

Learning about View of Life and Death, Especially from Children's Death Caused by Natural Disasters in the City of Manado, Province of North Sulawesi, Indonesia

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インドネシア北スラウェシ州マナド市において 災害によって亡くなった子どもの死から 死生観のあり方を学ぶ

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Summary

This is a study conducted by our research group about the psychological background of local people in Manado, Indonesia. Interviews were made to a group of locals concerning their approach to death and consequent state of mind focused on their religious beliefs on Obon festival, conversation with spirits, reincarnation and the influence of holy men.

We recognized the fantasy they believed that spirit comes back from afterworld in the ceremony. In addition, we understood the event that spirit returns from afterworld once a year and “offering” is common sense. However, these custom had difference depended on regions and their social rank. As a result, these local people were difficult to share the common sense about the event. Reporting to spirit and conversation to spirit were common events in whole regions in Indonesia, but the quality might be different. Especially, idea about reincarnation was modified among young and old generations.

Key words : Spirit, Manado, Indonesia, View of Life and Death, dead people

I Introduction

1. The Flow of This Study

Indonesia is one of the countries that many natural disasters occur frequently. I was dispatched by JICA (Japan International Corporation Agency) to the city of Manado as a specialist for maternal and child health in March 1999, and worked for about 3 years.

In February 2001, M6.9 level of earthquake occurred around the city of Manado. Residents had prepared carefully for Tunami, but approximately 11pm in the midnight, swollen river near my house over flooded. One of the children of my house maid died for it accidentally. She was just 5 years old at the time.

In August 2010, I visited to the city of Manado again, and conducted interview to local residents regarding to the view of life and death. The research was conducted an only around the city of Manado.

2. Overall Condition of Manado

The city of Manado (*Kota Manado*: Indonesian) locates in the north of Minahasa Peninsula in Sulawesi Island. Sulawesi Island locates in the center of Indonesia, and the area is 80% of the mainland of Japan. The shape of the island is rare; it looks like orchid or “K” in alphabet. Sulawesi Island has 14 millions of population and consists of 6 provinces. Manado is the provincial capital of North Sulawesi Province. In the colonial period, Sulawesi was called as *Celebes*, and Manado was also called *Menado*. The area of Manado is 157.26km², and it has 405, 715 of population (2005). Manado is the second largest city (Makasar, the largest city) in Sulawesi Island.

Introducing about the geographic feature of Manado, Sam Ratulangi Airport locates close to the city, only 13km. The airport has direct flights from Jakarta, Singapore, and Davao (Philippine), and parts of flights from Jakarta go though Makasar or Balikpapan. The west area of Manado faces to the Manado Bay, which has



〔提供：JICA〕

the coastline of 18.7km. The North area connects to Minahasa and Mante-hage, and the east and south area also connects to Minahasa. There are several satellite cities such as Tondano, Betung, and Amlan. Around Bunaken Island is specified to the national marine park, which has the most beautiful drop-off and coral shelf in the world. Around Manado Bay, there are some islands; Bunaken, Siraden, Manado Tua, and Mante-hage. People use ferry boats to visit to these islands from Manado. Manado Tua has the mountain Manado Tua which elevation is approximately 800m. The average depth of shallow bottom in Manado Bay is 2-3m, and the continental slope has the depth of 2000m in average. Manado has comfortable climate to live in though a year. The average temperature is between 24°C and 27°C. The annual rainfall is about 3.187mm. January has high amount of rain, and August has low amount of rain. Average humidity is 84%. The climate is Monsoon, so divided to dry and rainy seasons. However, the climate has been changing.

In the city of Manado, local people speak Manado language, which has similarity with the official language, Indonesian. Manado language has similar pronunciation to Indonesian, but it was influenced by Dutch and Portuguese during the colonial period.

Islam accounts 87% of the population in religious belief, and rest of the population believe Catholicism, Hindu, and Buddhism. The government allows free choice of the

religious belief for their people, but all of the people have to belong to a particular religion. Each people have their identification, which indicates their own religion.

One of the original dietary habits of Minahasa people in Indonesia is to eat dog meat. In China and South Korea, red dogs are popular among them, but Minahasa people prefer to eat black dogs. In Christmas season, meat of rats and dogs are sold in the city market and the department store in the city of Manado. Catholicism allows alcohol drinking; so many people enjoy domestic alcohol brands. It is possible to buy international brands, but these are sort of expensive goods for the local people.

Explaining the historical background of Manado, in 1658, the Dutch East India Company built the fort in Manado. Similarly like other east area in Indonesia, Dutch missionaries came to provide Catholicism to the local people in Manado. In 1830, the prince in Java, Dyponegro, got banned from the Dutch government. In 1859, a British biologist Alfred Russell Wales visited to Manado, and he admired the beautiful scenery of Manado. In 1919, Apostolic Prefecture was established. North Sulawesi province is the first land that Japanese troops came during the World War II. In 1937, the imperial general consulate was established in Manado. In 1961, Manado was allowed to be a diocese. Manado has relationship with two Philippine cities: Davao and Zamboanga.



3. The reason why I studied about view of life and death

10 years are not enough to forget the grief for the mother who lost her child. She told me that she still has been trying to talk to her daughter's spirit. In Western world, it is rare to have connection with spirit. Therefore, I am really curious to research this subject in my research field.

4. Focused issues in this study

I am interested in how often conversation with spirit (children) was recognized. In addition, I researched if Obon festival was popular event. I was also curious that Obon festival was normally found around the city of Manado. I found out that it was popular events among people to invite spirits, but it was unknown when and where these events were originated from.

The interview method is important to realize the contents of Obon events; talking with spirits, inviting spirits, and controlling spirits.

Though the interview, I knew that the local residents have a faith about the existence of spirits and believe abilities of spiritual mediums.

There are some differences about the existence of spirits and abilities of spiritual mediums depending on culture, religions, and regions. Therefore, I still needed to research the social background of Obon festival. As matter of fact, I analyzed of 5 theme of the interview ; Obon festival, talking with spirits, reincarnation, and spiritual mediums (Figure 1).

5. The methods of this study

I used a combined method of interview style and questionnaire form. Our research team recorded interview to the subjects in tape recorders and asked audiotyping. The interview style was positive interview style. We asked to the subjects objective and logical questions including some Japanese cultural information (Riesman 1970).

II View of life and death in Manado, Indonesia

The interview results

In August 2010, our research team had an air flight from Jakarta to Manado in North Sulawesi Province. I noticed that the airport had been kept clean and safety. There are 33 provinces in Indonesia, so even the official study groups do not understand the perspective of view of life and death. About ethical concerns, with the official approval of the director in health center, we conducted interview to 16 local residents; male and female in 30s and male and female in 40s. We made written documents about the content of research project. We had

Figure 1

	Obon	After death of children	Talking with spirits	Reincarnation	Spiritual Mediums
Male A 30's Indonesian	Go to the river for spirits	Close to their houses	Trying to talk with them	New life	Trying to talk with spirits
Male B 30's Indonesian	In September Put flowers in the river	Not stay away from their houses	Trying to talk with them	New life	Trying to talk with spirits
Male C 30's Indonesian	Ancestors coming back	Not stay away from their houses	Trying to talk with them	New life	Trying to talk with spirits
Male D 30's Indonesian	Ancestors coming back	Not stay away from their houses	Trying to talk with them	New life	Trying to talk with spirits
Male A 40's Indonesian	Ancestors coming back	Not stay away from their houses	Trying to talk with them	New life in another person	Trying to talk with spirits
Male B 40's Indonesian	Family Remembering dead people	Not stay away from their houses	Trying to talk with them	New life in another person	Trying to talk with spirits
Male C 40's Indonesian	Hoping souls go to heaven	Not stay away from their houses	Trying to talk with them	New life in another person	Trying to talk with spirits
Male D 40's Indonesian	Ancestors' souls coming back	Not stay away from their houses	Trying to talk with them	New life in another person	Trying to talk with spirits
Female A 30's Indonesian	Ancestors' souls coming back	Not stay away from their houses	Trying to talk to spirits in the dark	Next life	Dead souls
Female B 30's Indonesian	Going to the river for spirits	Not stay away from their houses	Trying to talk to spirits in the dark	Next life	Dead souls
Female C 30's Indonesian	In September Put flowers in the river	Not stay away from their houses	Trying to talk to spirits in the dark	Next life	Dead souls
Female D 30's Indonesian	Ancestors' soul coming back	Not stay away from their houses	Trying to talk to spirits in the dark	Next life	Dead souls
Female A 40's Indonesian	Hoping souls go to heaven	Not stay away from their houses	Offering food and flowers	Rebirth	Trying to talk with spirits
Female B 40's Indonesian	Hoping souls go to heaven	Not stay away from their houses	Offering food and flowers	Rebirth	Trying to talk with spirits
Female C 40's Indonesian	Ancestors' soul coming back	Not stay away from their houses	Offering food and flowers	Rebirth	Trying to talk with spirits
Female D 40's Indonesian	Family Remembering dead people	Not stay away from their houses	Offering food and flowers	Rebirth	Trying to talk with spirits

approval from those 16 people to cooperate to our research study.

III Discussion

I analyzed research study with interview and understood that spirits of dead children existed in birds or place close to their houses. I realized that fantasy whose spirits return to their families in the Obon ceremony. Specially, spirits of children were considered to live in birds and not stay out from their home. 16

people of subjects believed this story. In addition, I confirmed that offering of food and flowers and Obon festival were common events.

12 of subjects told us that they could communicate with spirits. Even spiritual mediums recognized the conversation with spirits. Therefore, local residents believed that death was not forever farewell, but it was separation of soul and body. That was why spirit stayed close to their families.

However, in Indonesia, each regions and social ranks have different Obon festivals. Indonesia has 87% of Islamic population, but Islamic rate is not high in every provinces.

For example, Bali Island has majority of Hindu population, and Manado has majority of Catholic population. It is believed that soul goes to another world in Islam. Hindu teaches reincarnation and rebirth. In Manado, Hindu is not popular religion, but people believed reincarnation and rebirth. The local residents respected Hindu statues and mosques.

As matter of fact, I realized that Obon festival was common event in Indonesia as same as Japan. It seems possible that Obon festival was not originally started from the mainland of China. Obon festival occurred naturally all over the world. In fact, In ancient Japan, same kind of Obon festival existed, I guessed.

In another study, I need to make sure that how strong local people believe the existence of spirits and gods, the conversation with spirits, and how reincarnation and spiritual mediums are involved in the conversations. Using

questionnaire forms, I will realize the content of conversation. In addition, it is important that I ought to conduct same research study in other regions. I need to understand the view of life and death and view of god in psychologically in several countries.

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