

## Character Values in *Palangkahan* Tradition In The West Sumatra Community

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses the character values that were taken from the *palangkahan* tradition. The *Palangkahan* tradition that exist in West Sumatera society originates from the manuscript or texts obtained from the *murshid* or tarekat teachers. This tradition is still sustainable and carried out by the community, not only in the inlands of West Sumatera, but also in the coastal areas of West Sumatera. *Palangkahan* tradition is local wisdom of the people of West Sumatera which has been passed down from generation to generation, which is used before carrying out certain activities in their daily lives. The revealed character values can be used as guidelines for the development of Indonesian people with strong religious understanding based on local wisdom. The character values contained in this tradition are *mushawarah* (consultation), discipline, positive thinking, and love of culture.

**Keywords:** Character Values, Tradition, *Palangkahan*, West Sumatera.

### A. INTRODUCTION

Tradition is a custom, belief, and teaching that have been passed down from generation to generation and which is still practiced in society, specifically in Indonesia. As a large nation consisting of ethnics, Indonesia has various customs, cultures, and noble values that can become a guide in daily

life (Sutarto: 2012, 2). The diversity of culture, religion, and belief in the archipelago has colored the traditions and rituals that have been carried out by the community until today (Japarudin: 2017, 167).

The diversity of traditions in Indonesia is part of the symbolic expression as well as a form of acculturation of religion, ethnic, and local culture (Sutarto: 2012, 2) which is increasingly complex with the intersection of one particular tradition with other traditions that come later, both with culture and with religion. This study will examine the form of a religious tradition that is still ongoing the community and is written in a manuscript by a local ulama who has broad knowledge about character values.

Indonesia, known for its various religions and cultures, has a wide variety of traditions that reflect the uniqueness of their respective regions or places, one of which is religious tradition. Religious tradition is the main institution containing elements related to divinity or belief. Therefore, religious traditions are difficult to change because they have noble values related to people's beliefs (Abdullah: 2020).

It is hard to deny that the archipelago has attracted attention where there are numerous religious traditions with various types of message and meaning which are expressed in various forms and become the main source of the nation's cultural wealth (Hasaruddin, 2016: 166). Religious tradition is a primary institution that has been considered standard by the community who support its existence where it is related to divinity and belief. Therefore, it is referred to as a norm framework in life and behavior of community (Amras: 2015).

In addition, the study of character values from religious tradition also is included in the agenda of national development planning (RPJMN) 2020-2024, that is to develop the nation's culture and character based on the existing religious traditions in the community. The orientation of character building based on local wisdom is towards the understanding and using local wisdom as cultural heritage that can be used to overcome many issues in the country nowadays.

Character is an attitude and way of thinking, behaving, and interacting as individuals in life, acting and working together, in small circle of family, and a wider scope of community and nation. Character is also a part of a person's identity that has been formed in the process of life through a number of ethical

values in the form of mindset, attitude and behavior (Sibarani: 2014, 137-138).

Character cannot be passed down, it is built and developed consciously gradually through a process that is not instant. Character is not innate given from birth like fingerprints. Each person is responsible for his or her character. We have full control in our character which means we cannot blame others for our good or bad character because we are fully responsible. Developing character is our own personal responsibility (Gunawan: 2015).

In building character of nation, local wisdom become the main capital to develop the people. If that is achieved, there will be individuals who have the character that is in line with the nation's noble values and become social capital in daily social life. This orientation towards local wisdom has been overlooked by the spread of modern thoughts that are not in line with the Indonesian nation's character.

West Sumatera is one of the provinces in Sumatera Island that is rich with various of customs, arts, cultures and traditions which are living and preserved by the community. Some of the existing traditions include; *pacu jawi* (found in district of Sungai Tarab, Rambatan, Limo kaum, and Pariangan – Tanah Datar and Payakumbuh – Lima Puluh Kota), celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad in Pariaman, *debus* in Payakumbuh, *basapa* in Pariaman, *Tabuik* in Pariaman, *balimau* (bathin in welcoming the month of Ramadan), eating *bajamba* or *barapak*, *turun mandi*, *batagak pangulu*, *maliek bulan*, *talempong*, *palangkahan* and other traditions (Halim: 2018, Tarihoran: 2015, Sukmawati and Zubir: 2015, Alfalah: 2012 and M. Yunis dkk: 2018).

Although West Sumatera is rich with its religious tradition and character values, very few studies on this issue have been done. This paper is the results of study that have been conducted in some regions in West Sumatera, especially the *palangkahan* tradition that is still preserved by the community; in nagari Pariangan – Tanah Datar, Ulakan – Padang Pariaman and Balubus – Lima Puluh Kota. *Palangkahan* is from West Sumatera and is a heritage that is applied by in daily life, taken from the manuscript kept by a *Buya* or *Datuk* a *tarekat* disciple who is guided by his master or *guru*.

This tradition is very interesting to study because it is a preserved and practiced local wisdom of the community in their daily life. It is found out that the local wisdom derived from manuscripts or texts found in the Shattariyah and Naqshbandiyah sufi order (*tarekat*) with a *guru* or sufi master as a source

of reference or central figure in carrying out the tradition. This tradition is related to important matters in daily life like building a house, determining someone to be married to, time to start cultivate the rice field or farm, asking about disease that someone has, *batagak panghulu*, *taqwim khamsiyah*, to extent of a person's travel when visiting or wandering. These traditions have been carried out massively and preserved by the community until today.

From the explanation above, the research questions are; what are the source of reference for the community in carrying out the *palangkahan* tradition? How is the *palangkahan* tradition conducted in Minangkabau? and what are the character values that can be taken from the *palangkahan* tradition? The purpose of this study is to reveal and understand the *palangkahan* tradition and character values contained in the tradition. This study is expected to discover the *palangkahan* tradition and the character values in the tradition.

Based on the literature review, there is one research on *palangkahan* conducted by M. Yunis et al. entitled "*Palangkahan* and the ancient strategy in coastal Minangkabau community". Yunis et al examined the tradition of *palangkahan* in coastal area of Minangkabau, in Pariaman. *Palangkahan* is a cosmos projection, part of ancient astrology which was little known by people. It is sacred and has symbol of magic element like in the distribution of magic box in every kind of *palangkahan*. The strategy of *palangkahan* refers to the calculation of day in a Hijri calendar system, and that is considered normal because *palangkahan* is carried out in a region where the *shattariyah* sufi order reside.

In addition, we have not found any research on *pangkalan* tradition conducted before related to character values. So, this research is different from what was conducted by M. Yunis et al. because it focuses on the religious tradition and character values that can be taken from the tradition. The location of study is also different, in Pariangan village in regency of Tanah Datar, Padang pariaman and the region of Lima Pulu Kota.

This research uses qualitative descriptive method with a case study of *palangkahan* in Nagari Pariangan – Tanah Datar, Ulakan – Padang Pariaman and Balubus – Lima Pulu Kota in the province of West Sumatera. Data were collected through photo documentation of manuscripts and texts related to *palangkahan*, interview with the actors of *palangkahan* tradition, in this regard is the *murshid* or sufi order guru s in 3 (three) locations, and the Head of Local Traditional Community or *Ketua Kerapatan Adat Nagari* (KAN) *nagari*

Pariangan. This research was conducted in the province of West Sumatera, in the regency of Tanah Datar and regency of Padang Pariaman. Some regions of West Sumatera that still have this *palangkahan* tradition are Nagari Pariangan in the regency of Tanah Datar, Ulakan in the regency of of Padang Pariaman.

## B. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### What is *Palangkahan* and in what Context of Tradition

In the context of community and culture, it is common to find traditions that exist in the community life, from farming, *sedekah bumi* (give offerings to earth), supplication and eating together after harvest, going to rice field ritual, to determining good days. The traditions might have been preserved by the community through oral transmission and written way. In practice, determining good days is a common tradition among the community.

The word *Palangkahan* is taken from the word *langkah* or step; someone who walks will have the first step, so does the person who will build a house, he will have the first step to do it. Also, a person who is getting married, he will have first steps in the process. *Langkah* is understood as initial activity that determine the next moments. In a *maqalah* (religious saying) it is mentioned that, "the first foot step determines the end." What is found in the first step can be a direction to begin something, supplications and hope.

*Palangkahan* is often associated with fortune-telling, but actually they are different. Fortune-telling is a mix between inner vision and exaggeration by subjectivity of the fortune teller. The *palangkahan* tradition use Sufism as the basis. Philosophically, *palangkahan* is a wise way looking at the future. In looking at the future, one has to have maturity in planning, predicting, and calculating in a correct framework of analysis (Yunis dkk: 2018)

This tradition is related to the important matters in daily life like building a house, determining who to marry,<sup>1</sup> begin cultivating the rice field or farm

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<sup>1</sup> Usually the parents of the prospective bride meet the guru or murshid to ask about the suitability of the girl's household with the groom by offering the names of the two prospective brides. To see the compatibility and harmony between the families of the two parties, the name of the father of the bride and the groom is seen or counted. Meanwhile, to see the future descents and fortune in prospective household, what is seen or calculated is the names of the prospective bride and groom and the names of the fathers of the prospective bride and groom (interview with Tuanku Herry Firmansyah, Ulakan, Thursday, 12 Maret 2020).

field, asking about disease one is having,<sup>2</sup> *batagak panghulu*, *taqwim khamsiyah*, and calculation of a person's travel. The tradition of finding good days and months is so common that the skill in this field is passed down and written in a special book or *kitab*. People who want to begin an important matter, they usually come to those who have this skill in determining good day and ask about when and how the matter should be conducted in order to avoid mistake and loss, usually a *murshid* of a Sufi order or a guru who has learned directly from the *murshid*.

### **The Source of *Palangkahan* Tradition**

How *Palangkahan* tradition is done is based on the manuscript which is the work of Sufi order figure in each region. The manuscript is found in Nagari Pariangan – Tanah Datar, Ulakan – Padang Pariaman and Lima Puluh Kota.

A. The manuscript or the *Palangkan* text in nagari Pariangan – Tanah Datar.

The *Palangkahan* manuscript in nagari Pariangan is found in 3 (three) Sufi orders in the area, tht Shattariyah, Naqsyabandiyah and Sammaniyah. Although the existence of the three Sufir orders were not like in the past, the *palangkahan* tradition is still preserved in community. Each Sufi order has manuscript or *kitab* that become reference to how to conduct *palangkahan*.

#### **1. The *palangkahan* text of the Shattariyah Sufir order**

The *palangkahan* in Shattariyah Sufi order is still neatly stored by bapak Aswardi Sutan Tumanggung<sup>3</sup> in a notebook, a disciple of Sampuno Marajo, the *murshid* of Shattariyah order. This manuscript was written by pak Aswardi himself when he was attending the *tarekat* held in Surau Mudik Pariangan by Datuk Sampuno Marajo. According to pak Aswardi, the manuscript was written by himself in the 1950s (it means that the manuscripts is 70 years old and it is categorized as old manuscript because it has been more

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<sup>2</sup> For this, it is done in Nagari Pariangan. If the community complains of an unhealthy body condition, they will meet pak ASwardi Sutan TUmanggun. He is a student of Datuk Sampuno Marajo, the *murshid* of the Naqshabandiyah order in the Pariangan village. With the knowledge of *hisab*, the formula and instincts that pak Aswardi has, he can find out the disease that is being suffered by a person by referring to the book he wrote directly when he obtained this knowledge from his *murshid*.. (Wawancara dengan pak Aswardi Sutan Tumanggung, Pariangan, Rabu 4 March 2020).

<sup>3</sup> The interview was done on Wednesday, 4 March 2020 at a *Dangau* (small hut in the middle of rice field) in Pariangan.

than 50 years). Written by using lined paper, with Arabic Malay alphabet. The manuscript is still readable and used by pak Aswardi when there are people who ask about the *palangkahan* regarding the matter of health or medication.



Photo: the first page of the manuscript where there is about *palangkahan* for people who want to have medication (Collection of Aswardi Sutan Tumanggung Pariangan)

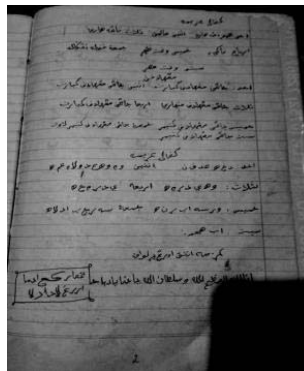


Photo: the second page of the *palangkahan* manuscript, collection of Aswardi Sutan Tumanggung Pariangan

## 2. The *palangkahan* Manuscript of the Naqshabandiyah order.

The *palangkahan* manuscript found in Naqshabandiyah order is the

collection of bapak Dalimi Kasim Datuak Mangkudun<sup>4</sup> (78 years of age). His *palangkahan* manuscript was written by himself directly when he was attending the religious gathering of the Naqshabandiyah order led by Shaykh ‘Abdul Kadim Balubuih, the *murshid* of the Naqshabandiyah order. The manuscript was written by using lined paper, in Malay language with Arabic alphabets. The manuscript is in good condition and still readable. This manuscript is also used by pak Dalimi only in family circle. Almost 80% from what is written the manuscript happened and was experienced by his family. The following is some photos of the *palangkahan* manuscript from the collection of Dalim Kasim Datuak Mangkudun;



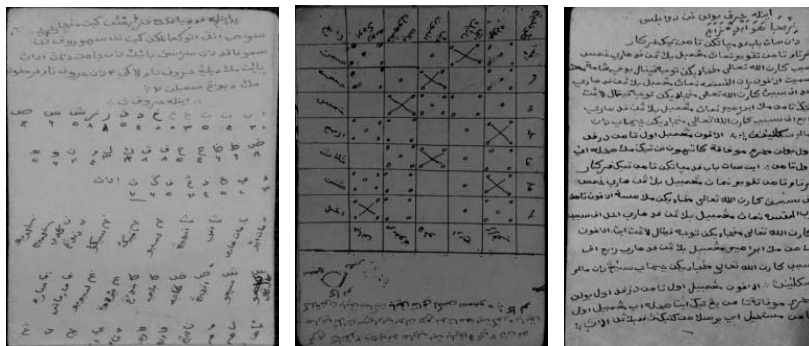
### 3. The *Ulakan* Manuscript.

This manuscript belongs to Tuanku Herry Firmansyah who is Tuanku Khalifah 15 from Shattariyah order from the line of Shaykh Burhanuddin Ulakan. This manuscript contains *palangkahan* that was written Muhammad Bakri. Based on the information written in the manuscript, it was written in 1961. This manuscript measures 14.4 cm x 19.8 cm with text size of 14.1 cm x 18.7 cm. The manuscript is still in good condition and readable. It uses local paper as its base and has 32 pages. It uses Arabic alphabets in Malay (Jawi). This manuscript is found at *surau* Pondok Ketek desa Koto Panjang, Ulakan – Padang Pariaman.

Below are some photos of the *Ulakan* manuscript;

<sup>4</sup> Interview was conducted on Wednesday, 4 March 2020 at the house of bapak Dalimi Kasim Datuak Mangkudun





#### 4. The Belubus Manuscript (text 1)

This manuscript contains explanation of *palangkahan* using *Bintang Dua Belas* (twelve stars) method. The *Dua belas bintang* originated from the materials in astronomy or *falaq*, which then became astrology and has the characteristic of *tajribat* (prediction based on habit). The names of stars are *shams*, *marikh*, *atharid*, *ramal*, *qamar*, and so on.

The Bintang Dua Belas manuscript which is being discussed in this study is the version from Shaikh Mudo Abdul Qadim Belubus, written in folio size manuscript. This manuscript, based on the paper and period of the writer activity, was written around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The manuscript is in good condition; the writing can be read clearly. Only the binding part is broken because the thread is deteriorated so that some parts of the manuscript are separated from the binding, but the arrangement is still in order. The manuscript is written using not so neat *khat Naskhi* (naskh script) but still readable easily. The ink used to write is black without rubric. The manuscript is written in Malay with Arabic alphabets.



Photos: The *Palangkahan* Manuscript is about the pulse travels in the human body, daily circular with the vibrations of the soul in the Arabic month count

#### 5. The Belubus Manuscript (text 2)

*Palangkahan* in Belubus Manuscript (text 2) is based on *ghalib* and *maghlub*, the pulse travel.. This manuscript was written by anonymous (*majhul*); indicated by the one of the khalifah Syaikh Mudo Abdul Qadim Belubus di Surau Tuo Belubus. The manuscript about this pulse travel can be used to determine the trip and best time to open business like selling or farming. The condition of manuscript is good. It uses lined local paper. The cover is made of thick carton and grey colored. The binding uses thread for each manuscript.

From paper and dating analysis in the text, the manuscript was produced in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The writing itself was in 1910s. The length and width of the manuscript is 30.5 cm x 20.9 cm. The manuscript volume is 100 pages. It is written in quite neat Naskhi script (*khat naskh*) and can be read clearly. The ink color used is black without rubrication.

#### 6. The Koto Tuo Mungka Manuscript

This manuscript is an elaboration of *Palangkahan* based on Ampek Galah Salapan. What interesting about it is that it contains pictures (illustrations) from Ampek Galah Salapan, also written with elaboration in each “*galah*” based on the Hijri calendar.

The physical condition of manuscript is good. The text is written on the lined local paper with black ink. The manuscript writing is predicted to take place in the 1940s according to other writing of manuscript that contain information about lessons in Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah (Islamic School) of Koto Tuo Mungka. The manuscript is written in Malay language with Arab alphabets in very neat *khat naskhi* so that it can be read easily. The manuscript has two pages and has illustration of Galah Salapan, and explanation about “*galah*” with the elaboration part being framed by square lines, located under the illustration. The manuscript writer is probably Shaikh Muhammad Jamil Sa’adi (d. 1970), the leader of Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah Koto Tuo.

#### 7. The Mungo Manuscript

This manuscript contains *ragam* (diagram) of Galah Salapan, in the form of front line corner. Each corner is written by the Galah Salapan name. This manuscript was only found one page with quite good condition and readable. There is no elaboration of this manuscript. There is indication that this manuscript is only for its writer, not for public so that the important part about

the meaning of each “galah” is not included in the writing.

### **Tradition of Reading *Pelangkahan* in Minangkabau**

In the science of *Pelangkahan* in Minangkabau, there are at least three important things to notice. These are about how to read *Palangkahan*, the time to see *Pelangkahan*, and the figure who read *pelangkahan*.<sup>5</sup> These three things will really help the text analysis of *pelangkahan* which is discussed in the next sub discussion.

The first about how to read *palangkahan*, there are some methods of how to read it, on of which is reading *palangkahan* by using “Ampek Galah Salapan”, “Bintang Dua Belas”, and “Reading Ghalib and Maghlub”. From three methods explained here, the “Ampek Galah Salapan” is the popular one, especially in Pedalaman Minangkabau.

The “Ampek Galah Salapan” method calculate the date and match it with the four elements of particular object or animal and other four elements as their antonyms.<sup>6</sup> From this process, the name Ampek Galah Salapan, derived.

The first four elements, if taken from objects, are water, soil, wind, and fire. If they are taken from animals, they are crocodile, cat, goat, and tiger. While other four elements, if the number is eight, they are the antonym of the former four elements, like the antonym of cat is mouse, as it understood.

Someone who will read *palangkahan* at first will be counted based on the date when he ask. After the date is obtained, then the first element will be mentioned to the date obtained. If he wants to find the match of the time to cultivate the rice field, if it is matched with the water element, he will succeed; he will not find drought. If he meets with the fire element, heat, probably he will not succeed. It could be that there will be famine, pest attack, or bad result. All of this was conveyed by a figure who gave the direction of *pelangkahan*. However, it needs to be emphasized that the results of this reading are only in the form of predictions (*tajribat*) which may not happen, but the *galib* happens.

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<sup>5</sup> These three points were drawn from anlyasis and observation in the field, from February 2020 to June 2020, from the figures of *pelangkahan* experts, with Abuya Shaikh H. Khatib Ilyas (96 years old).

<sup>6</sup> Taught by Tuanku Mudo Rasyid Zaini (1916-2008), according to information from Apria Putra (June 2020).

To read *palangkahan*, it is usually made in a diagram of eight directions. Shaykh Jamil Sa'adi wrote in his *Palangkahan* manuscript the date numbers in each direction, up to the number 30 (indicating the number of days 30). He then wrote down the meaning of the numbers, for example the date 1 is not suitable for farmin, only suitable for breeding livestock. This kind of writing will make it easier for the community to learn about *palangkahan*.

The second type of *palangkahan* uses "Bintang Dua Belas" method. This reading method refers to Abu Ma'syar al-Falaki,<sup>7</sup> a scholar of astronomy and astrology who is well-known as a wisdom expert. He wrote a book, which is still popular in astrology, namely the *Kitab Abu Ma'syar al-Falaki*. This book contains the foundation and direction of wisdom based on the twelve stars (zodiac). The book of Abu Ma'syar al-Falaki was translated into Malay, written in Arabic alphabets and published in Pulaupinang. The translation and publication of this book proves that this text is quite popular in the Malay world.

In Minangkabau, the Abu Ma'syar manuscript was manually translated and copied in a collection of wisdom books. One of the leading scholars in the inlands of Minangkabau, Shaykh Mudo Abdul Qadim Belubus (d. 1957) had copied the text of Abu Ma'syar al-Falaki, probably after receiving his certificate of practice, in Malay Arabic script (Arabic Melayu). His son.<sup>8</sup> His son, Haji Abdul Malik then printed a copy of the Abu Ma'syar text along with several other wisdoms in a small book called *Kitab al-Manaq* (Malik: t.th). The book of al-Manaq was printed many times, in Bukittinggi and in Padangpanjang, and was spread outside among the Tariqat experts in the inlands of Minangkabau.

The use of Abu Ma'syar al-Falaki by using *hisab jumal* as the basis (Butar Butar: 2017), using a formula, in the form of a combination of date numbers, number of letters, and the sum of them, all of which use the *Hisab Jumal*, questions from the public, from good days of farming, building houses, performing wedding feasts, to diagnosing diseases, are all predicted. Each has

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<sup>7</sup> Abu Ma'shar al-Falaki is an expert in science of wisdom or *ilmu hikmah* well-known Muslim astrologist, even he was considered as the first expert in *Falak* among Muslim community. He was born in 171 H and died in 271 H. One of his famous works until today is *Kitab Abu Ma'syar al-Falaki*.

<sup>8</sup> Some of the quotations from Abu Ma'syar al-Falaki were found in Ms. *Kitab Thabib dan Obat-obatan Syaikh Mudo Abdul Qadim Belubus*, edition Nurullah Dt. Angso (d. 2006)

a different formula that has previously been fully recorded in the introduction to the Book of Abu Ma'syar al-Falaki. For example, to find out a disease, the first number of count from the name of the client, then the number of days, and added and subtracted by the formula listed. The result of addition and subtraction, according to the formula stated in the book, will become a reference for the characters who read the *palangkahan*. Usually the best result is the lowest number. Each result in the form of a number has its own meaning, which is clearly explained in the text.

The part that is interesting, and occurs in the community, is the reading of *palangkahan* for couples who are getting married. As described above, the names of each are added, added by the number of days, and subtracted, so that the final result is found. If the end results show something good, for example the number one which is interpreted as a harmonious household, both of them will be happy, so will the bride's family. If the results show bad (not good) then the two families of the bride and groom will look for a way out to get a good result, because the marriage must take place. The trick is to change the name of a person so that the sum of the names becomes a good number (Rajab: 1950). When the marriage contract takes place, the new name for each bride will be announced. The public already knows that this name change is to match the name so that the reading in the *Pelangkahan* can be interpreted as a compatible partner.

The third method in *palangkahan* is to use *Ghalib* and *maghlub*, which is something that has become a habit (*tajarrubat*).<sup>9</sup> Usually the method is used for travel. For example, a one-day month trip is usually considered bad (not good), while a seven-day month trip is considered good. It can also be used in trade matters; gain or lose. In this method, the asker or client only determines the date or time of the activity. The date or time has been determined as lucky or unlucky, *nahas* or not *nahas*.

One of the references in this method is the *Tajul Muluk* book written by Acehnese scholars. At the beginning of this text there is a discussion of astronomy, namely about the procedures for determining the beginning of the month of Qamariyah based on *hisab* (astronomical count), and a discussion

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<sup>9</sup>The term *ghalib* and *maghlub* comes from the book *Tajul Muluk* (Surabaya: al-Haramain, no year).

of the good days of the month according to the *ghalib* and *maghlub*. The *Tajul Muluk* book was so popular that it was printed in various regions, even once printed in Egypt, to meet market needs.

Apart from *Tajul Muluk*, there are local texts regarding this *ghalib* and *maghlub*, including texts given by Syaikh Mudo Abdul Qadim Belubus. He wrote the *Risalah Thabib dan Obat-obatan* (Treatise on Tabib and Medicine) in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This work is a compilation of the sciences he learned from several scholars and wisdom experts at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The contents of this text include Minangkabau natural carpentry, astrology of Abu Ma'syar al-Falaki, traditional medicine, knowledge of breeding livestock and animals (such as horses and cats), and knowledge of good days and good months. This text was written by several of his students and biological children. There are at least three text copies of this manuscript.

Another point that must be understood in the science of *pelangkahan*, apart from the method used, is the time to read *palangkahan*. in Minangkabau, not all things are then seen with the science of *palangkahan*. Only for important activities the *palangkahan* is used, especially in determining marriage, commerce, building houses, and important trip.<sup>10</sup> At certain times *palangkahan* is used to solve life problems such as finding lost items or knowing the direction of missin people. In this condition, the *palangkahan* does not provide a detailed location, but only in the form of cues that indicate where the item was lost or stolen.

In several activities, *palangkahan* was accompanied by ingredients. For example, when building a house, besides being told the right and good time, it is also equipped with ingredients in the form of spices which are believed to give blessing to the *managak rumaht* activity (building a house) (Malik: t.th). Previously, the spices were recited a prayer (or in the local term is *mantera*) which contained asking for protection with Alllah accompanied by quotes from the Quran veses and *kalimah tayibah* (zikr, remembering Allah). Not only when building a house, on important journeys, such as *merantau* (travel far for home to do business or find job for earning), *mantera* were recited apart from performing them according to *palangkahan*.<sup>11</sup> The *Mantera* for

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<sup>10</sup> Based on interview with Abuya Syaikh H. Khatib Ilyas (96 years old), in Titian Dalam, District of Gunung Omeh, Regency of Limapuluh Kota, February 2020

<sup>11</sup> *Mantera Pelangkahan* like *Mantera Qaf Empat Puluh*. Interview with Buya Yaman Habib, Belubus, informed by Apria Putra, February 2020.

starting the journey contains prayer for protection during the trip and seek for blessing and profit.

The figures who can convey *pelangkahan* must have the certificate or *ijazah* as a recognition that he has received knowledge (also has *Palangkahan* text) from the previous teacher, normally he is also an *anaksiak* (close to religion, or a *santri*).<sup>12</sup> It is customary that *palangkahan* is asked from an *anaksiak* or a religious scholar 'ulama' to foresee issues such as problems in life or good day in *surau*. Knowledge and blessing from the ulama are important for Minangkabau community, especially the inlanders. One word from the *surau* master is something needed, even it can bring spiritual calmness for the community.

In practice, people meet the ulama in *surau* who have been waiting to serve the community and answer questions or give opinion to solve problems in life. The ulama will give solutions based on *akhlak* or good manners. Advice how to solve problems or even cure disease was listened to carefully by the people. The ulama start with the advice to be patient and then give the solution in a form of supplication or *du'a* or potion (if it is health issues). If people ask for guidance about farming, business, marriage, and others, the ulama will see the prediction based on *palangkahan* knowledge. The ulama mention the prediction by heart because they often say it. For rare issues, they try to find out in the existing *palangkahan* books. There are also ulama in *surau* who convey their prediction without using the *palangkahan* knowledge as explained before. They use *kashf* (intuition from the result of religious rituals to God) in determining *Palangkahan*, although only few of them.

After giving a description of *Palangkahan*, usually, Ulama are given alms by the people who ask. Alms giving is a form of gratitude and respect for the cleric earlier. The amount was not determined, and was not requested by the cleric, only sincerely from the community.

*Palangkahan* in Minangkabau becomes characterized feature that is still preserved in the villages. Although there are objections to the *Palangkahan* tradition by a number of people because it is considered heresy, along with modern life which partly erodes the existing traditions. The *surau* which is the object of observation in this paper is almost never devoid of people asking

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<sup>12</sup> Based on observation that the master of *Pelangkahan*, based on field observation, are *ulama* or *labai* in *surau*.

questions about life, including about *pelangkahan* in their business and life. This indicates that *pelangkahan* is local wisdom that is able to survive in the midst of changing life today.

It is not only practiced, *pelangkahan* passed down to the next generation. In fact, there are some young people who deliberately learn *pelangkahan* with various purposes, including to provide suggestions and motivation in business, travel and career.

### Character Values in *Palangkahan* Tradition

We can contextualize the assessment, not only based on text, but also practices in the community using the *palangkahan* manuscript. A manuscript not only provides written information as depicted in the text, there is another dimension that can be interpreted when it is connected to the community where the text is “alive”.



Photo: How to read *Palangkahan Galah Salapan* based on Hijri calendar

In the context of character, the *palangkahan* manuscript provides meaning and value of (1) *musyawarah* (consultation) before carrying out an activity, (2) discipline, (3) love of culture, (4) reading natural signs, and (5) social relationships. These five things are described as follows:

#### 1. *Musyawarah* (Consultation)

*Palangkahan* teaches people to have *musyawarah* (consultation) before one starts farming, getting married, doing business, building house and other life issues. This *musyawarah* begins in family as the smallest circle of community to the prominent figures in community, the ulama, master of *palangkahan*. *Palangkahan* makes someone not to act alone, without knowledge of the people around him.

In Minangkabau community, *mushawarah* is very important. It is an important element in building society and strengthening social ties; by



understanding each other. There is almost no decision made without *mushawarah*. In the social system in Minangkabau there is a "Balai Ruang", a traditional house without walls. The function of this place is to have *mushawarah*, to decide on an activity, or to resolve disputes. This meeting space is made without walls, meaning that it can be seen and known by the public. It also means that the *mushawarah* and decisions are open to the public, not covered up.

Leadership in Minangkabau is held by the rulers of each tribe. However, the highest power is held by consensus, collective *mushawarah*. There is an adage, *picak lah dapek dilayangkan, golong lah dapek digulangkan*, which is a decision based on *mushawarah* that can be actualized in the society. From here it is also known that the democratic system in Minangkabau is when you are at the negotiating table in *Balai Ruang*.

*Palangkahan* also implies the value of this *mushawarah*. A person who is getting married, does not immediately make a contract without a procession. Apart from negotiation to agree on the marriage that is about to happen. The family of the bride and groom also discusses how good or how suitable the couple is to the ulama, master of *Palangkahan*. There the motivation gets stronger, as a result of the advice and reading of the *palangkahan*.

## 2. Discipline

Time is something that is always reminded by religion. There are many religious texts, both from the Quran and hadith which show the importance of paying attention to time for Muslims. There is a sura in the Quran, *al-asr*, which means time. It tells about the importance of time and warning to those who neglect misuse the time. One of the well-known scholars from Saudi Arabia, Syaikh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah, wrote a book about the position of time in religion, titled *Qiimatuz zaman 'indal ulama* (The value of time in the view of ulama). The importance of time is also taught in the practice of *palangkahan*. One does not simply do activities or plans without looking at the best times. The use of Hijri calendar also gives the impression that a Muslim is really required to use Islamic calendar in his activities.

## 3. Love of culture

*Palangkahan* raises and adds to the community's passion towards the tradition passed down from generation to generation through the media of manuscripts or books. There are three important things related to loving

culture: (1) trying to find, (2) trying to have ownership, and (3) trying to enjoy the culture. People who love culture, will try to find, possess, and the tradition in their daily life.

#### 4. Reading natural signs

In Minangkabau there is a well-known saying, *alam takambang menjadi guru*, which means the Minangkabau people use nature as knowledge, or prediction. In other part, there is local wisdom, *gabak di ulu tando ka ujan, cewang di langik tando ka paneh* (black clouds means rain will come, and bright sky means the day will be hot), which shows the ability of Minang people to read natural signs and make use of it. If there are signs of rain, they will plant crops to get rain water for plant fertility. When the dry season is marked by clear skies, they will dry rice, cocoa, corn, and others. The wisdom of reading nature has become common knowledge, which is passed down from one generation to another.

*Palangkahan* is also performed based on the reading of natural signs; the travel of stars, the habit of recurring of certain dates, and the meaning of certain mathematical calculations (astrology). By connecting *palangkahan* and the wisdom of reading natural signs, it proves the value of this wisdom in the society where there is an adage of *alam takambang jadi guru*. It should be underlined that reading these natural signs only in the context of *tajribat* (repeated habits), not always certain. Sunny sky does not always mean hot weather, or black clouds does not always mean a sign of rain. This is an important thing and has been emphasized by the scholars who perform *palangkahan* that they need to keep the Islamic faith, as the essential determinant from God, while nature only give signs.

#### 5. Social relationship

*Palangkahan* has also strengthened social ties in the community, especially with the ulama in the area. A person who will do important things will ask the opinion of ulama about good day for the activity that he want to complete. This indirectly strengthening the relation between community through *surau* institution. This relation is built because *surau* still has a strong social role.

### E. CONCLUSION

The *Palangkahan* tradition that exist in West Sumatera society originates

from the manuscript or texts obtained from the *murshid* or tarekat teachers. This tradition is still sustainable and carried out by the community, not only in the inlands of West Sumatera, but also in the coastal areas of West Sumatera. *Palangkahan* tradition is local wisdom of the people of West Sumatera which has been passed down from generation to generation, which is used before carrying out certain activities in their daily lives.

*Palangkahan* is a form of local wisdom with cultural and religious nuances Minangkabau. *Palangkahan* is a wise perspective on the future. In looking at the future, people must have mature planning, prediction, and calculation in a proper analytical framework which is still being carried out by the people in Nagari Pariangan in Tanah Datar Distric, Ulakan in Padang Pariaman Regency. The implementation of this tradition is based on the sources in the form of ancient manuscripts or manuscripts owned by tarekat scholars in the region. Many values can be revealed from *palangkahan* tradition and viewed from character values such (1) *mushawarah* before performing an activity, (2) Discipline, (3) Love of culture, (4) Reading natural signs, and (5) Social relationship.

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