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SOCIO-RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF TRADITIONAL CEREMONY: ISLAMIC THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL COHESION IN NGALAKSA TRADITIONAL CEREMONY IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the traditional ceremony of Ngalaksa which conducted by indigenous people in Sumedang, West Java as an expression of gratitude for the abundant harvest. This study argued that this ceremony is a kind of religious phenomenon and in a cultural context and has implied to their daily social life. Using the ethnography method, this study describes how Islamic theological values occurred in the process of the ceremony which at the same time shows the significant relationship between Islamic theologies with the beliefs of indigenous ancestors in Sumedang. This is shown by many elements of Islamic values, including through the use of *du'as* (Arab-Islamic spells). In addition, as in general traditional ceremonies that usually have social values, the whole process of Ngalaksa ceremony is also used as the medium by indigenous people to maintain social cohesion.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a cultural richness that is dialectically inspired from the nature and theology of its people. In this context, it is not surprising that the relationship between religion and culture is so strong which represented by symbols. Among the traditional ceremonies that are still sustainable is the Ngalaksa traditional ceremony that can be found in Sumedang, West Java. Sumedang region has some cultural uniqueness even if compared to other areas in the Eastern West Java region. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Sumedang has a local power formed by a mixture of local cultural elements of Sundanese

(Galuh-Pajajaran) and Javanese (Cirebon-Mataram) in the past. From a variety of cultural artifacts that can be found, Sumedang still seems to show the loyalty to the cultural heritage of the Sundanese-Javanese kingdom as this region was the center of political power that culturally has layers of culture with complex characteristics.

Comparing to other areas in West Java which generally show—in the term of Geertz (1960)—more religious aspects through its *santri* characteristics, Sumedang people are more *priyayi*, even a little *abangan* for certain cases, especially in Rancakalong where Ngalaksa ceremonies take place. Ngalaksa ceremony is a cultural heritage of Rancakalong ancestors who have related to Islamic teachings that have been forming the normative structure and fundamental rules of behavior.

Specifically, Ngalaksa ceremony is basically intended as an expression of gratitude to God over the abundant harvests. Previously, Ngalaksa ceremony held every three or five years according to the rice planting schedule and performed only limited to individual, but nowadays this ceremony has become a magnificent ritual performed every year. In three days and three nights, Rancakalong people perform a traditional dance accompanied by Jentreng and Tarawangsa, traditional music instruments they invented. This music is then filled with traditional dances initiated by *Pemangku Adat* (customary leaders).

Rancakalong is located around 46 km east of Bandung, the capital of West Java. The name Rancakalong itself refers to two words in Sundanese, namely *ranca* (swamp) and *kalong* (bats) which has a philosophical meaning related to the people of Rancakalong that must have a high character indicated by the height where the bats live and depth of feeling to others, as well as the depth of knowledge like the depth of a swamp. The majority of the livelihoods of the people of Rancakalong are farming, especially planting rice which has been inherited over generations so that for them, rice is more than just for consumption needs but also has become part of cultural values. Although the amount of agricultural land used to grow rice is not large, they can do food self-sufficiency. A strong attachment to agriculture makes fellow Rancakalong people support one another during the planting season or harvest season. This bond is then strengthened culturally by traditional ceremonies as an inseparable part of traditional customs and farming procedures, namely the Ngalaksa ceremony.

It is interesting that most participants of this ceremony are formally Muslims and that is why religious and local leaders in Rancakalong see this ceremony as a part of the religious ritual since it is a form of gratitude and *dhikr* (pray) to God. Thus, for the Rancakalong people, Ngalaksa is not only an indigenous ceremony but also religious rituals that have ethical and moral implications for their daily lives. Therefore, this paper intended to see Ngalaksa ceremony as a ritual-religious ceremony, especially Islamic theological values.

This paper uses several main concepts, namely the concept of religiosity and culture. In some explanations, the meaning of religion (English) and *religie* (Dutch), both derived from the word *relegre* (Latin) which mean “to gather to

gether” or “*religare*” means binds, bonds, or self-bonding while in Arabic the word religion is known as *al-millah* and *al-deen* (Anshari, 1979; I.M. & Sugiyanto, 2002). This implies that religion is the most fundamental element in influencing aspects of human life that often even appear in the most basic forms (Durkheim, 1965).

Annemarie de Waal Malefijt (1968) discloses that the function of the religion can be seen significantly in its social relations with the individual or community of its adherents (see, Muhtadi et al., 2016). In this context, religion plays an important role in strengthening the social cohesion of its adherents since a community can strengthen the bonds of togetherness if they tied in the same religious consciousness (Fakhruroji, 2019; Muhtadi et al., 2016) so religion potentially becomes a force that shapes commitment and conformity among its adherents (Tischler, 1990: 569-570).

This is not surprising since religion is often manifested as values that underlie socio-cultural life. Religion is assumed as the symbolic universe that can provide meaning of life to human and provide the most comprehensive explanation of reality, such as; death, suffering, tragedy, and injustice and that is why Peter L. Berger suggested that religion is a kind of *sacred canopy* that protects people from chaos (Berger, 1991). Even religion can function as a value that contains specific norms which generally become the frame of reference in social life (Ishomuddin, 2002: 35). In a more pragmatic way, Kahmad (2002: 119) reveals that religion not only gives meaning to life for both individual and community but also gives hope about the survival of life after death.

In a cultural context, religion exists in this dialectic. Therefore, scholars have agreed that all societies in the world are essentially religious (Schraf, 1995: 29). Meanwhile, the difference in religion as a cultural product lies in the transcendent value resulting from religion. By doing so, religion comes from a certain transcendent valuation process. As an objectification process, it involves the relationship between subject, culture, and artifact. A similar thing happens when a religion introduced in another society outside its constituent where it will experience a process of adaptation to an existing culture. There is a compromise of values or symbols so as to produce a new form that is different from the religion or culture of the origin (Schraf, 1995: 75).

Accordingly in certain contexts, religious and cultural practices can share the same symbols, including in traditional ceremonies. This is suggested by Weber (quoted in Suprpto, 2017) that basically human beings themselves create the meanings of the religion they believe so that any cultural practice can have religious meaning in certain limits and represent the meaning through symbols because as stated by Spradley that all cultural meanings are created by using symbols (Spradley, 1997: 121), even in the notion of Geertz as quoted by Sobur as asserting that meaning can only be stored in symbols (Sobur, 2004: 177).

A similar approach to this study that reveals interreligious harmony in “perang topat” festival in Lombok, a festival that engages the Muslim community with Hinduism (Suprpto, 2017). However, Ngalaksa ceremony does not involve non-Muslim communities, although in the process there are syncretic values

between Islam and the ancestral belief of the Rancakalong people as one of the indigenous peoples of West Java.

METHODOLOGY

Ngalaksa ceremony is one of the rituals that symbolically contain social and religious values. The symbols that appeared in the entire ceremonial process of Ngalaksa are interpreted and analyzed by ethnographic approaches which are considered to be able to serve as an approach to understand the context of the meanings of symbols that appear in cultural practice.

As an ethnographic study, this study was conducted by participating in Ngalaksa ceremony without ignoring the social context that occurred during data collection process in the field study. In addition, the researchers attempt to remain sensitive to the various phenomena on the ground in order to construct and relate observed facts to the background in which they appear and then linked to the possible historical and cultural background. As expressed by Tedlock cited by Marvasti (2004) that for an ethnographer, research findings cannot be separated from the particular environment in which they are obtained. In other words, a study can be said to be ethnographic when a field researcher carefully links the observed facts to the background where these facts emerged, linked to historical and cultural possibilities.

Ngalaksa Traditional Ceremony

The Ngalaksa ceremony is one of the popular ceremonies in Sumedang, even in West Java. According to famous folklore, the Ngalaksa ceremony appeared almost simultaneously with the history of the formation of Kampung Pasir Nusa, now known as Kampung Cijere. This area is a dense forest that is home to the ancestors of the Rancakalong community who have a livelihood as peasants even though they only plant rice around the house due to natural conditions. This is as expressed by Abah Anang, one of the traditional leaders of Rancakalong,

“The Ngalaksa ceremony was originally performed by the ancestors who lived in Pasir Nusa, which is now Cijere Village. It’s a dense forest and not everyone wants to live there, especially for a long time. Because not many crops could be obtained for survival, the ancestors then planted rice around their homes...” (Interview with Abah Anang, March 2014).

Based on the most popular folklore, the Ngalaksa ceremony is mostly associated with prolonged famine back in the 15th century which has resulted in a lack of food, even no more rice seeds to plant for the next season. This situation forced them to look for alternative foodstuffs besides rice and finally, they decided to plant *hanjeli*,¹ but this decision turned out to be disastrous. The *hanjeli* which stored in the barn has caused a child to be buried and died and this incident caused trauma and finally, they decided to back to plant the rice.

¹ **Hanjeli** (*coix lacyma-jobi* L.) is a kind of tropical grain plant from the grain or Poaceae tribe. This plant originated from East Asia and Malay, but has spread to various parts of the world. Some varieties have edible seeds and are used as a source of carbohydrates and medicine. See, “**Hanjeli dan Potensinya Sebagai Bahan Pangan**,” accessed December 4, 2017, <http://biogen.litbang.pertanian.go.id/2014/10/hanjeli-dan-potensinya-sebagai-bahan-pangan>.

But the decision to re-plant rice was not easy as they have not had rice seeds for a long time. In order to solve the problem, a group was sent to look for seeds outside the Rancakalong area, namely to Mataram (now, Central Java). When they arrived, they found the same facts because Mataram was also being hit by a drought so that the seeds for agriculture were tightly guarded in special storage and no one was allowed to bring seeds out of the Mataram region. As expressed below,

“Unfortunately, when the group arrived in Mataram it was not easy to get seeds because it turned out that Mataram was both experiencing a famine which made this group find a way to get the seeds without disturbing food stability in Mataram ...One of their efforts was to present art using harps and fiddle to get the attention of the community so that they want to share the seeds... (Interview with Abah Anang, February 2014)

The performance of the arts in question is by playing traditional self-assembled musical instruments in the form of a *kecapi* with seven and a *rebab* with two strings. They presented this while explaining that this art was an attempt at worshipping Dewi Sri, the Goddess of Agriculture. As a result, their performances from the village to the village got the attention of the Kingdom who finally invited them to perform at the palace and in return, the group was given rice seeds to take home to Rancakalong and these seeds later became the forerunner to the continuation of agriculture in the Rancakalong region. This story is so popular and passed down from generation to generation that generally illustrates that the Ngalaksa ceremony is a kind of historical reconstruction of the concerns experienced by the ancestors of the people of Rancakalong that they have to travel outside the Rancakalong area to get seeds.

The term of Ngalaksa in this ceremony is based on the core of the ceremonial procession itself so that Ngalaksa can literally means “making *laksa*.” For Sundanese people, *laksa* is widely known as a kind of rice-based food and wrapped in *congkok* (palm grass) leaves.² Rice is then processed into flour and made dough to be boiled in traditional stoves made of banana stems. Ngalaksa ceremony itself has undergone several changes since previously in the beginning, Ngalaksa held every three years for approximately forty days with using the Islamic calendar system, usually begin from 11 Shawwal until 23 Dzulqaidah. Along with the development of agricultural technology that accelerates the harvest season, Ngalaksa ceremony held more frequently namely once a year which is held on average for only five days and nights in a row. Nowadays, Ngalaksa ceremonial process divided into several stages in sequence and should not be missed and the preparation process of this ceremony usually takes about 40 days.

The whole series of ceremonies were full of solemnity. To maintain solemnity, this ceremony also has some taboos which must be avoided by each participant such as; do not speak loudly, especially laughing and joking; male and female should not wear any jewelry or dress in a luxurious way; a female who is

² Congkok (Latin: *Curculigo Orchioides Gaertn*) has a common feature of having palm-like leaves that are small and have yellow flowers. This plant is often used as an ornamental plant because it has beautiful leaves and flowers, food wrappers, leaf fiber plants can also be used to make clothing. Excerpted from (*Manfaat Tanaman Congkok Curculigo*, n.d.)

menstruating should not be the executor and are only allowed to dance; must not step over *laksa* and *congkok* leaf used to wrap the *laksa*; the husband and wife who present at this ceremony do not have sexual intercourse or have a great *hadath* (Islamic term related to ritual impurity), and should not be held on Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday. In addition, Ngalaksa ceremony always ends up with a prayer led by an Islamic cleric appointed by traditional leaders or the chairman. After the prayer was finished, *Saehu* then distributed the dishes to all the participants, either to be eaten on the spot or to be brought to their homes. When it is completed, the ceremony participants can return to their homes.

Saehu and Arab-Islamic Du'as: Islamic Dimension in Ngalaksa Ceremony

As mentioned earlier that this ceremony has become part of the cultural practices for the Rancakalong community which mostly Muslim. As a tradition that they have inherited, they no longer question the status of this traditional ceremony as something distorted. They repeatedly insisted that this ceremony is nothing more than a tradition. The elements of Islamic theology in this traditional ceremony were mainly caused by the fact that Rancakalong people are Muslim. In other words, they are Muslim and Sundanese at the same time. As Sundanese, they practice the customs and cultural traditions they inherited from their ancestors.

The merge of traditional and religious elements can be seen at least in two ways, namely through the using of Islamic terms and how those terms give a certain meaning in the process of this ceremony as a whole and also the involvement of Arabic duas which is Islamic as an inseparable part of this ceremony. *Firstly*, it is known that the whole series of Ngalaksa ceremonies cannot be separated from the role of *Saehu*, the person who is appointed as the leader in all stages of the ceremony. There is no detailed explanation of the term *Saehu* in this ceremony, but it is believed that the term is originated from the word "*Shaykh*" or "*Sheikh*" which in Arabic means teacher or person with a wide range of religious knowledge.

The presence of *Saehu* as a key figure in this ceremony has also reinforced that basically, the ancestors of Rancakalong indigenous people are so adaptive to terms those come from outside of their culture. Almost all stages in Ngalaksa ceremonial procession involve spells and *du'as* (Arab-Islamic prayers) referring to the prayers which commonly recited in Islamic traditions. Although the prayers are generally a mixture of Arabic and ancient Sundanese, the presence of prayers in each series of ceremonies has reinforced the assumption of Islamic theological values in this ceremony. It seems that this is meant by Eliade that historically, religion often uniquely deals with religious symbols, namely with things that contain religious experiences or religious conceptions of the world (see, Permata, 2000).

In addition to the presence of *Saehu* figures which is symbolically related to Islamic tradition, other theological values of Islam can also be easily encountered in all stages of Ngalaksa ceremonial process. Besides being caused by various rules and is part of the procedures that must be obeyed, the sacred

atmosphere presented in this ceremony is also due to the circumstances that support the atmosphere. Begin with the burning of *kemenyan* (incense) which is believed to be a medium to connect the prayers to God and the *karuhun* (ancestors), fragrance resulted from smoky *kemenyan* makes the participants more solemn to participate each stage in Ngalaksa ceremony.

In addition, the rhythm of Jentreng and Tarawangsa psychologically also makes a more solemn atmosphere that makes the participants drift in their imagination to relive the tragedy of the past about how the struggles of their ancestors in seeking for seeds to Mataram. This historical consciousness has become part of the cosmology of Rancakalong indigenous people so that such historical events can make them even better in the future to be more grateful to God. To begin the process of this ceremony, *Saehu* usually recites the following prayers and spells as follows,

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim. Ngahaturkeun salam syukur abdi sadaya disanggakeun ka nyai Sri nu parantos ngajaga siang kalawan wengi, ti kawit melak dugi ka ngabuat, mugia ditebihkeun tina panyawat hapa, sumpingna paré nu beuneur...

(Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, we greet and gratitude to *Nyai Sri* (Dewi Sri, Goddess of Agriculture) who has guarded day and night, from planting to harvest, hopefully, kept away from the disease [of rice], we are expecting good-quality rice...)

Above prayer strongly shows a syncretism between ancestors' belief system to the Gods and also the Islamic ethics. The symbol of syncretism can be seen from the mention of the *Dewi Sri* which regarded as the goddess of agriculture while Islamic symbols are shown by reciting the word "*bismillahirrahmanirrahim*" to begin the prayers. In Islam tradition, pronouncing "*bismillahirrahmanirrahim*" is one a fundamental ethics when a person reciting Quran verses or to begin every goodness and virtues. The word "*bismillahirrahmanirrahim*" is certainly not just a word without meaning, they fully believe that Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is one of the noble traditions and that is why they include the word as they request that the rice they plant the next season produce good rice.

After the prayer was recited, *Saehu* led the *hadharah* or *tawasulan*³ to Prophet Muhammad, his companions, *walis* (local Islamic saints), and the ancestors of Rancakalong indigenous community. They believe *tawasulan* as an important effort to gain blessing, salvation, and protection of God. Once *tawasulan* is completed, the ceremony is continued with a prayer led by a religious figure appointed by *Saehu* or the chairperson of the organizing committee.

The procession was then continued by the performance of a solo dancer (a male dancer) accompanied by Jentreng Tarawangsa instrument which was then followed by five female dancers which symbolize five prayer times in Islam. Tarawangsa performance which accompanying Ngalaksa traditional ceremony always begins with the song "*Saur*" (news, notification) which is a symbol of

³ In the Islamic tradition, *tawasul* is one of the religious practices which originally develop as Sufism tradition and assumed as one of method to be closer to God as it contains praises to God and the Prophet Muhammad. In muslim's daily life, *tawasul* is usually practiced by society in the context of *syukuran*, *tahlilan*, and other traditional religious ceremonies.

the notification to the local community about the commencement of Ngalaksa traditional ceremonies so they can participate. After completing the instrument of “*Saur*”, then proceed with the song “*Pamapag*” (picking up) and “*Pangapungan*” (flying) which symbolizes flying to heaven to pick up Dewi Sri to come to the human world.

The whole rhythm of Jentreng and Tarawangsa songs contains the expression of divine values. Even the word Tarawangsa itself comes from the Sundanese term “*Narawang ka Nu Maha Kawasa*” which means “wander to God The Almighty” which means that Tarawangsa is an effort for being closer to God. They also believe that Tarawangsa is nothing but a blend of Islamic teachings with their ancestors’ religion since long time ago. This is what causes the importance of the figure of *Saehu* in traditional ceremonies Ngalaksa because it is considered to understand the true history and symbolic meanings in the ceremonies.

Chanting for God and Medium for Social Cohesion

Songs that are played are sort of chanting to God since they believe that Jentreng and Trawangsa music can be one of the spiritual experiences. This makes the music and songs become a piece of sacred music as Schulz expressed it does not only exist as a tradition but is capable of mediating God’s presence (Schulz, 2008: 172). For instance in Hinduism tradition, esoteric notions of sacred sound form a cornerstone of devotional practice and of disciplinary techniques aiming at higher spiritual awareness. Music is believed to have divine origins and is explicitly acknowledged as being instrumental in generating and validating genuine spiritual experience (Schulz, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that not all songs can be played at this ceremony. Even the instrument itself becomes part of the sacredness of the ceremony. Tarawangsa musical instrument which is a kind of *rebab* (Indonesian traditional music instrument, mostly in Java) with two strings symbolizes *Shahadah* (Islamic credo), while musical instrument Jentreng with seven strings symbolizes seven days in a week to be filled with virtue and goodness.⁴

Among the few songs played were songs that could imaginatively “taking them back” into the past. In general, there is no definite rule about the duration of a song being played in this ceremony since throughout the song, dancers and music players can experience natural ecstasy as it is carried away and blend with the mystical atmosphere. One of the songs that played in the song “*pangapungan*” (derived from the word *ngapung*, means flying) which means that flying is interpreted as an attempt to plead to the Divine world. In addition, there is also the song “*panimbang*” (derived from the word *nimbang*, means measuring) which symbolize that human beings should be able to measure between good and bad in daily lives.

The noble values contained in Ngalaksa traditional ceremony are not only viewed as a cultural ritual but also contain theological and social life. Not

⁴ Seven days in a week is a symbol of the human life cycle. Seven strings with different tones are symbols that life is filled with a rhythm that sometimes is not the same every day, but that difference makes life more beautiful. But it must be played well and harmony so that really provide benefits for humans.

surprisingly as a traditional society, Rancakalong indigenous people interpret this ceremony as a tradition in order to maintain their social interaction with each other. So it can be said that Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is essentially not only a cultural tradition, but a way to maintain the quality of religious beliefs in order to remain intact while maintaining social cohesion. The songs that were performed in the entire process of the ceremony and all the supporting facilities showed togetherness among the members of the Rancakalong indigenous community who were psychologically able to become a medium to maintain social cohesion among them.

For Rancakalong people, this universe is a collection of symbols with profound meanings and Ngalaksa ceremony is a form of symbolic communication to describe their joy while remembering the greatness of God. Likewise, rice for Rancakalong indigenous peoples is seen as more than a basic ingredient that can fulfill human needs, but more deeply that rice is an entity that is alive and has services that cannot be measured by humans. In Sundanese, rice is called *paré*, but Rancakalong indigenous peoples interpret *paré* as a word which forms word *paréndéng* (Sundanese: side by side as with the spouse) that symbolize that every human being should appreciate the rice as appreciating their spouse who should be treated with affection and placed in a proper place.

These meanings have been positioning Ngalaksa traditional ceremony as a sacred event for Rancakalong people. This was confirmed by the indigenous community leaders of Rancakalong who acknowledging that the practices in Ngalaksa ceremonies do have the nuances of ancient belief characterized by the use of *kemenyan*, the presence of figures like *Dewi Sri* and so on, but they also revealed that this practice is not purely ancient belief as every procession of the ceremony was also recited Arabic-words *du'as* (prayers) of Islam by a cleric. This clarifies that Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is a syncretism since theological values contained in this ceremony are not merely inspired by the heritage of ancient belief, but also contain Islamic theological values.

Du'as (Islamic prayer) is part of a very important symbolic expression of the response to all infinite values which is categorized by Ninian Smart as the emotional experience in religion (Connelly, 1999). The *du'as* (Islamic prayers) which are a mixture of Arabic and Sundanese in this ceremony constitute the symbolic practices of theology among Rancakalong indigenous people of something mystical and powerful. In addition, the symbolic process associated with this theological aspect can also be seen from the practice of *tawasulan* to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Companions, Walisanga, and the ancestors of Rancakalong people. This is done so that what they do will always receive the pleasure and protection of Allah the Creator. The procession of *tawasulan* in this ceremony has the same pattern as the *tawasulan* that can be found in religious ceremonies such as *syukuran* (generally, religious ceremonies) and so forth. Furthermore, this indicates that Islamic theological values in Ngalaksa traditional ceremony are significantly strong.

As a culture, as noted by Ali Shariati (cited in Muhammad, 2013), Islam has become a collection of theological, interpretative, and sentences that are combined to form what we called the Islamic sciences with its own field. As a

culture, Muhammad continued, Islamic theology is not a doctrine that easily emerges in empty space, but is shaped by the socio-political-religious situation and condition existing in the history of the Muslims, so that such doctrines cannot be understood precisely if removed from its contexts (Muhammad, 2013). Rancakalong people believe that Ngalaksa ceremony is a ritual to show gratitude to Allah as The Creator. The accompanying ritual is only symbols that can be understood with various interpretations. So in this context, it can be said that Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is a product of Islamic dialectics with the local culture so that the values among each of them are not mutually opposed but are united in new cultural practices.

Theological values not only emanate from the ceremonial process itself but are also able to internalize in their social life. Ngalaksa traditional ceremony has a significant contribution to strengthening social cohesion among them. This is due to their view that divine and human values have a very strong relationship. One is shown through a relationship with another world (*ghaib*, the unseen world) which is believed to affect their daily life. The relationship between the human world and the unseen world is believed to be a medium for contemplating past events and as a foundation for the world view today and in the future.

Symbolically, Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is also can be described as a form of the historical narrative of their ancestors' struggle in obtaining the seeds to Mataram which is located outside of the area. In the perspective of narratives, this ceremony is a kind of historical narrative about events in the past which are illustrated through a series of rituals that are unique and binding. However, it is important to note that a narrative always moves simultaneously, circulating, and adapting (Mitchell, 2008). Their efforts were successful and when the first harvest comes, they immediately held this ceremony as an expression of gratitude to God accompanied by performing Jentreg and Tarawangsa, two musical instruments that are seen meritorious in paving their efforts. In other words, Ngalaksa traditional ceremony is nothing but a reconstruction of the past as a form of appreciation in the struggle of the predecessor. Every time the ceremony is held, this historical event is narrated on a hereditary basis.

The historical awareness of the symbolic meanings of Ngalaksa traditional ceremonies became the fundamental capital for Rancakalong society to strengthen social cohesion among them. According to its characteristics, the practice of religion and culture is the binding force of the solidarity of its adherents. The stronger the religious or cultural practices of a group of people, the stronger the social cohesion among them. By doing so, Ngalaksa traditional ceremonies can be assumed as an important ritual in strengthening social cohesiveness among indigenous people Rancakalong. In other words, Ngalaksa traditional ceremony as a tradition of indigenous people is an important social structure to see the reality of religious values with community life. This is due to the collective awareness amongst members of the Rancakalong community coupled with the strength of their commitment to certain cultural practices that can mechanically form a strong togetherness as well. In this context, Ngalaksa traditional ceremonial practice becomes the power to strengthen commitment

and conformity among the participants who are indigenous people of Rancakalong.

CONCLUSION

Ngalaksa traditional ceremony in Rancakalong indigenous community is held to express their gratitude for the abundant harvest they have. In general, the conceptions and reflections of the theological values of the Rancakalong community reflect a unique pattern in which acculturation, assimilation, and even syncretic, takes place because in addition believing in the existence of Allah as God, they also still believe in another power which in their beliefs also has a very strong influence, namely the *karuhun* (ancestors) and other figures such as *Dewi Sri*. This also proves that Ngalaksa traditional ceremony has been practiced long before Islamic teachings arrived. Once they interact with Islam teachings, they only see these figures as part of the ceremonies, not the manifestation of the religious teachings that they now believe, Islam. In addition, the presence of *Saehu* as a central figure and practice of *tawasul* and *du'as* (Arab-Islamic prayers) indicates the strong relationship between Islam and culture on Rancakalong indigenous people.

In theological perspective, the Ngalaksa ceremony is a form of theology that can be categorized in *Qadariah* group which adheres to the rule of “*keeping good old values, while taking better new values*” which manifests in the form of assimilation between local culture and Islamic culture, and is possible in some aspects, especially in the context of theology and normative *fiqh* will bring controversy to other Muslim groups who expected Islam to be presented as a coherent presence with Arab culture and do not want the existence of assimilation to adopt various cultures. It is still practiced by Rancakalong indigenous people because it does not only have cultural benefits but also social. Ngalaksa traditional ceremony becomes an arena for fellow citizens of Rancakalong to interact and maintain their mutual values so as to strengthen social cohesion among them.

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