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THE PAYMENT OF ZAKAT AL-FITRAH IN A MINANGKABAU COMMUNITY¹

INTRODUCTION

Z*akat al-fitrah* (to be referred to as *fitrah*), compulsory alms to be given by every living Muslim during the fasting month and before the end of the prayer ending the fasting month,² have to be given to one of the following: 1. poor men; 2. needy persons; 3. collectors of the *fitrah*; 4. those whose hearts are to be reconciled; 5. captives who are to be set free; 6. debtors who are to be set free; 7. fighters for the cause of Allah and 8. wayfarers (Al-Koran, Sûrah IX, At-Taubah, 60; see Mohammed M. Pickthall, 1953, 150).

The idea of the *fitrah* is to give these people the possibility of enjoying the feast celebrating the end of the fasting month.

Not in every community is this rule applied literally. Sometimes it is replaced by a new one, as can be seen in a community in the Minangkabau society, i.e. *Silungkang*, a village of around 10,000 people³ located on the road between *Solok* and *Sawah Lunto* in the province of Sumatra Barat (= West Coast of Sumatra), Indonesia (see, Junus, 1964, 293).

This community has its own specific structure which differentiates it from its neighbours, as can be seen from the discussion below.

DATA

Ideally, every member of this community should give his *fitrah* to a certain person, i.e. the *pandito* of a *kampueng* to which he belongs

¹ The term 'community' is here understood in a rather loose way. It is primarily a matter of descent, unless especially indicated as a matter of locality.

² It is considered preferable to distribute the *fitrah* after the sun sets on the last day of the fasting month, and it is compulsory to distribute it before the end of the prayer ending the fasting month. The *fitrah* may, however, be distributed during the fasting month.

³ The population mentioned here does not mean only those staying in this village. It is based on the descent principle, and includes both those living in the village and in other places.

(for the division of this community, see Junus, 294 ff). Sometimes, but rather rarely, instead of to the *pandito*, one gives his *fitrah* directly to persons who belong to the categories mentioned above. Although it is not preferred, this is allowed because the obligation does not fall on an individual but on a *paruik*.⁴ A *paruik* is under an obligation to encourage its members to give their *fitrah* to the *pandito*.

No account is taken of the place of a person's domicile, since he is always under the obligation of giving his *fitrah* to the *pandito* of his *kampueng*. Sometimes a member of a *paruik* may feel that he is obliged to pay the *fitrah* of another of the members of his *paruik* by giving it to the *pandito*.

This last phenomenon is changing, especially when many members live in a place remote from the village, as can be seen in Djakarta. They instead establish an office after the pattern of the *pandito*, although the two are quite different in nature, as can be seen in the discussion of the structure of this community. The difference is either in function of this office or in the idea of founding this office. This office bears no name, and the officer is referred to as: '*injo nan djadi pandito arwak disiko*' (he is substituting for our *pandito* here).

Some members of this community do not regard the founding of this office as an excuse for not sending their *fitrahs* to their real *pandito* in their own village. It is only for humanitarian reasons that they give their *fitrah* to the pseudo *pandito*, as the office is referred to here.

In conformity with Islamic law, it is the father who has to pay the *fitrah* of the wife and the children, not the mother's brother. Since the father does not belong to the same *paruik* and *kampueng* as the wife and the children, they do not all pay the *fitrah* to the same *pandito*. The father gives his *fitrah* to the same *pandito* as his sisters, his mother and his sister's children, while the wife and the children give theirs to the same *pandito* as his wife's mother, his wife's mother's brothers and his wife's brothers.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNITY

The *Silungkang* community has the same general pattern as every community in Minangkabau is supposed to have. The descent is

⁴ There is no special name to refer to this group within this community. The term *paruik* is thus used here as a common term in Minangkabau as described by Josselin de Jong (1960, 12).

matrilineal,⁵ the marital residence is uxorilocal in a sense rather different from what is usually meant by this. The term is understood here as meaning that the wife continues to live in her own home, while the husband lodges with her (family).

The community practices local endogamy. A male member is compelled to marry a woman of his own community. He can take a woman from another community as his co-wife, but he is not supposed to do that. If he did, he would be (very) unpopular in the community.

On the contrary, a woman is not, under any circumstances, supposed to take some one from another community for a husband. If she did, her *paruik* would unhesitatingly expel her from the *paruik*. Since the membership of this community is through the membership in a *paruik* she would thus be expelled from the community as well. She would neither be allowed to stay in the *nagari* (= village)⁶ nor to visit it, until she divorced the husband.

All members, no matter where or under what conditions they live, do their best to behave as the rule mentioned prescribes. They have to keep their ethnic identity by keeping the marriage circle within themselves. This rule makes them different from the other groups where they live, although they mix with each other in every day interaction.⁷

Almost every member of this community is engaged in business, either as a merchant or as an owner of a handicraft manufacturing business. Although the present writer cannot give exact figures, most of them are merchants, a fact which explains why they have spread to places relatively far from their native village.

There are four kinds of merchants, classified according to where and in what way they live, i.e.:

- i) the merchant who is either domiciled or conducts his business in his own village;
- ii) the merchant who is domiciled in the village but conducts his business in other places and who is away from the village during the day-time or for several days a week;

⁵ The descent is understood here to be based on the side a person affiliates with. The present author in this occasion takes no account of factors other than the grouping. This statement can not be interpreted as a denial of the existence of the double descent principle in this community as has been stated in another article (Junus, 1964).

⁶ '*nagari*' is understood here as having a territorial connotation.

⁷ It is interesting to study how the members of this community maintain their ethnic identity. It is quite different from what E. M. Bruner describes for a Batak community (E. M. Bruner, 1961).

- iii) the merchant who is domiciled in another place, while the wife and the children continue to be domiciled in the village;
- iv) the merchant who together with his wife and children is domiciled in another place.

For quite a long time, almost every member practiced either ii) or iii). Historically stated, ii) existed long before either iii) or iv) did.

It could be expected that a person would be away during the day-time or for several days a week or longer.

This raised the problem of who was going to take care of the social problems of his *paruik* during his absence. His family affairs are matters of great concern to him, and sometimes cannot wait until his return.

It is quite correct to say that everything is related to family affairs. Every one has to take care of the interest of his *paruik* without disturbing the interest of other *paruiks*. He has to keep his *paruik* in order, and keep it away from any harm. He has to arrange a marriage partner for any member of the *paruik*.

Marriage ceremony and burial are two important occasions in the community. Every one who has any relation with a *paruik* which conducts one of these two ceremonies has to participate in them. He holds a specific position depending upon what kind of relationship he has with the *paruik* concerned.

There are two groups in a marriage ceremony, each of which in turn can be subdivided into two. The first big group is '*sipangka*' (the hosts) which consists of '*nan punjo olek*' (the ones who have the party, the owners of the party), and an un-named group which can be labelled as 'the workers'. The other group is '*olek*' (the guests) which consists of '*olek*' and '*marapulai*' (the groom and his group).

The same division occurs also at burial except that there is no name for each group. There are 'the hosts', 'the workers' and 'the guests'.

The 'hosts' and '*nan punjo olek*' take the full responsibility for conducting these ceremonies. Any adult member of a *kampueng* where the ceremony takes place belongs to the host group, but members of the *paruik* concerned play the important roles.

Neither of these two ceremonies is the business of the *paruik* concerned alone. The whole *kampueng* is supposed to play an important role in them, as can be seen in the marriage procedure.

The question of marriage is not a matter between two *paruiks* concerned alone, although the decision to make a contract is theirs.

In a marriage ceremony they take no active part other than preparing and conducting it. It is their *kampuengs* who represent them in it.

Except for some recent innovations there are no paid workers in the community; especially is this so in the case of social affairs. Anyone who does hard work for his living and gets paid for it is unpopular, since its members like to be their own bosses. And if they do work for some one else, the relationship between the employer and the employee is as follows:

- i) the employer is a relative or is regarded as such by the employee;
- ii) the employee gets no payment for his service, although the employer provides him with food, clothes and a small allowance. Besides this, he gets a share of the profit earned over a certain length of time;
- iii) the job, for the employee, is a matter of apprenticeship. After a certain length of time he tries to go into business of his own, i.e. after he has acquired enough money to buy the basic assets and a skill in business.

This system makes them dislike living on charity.

A man feels embarrassed if one of his relatives lives on charity. He has to do his best to support this fellow. Then, if some one is too poor to afford his or her living expenses, he or she is not supposed to receive any support except from relatives. But he is not in a position to receive any *fitrah* from his relatives, since he is regarded as a dependent.

The living standard of the people of this community is likely to be "higher" than that of most people of its neighbours. This can be seen by the diet, the clothes and so on they have. And this situation makes the people of this community feel that they are "superior" to the other people.

A *kampueng* is administered by two officers, '*datuek kampueng*' (*kampueng* chief) and '*pandito*' (Indonesian '*pendeta*' is its cognate). The *datuek kampueng* deals with problems such as the security of the *kampueng*, arranging marriage partners for members of the *kampueng*, arranging certain parties and generally preserving the interests of the *kampueng*. In other words he deals with the profane aspects of the social life.

In contrast to this, a *pandito* deals with the sacral aspects of the social life in a *kampueng*. He has to be a witness to the signing of a marriage licence, and to arrange the appointment with the village officer who issues marriage licences.

The *pandito* also conducts the burial of members of his *kampueng*. Unless the dead person is a woman, he must bathe the corpse and cover it with winding sheets, conduct the prayer and supervise the ceremony of putting the body into the grave.

Neither of these officers receives regular payment for his services. And there is no property requirement for candidates for these two offices. These offices can be held by either a relatively rich man or a poor man.

A person appointed to one of these offices is elected for a time of indeterminate length. The election is based on the *gotong rojong* or consensus principle, since there is no balloting.

The main concern in appointing a man to one of the offices is not to choose some one who belongs to *lotjieh* (for *lotjieh*, see Junus, 296 f).

The pseudo *pandito* office for the members of this community living in Djakarta has nothing to do with the linearity principle of descent. This pseudo office is for all members of the community living in Djakarta, although they belong to different *kampuengs* in Silungkang.

There is no election for this pseudo office since no one is officially appointed to it. The members come to regard some one as holding it, because he does the jobs a *pandito* would do. He, the pseudo *pandito*, attends and conducts every burial. He is a religious man in the eyes of the members of this community. And they let him know whenever someone dies.

This situation makes him known as "*pandito*" and the people begin to give their *fitrahs* to him.

As a matter of fact, this "*pandito*" is relatively poor, since he has no business of his own; besides, he is quite old. Thus he is able to give his service any time the people need him.

This system is quite different in nature from the appointment of a *pandito* in their village.

ANALYSIS

The neighbouring communities have the following characteristics:

- a) they earn their living by way of agriculture, so they do not have to be far away from their villages regularly;
- b) they have a rather fixed income provided by the soil, so that only a few people are really in a position to support other members of their *paruik*;

- c) every member of a *paruik* is supposed to have the same income since the income is divided into equal portions;
- d) they do not think that being a paid worker will make them unpopular;
- e) they do not practice strict local endogamy in marriage, although they do prefer to marry some one from their own village;
- f) there are no '*pandito*' in these villages, and the people give their *fitrahs* to the poor.

In contrast to this, Silungkang can be summarized as having the following characteristics:

- a) they earn their living by trading, so they have to be far away from the village regularly;
- b) they do not have fixed incomes and a person can become rich enough to support his *paruik*;
- c) members of this society have become acquainted with many outsiders, but this does not affect their social system. They still practice their village customs, although they are living in a place remote from their native village;
- d) wherever they live they continue to practice the local endogamy system in the sense of the community, i.e. they have to find a marriage partner among the members of this community;
- e) there is an office called '*pandito*' to which the people give their *fitrahs*.

By comparing the situation in this and the neighbouring, the present author is able to make the following statements:

- a) the way the people earn their living has an influence on the structure and the living standard of a society and the degree of wealth they have;
- b) the structure of a society and its wealth have an influence on the method of the payment of *fitrah*;
- c) the living standard of a society, as far as this sample is concerned, is a factor in forming the attitude of its members;
- d) the attitude of a society towards other societies, as far as this community is concerned, is a factor in determining whether or not a society practices the endogamy system (within a certain community).⁸

⁸ The present writer would like to state that this is the main problem to be solved in finding a way to integrate those of Chinese descent into Indonesian society.

CONCLUSION

The paper has answered the question as to why the distribution of the *fitrah* in this community deviates from what Islam prescribes. The deviation is due to the way the people earn their living.

Besides, the paper has proved that acquaintance with outsiders does not necessarily influence the social structure of a community, as P. E. de Josselin de Jong had also proved in Malaya (Josselin de Jong, 1956, 152). This might be due to the way the members of the community deal with outsiders. They limit their dealings with the outsiders to business problems. And if some one tries his luck in a certain place he tries his best to be associated with some one who comes from his own village, often as an apprentice. This system makes them keep their ethnic identity wherever they live.

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