in all their activities. It is true what Sinaga (2009:4) said, "Where and how they act, their customary is always based on system DNT. In market, bus, especially at home, DNT has always been a base cornerstone and essence: *Somba*

marhulahùla, Elek marbòru, hormat mardòngan tubu.” Sinaga’s Reflection showed that all Toba Batak people's actions the relational actions which are based on that system. This is what they called as religiosity. They build a custom system in ways obvious because they believe that in that way they can establish their relationship with the Almighty, human beings and nature.

The same thing happens in *padalan jambar*. When the recognition of the right appeared in this activity, its aim is maintaining and confirming of their relationship sacral. All of people who present there together bind themselves between one another. When one party presents in traditional ceremonies, directly they give a moral obligation and responsibility to the owner of the party to receive them in a circle of DNT. This bond presupposes the existence of a strong ethical relationship among them. The same sound is confirmed by Emanuel Levinas, (1985:98) “I am responsible for the other without waiting for reciprocity”. Asymmetric ethical relation proclaimed by Levine is appears in *padalan jambar*. The owners of the party build inter-subjective relationships with everyone who present when he gave recognition on their dignity and status.

The main idea is that all forms of the relations should be existed in every party in the country. All citizens are equaled (subject) in the country. Every citizen has the same right. No person or group has the specialized right especially in the field of human dignity. This inter-subjective relationship confirmed that the governments when he/they are occupying a position, automatically he/they become responsible for maintaining that relationship. Moral responsibility directly comes into the top of her existence otherness. Is not it better if, the distribution of power, for example, all parties truly present and be presented as a subject? In other words, one of the contributions of *padalan jambar* is how development and the state budget as well as *jambar juhut*, should be distributed to all the people with a fair and transparent. The ultimate goal is that the relationships among all parties in the state remain can be maintained and strengthened well.

Finding and Suggestion

Revitalization of cultural values of a nation is one of the appropriate measures to fight the evils of corruption. This effort is very important because

corruption is not only touch the physical part of a civilization, but it has gotten into the basics of humanity. Corruption is no longer the case because of the opportunity, but it has happened by looking for opportunities even to make planning the occasion. In other words, corrupt habits as if not immoral anymore. By simply relying on the existence of a rule or law, these crimes may not be terminated. There must be something that moves from within human. Cultural values that formed human are expected to reach that goal.

In the Toba Batak culture, one of the forms of culture that can revitalize anti-corruption characters is *padalan jambar juhut* activities. Some of the main things that can be seen from this activity are its process, meaning of its activities and also the purpose of the activity itself. In terms of process, this activity involves preparation (in a marriage rite called *mangalap ari*), *padalan jambar* activities and the announcement of receiver that he has received his portion. Sense of *padalan jambar juhut* activity can be understood as an activity which gives the right of all parties over the life of existing resources and the recognition of the dignity of others to establish and reaffirm the relationship between them. Aspects of rights, recognition and relationships are the keys of this activity. Besides it, the purpose of the activity itself is related to the whole ceremony involving all the cosmos. Through *jambar*, Batak, people is reminded himself in the middle of the world who live in a relational world. What is the contribution of this activity in the realm of cultural values generate anti-corruption?

Activity *padalan jambar juhut* can make a major contribution in instilling a culture of anti-corruption and in an effort to make the anti-corrupt policies. The first contribution arises from the *mangalap ari* process. *Mangalap ari* contributed about the participation of community and also the government in determining the decision. As *mangalap ari* cannot be declared without the presence of *Dalihan na Tolu* parties, decision-making in government was supposed to be. There are those who must be present in the decisions that must be present in order for the decision was valid. Moreover, it is more important if that decision would be concerned many people. On many occasions, there are many affair appeared various forms of policy without presenting the community. Finally, the public was only used as a passive

spectator in the work program of government. Supposedly, the community as the highest state authority is always present in every program and presented it.

The second contribution emerged from the process of sharing *jambar*. When a protocol shouted to divide *jambar*, it is not intended to create a whole noise. The yelling was actually an invitation to the public so that they know, observe and give himself as a witness to what happened in the process of dividing *jambar*. In other words, the yelling is a manifestation of transparency. In government, it should be emphasized more. Transparency should not be overlooked. All the people should be the subject of government. Subject means he/she who is active and participatory in the process of government system. Thus, there are no many activities conducted clandestinely anymore (*padalan jambar* in hide). Is it not corruption is the secret work? In other words, surreptitious means there are corruption.

The third contribution is manifested in *padalan jambar* activity totally. Believing that *adat* is coming from The High God makes Batak people are able to see this as a holy activity. This perspective can give an affirmation to the activity distribution of resources within the realm of government. A government is a messenger of God High to ensure the good of the people. This was confirmed in the electoral process or the appointment of a government official. Thus, *patik* and *uhum* that have to be run by government officials is the order from The High God. This grounding becomes a confirmation that the distributions of resources, power etc. activities have to be done on the basis of holiness. The government is the messenger of The High God to give kindness to human beings (people) whom they lead. Thus, government activity is a holiness activity. Hopefully!

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