



# Local Traditions: Ritual Sopik at Tahane Makean Island, South Halmahera

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**Abstract.** This study focuses on three main problems, namely (1) how the history of the “Sopik” ritual is carried out, (2) how the “Sopik” ritual is a customary law and (3) how the social values and cultural meanings are contained in the “Sopik” ritual. The research was conducted to reveal the history, social values, and cultural meanings contained in the “Sopik” ritual in Tahane, South Halmahera. The method used in this research is a qualitative method through two stages: (1) analyzing the results of interviews with informants from an emic and etic perspective and (2) interpreting the meaning and implications of the “Sopik” ritual. The results showed that (1) the ritual ceremony “Sopik” in the village of Tahane, Makean island is hereditary and is a manifestation of the interaction between Islamic culture and local culture. The traditional ritual ceremony of “Sopik” in Tahane village has long historical roots and is still preserved by the community. (2) Traditional and religious leaders perform traditional oaths known as the “Sopik” ritual as a custom for resolving disputes between members of the community for generations, (3) the “Sopik” ritual has social values and cultural meanings, including: strengthening a consistent attitude towards mutual agreement, social glue, ethics and morals, customary law and deliberation and consensus.

**Keywords:** Habit · Law · Ritual · Sopik

## 1 Introduction

Various rituals and traditions carried out by the community have strengthened the existence of religion, because traditional customs are related to the life cycle of the community. Religious traditions and rituals have become entrenched in people’s lives and have the function to increase the social mobility, which encourage the creation of a social stability, and the development of religious and cultural values.

At this time, the tradition of culture and custom that live in the middle of community are very important for their life. The one of the villages in North Maluku Province, South Halmahera Regency, that is Tahane Village, still carrying out the tradition of Sopik ritual that related to customary law and customs. This customary tradition is one of the norms values or belief that are used as the basis for resolving civil cases that occur in community.

The tradition of Sopik ritual is preserved by the Tahane community has become a rule of law or custom as reference for the community in resolving disputes or civil cases.

In the practice of community life, the tradition of Sopik ritual has been hold firmly by the community. Therefore, it becomes very important to study and recognize the history of Sopik rituals as part of community identity.

The traditional values of North Maluku community are also inseparable from the forms of religious rituals, related to the settlement of civil cases among community members. Where the implementation of Sopik ritual is determined by religious leaders. It shows that there is the role of traditional and religious leaders as determinants. Because religious leaders have the highest level of legitimate power of religious values and beliefs.

Religious rituals or traditions that have a function in community's life will stand long and will not be lost easily. It is concured with Soelaeman's opini (2017) that persisting customs cannot be separated from human needs themselves. Humans as social beings cannot walk alone and depend on each other. This social need can be channeled into the traditions carried out by the community.

The tradition of Sopik ritual is carried out by the Tahane community still survives because it has a function for the community. In addition, in general, the tradition and custom of Sopik ritual can also help to re-strengthen the community solidarity in resolving civil cases that cannot be resolved by the village government. From the process of resolving the case, it is necessary to take the tradition of Sopik ritual method as one of the ways of resolving cases of community members in a traditional manner.

Tradition as a habit that applies in a group of community is inherited from generation to generation. The traditio of Sopik ritual which is practiced by the Tahane community of South Halmahera Regency, becomes a reference for resolving civil cases in the community. Therefore, it is very important to examine (1) how is the history of the Sopik ritual procession to achieve social justice, (2) the Sopik ritual as customary law and (3) what are the social values and cultural meanings contained in the Sopik ritual?

## **2 Discussion**

### **2.1 Sopik Ritual: Water for Reaching Community Justice**

Philosophically Sopik is "Water". it means that water is the main element in the ritual and contains a deep meaning, so it is appropriate to use it to seek justice and truth. From water also the earth is fertilized, trees grow, plants live and from water all living things need water. A stonemason certainly uses water to measure balance. It means by the water we can live, we can clean ourselves, we can measure the balance. And the truth of a civil event. So the Sopik ritual, traditionally, can be used as a solution to settle civil cases in the community.

Sopik derives from the word 'SO' in the Tahane language that means bathing or diving in deep water, such as in the sea, in ponds or wells and rivers. Usually, the process of Sopik tital is carried out on Fridays and it has been announced to the community so that after Friday Prayers all the community members gather at the designated location and usually on the beach to witness the implementation of the Sopik ritual.

The Sopik ritual process is led by a priest (religious leader) accompanied by religious leaders, traditional leaders and the local government. Two representatives on each side hold a stone that will be used as body weight when diving. Previously, the stones are

read prayers by the priest and other sarah staff. After being given the stone, the two representatives of both sides walk into the sea until the water was up to their necks, then the priest gave the cue to dive together into the sea.

The command from the priest is Shalawat three times. In the third Syalawat reading, both of them immediately threw themselves into the sea using the ballast from the stone. At that time the tension enveloped all the people who witnessed. Because waiting for who will win the case. If one of the representatives who dive appears first to the surface of the sea, automatically that the one who is still surviving in the water will be the winner. If so, then the disputing side will sincerely accept both defeat and victory. The two sides shake hands, prayers are read as a sign that the case court has finished his breath or the expert held his breath as long as possible in the sea. Because the length of the breath or the length of time in the water really depends on the side who represents (Fig. 1).

Based on the experience of people who have represented the sides in carrying out the Sopik ritual, if the side who is represented is in a guilty position, then when diving, their breath becomes blown, all the sand and stone material swirls up to cover them, even small fish from everywhere. Swarmed and pegged his face, so it forces him to release the stone of the weight of the body and immediately rise to the surface of the sea. If you survive it will result in fatalities. Meanwhile, the person who represents the side in the true position feels relaxed while in the water like sleeping on a soft mattress, so that if he is not surprised by the throwing of stones from the priest who led the ritual ceremony, he might have stayed in the sea all day.



**Fig. 1.** Sopik Ritual Procession in the Village of Tahane Makean, South Halmahera, 2020

## 2.2 Sopik Tradition as Customary Law

In the study of cultural history, there is a specific discussion developed by Yulia (2016) about customs that have legal consequences called customary law. Customs have consequences when violated by the community, where these customs apply. These customs are unwritten and preserved from generation to generation so that they are rooted in society.

There are several interesting questions in the study of the sociology of law: (1) why do people obey customary law?, (2) why was customary law made? And how does it function?. The dimension of customary law in the sociology of law emphasizes several aspects, including; customary law as a product of culture, customary law represents social order, customary law strengthens human kinship bond, and customary law provides space for symbolic meaning.

The main element of customary law is a collective agreement that is carried out repeatedly become a habit of the community. It is accorded by Koentjaraningrat's view (2002) that "customs carried out by community members related to constructive common interests will still be preserved as the function and purpose of the custom or ritual".

Traditional ceremonies are the center of religious and belief systems, as part of customs, religious ceremonies are the most difficult things to change. It is caused the religious ritual ceremonies involve beliefs that are believed by the community. This finding is relevant to the thought (Clifford 1981) explaining that "performing religious rituals is expected by humans to increase belief and trust in the rituals performed. Because traditional ceremonies which contain elements of customary law are still held by community.

In a very spacious area, customary law grows, adheres to, and maintained as the rules for maintaining social order and legal order among humans in a community, in order to uphold balance and social order. The order that is maintained by customary law is both spiritual and physical, visible or invisible, but has been trusted and believed by the community since formerly until now. Where there is society, there are customs that applied. Customs differ from place to place, as well as customs in a place.

The implementation of traditional ceremony is very important for the socio-cultural development of the concerned community members. The purpose and goal of implementation of traditional ceremonies is as an expression of trust in traditional values and rituals that apply in society. The implementation of ritual ceremonies as a form of respect for the cultural heritage of the ancestors hereditary must be preserved.

One of the reasons and goals of carrying out traditional ceremony is as a reinforcement of existing cultural values and customs. Thus, traditional ceremony can evoke a sense of security, comfort for every member of the community in their environment, and serve as a guide for them in determining their daily attitudes and behavior (Supanto, 2013:12).

The implementation of traditional ceremony is carried out with full awareness, understanding and high appreciation that is traditionally held from one generation to the next. Therefore, efforts to study and understand the meaning behind symbols in a tradition need to be done (Muhaimin AG, 2018).

In traditional ceremonies, there are usually a series of social activities involving the villagers of Tahane. The social activities are carried out in an effort to achieve

social order and balance together. Therefore, all levels of the villagers of Tahana are involved, so cooperation among community members are needed so much. Various kinds of ceremonies that are found in the community of Tahane in general are a reflection of a plan, action and deed that has been regulated by local customs. These customs are inherited from generation to generation. Of course, it is unfortunate if it is only seen as a ritual activity that is routinely carried out by the community, because these activities are a reflection of the characteristics of customary law communities such as religious, communal and other patterns, but what features are behind these activities that have not been fully revealed. The ritual ceremony of Sopik in Tahane village is hereditary and is a manifestation of the interaction between Islamic culture and local culture. The traditional ritual ceremony of Sopik in Tahane village has long historical root and is still being preserved by the community.

When we talk about the law and socio-cultural values of society, we cannot escape from the fact that community, law and culture are the main elements of strengthening social integration. It is accorded with Adeng Muchtar's opinion (2011) that "society and law are a unit composed of socio-cultural values, known as the customary law community. These smaller legal community units are a form of traditional society that has its own legal traditions that are recognized for their autonomy". As a legal community system, these legal community units have their own system components as well, they have a social structure, a philosophical system, a cultural system, an education system, a legal concept system, a system of formation and a system of law application that is completely unique. In this legal society there are socio-cultural values as traditions that are already owned and embraced by the Indonesian people.

In the process of legal development, legal culture influences the implementation of customary law in society. Adherents of the Sociological jurisprudence as quoted by Lili Rasjidi (2019) said that "laws and socio-cultural values that live in society are the pillars of strengthening social stability, according to the socio-cultural values that live in the community concerned.

In the context of the Sopik ritual as a form of customary law for the community of Tahane village in South Halmahera Regency, North Maluku province, the existence of which is still preserved by the community members. Sopik customary law as part of the actualization of the socio-cultural values of the community that apply in people's lives. The existence of the Sopik customary law is enforced, if there is a dispute among villagers that cannot be resolved by the village government, then the Sopik customs and rituals are enforced by going through the stages that have been determined by the stakeholder in Tahane village.

Solutions for resolving civil cases for the Tahane community. In customary law communities, one thing that needs to be understood is that customary law has binding power, if the community members still preserve and believe in its existence hereditary. From this reason, it appears that the meeting point of the Sopik ritual with the cultural values of society is to create social stability in society. According to Handoko, W. (2007) that "customary and social diversity in society is a gift from the almighty. Every custom and community, of course, has a value (law) that comes from their respective habits, is hereditary, and is bound by religio-magic. This situation is the basis for the application of customary law and it is hoped that the community will manage it themselves".

The benchmark of an act is said as a bad action, and contrary to the values of society, namely if the act results in the cracking of social relations in society, and among community relations. Customary law is an unwritten law, namely the law that lives in the community and the values of justice that live in the community, customary law has a close, integral, and even inseparable correlation which is commonly expressed in the form of *petatihpetatih*. As a local wisdom, which cannot be eliminated, the Sopik Oath will certainly continue to be tested for its existence in the middle of the increasingly swift currents of globalization.

### 2.3 Sopik Tradition and Community Cultural Values

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### 3 Conclusion

The Sopik ritual ceremony in Tahane, Makean Island is hereditary and a manifestation of the interaction between Islamic culture and local culture. The tradition of Sopik ritual ceremony of Tahane village has long historical root and still preserved by the community.

The Sopik ritual was practiced because at first there was a dispute among the community members about village boundaries that could not be resolved. The village leaders had taken many solutions, but they had not been able to get a final decision. On that basis, traditional and religious leaders perform traditional oaths known as the Sopik ritual as a custom for resolving disputes among members of the community hereditary.

The Sopik ritual has social values and cultural meanings, including: strengthening attitude and consistent towards mutual agreements, social adhesives, ethics and morals, customary law, deliberation for consensus and being media of educational development attitude of respect and openness.

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