

# CULTURAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINING NUSANTARA RELIGION WITHIN BOTI INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

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## ABSTRACT

*Boti indigenous community which is in Timor Tengah Selatan district, Nusa Tenggara Timur preserves and nurtures their Nusantara religion, named Uis Neno ma Uis Pah. Boti is able to live through different eras, before West influences, the colonization era, modern, and contemporary. How can the Boti indigenous community be sustained with their religion as part of custom? Is there any certain methodology which they have implemented for the regeneration so their descendants keep preserving and nurturing their Nusantara religion?. This research article is focused to answer those two questions. The research is already implemented using ethnography method, so the researcher lived in the Boti indigenous community for 13 months from October 2, 2021 until November 1, 2022. This research used decolonization as the perspective method in order to understand Boti's Nusantara religion as well as their customs in detail and holistic including the concept and the core, so enable to do the comprehensive analyzing using proper theories of education; education and culture theories from Ki Hajar Dewantara, the Indonesia National Education Notable; Tukan and Hasfaria's theory about Adat (Indonesia: custom); Roem Topatimasang's theory about school; and Mori's theory about learning method. Boti implements the cultural education as the methodology to do the regeneration so the next generation know and preserve their Nusantara religion and customs. It teaches the understanding of the transformation in life that enables them to be open and flexible for the new influences. By the implementation of division on education; modern and cultural education; Boti indigenous community is able to sustain and nurture their Nusantara religion.*

**Keywords:** Nusantara Religion, Boti, Cultural Education, Uis Neno ma Uis Pah, Indigenous Religion

## INTRODUCTION

Considering historical facts, the Boti indigenous community is able to be sustained through various eras and nurture their tradition including their Nusantara Religion. Boti's Nusantara religion is taught by their ancestors and continued to their adherents. There is a certain method and mechanism applied by the Boti indigenous community so the Boti children still know, moreover implement their tradition and believe in Boti's Nusantara religion.

The interesting thing is they apply their tradition and religion not merely as the form, but have philosophical understanding so they may modify, revise, and change the formal things to adapt with the contemporary era. This understanding raises unique wisdom and enables them to be resilient. How can the Boti indigenous community be sustained with their religion as part of custom and become their culture? Is there any certain methodology which they have implemented for the regeneration so their descendants keep preserving and nurturing their Nusantara religion? This research article focuses in order to explain those questions.

Understanding Boti indigenous community's methodology presents the knowledge to support the indigenous community sustainability in their ways, using their wisdom. This understanding is also able to explain how important Boti's Nusantara religion was, as the soft construction of Boti indigenous community and the foundation of their way of life. Otherwise, it will paint a unique color in modern knowledge on sustainability methodology of the root community, especially indigenous communities.

This research implemented an ethnography method for the field research. The researcher was living in the Boti indigenous community for 13 months; October 2, 2021 to November 1, 2022. There are many rites and thoughts of indigenous community which cannot be accessed by outsiders. It needs trust which might be developed by closed and routine interaction. Besides, there is much value in knowledge which is frequently not formulated, but internalized through daily activities, habits, and routine work. Ethnography enables researcher to live blending with them and joining their daily activity, so the researcher is able to catch up and understand the unformulated and unspoken knowledge as their wisdom of life.

To strengthen the mindset of researcher to get comprehensive data, this research used decolonization methodology as the perspective. In doing the research, there are some possibilities that will be happened: (1) the scholar will face difficulties in catching and understanding the subject and object matter of the research, (2) the scholar's way of thought (West constructed) will influence the indigenous community which is then change the community, (3) there

will be the efforts to transliterate the indigenous concept into academic term in order to disseminate the understanding of the research results.

All of those possibilities are able to make reductions, augmentations, or distractions to the indigenous community's authentic concept, meanings, and values. Otherwise, it is also the possibility for indigenous community to get influences from the researcher which is then affirmed and adopted to be unified with new indigenous community concepts and values. In order to limit those possibilities, this research needs to implement decolonizing methodology as the perspective. It will urge the researcher to do critic and auto critic during the field research until writing the research results.

Smith in the *Decolonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous Peoples* propounds Graham Smith's four models of research works as part of her decolonizing methodology (2008: 177). These are the points (1) the *tiaki* or mentoring model in which authoritative Maori people guide and sponsor the research, (2) the *whangai* or adoption model in which researchers are incorporated into the daily life of Maori people, and sustain a life-long relationship which extends far beyond the realms of research, (3) a 'power sharing model' where researchers 'seek the assistance of the community to meaningfully support the development of a research enterprise', (4) 'empowering outcomes model', which addresses the sorts of questions Maori people want to know and which has beneficial outcomes.

These Graham Smith's four models can be implemented in this research as the manifestation of decolonizing methodology. There are also some critical considerations that need to be placed as the mind frame in doing this research which are abstracted from Smith. Those are (2008: 177-191): First, the move towards research is more ethical, and concerned with outcomes as well as processes. Second, epistemological tradition which frames the way we see the world, the way we organize ourselves in it, the questions we ask and the solutions which we seek. Third, it is a way of abstracting that knowledge, reflecting on it, engaging with it, taking it for granted sometimes, making assumptions based upon it, and at times critically engaging in the way it has been and is being constructed. Fourth, developing more culturally sensitive research and employing the indigenous community approaches. Fifth, the research approach also has to address seriously the cultural ground rules of respect, of working with communities, of sharing processes and knowledge. Sixth, researchers have to share their 'control' of research and seek to maximize the participation and the interest of indigenous community.

From this perspective, the researcher does not position themselves as an outsider with an abundance of knowledge, but rather as someone who studies

and learns from the Boti indigenous community. This approach posts the Boti indigenous community as the resource of the knowledge for this research. It is common practice to make comparisons when acquiring new information in order to enhance understanding. For instance, the Boti farewell ritual which is held 3-4 years after the burial can be compared to the Javanese tradition of a similar ritual held 1000 days after burial, also occurring 3 years after burial. If the researcher applies this comparison and presents it to the Boti indigenous community without considering their own knowledge, it undermines their role as the primary source of knowledge. Additionally, injecting other traditions into the Boti culture would perpetuate the colonization of knowledge, impeding the implementation of decolonization.

It will have a different meaning if the Boti indigenous community shares about other facts from the different location or from researcher's location which have similarity. By adopting other facts, the Boti indigenous community endeavors to convey their knowledge to the researcher as the outsider in order to facilitate understanding. As elucidated by Smith's critical analysis, the researcher sometimes has to take for granted all the knowledge including the information and data which are given by the indigenous community. By this way, the Boti indigenous community is posted as a valuable resource of knowledge.

The decolonization methodology becomes the guide of awareness for the researcher in absorbing the knowledge, doing the conversation and discussion with the people, observing and even act in their daily lives. Still about the Boti's farewell ritual, refraining from making comparisons allowed the researcher to comprehend that there is a collective work and resources sharing. Each group of family comes to the party bringing the rice, goat or cow, and other food items to give to the host to be cooked and eat together. This practice implements in all Boti's rituals. Through this system, the cost for the ritual is kept affordable and each adherent able to hold the ritual because they will be supported by the society.

By employing decolonization as a guiding principle of awareness, the researcher also discovers that *Ama Usif* (Dawan, The King Father), as the leader of the Boti's Nusantara religion, does not always lead the ritual. Instead, there are other spiritual leaders known as *Amaf<sup>1</sup>* and *Atoin Amaf<sup>2</sup>* who have the ability

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<sup>1</sup> *Amaf* are the persons who assist all affairs and are in charge to take care of various duties given by *Usif* for all areas of life; the religious sector, the government as kingdom, social, economy, politic, and custom.

<sup>2</sup> *Atoin Amaf* is the foster parent from mother's family who accompany the persons since teenage in order to guide and educate them. *Atoin amaf* is appointed by customary elders. *Atoin amaf* led religious rituals based on family custom.

to take charge of the rituals, such as the farewell ritual.

Discussing topics on sustainability and regeneration are closely linked to the education process practiced by the Boti indigenous community. This research article explores the education and culture theories in an attempt to analyze the Boti's methodology.

### **BOTI INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY**

Boti is a village in Timor Tengah Selatan (TTS) district of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province of Indonesia. It is located on the expansive Timor island. This village was established and nurtured by the local people who are recognized as members of the Dawan tribe, one of NTT tribes inhabiting Timor island. Boti was one kingdom, part of Amanuban Kingdom with its capital located in Niki-niki city.

It is an indigenous village surrounded by mountains and hills. The village area is 16.500 M<sup>2</sup> at 519 MASL. The majority of the village is encompassed by hills with slopes ranging 45° - 90°. It's not easy to get to Boti. The road from Soe<sup>3</sup> to Niki-niki<sup>4</sup> is fully paved with asphalt and it takes about 1-2 hours to travel by car or motorcycle. Then, a quarter of the way from Niki-niki to Boti remains asphalt, but beyond that point, the road is a dirt road surrounded by bushes and trees. It takes 1-2 hours to travel from Niki-niki to Boti by car or motorcycle. Some parts of the dirt road will be very muddy and challenging to navigate during and after the rainfall, so it needs a skillful driver and off-road type of car.

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<sup>3</sup> Soe is the capital city of TTS district.

<sup>4</sup> The nearest city of Boti which used to be the center of Amanuban Kingdom where Boti is part of it.



Figure 1: *The muddy road to Boti after the hard rain*

Photo by: Octalyna Puspa Wardany at Sonaf Boti on November 1, 2022 using Redmi 9

Fortune by its geographical location, Boti has remained untouched by any colonizers; Portuguese, Dutch and Japan who colonized Niki-niki. Boti has been accessed by foreigners since 1985. Boti always welcomes and opens to all guess, regardless of their origin, purpose, or background. Based on the history of Amanuban Kingdom and Boti Kingdom, the Boti indigenous community has existed since before the 14th century. This fact is substantiated by Vlekke (2018: 24-25) as explained in the *Nusantara: Sejarah Indonesia* that many kingdoms in Indonesia have existed since the 2nd century.

In 2019, the population of Boti village was 2.236 persons<sup>5</sup>. Nowadays, there are approximately 631 HH<sup>6</sup> or approximately 3,000 people. The population growth is caused by marriage. Most of the Boti people, circa 85% are Protestant, comprising 536 HH<sup>7</sup>. The fewest are Catholic amounts 14 HH. The remaining, about 76 HH, equivalent to 319 individuals<sup>8</sup> are the adherents of Nusantara Religion. It is considered an "... "unstructured religion" embraced

<sup>5</sup> Data of Boti Village Potency year 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with The Head of Boti Village Government, Balsasar O. I. Benu on October 11, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Mike Nuryati Tatfui, S. Th., The Preach of GMIT (*Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor* or Evangelical Protestant Church in Timor) Boti on January 30, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with *Ama Usif* Namah Benu, Boti King & the leader of Nusantara Religion of Uis Neno ma Uis Pah on September 6, 2022.



by “subordinated groups” and different from institutionalized, established, or recognized religions whose theology and dogma have been codified” (Makin, 2016) in the context of Indonesia. Within Indonesia's legal system, the Nusantara religion is categorized as Belief in One God, distinguishing it from *agama* or religion (Maarif, 2019).

The term “Nusantara” symbolizes the interconnection between indigenous religions and Indonesia as geographical, geopolitical with all its nature, and culture that is historically constructed. There exists a mutual influence between indigenous religions within the specific context of Indonesia, leading to the development of a unique character so differ it to other indigenous religions in different contexts. This distinctive character encompasses particular concept within the content of Nusantara religion, holding intellectual, instrumental, and emotional significance as a result of the adaptation process of human beings and their habitat. The “Nusantara” term serves as a symbol that represent this unique character, defining the specific indigenous religions in Indonesia.

In the easternmost part of Indonesia, there existed a Nusantara religion known as *Wiyon* or *Wofle*<sup>9</sup> in the South West Papua province which was practiced by Maybrat, Imian, and Sawiat tribes. These three among 257 tribes of 7 ethnic groups live in the Maybrat regency and Sorong regency<sup>10</sup>. *Wiyon* or *Wofle* believed in supernatural powers residing in *Sawro Mron* (heaven) situated in *Ayoh* (sky) headed by the supreme and eternal power called *Oron Yabi* or *Wiyon U* (God)<sup>11</sup>.

Moving to the center part, there are the adherents of Nusantara religion named Jingitiu in Sabu island that explicitly concerns faith in Deo (God) and involves many aspects; the physical world, human life, and the unseen world. Jingitiu views everything as a gift from God Almighty called ‘*Deo Mone Ae*’ (Widjaja, 2022).

From the western part, there is Orang Rimba, a group of tribes who live in the forest of Sumatra, that is also called Suku Anak Dalam (SAD), Kubu, Komunitas Adat Terpencil (KAT) who spread at Bukit Duabelas National Park or Taman Nasional Bukit Duabelas (TNBD) of Jambi province<sup>12</sup>. As a semi nomadic tribe who follows local wisdom and customary law of their ancestors, forests are their homes and sources of life where traditional and

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<sup>9</sup> Sagrim (2013: 29); *Wiyon* is the name of Nusantara religion for Maybrat tribe and *Wofle* is for Imian and Sawiat tribes.

<sup>10</sup> Sagrim (2013: 30).

<sup>11</sup> Sagrim (2013: 30).

<sup>12</sup> Tuhri, 2020: 236.

religious ceremonies are held<sup>13</sup>, also the sacred land where a spirit live<sup>14</sup>. They also consider the rivers as a primary avenue for the interconnection of forests and villages on earth and the heaven, for the flow of ideas, contact and relations with the outside world, as well as the means through which the gods of sickness travel from heaven to earth<sup>15</sup>.

Nusantara refers to Indonesia geographically and geopolitically, and it is admitted internationally. It is nowadays often used interchangeably with the name Indonesia. The utterance of Nusantara as Indonesia geographically and geopolitically actually interconnected and interrelated to culture too. It is called Nusantara for Indonesia territory with area 7,81 km<sup>2</sup> which consist of 3,25 million km<sup>2</sup> water area, 2,55 million km<sup>2</sup> ZEE and 2,01 million km<sup>2</sup> land area. Within this vast territory, there are abundant natural resources, a diverse population, and various ethnic groups including the culture. All born within this territory can be considered a part of Nusantara. Those all can be absorbed and adapted to the syncretic with others from outside Nusantara. This intermingling extends to the realm of religion as well.

Specifically, the Nusantara Religion term refers to the existence of various religions amounting to more than 600 (Makin, 2017) in Indonesia which already lived before the entrance of World Religions (Christian and Islam), even before the entrance of Buddha and Hindu as the history of Indonesia people is already existed since second century which was signed by a number of unrecognizable Indonesian kingdoms (Vlekke, 2018).

Nusantara Religion is an authentic concept of religion in Indonesia. It represents Indonesia's thought and understanding in living as part of this world inhabitant. It presents the understanding of the long history of the struggle of authentic religion in Indonesia. It represents the religion which is understood by Nusantara people as the unification of God with infinite power and nature which is also as the place of the spirits including the spirits of the ancestors. This religious teaches to maintain the way of life which is synergized with nature to worship the superhuman power.

The title of Boti's Nusantara religion is *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* from the Dawan language. *Uis* stands for God. *Neno* represents for the sky. *Ma* means and. *Pah* signifies nature. Using the straight translation, *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* means "the god of sky above and the god of nature, the natural environment as the human habitat". This translation might imply that Boti's Nusantara religion believes in two gods. This interpretation is commonly understood by those

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.: 237.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



outside the religion.

The adherents of Boti's Nusantara religion employ a metaphor to describe the constellation between human and *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah*. The metaphor equates *Uis Neno* to the father and *Uis Pah* to the mother, while human as the children. According to this understanding, they always ask nature first to fulfill their needs, such as food and favorable weather. They will ask the father for things that cannot be provided by the mother, such as protection for their lives, blessings for the spirit of their ancestors and the deceased, as explained by *Ama Usif* "*Kalau anak mau minta, pertama minta di Mama dulu. Kalau Mama tidak bisa kasih, baru minta Bapa*" (If the child wants something, first asks to the mother. If the mother cannot provide, then asks the father).

Nature plays a crucial role in life. To have a secure and good life, humans should conserve and nurture the nature. Then, nature will take care of humans too because all things that are done to nature will be returned to the humans. All things done will give effects and impacts to the humans. By mentioning nature in the title of their religion, the Boti people are consistently reminded of nature's superior power over humanity. They do not conquer the nature, but live in synergy with it. While the sky for *Uis Neno* is the symbol of the infinity power, reigning over all aspects of life. When there is something that cannot be solved by nature, they pray and surrender to God.

*Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* are not two distinct gods worshipped by the Boti people. In their religious rituals, *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* is always mentioned as a unification without any separation. Balsasar O.I. Benu explained, "... *dua sebutan itu menjadi satu dalam penyembahan*"<sup>16</sup>. *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* are two rules in one God. They don't have any term to explain One God. *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* represents the consciousness of the infinite power of God and nature which surpasses human capabilities in this life and as the manifestation of God power. God almighty has two manifestations. God rules the sky to explain the infinity power and God rules nature.

Boti's Nusantara religion is also the root of all customs which then construct the way of Boti people's life. The cornerstone of their ethics lies in being a virtuous individual. In order to achieve this, they adhere to the ancestral teachings passed down through generations, which are embodied and practiced by the followers of *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah*. These ancestral teachings encompass various aspects, including religious rituals, the way of thinking and acts in facing the new things and solving the problems, preserving nature, fostering the harmonization of social life based on the consideration that Boti

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<sup>16</sup> Interviewed on October 11, 2021 "... those two names always become one unify in the worship".

people are one family, and not doing the bads. By upholding these principles, individuals strive to become good people.

The cores of the thought are being good people, independent, and life synergize with nature. To be a good person, they cannot hurt other people and implement monogamy. To be independent means they can fulfill their needs from their own works, so they do not want to be lazy and accept any aids. Life synergizes with nature by forbidding them to exploit and waste nature. Otherwise, they should think about a better life and future for Boti people and the environment.

The Boti indigenous people keep the core of their ancestors' thought but not rigidly applying various customary rules. The cores of the thought enable them to be flexible in receiving the new influences and adjust themselves with various changes then transform their lives. It can be seen from their openness to modern education and building the school.

### **MODERN SCHOOL AS THE SPACE FOR NEGOTIATION**

The national school in Boti started in 1957. As Heka Benu told<sup>17</sup>, firstly, the late *Usif Nune Benu* already gave permission for Boti people to study in modern ways, unfortunately there was no education facility yet. He instructed 5 persons to go to NTT capital city, Kupang, in order to ask the modern education facility in Boti. One of those 5 persons is Christopher Benu. Since Boti is very far from Kupang, the provincial government recommended them to ask their neighboring villages.

Before the school operated, the Boti people took their education at Oenaek and Opus, the neighboring villages. Following the provincial government's suggestion and after asking Bele, another neighboring village, the school was finally built using a weeds roof and named *Sekolah Rakyat* (Indonesian, public school). The first teacher was Mr. Biredoko from Rote who was called by Boti people and students as Mr. Meniloko. In 1960, it was changed to *Sekolah Dasar* (Indonesian, Elementary School) until now.

The school days are Monday to Saturday from 7.00 am to 12.15 pm. But, in the hot season, it ends at 11.00 pm or 11.30 pm considering the students have to walk back home, which is very far about 1 hour to 4 hours on foot, in the very hot season. The school did not operate during the Gestapu incident; 1965 until July 1966. During the corona pandemic in 2020, the school was also not operated and activated for half day school in July 2021 until June 2022. Starting

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<sup>17</sup> Heka Benu (80 years) who is the little brother of late *Usif Nune Benu* is interviewed on May 8, 2022.

from July 2022, the school is fully operated. Nowadays, there are junior high school and senior high school too, so Boti children are able to study in their own village. While for undergraduate education, Boti has cooperated with Indonesia Open University in Soe. Thus, the Boti students are able to continue their study without leaving their village as the Boti people's dream.

The religion subject is taught in every class, spanning 6 levels of elementary school, 3 levels of junior high school, and 3 levels of senior high school. Protestantism is primarily taught reflecting the majority of the Boti people. However, the elementary school provides Catholic teachers so the Catholic students get their own religion subject. While the *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* adherents could join Protestantism for religion subject.

Because religion is not included as part of the evaluated subjects at National level and no guidelines for the evaluation aspects, the valuation and evaluation system are determined by the school itself. The students of *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* adherents do the evaluation of Protestant religion subject in Boti elementary school<sup>18</sup>, but they are not obligated to answer all questions correctly and achieve a certain grade score. Beside the result of the evaluation, the scores for their religion subject also consider their attitude and ethics in daily life at school.

In the intercommunication with other students who are Protestant and Catholic, there is no discrimination either in learning activities in class or social interactions between students outside of study hours. The students of *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* can have good relations with other students. They can play, study, go to school, and walk back home together. Indeed, there are some special attitudes of the students who adhere to *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah*. They are very polite and respectful. When they receive admonition, they listen well and obey it<sup>19</sup>. Based on the information from the teachers, the students of *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* adherents have different acts and attitudes in their ethic, their perspective about study<sup>20</sup> and teachers, also how they use the knowledge in their life. They post those as the important matters and act in a good way. These different acts are related to the way their families – especially their parents – educate them.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Yakob Benu, the Headmaster of Boti Elementary School, on November 25, 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Antonius Nesi, the teacher in class 5 of Boti Elementary School, on November 25, 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Their perspective about study leads them to understand that everything which is given in the school is part of the knowledge. This makes them have no obligation in learning another religion in class which is mostly Protestant. For them, that subject is part of knowledge and won't make them change their religion. From this perspective, it is not very rare if a student of *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* adherent achieved good points in religion.

## CULTURAL EDUCATION: THE STRATEGY FOR RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Boti indigenous community understands very well that in order to preserve and nurture their culture, including their Nusantara religion; they should do regeneration. Education is an important methodology for the regeneration process. The Boti indigenous community name their education as cultural education.

### A. EDUCATIONAL DIVISIONS

For the adherents of *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah*, they implement the rule of the Children Education Division. If they have two children, one can study modern knowledge and the other should study about culture. If they have three children, two can study modern knowledge and another should study about culture. The acquisition of modern knowledge can be pursued through national or modern schools. While, to study culture or cultural education is facilitated by parents as the teacher and integrating daily tasks and work as learning methods.

In practice, the rule of educational division is not implemented strictly. There is always a space of tolerance in every Boti's customary rule including education. It is allowable for those whose four children, that three children study at modern school while only one child studies cultural. In deciding which child will study at modern school or do cultural education, they observe their children's habits and ask their willingness. If a child is able to obey their parents' commands and has good intellectual competence, that child will study at the modern school. If a child prefers to work in the fields and disinterest to study modern knowledge; that child will do cultural education. It is not impossible a child states their desire to not go to the modern school and prefer do cultural education as the case of one girl named Koko Banuet,

*“Ya, beta tidak mau sekolah (modern). Mau bantu Mama di rumah. Mau masak, tenun di rumah”<sup>21</sup>.*

*“Indeed, I don't want to go to (modern) school. I'd like to help Mama at home. I'd like to cook and weave at home”.*

A different experience from a boy named Heka Neolaka who do not go to the modern school due to his parents' rule,

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Koko Banuet, 18 years, on August 23, 2022.

“Itu dari dulu. Sudah ditentukan memang”<sup>22</sup>.

“It has already been decided since a long time ago”.

## B. EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT

The Boti indigenous people embrace a paradigm that the first and primary education takes place within their families, with parents as the teacher. Ki Hajar Dewantara, the Indonesia National Education Notable, agreed with this concept that family serves as an educational institution for children. He even wrote three statements about this in *Pemikiran Konsepsi, Keteladanan, Sikap Merdeka* of book 1 which specifically discusses education:

*“**Alam keluarga** adalah “pusat-pendidikan” yang **pertama** dan yang **terpenting**, oleh karena sejak timbulnya adab-kemanusiaan hingga kini, hidup-keluarga itu selalu mempengaruhi bertumbuhnya budi pekerti dari tiap-tiap manusia”*<sup>23</sup>.

(“Family environment is “the center of education” which is *the first* and the most important because since the emergence of humanity until now, family life always influences the maturity of character of each human”).

*“... keluarga itulah tempat-pendidikan yang lebih sempurna sifat dan ujudnya daripada pusat lain-lainnya, untuk melangsungkan Pendidikan ke arah **kecerdasan budi pekerti** (pembentukan watak individual) dan sebagai **persediaan hidup kemasyarakatan**”*<sup>24</sup>.

(“... family itself is the education place which is more perfect in quality and shape than other centers, to perpetuate the education toward *the intelligence character* (the individual character building) and as *the source of social life*”).

*“**Alam keluarga** itu buat tiap-tiap orang adalah alam Pendidikan yang permulaan. Pendidikan di situ **pertama kalinya** bersifat Pendidikan dari **orang-tua**, yang berkedudukan sebagai **guru** (penuntun), sebagai **pengajar** dan sebagai **pemimpin pekerjaan** (pemberi contoh)”*<sup>25</sup>.

(“Family environment for each person is the beginning of an educational environment. The education there for *the first time* has the character of education from *the parents*, who are as *teachers* (guide), as *instructors* and as *work leaders* (giving the examples)”).

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Heka Neolaka, 19 years, on August 23, 2022.

<sup>23</sup> Ki Hajar Dewantara (2013) *Pemikiran, Konsepsi, Keteladanan, Sikap Merdeka: Pendidikan* pp. 71. The bold words are written italicized in the book.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. pp. 374. The bold words are written italicized in the book.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. pp. 375. The bold words are written italicized in the book.

Those three statements clearly explain that family has the most important role in education. The children's acts and attitudes in their daily friendship, their involvement in various places and institutions such as schools, moreover their perspectives and mindset regarding life are significantly dependent on how their parents educate them.

Regarding education itself, Ki Hajar Dewantara emphasized it as an effort which is not merely focused on improving the intellectual competence, moreover about the soul values in order to enable human being to live together with others in the community as stated below:

*“Pendidikan adalah salah satu usaha untuk **memberikan segala nilai-nilai kebatinan**, yang ada dalam hidup rakyat yang berkebudayaan, **kepada tiap-tiap turunan baru** (penyerahan kultur), tidak hanya berupa “pemeliharaan”, akan tetapi juga dengan “memajukan” serta “memperkembangkan” kebudayaan, **menuju ke arah keluhuran hidup kemanusiaan**”<sup>26</sup>.*

*(“Education is one of the efforts **to give all the values of philosophy**, which exist in the life of a cultured people, **to each new generation** (handing over culture), not only in the form of “maintaining”, but also by “advancing” and “developing” culture, **towards the nobility of human life**”).*

*“Soal Pendidikan itu bukan hanya bersifat pengetahuan atau “wetenschap” dari kaum ahli belaka, akan tetapi suatu soal yang mengenai tiap-tiap orang yang hidup Bersama di dalam masyarakat ...”<sup>27</sup>.*

*(“Education is not only knowledge or “wetenschap” from experts, but a matter that concerns every person who lives together in society...”)*

So, education is not merely at school. Education can be held anywhere considering the type of knowledge which would like to be learned.

### C. EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

What they study in cultural education actually are the thoughts passed down from their ancestors about life. As farmers, they study agricultural for the dried land with no irrigation and depend on rainwater to nourish the crops. They apply the indulgent cattle system which accommodates their habitat. Both girls and boys study cooking and cleaning their living space; house, field, *Sonaf* (Dawan, palace). In cooking, the Boti people have a unique method of

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pp. 344. The bold ones are as written in the book.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. pp. 433-434.



animal slaughter. They do not cut the throat, but instead pierce specific part of the neck. This method makes the slaughtered animal die quickly and there is no blood spilled from the animal's neck. Afterward, the animal is burned to remove the feathers. After completely cleaned, the animal is cut into pieces and the meat, head, legs and entrails are separated. They learn to build their various houses; *ume kebubu* (Dawan, round house), *Lopo* (Dawan, gathering house), and square house. In cleaning their living space, they clean regularly so there are no mosquitos, but only one or two found.

They study cultivation in their fields and do farming since they are circa 6 or 7 years old, so when they get 17 years old, they usually are capable of managing their own field. Likewise, Heka Neolaka, 19 years old, already has the field and various livestock; 1 cow, 2 goats, 10 pigs, and countless chickens. Almost every child raises chickens since they are 6 or 7 years old. Kolo, who is 6 years old, already raised his own chicken, though only one.



Figure 1: *Cleaning the cotton as the process of weaving*

Photo by: Octalyna Puspa Wardany at Sonaf Boti on December 6, 2021 using Canon 60D

They study about managing finances too. Koko Banuet who's 18 years old already had livestock; chickens and 2 pigs. She bought her first pig in 2017, when she was 13 years old, from her savings of selling woven blanket, sarong, and shawl. She started to study weaving from the first step; taking the cotton plant from its tree and processing it to be the thread by cleaning the cotton plant and spinning it. Then, she studied coloring the thread. Finally, doing the manual weave. For the first time, she can weave a shawl in three months. After

successfully doing one shawl, she studied to weave the blanket and sarong which can be accomplished in 3 years.



Figure 2: Spinning yarn as the process of weaving

Photo by: Octalya Puspa Wardany at Sonaf Boti on December 6, 2021 using Canon 60D



Figure 3: Rolling the dyed yarn to be ready to be woven

Photo by: Octalya Puspa Wardany at Sonaf Boti on December 6, 2021 using Canon 60D

Culture takes an important role in Boti education. Since childhood, all *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* adherents get usual to gather in *Sonaf* routinely for *Neon Tokos*, the ninth day in Boti week period<sup>28</sup>, welcoming the guesses, to be documented in certain film or television program production, and becoming resource persons for research interviews. The welcoming guesses events or involving in film production are the chances to study their traditional arts, such as *Pukul Gong* as the name of dancing and playing the dance music consist of gong and trommel, playing *juk*<sup>29</sup>, and sing their traditional songs. They study visual arts, such as painting and sculpt, as part of their architecture to decorate the house. They make wood sculptures too, but very rarely.

Indeed, their understanding about culture is not limited to the arts. They do understand that all human products are cultural (Dewantara, 2013: 342-343). According to Ki Hajar Dewantara (2013: 83), culture is described as “the result of human struggle, that is, its struggle against all the “natural” forces that surround it, and all the influences of the “age”, or its society, which both - nature and the age - cause constantly changing all the “forms” and “contents” of culture in the life of every nation”.

Part of the culture is *Adat*, or custom, or tradition. *Adat* becomes the key role in their education. It becomes the source and reference for everything in their lives, particularly in education (Dewantara, 2013: 491). *Adat* also becomes the guiding principles for the Boti people in conducting ceremonies and in their conception for preserving nature. Indeed, *adat* is not merely about tradition with their instruments, such as tools, rules, procedures, traditional speech, clothes, etc. *Adat* represents conformity and harmonization, relating to the interconnectedness of acts, situations, or matters (Dewantara, 2013: pp18). Tukan and Hasfaria further elucidate *adat* as the explanation on the being of human in all their essential dimensions which contains of elements, values, norms and rites and applied universally in their society so becomes the knowledge loaded of wisdoms and internalized in their society hereditary, rooted and binding (Tukan, 2018: 9).

And Boti indigenous community denominate their non-modern school as the cultural education. It is the school too. The school is beyond the buildings, certain equipment, uniform<sup>30</sup>, textbooks, curriculum, class of study, test

<sup>28</sup> Boti implements 9 days in a week. The last day, 9<sup>th</sup> day, is called *Neon Tokos* as the rest day for gathering at *Sonaf* or taking a rest at home. The complete explanation is in Chapter 5.

<sup>29</sup> *Juk* is a small guitar made of certain fruit which is dried and given strings.

<sup>30</sup> In Indonesia, commonly, the students should wear uniforms which are indicated their level of study; playgroup, elementary, junior high school, senior high school; certain purpose such as scout uniform; or indicated their school and even religion identity for the school based on religion such as Muhammadiyah and Pondok Pesantren.



scores, graduation, etc. as said by Roem Topatimasang (2018: 21) in *Sekolah Itu Candu* that “in the end, school is just a word, a term, a designation, a name, for a purpose and a true meaning which cannot be marked at all in the way it is formed, in the container in which it was born”. School can encompass a certain school of thought (Topatimasang, 2018: 15). Therefore, what the Boti indigenous community called their cultural education as school is actually correct.

Indeed, the daily life of the Boti community is knowledge as explained by Dewantara that education is not only knowledge from experts, but a matter that concerns every person who lives together in society (2013: 433-434). Moreover, the daily life of Boti which contains certain customs heredity that is proven able to sustain for centuries should be studied. It is not merely about survival methods. It is the knowledge related to managing nature with specific conditions as their habitat. It then becomes their local wisdom and knowledge which is constructed as cultural. Kyouzon-no-Mori Network (2016: 1) explained this in *Kikigaki* that “Humans’ daily life and their cultural roots are very closely related to the natural resources around where they live. They utilize natural resources such as paddy fields, fields, forests, and the sea in their surroundings for their daily livelihood and work. During the process of utilizing natural resources, it is also accompanied by the growth and development of local wisdom or knowledge and perspectives and thoughts that are passed down from generation to generation”. It is a precious asset, it is important for the younger generation to study and learn from the elders to develop their village and at once participate in developing Indonesia future (Kyouzon-no-Mori Network, 2016: 4).



Figure 4: Boti children who join the modern school and get cultural education  
Photo by: Octalyna Puspa Wardany at Sonaf Boti on August 8, 2022 using Canon 60D

Boti local wisdom in the division of children's education presents the cooperation between those attending modern schools and those receiving cultural education. Each type of school has its own strengths and weaknesses which can be combined in order to strengthen their village. Every child can respect each other regardless of their education background because all of them have important roles in their village. Finally, it can achieve the main purpose of education as the Boti indigenous people principle that is to be the independent individuals who are self-reliant and capable to fulfill their needs through their own efforts.

## CONCLUSION

Religion is related to education particularly to maintain, preserve, and nurture the religion itself. The Boti indigenous community understands this very well. Without refusing the modernity or even contemporality, the Boti indigenous community maintain a methodology to sustain and regenerate their Nusantara religion through cultural education. Furthermore, their wisdom on the division of education for their children is the methodology to sustain and regenerate their custom in the different eras with different ways of life.

The Boti indigenous community understands education is not merely at modern school. School can be held by doing their daily activities in real life. They recognize that education is to educate their next generation to be able to live while preserving their custom and nurturing their religion. Religion is not exclusive from daily activities but involves all aspects of life. Cultural education is the appropriate methodology to sustain and regenerate Boti's Nusantara religion and their customs.

Cultural education enables the kids have critical understanding about their live in the correlation with the environment and still follow their Nusantara Religion. Cultural education fosters the Boti children to be the independent human as well as adaptive to the changes and the developments over time. Cultural education presents the Boti children who do not lose their identity as the Boti indigenous community. Cultural education is an education methodology which is blending with daily live in all aspects of life.

This research is one case study of the indigenous community related to their Nusantara Religion. It will be enriched the study of indigenous community and the study of Nusantara Religion to do more research in other indigenous communities in the different location with different ecosystem.

## ENDNOTES

**Acknowledgment:** for INSIST (Indonesian Society for Social Transformation) as the school of thought which has shown critical consciousness and implemented it as well in daily live that enable the researcher to study and work on this research, IRS/ICRS (Inter-Religious Studies/Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies) for many value insights and critics in order to strengthen this research, CRCS UGM (Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies Program), Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Carlos Sanchez and our families.

**Author Contribution:** Octalya Puspa Wardany, S.E., M.Sn., Ph.D. cand. as the field researcher and writing the research result. Prof. Dr.Phil. Al Makin, S.Ag., M.A. and Dr. Samsul Maarif as senior researchers who were supervising and giving consultation for the implementation of this research and reviewing the research result writing.

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