

## ADAT AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE: *Ethnophilosophy Perspective*

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### Abstract

As a country with the largest Muslim's population in the world, Indonesia has an overwhelming number of communities with different religions, such as Protestant, Catholic, Buddhist, Hindu, Confucianism and other local religions from ancestors that influence various Indonesian people's beliefs. This situation can raise the tendency of conflicts between the majority groups of certain religions and other minority religions in Indonesia. This paper aims to explore the conditions of ethnic communities in Alor District, East Nusa Tenggara Province, who live harmoniously among different religions such as Muslims and Christians. Alor District has obtained a trophy of 'Harmony Award' 2017 from the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. This paper uses an ethnophilosophy perspective to find out why Alor custom or 'adat' can establish harmony among the diverse religious communities. Their custom or 'adat' as a relic of Indonesian's ancestors can play a role in avoiding the recent inter-religious conflicts that have recently sprouted in urban areas. Alor's custom (adat) is one of the identity traits that had survived from the time of the ancestors of Alor people who had their local religion and before Islam and Christian became the major religions of Alor Society.

**Keywords:** custom, *adat*, ethnic community, ethnophilosophy, ethnic solidarity, religious tolerance

### Abstrak

*Sebagai negara dengan populasi Muslim terbesar di dunia, Indonesia memiliki banyak komunitas dengan agama yang berbeda, seperti Protestan, Katolik, Budha, Hindu, Konfusianisme dan agama lokal lainnya dari leluhur yang memengaruhi berbagai kepercayaan masyarakat Indonesia. Situasi ini dapat menimbulkan kecenderungan konflik antara kelompok mayoritas agama tertentu dan agama minoritas lainnya di Indonesia. Makalah ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi kondisi komunitas etnis di Kabupaten Alor, Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur, yang hidup secara harmonis di antara berbagai agama seperti Muslim dan Kristen. Kabupaten Alor telah memperoleh piala 'Harmony Award' 2017 dari Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia. Makalah ini menggunakan perspektif etnofilosofi untuk mencari tahu mengapa adat Alor dapat membangun harmoni di antara beragam komunitas agama. Adat sebagai peninggalan leluhur Indonesia dapat memainkan peran dalam menghindari konflik antar-agama yang baru-baru ini tumbuh di daerah perkotaan. Adat Alor adalah salah satu ciri identitas yang telah bertahan sejak zaman leluhur masyarakat Alor yang memiliki agama setempat dan sebelum Islam dan Kristen menjadi agama utama Masyarakat Alor.*

**Kata kunci:** adat, adat, komunitas etnis, etnofilosofi, solidaritas etnis, toleransi beragama

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Islam is the majority religion, with approximately 87 percent of the total population being Muslim.) (“Agama di Indonesia,” n.d.), must live with other religious communities in ‘*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*’ (NKRI/the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia). Religious differences are vulnerable to create conflicts considering there are members of the majority religious community who feel superior to minorities. However, Indonesia also has diverse tribes that can unite various religious groups within a customary community. Nowadays, there has been a rising role of custom as an identity strengthening the existence of the ethnic in Indonesia. The ethnic community has an opportunity to develop its customs because the government provides space for it. Indigenous tenure is guaranteed in ‘article 18B’ of the ‘1945 Constitution’ concerning state recognition and respect for indigenous and tribal peoples,’ and ‘article 32’ from that constitution, concerning ‘the role of the state in advancing the nation’s culture amidst world civilization.’ The right to ethnically traditional customs must certainly be defended for maintaining national integrity, which is a national feature viewing ethnic and cultural diversity as the wealth of the nation. View as such is important to strengthen the existence of *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia)

The defense on the rights of the traditional customs must be carried out for the strength of national integrity, which makes cultural diversity of the ethnic and religion in Indonesia the nation’s properties. It can strengthen the existence of the Republic of Indonesia, which consists of 633 ethnic groups, scattered across the islands (BPS, 2015). Indonesia is the place of various communities, which most of them still apply the customs (*adat istiadat*) of their ancestors as local wisdom or ways of life. Usually, traditional customs are still comprehensively applied in remote areas or far away from the city. Traditional heritage customs are expressed into ways, such as ideology from local wisdom in rituals and material things. Local wisdom is

a part of the cultural structure, and it refers to the growing cultural community as an essential element for strengthening social cohesion in ethnic communities. According to John Haba in Humaedi (2013) “Local wisdom is all of the ideas, values, knowledge, and activities, including the specific and proudly cultural objects that become the identity of a particular community or ethnic group” (Haba, 2007).

Nowadays, political events, such as local government elections, tend to make national unity ruined because some of the candidates of the general elections have often used political religions in their campaigns. Problems can arise when political interests eventually use political religion for the victory of candidates who take part in the election. For instance, the ‘212’ case,<sup>1</sup> the presidential election in 2019, and other election recently used religious jargon for political purposes. Besides, the issue of religious radicalism also rose with the emerging groups that aspire to *adopt the Khilafah* (Islamic laws) system in government. It can be seen in the case of HTI (Hizbu Tahrir Indonesia) group that has been banned by the government of Indonesia, as they are against *the Pancasila*. Although the majority of the population of Indonesia is Muslim, not all of them *desire the Khilafah* system to be applied in the country.

Of course, people from other religions than Islam in Indonesia also do not want the system of *Khilafah* to be applied in this democratic country. All of the conditions, clearly seen as a disturbance to the integrity of NKRI built long before the country came into existence. It was the time when Boedi Utomo was established in 1908, followed by the Youth Pledge on 28 October 1928 which declared ‘one nation, one language, and one country, namely Indonesia.’ The young people as fighters who struggled for the establishment of the NKRI, all came from various ethnicities and religions in Indonesia. Therefore, even though the Javanese ethnicity and Muslim religion have been the majority of communities in this country, these groups are

<sup>1</sup> demonstration held by more than hundreds of thousands of Muslims on 2nd December 2016 around the Jakarta National Monument opposed Basuki Tjahaya Purnama, the Jakarta Non-Active Governor who had become a suspect in a legal case concerning the desecration of Islam.

united with other ethnic and religious groups informing the Republic of Indonesia. The declaration of independence of the Republic of Indonesia on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1945 was a struggle of all ethnic and religious groups in this country. Then, how do we deal with the efforts that try to disrupt the existence of NKRI which is the unity of various ethnicities and religions as embodied in the slogan of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity)?

The author tries to present the role of traditional customs in various ethnic groups in Indonesia, in strengthening the Unitary Republic of Indonesia which has existed long before the imported formal religions like Islam and Christianity, came to this country. It is argued that traditional customs (*adat*) can be used to strengthen tolerance among people with different religions. The spirit of unity can be strongly tied with the customs that have been owned by the ancestors of Indonesian people long before the imported religions came.

One of the ethnic communities that have succeeded in using the role of their traditional custom that exists in their life as a way of life is the community on the island of Alor, East Nusa Tenggara. Before Islam and Christianity came to Alor, the Alor's ancestors already had some indigenous religions and beliefs which full of customary rules which now becoming the Alor people's ways of life in the modern time. That customary rules (*adat*), as habits of life, now has become the uniting tools to the people of Alor because they still apply their *adat* together despite living with different religions. On the island of Alor, Muslim communities try to build Islam as a tolerant religion to other people from different religions. They feel that they, as an ethnic community, are 'one brother' and tied up with the customs. They did not obey MUI's (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia/Indonesian Religious Leader*) *fatwa* that forbids greetings on Christmas day years ago ("MUI: Umat Islam Tidak Usah Ucapkan Selamat Natal," 2012). They helped to build the church and helping Christian people on Christmas and other Christian holidays. On the other hand, the Christians do the same thing to help the construction of the mosques and celebrate Eid.

They can work together and tolerate each other because they think their custom can unite them as a sacred value, and it must be maintained as their ancestors' ways of life.

The application of custom (*adat*) in Alor district, which can be seen in marriage with dowry '*moko*' (a kind of traditional trophy bronze-shaped object), *lego-lego* dance, and a strong kinship relationship), is unifying in Alor society of various religions. In Alor, Muslim communities live together in harmony with the other people from other religions, whom they regard as their brothers and sisters. It is because they believe they are tied up together with the custom they respected. They believe their custom is a sacred value that must be preserved by helping each other regardless of religion. Muslim people are usually helping Christian to build the church, participating the Christmas and other help to their Christian neighbors. Instead, the Christians are also helping Muslim build the mosque and celebrate *Eid*.

## THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

This paper aims to show how the people in Alor District, in the village of North Probur, can live harmoniously despite different religions, such as Muslim and Christian. The goal of this paper is to explore the conditions of ethnic communities in Alor. Their custom, which comes from their ancestors who had had their local religion before Islam and Christianity became the main religions, can play a role in avoiding interfaith conflicts, which recently emerged in urban areas. Alor's custom is one of the remaining of Alor ancestries which now has become the identity of Alor people. The main research questions of this paper are: "How do the Muslim and Christian communities in Alor District, East Nusa Tenggara Province in Indonesia, use '*Adat*' (Custom) to establish the religious tolerance?"

## METHODOLOGY

This paper used a qualitative methodology by using empirical data of the sociological and environmental conditions of the custom and culture of Alor people. The data collection

technique was in the form of secondary data from the writer's books on Alor language and the internet media.

This paper also used an ethnophilosophy perspective to find out why Alor custom or '*adat*' can establish harmony within diverse religious communities. Ethnophilosophy reviews are applied to explore this issue to gain a deeper understanding of ethnic elements, customs, and worldviews by using a philosophical perspective. It refers to the body of beliefs and knowledge that have philosophical relevance. Ethnophilosophy is a study of ethnic forms, customs, world-views, elements of knowledge and beliefs and views of life (*weltanschauung*) possessed by a particular ethnicity, more than descriptions which are usually done by the empirical sciences, by using the system of philosophy (Karp & Masolo, 2016).

The methodology of the ethnophilosophical review can be used to explore the empirical data which show the research 'problems, in this case, the description of the traditional custom and religion in Alor. Conducting an ethnophilosophy review of the traditional traditions of Alor communities enables us to find out the causes of the religious harmony that occurs in that society. An ethnophilosophical review of the culture of Alor's ethnic can be used to see the role of Alor's custom as an ethnic identity.

## FINDINGS

In Alor Island, also known as the district of Alor, in the province of East Nusa Tenggara, traditional customs (*adat istiadat*) are still applied among the society of original ethnic as sacred and valuable rules. These islands consisting of about 200.000 population keep the natural beauty of the sea that makes more and more foreign tourists come to that area. There are many ethnicities of Alor that can be found based on their ethnolinguistic identities, such as the Nedebang in Nedebang area, the Daeng in Nade area, Lobang Beengada in Mariabang, the Mauta in the areas of Alalan, Mauta, and Kaka, and the Lema in Darang and Kawali. On Alor island, other Alor tribes inhabit the area along the Gulf of Kabola (southern part), Dulolong in Alor Kecil and Alor Besar. The Kabola tribe inhabits

the Kabola area, Adang, Petumbang, Bujanta. Kelong tribe in Probur, Aragiari; The Abui tribe inhabits the area of Likuwatang, Malaikawata, Kelasi, Tafukadeli, Atimalang, and Motang; The Kawel tribe inhabits the area of Lembur, and the Kamang tribe inhabits in the Alor district (UPT Unit Pelaksana Teknis Arkeologi, Sejarah, dan Nilai Tradisional, 2009, p. 17).

District of Alor has an area of, 2,864 square kilometers, consisting of various islands with the main island of Alor and Pantar islands. The district capital, Kalabahi, located on the island of Alor, is well advanced with modern facilities such as government offices, luxury homes, and various hotels owned by Chinese traders. However, that kind of modernity can only be found in Kalabahi and not evenly distributed to the sub-district that have villages close to that city. The villages in Alor district, especially in the mountains, remain left behind although the government has opened up the remoteness of these villages by building roads.

Alor has beautiful natural charm of mountain and sea. The people of Alor islands also has a religious tolerance. Religious differences and faith are often prone to the cracking of the harmonization of Indonesian people who have lived side by side. However, these differences do not make Alor people divided because they are bound by a strong traditional unit. This relationship is reflected in everyday life of Muslim communities, which they called *Salang* (the lower part of bamboo that grows very much in Alor) and Christians (*Sarani*, from the bottom of bamboo), as seen in the Aimoli village of Alor district (Pulinggomang, 2013).

The harmony of Alor people is reflected in the construction of the people's houses of worship. When the Christians build churches, usually Muslims help them by becoming a construction committee. On the other hand, when Muslims build mosques, it is the Christians who become their support committee. "I heard stories from Dandim 1622<sup>2</sup> / Alor and Alor Regent, Alor people are always together when they build mosques and churches. Even during Christmas celebrations, the church, it is always filled with *qasidah*

<sup>2</sup> Dandim is a Komandan Distrik Militer or Military District Commander.

groups. On the other hand, during the *lebaran* celebrations, there are choir groups of Christian youth performing church song,” said Heri, Commander of Korem (Danrem) 161 / Wira Sakti, Brig. Gen. Heri Wiranto, SE. MM (Tribun-news.com, 2016).

The General Chairperson of *Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran* (MTQ), a Qur’an reading competition, that was held from 24 April 2016 to 2 May 2016 in Bakalang Village, Pantar Island, Alor District, was a Christian Alor man named Amran Olang. At that event, according to ‘*Teropong Alor*’ newspaper, when the recitation of the Holy Qur’an by the MTQ participants was taking a break, there was a choir from the church on the stage singing Christian hymns. That attraction was a part of the official MTQ program that had been scheduled. When the choir sang Christian hymns, everyone in the audience was listening respectfully. According to Amran, “the supporters of MTQ in Alor are around 99 percent coming from Christians people that event, Supported by 22 churches and seven mosques in Pantar Timur.” (satuharapan.com, 2016). Minister of Indonesian Religion, Lukman Hakim also acknowledged the religious’ harmony in Alor, as stated in his posting about that religious tolerance. In Alor, “I learned something extraordinary tolerance and mutual respect shown by the people in Alor Regency are truly sincere, there are no other appendages,” said Lukman Saiffudin, the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (Nainggolan, 2015)

From the researchers’ observations on religious harmony in Alor, they found several causes, which strengthened that condition. The application of custom (*adat*) in Alor district can be seen in the wedding ceremonies with dowry ‘*moko*’ (a type of traditional bronze-shaped object) and *lego-lego* dance in every important event in the Alor’ethnic community and family as the unification in Alor society of various religions. In Alor, the Muslim and Christian communities have lived together in harmony because they feel they are brothers and sisters bonded by custom that they respect. They believe their custom has sacred values that must be maintained by helping one another regardless of their religions.

### **Ethnic Solidarity**

Religious harmony in Alor is caused by strong ethnic solidarity in each tribe which lives in those islands. For example, from the author’s exploration in the North Probur village, there is a Habollat kampong which all of the populations are Christians (Tambunan, 2013, p. 206). In the whole area of Alor, it should be acknowledged that one village contains a community of one religion, such as the one in Habollat village. If some of Habollat community members convert their religion, for example, from Christian to Moslem due to marriage, they are expected to leave that village following their partner. Nevertheless, they still maintain ethnic solidarity by staying in touch by attending the events and visiting each other. They have a social integration with an emotional level built by fellow members. This ethnic solidarity was built because the Alor people are used to having hereditary verbal norms that built this solidarity (Tambunan, 2014). Muslim people usually help Christians to build churches, participate in Christmas parties, and doing other helps for Christians. Instead, Christians also helped Muslim to build a mosque and to celebrate Eid (Pulinggomang, 2013).

### **Traditional Custom Which Uses as Tools of Unity**

The customs of an ethnic can be used to strengthen the unity of the people with many different views of life and religions. Alor people still apply their traditional custom as their ancestor’s heritage together. Some of the forms of the custom are:

#### *1. Lego-lego Dance*

‘*Lego-lego*,’ is one of Alor traditional dances, originating from their ancestors. This dance is famous in Alor because there are still many people who do it as part of the traditional ceremonies. In this dance, all participants perform circular motions, surrounding a pile of stones called *Misbah* or *Kameng*, which is the sacred stone of their ancestral in a ritual ceremony before Alor people embraced Islam and Christianity. In a lot of Alor area, that ritual is regarded as the worship of their ancestors’

God which-called '*Lahatal*.' "This dance is originally held during traditional ceremonies or after conducting joint activities as an expression of their gratitude and joy by surrounding and by holding their hands together and singing songs of praise to God" (negerikuindonesia.com, 2015). The ancestors of Alor's ethnicities believed in the same kind of local religion. Now, this stone has become the sacred object for the *lego-lego* dance. Besides dancing, they also sing a traditional song or a kind of *pantun* (poem) in Alor language. This dance is usually held overnight and accompanied by some traditional drums/ musical instruments named *gong* and *moko*.

Picture 1. *Lego-lego* Dance



Source: negerikuindonesia.com

## 2. Marriage with Dowry Moko, The Traditional Drum Musical from Alor

Picture 2.1



Source: Wahana Visi Indonesia

Picture 2.2



Source: goodnewsfromindonesia.id

Wedding with dowry '*moko*' (a type of traditional trophy-shaped object made of bronze) of Alor custom is one of the remaining Alor's ancestries which still can be found in many places in Alor. Marriage with dowry '*moko*' is a very important event in the community and a strong family relationship as the unification in Alor society of various religions. In Alor tribal custom, *Moko* is offered as dowry, a valuable treasure given by the groom to the bride as compensation or a marriage requirement. In Alor tribe, there must be at least one *moko* in every family. As shown in Picture 1, the process of carrying *Moko* is on the bride's head at the traditional marriage of Alor society, NTT (BeritaSatu.com, 2014).

In the field of music, Alor people have made *moko* as one of the most famous traditional musical instruments that are similar to a drum and is the result of a long-time bronze culture. In general, *moko* will be played along with *lego-lego* dances and various other traditional events.

## 3. Blood Oaths "Bela" As an Ethnic Ideological Element of Alor People

*Bela*, a blood pledge traditional oath, is an ethnic, ideological element of Alor which started around the migration of indigenous people of Alor in the 19th century. The purpose of the oath is to declare that all wealth in Alor is a shared property of Alor. In this oath, the

representatives of each tribe in Alor cuts their finger until it drains the blood. The blood was then put in a container filled with water. Each of the tribe's representative drinks that bloody water. The oath is a symbol of the blood ties of all Alor people who are united in many different situations. It also shows the tolerance of Alor people even though they are of different religions, and they feel one in their custom. 'One of the traditional elders of *Taruamang Alor*, Golliet Sirituka, said that tolerance is highly valued in religious life in Alor' (Kompas.com, 2016). In fact, the crops of Alor people are also a shared property that they must protect and enjoy together.

#### 4. Appreciation to Nature Because of Ancestral Beliefs

Alor people really appreciate their nature as they are still functioning as a source of their life and the commodity for those who work as farmers and fishers. This appreciation of their nature also rises because their ancestors believed that the gods-controlled nature. Even though many people of Alor have become Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims, many of them still adhere to ancestral beliefs, animism, and dynamism and give their offerings to their God's. "This supreme power or form, are called *Labatala* (some call *Lahatal*) ... Because of the high and large size of *Labatala*, every human being cannot worship directly to Him, but through *Mou Maha* - the omnipotent person described as a flying god and assigned to forward the prayer request to *Ui* (moon and Fed (sun) and then to to *Labatala* (Djawang, 1987, p. 31). In addition, in Alor, there were also known gods, like, Mairal (the god of the sea) and the Nedah (the god of water)" (UPT Unit Pelaksana Teknis Arkeologi, Sejarah, dan Nilai Tradisional, 2009, p. 20).

## DISCUSSION

Based on the empirical description above, we learned that the integrity of *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* or NKRI could be preserved with the strong ethnic elements, as seen in Alor and from Alor people. The cultural and traditional strength of an ethnic group is useful for maintaining the national tolerance and

filtering the flow of modernization that could impact the tradition and culture of the nation. It is impossible for us to create a prosperous society without strengthening the local community. The preservation of these regional customs must indeed be fought for national integrity as a characteristic of the nation, which views ethnic and cultural diversity as national wealth. Custom preservation in an ethnic group can strengthen the Republic of Indonesia as a cultural heritage that supports the existence of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia. Although the people of Alor have embraced the modern religions, they still carry out the values or norms taught by their ancestors. They believe that their ancestors' norms heritage can give them a better and harmonious life. This condition shows the strength of the solidarity that exists in Alor community. Social solidarity theory says that "solidarity is a state of relations between individuals and or groups based on moral feelings and shared beliefs that are reinforced by shared emotional experiences (Pulinggomang, 2013).

Alor people have a strong will to maintain ethnic identity and their basic property rights as an indigenous community within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Strengthening local custom is part of human rights, which make every member of one ethnic contribute to its uniqueness to the nation in the Republic of Indonesia. The preservation of indigenous areas must indeed be fought for national integrity as national characteristics, that view ethnic and cultural diversity as the national wealth. Preservation of custom of (*adat*) Alor in an ethnic group can strengthen the Unitary Republic of Indonesia because Alor' traditional (*adat*) is a cultural heritage that supports the existence of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia.

This paper carried out an ethnophilosophical review in exploring the ethnic Alor culture, which is related to their view of life. Alor people are still actively participating in defending their custom as something that stands out as community identity and as the strength of their identity as a tribe. Local cultural strength in a nation is a means to make tolerance and ethnic identity for its people, even though they have

different religions and beliefs. The Alor ethnic as an indigenous community has a strong will to maintain their ethnic identity as their ethnic property rights in a Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

In order to gain a deeper, more critical, and reflective understanding of the meaning of the custom (*adat*) and Alor culture as an ethnic identity, the author needed to conduct ethnophilosophical reviews of empirical data as objects of study. Studies on ethnography and descriptions of Alor custom and culture have been carried out into the profound areas by the expert scientists, while ethnophilosophy reviews on this topic are still lacking. The author felt the need to explore Alor custom in ethnophilosophy by highlighting the principles and various elements used in traditional rituals and ceremonies.

The strengthening on the applications of the Alor culture as an indigenous community is a part of human rights for Alor people, which can contribute to the integrity of NKRI. According to the modern English philosopher John Locke in his *Two Treatises of Government*, human rights are the rights that are not can be separated (inalienable rights) from an individual or community ("Human Rights - The Classic Theories," n.d.). One of the rights that cannot be separated from humans is property rights, including ethnic property rights. This traditional property right is an ancestral heritage of an ethnic group who want to maintain their culture to become their way of life in their ethnic community. Without property right and ownership of customary rights, an ethnic group will lose their identity of their ethnic in the larger society of a nation. As John Locke said, property rights are basic rights that cannot be separated from human life (inalienable rights). Alor people consider their custom and culture as a part of their property rights because they need it as a collective identity which they still preserve. Ethnic of Alor still retain their property rights of *adat* as part of collective identity because they need it as a collective need. The word '*adat*' in the Alor's custom is a form of application from overall behavioral patterns of the heritage of their ancestors. According to Louis Leahy, the

perpetrators of *adat* are a "mystery" of a living being, who can speak, knows, can understand, has freedom and determinism, and they are the creatures that are developing individually in a group (Leahy, 1989, p. 214). Furthermore, he said: "*Adat* as part of a culture is an activity that remains alive and thrives in a society that still inherits religious elements from its ancestors."

As an ancient ethnic group, Alor people have a hereditary culture, which is formed systematically as the elements of knowledge and beliefs and can only be understood by them. The elements consist of the symbols of the sacred and the profane objects, myths, and custom of the ethnic groups in Alor. Schelling, a German philosopher (1775-1854) argued that "man and nature of the objective world, constitute an equal position as subject to objects. That means that the object, or, in this case, the universe, also gives something active to human knowledge." Schelling revealed that humans and nature are one subject in equal position because they have one will. Through this thought, he led to an identity philosophy where the unity between nature and human subjects is identical, as contained in his writings "*System des transzendentalen*" (Tjahjadi, 2004). It means humans and nature have one will, so both have freedom, which is the whole reality of absolute identity, that is when nature has recognized its character again through the reflection of the subject. Schelling's thinking can be seen in Alor people who consider the universe as an equivalent subject that forms their identity. Alor people give a special appreciation to their ancient gods that they believe lives in their nature.

Traditional and cultural Alor is an expression to show their ethnic identity. Alor people maintain their ethnic identity as collective human identity, to understand reality as a unified subject, spirit, and nature from the objective world reality. As Schelling said, people of Alor and their nature have one will, which both of them have the freedom as the whole reality of "absolute identity" (Schelling & Ottmann, 2010). Therefore, Schelling begins with an absolute identity of the known and the knower, an identity that cannot be posited within subjectivity. With this notion of absolute

identity beyond subjectivity, Schelling definitely breaks with Fichte's Subjective Idealism and Kant's reflective philosophy.

Appreciation to nature in one ethnic can shape their identity, as seen in the appreciation of traditional objects that are considered as symbolic and real bearers of warmth, or appreciation for highly valued objects as sacred places. In the modern Alor community, even though they have different religions, the understanding of the meaning of *adat* remains stored as something sacred. They still use *adat* as traditional symbols reflected in the ritual ceremonies they often hold. In *adat*, various symbols are containing many sacred values for the community, which in Alor people they are found in various traditional objects. As quoted by Douglas Allen (1978), Mircea Eliade stated that:

Symbolism has played an important role in the religious experience that is magical from humans especially because the symbol can continue the process of hierophany (purification) and especially because, on various occasions, the symbol itself is a hierophany. The symbol itself reveals a sacred or cosmological reality. Symbolism carries further dialectical or hierarchical elements by transforming something into something else, rather than what appears to be a profane experience (Douglas, 1978: *Interpreting the Meaning of the Religion Phenomena* Page 41-42).

As Mircea Eliade put, symbols which are hierophany and that expresses the experience appear to be profane and sacred. This situation is evident in the deep appreciation of the traditional elements in traditional activities to worship traditional objects that have values and serve as a sign of profane ethnic identity. It also appears in respect for ancestors who have sacred values. Ethnophilosophically, it can be concluded that Alor ethnicity strongly connects the profane and the sacred in its culture, as expressed by Mircea Eliade. This situation is evident in the deep appreciation of the traditional elements that look like customary activities (*adat*) and the appreciation of traditional objects that have values that act as a sign of profane Alor ethnic identity, as well as a tribute to ancestors who have sacred values.

The research on customs (*adat*) has an area that cannot be separated from natural ecology and its people. Customs have full of ethnic symbols which the meaning is related to the sacred objects such as, *moko* and *kameng*. These symbols and objects are always sacred and profane. The sacred things are metaphysical elements because of its high appreciation of the high power, whereas the element of profane remains meaningful as something ontological but very valuable.

Alor society has a culture which is full of metaphysical views about the cosmos and the universe. From the description of the empirical data, the researchers argue that ethnic groups in Alor have an ethnophilosophical understanding that contains elements of ethics, metaphysics/ontologies, and epistemologies in their culture. Ethnophilosophical reviews can explore the existing life views, customs, and ritual ceremonies to gain a deeper, more critical, and reflexive understanding of meaning and study of indigenous elements in Alor as their ethnic identity. As an ancient ethnicity, people of Alor have hereditary beliefs, which are not systematic, namely elements of knowledge, belief, and symbols concerning the sacred and the profane of material objects, myths, and Alor custom. Alor ethnic ancestors have inherited symbols that have become the main elements of Alor culture. Material elements are seen in *Mesbah* or *kameng* and *moko*, whose functions have been described above. Metaphysical symbols are seen in *lego-lego* dance as an Alor's appreciation for their ancestors. The oath of *Bela* is the ideological element of Alor in the context of the Alor cultural community, which contains a philosophy of life, ethics of politeness, law, and society. Rituals and ceremonies, such as *lego-lego*, ethnophilosophically can be concluded that ethnic groups in Alor strongly link the profane and the sacred elements to their culture. All of these cultural elements are associated with hierophany symbols, as Mircea Eliade referred. All of these symbols are useful for equalizing the subject of nature and humans as according to Schelling.

From the description of the deepening ethnophilosophy of Alor culture and custom

above, we can understand why Alor ethnic groups maintain and preserve their *adat* by continuing to do so in daily life. Differences in religion make them become a diverse ethnic group with different beliefs. Even so, they still value their ancestral heritage to preserve their ethnic identity. They live among inter-religious communities and tolerate each other. They help each other during religious ceremonies. Christians help Muslims in building mosques and on religious events. Moslems also help Christians on Christian religious events. All of this has happened because of the implementation of *adat* which they still do because they feel they are brothers and sisters as Alor ethnic group.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Indonesia, which consists of around 700 ethnics, agrees with the world view of '*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*' or Unity in Diversity. However, this agreement should not happen if the people of Indonesia ignore their ancestor heritage. The spirit of unity can be strongly tied with the traditional customs (*adat*) that had existed among the people of Indonesia long before the major religions like Islam and Christianity came to Indonesia. On the island of Alor, Moslem community tolerates Christian people as they feel they are one community and bonded with their traditional custom. A lot of Alor people from Moslem community give greetings on Christmas day to the Christians. They have helped build the church and supporting Christian celebrations. On the other hand, the Christians do the same thing to help the construction of the mosque and celebrate Eid. They tolerate each other because they believe their custom unites them as a sacred value, and it must be preserved as their ancestor's ways.

In general, Alor people are diverse and believe in various kinds of religions such as Islam, Protestant, and Catholicism. The application of *adat* or custom is a very important discourse in the context of multi-religions in Indonesia, as the efforts to solve the conflicts and strained situations that often happen.

The defense on the rights of the traditional customs like Alor custom must be protected for the strength of national integrity. It makes the

cultural diversity of the ethnic and religion in Indonesia exist as the nation's properties. It can be seen among the Muslim and Christian communities in Alor District, East Nusa Tenggara in Indonesia, where they utilize their '*adat*' to establish religious tolerance.

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