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13

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The human life cycle is well respected by cultures around the world. Therefore ceremonies, rituals, and traditions are performed to honor it. This starts at the 4th beginning of life with newly born babies. One of the rituals performed by Acehnese people living in Blangporoh, South Aceh, Indonesia, is naming babies. This ethnographical study collected data related to the naming of babies through field observation, interviews, and documentation. Based on qualitative data analysis, it was found the ritual consisted of a series of activities. The ritual was begun by reciting *Barzanji* (chants for Prophet Muhammad), then followed by giving gifts, shaving hair, naming the baby. For females, there was also a circumcision ritual. Those activities had a certain meaning for the local people since the early days, as a way to initiate and introduce the baby to the community and religion. The entire series of rituals not only celebrates and acknowledges the child, but also affirms its connection to the community, heritage, and culture. Besides, naming the baby is an important first step for the family to integrate the new baby into a progressively expanding set of kinship, fictive kinship, and other types of social relationships, thereby making it part of these social structures.

Key Words: Life ritual, Names, Onomastics, Aceh, Peucicap

Labor and childbirth are considered sacred processes in the human life cycle. People of different cultures throughout the world respect this process with celebrations, ceremonies, or rituals that have special significance for the members of traditional societies (Manan, 2021). These celebrations of a new birth begin as soon as a baby is born, and can consist of several interrelated rituals.¹ For example, in Kashmir, a newborn Hindu baby is welcomed with a range of rites that include blessing songs, giving gifts for mother and baby, and offering happy distribution of sweets. In the tradition of Islam, the baby is given a bath immediately after birth followed by whispering *azan* (Arabic, calls for prayer in Islam) into the baby's right ear by the *imam* (priest) (Dar & Thirumurugan, 2016; Manan, 2019). In the Indian Muslim community living in the United Kingdom, as reported by Gatrad and Sheikh (2001), soon after the *azan* is whispered, the baby is fed with a small piece of softened dates, which is rubbed gently into the baby's upper palate. In case dates are not available, they can be replaced by something sweet such as honey.

Traditional societies that are bound by a religious belief system respect a newborn as a gift from God. Accordingly, rituals are performed to introduce the new arrival to its new environment and human society (Behruzi et al., 2013). Within many communities, those rituals were considered as a milestone; something that must be performed in the life of a person (van Gennep, 1960): the first rite of passage in the human life cycle. Besides the expression of joy, these rituals are performed to both ensure that the newborn baby is received properly by the community and to demonstrate to the community that a newborn baby is accepted by the father as his own (Khademi et al., 2016).

This traditional ritual precedes modernization, but the custom of initiating a newborn is still preserved in rural areas, and strong cultural bonds are maintained within the communities. Oraon people in Bangladesh, for instance, still launch that kind of sacramental rite during the seventh or eighth month of the prenatal period, performed as a way to predict the sex of the baby. Barua (2014) comments that such rituals relate to the unavailability of proper medical infrastructure, thus the people relied on traditional rituals as media to diagnose the baby's sex in the womb. This sort of ritual, preparing for a newborn baby, is

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¹ Rituals are about the expression of a wish or a fact in symbolic form. In other words, "they refer to another reality behind the directly observable one." Rituals "bring society together as they manifest with each individual the feeling of the dependence and strength gained from membership and participation in the social group" (Durkheim, 1915). To broadly summarize the theory on ritual, scholars note that rituals are communicating [ritual says something to its participants] and clarifying social reality, as well as actually establishing it (Manan, 2015).

observed also in other areas of the world, regardless of the economy, health infrastructure, and other circumstances.

The value that people place upon the process of labor and childbirth is more-or-less universal, but its expression depends on culture and traditions which differ from one society to another. Moreover, the different religious traditions infuse rituals for the newborn. Malinowski (as cited in Khasanah, 2011) describes labor as a very important focus of attention. People consider this to be a critical period because it could harm the fetus and mother. Therefore, the period of pregnancy and labor receives close attention from the community with strategies such as traditional rituals, offerings, and so on (Manan, 2019). Those aim to provide an immediate sense of connection as well as the inclusion of the newborn into the clan, tribe, or community.

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Giving a name is a ritual following the birth of a baby; it may be done immediately after birth or several days after birth. The procedures of naming babies, as part of the infant's integration into the community which acknowledges him or her as one of its members, are complementary to the need to distinguish humans from one another. Within the procedures, the baby-naming ritual tries to delineate particular attributes of the new appearance in the community by imprinting them with an uttered sign, which possesses certain pertinent meanings for the group. Likewise, by the given name, the pedigree of families, relatives and all related bloodlines can be made distinctive. The individual human being carries his or her name as a figurative aspect of him or her. To establish this, to praise the individual and have a good name for him/her, a series of rituals are held.

Associated with name-giving and certain other connections, Mill (1974 as cited in Bodenhorn & Bruck, 2006) makes the distinction between signification and implication. He proclaims that names signify but fall short of implicating. In addition, an appropriate name is solely a disentangling label. This hints at an interpretation by some that names force someone to relate to particular ideas or objects in people's minds. Thus, names have no implication, according to him. Contrarily, Colman (2008) argues that names may possess utilities and unlimited

significations. Intrinsically, names do not identify individuals one by one. A name may be complemented¹⁰ by other ones. As an example, in Kenya the traditional naming scheme has kinds of names—given names, kinship names, clan names, spiritual names, and praise names. However, we can think of giving a name simply as a significant milestone in a person's life as the name becomes attached to his/her identity.

As naming newborn babies is one part of the life cycle rituals, one that is inevitable to be conducted, several rules need to be followed. The name assigned to the newborn should be based on certain criteria. Parents ought to determine the applicable, appropriate, and acceptable names for their children. Young fathers and mothers surely do not want to see their children having problems with the names they have given them (Askuri & Kuipers, 2019). One viral case occurred in Indonesia as a man named his son *Tuhan* (God). Although some parties, mostly from Islamic associations, asked him to change the name, the man who was named *Tuhan* persisted in not changing as the name was a gift of his parents (Askuri & Kuipers, 2019). It signifies the process of giving a name to Indonesian people, as most Indonesian societies still tightly determine the selection.

Naming babies can lead to the formality of giving a name according to whatever the government implements in the country. In Iceland, for example, the gender of the child and the official catalog of baby names provide something of a guidance for young parents to choose the names of their children (Willson, 2009). People in Tajikistan must choose their baby's name from the 3000 legally recognized names provided by the government (Asia-Plus, 2015). Similarly, the Japanese should select their baby's name considering the spelling in the writings utilized in¹⁶ the country according to government policy. Although the Japanese language is written with an admixture of *kanji* (Chinese characters), *katakana* and *hiragana* syllabaries (Japanese characters), *romaji* (Roman characters), and Arabic numerals, they are only allowed to use *kanji*, *katakana* and *hiragana* (Unser-Schutz, 2019). Vhevanda societies in South Africa follow the inherited local custom that only paternal grandparents and other elder guardians of the tradition are bestowed with the authority to name infants, even though these elders sometimes use this prerogative to embed messages of a contemptuous or admonishing nature in the names that can stoke conflicts (Mahwasane & Tshifaro, 2019). Younger parents tend to fight this practice by taking over the control of naming their own babies. Even the government has become involved in this process.

Even internationally and locally adopting parents in the United States of America, who are not the physical parents of the children, consider that naming babies, particularly first names, is vital due to enhancing outcomes within their

families (Pilcher et al., 2020). The assignment of a name to a newborn baby exposes the diverse potential connections that this human individual has not only with the community of his or her family and relatives but also with the wider society into which the child grows. With the cultural values embodied in a naming ceremony, a community may reveal old mythological notions regarding the connection between the cosmos and its manifestation in the human body, as the anthropomorphic exemplification of the cosmic order (Doja, 2006). Philosophically, the given names relate to the metaphysical order of the universe, which is proven by some rituals of giving a name being held from the distant past until the present time.

Name-giving rituals are highly affected by culture and religion. Among Christians, baptism provides the ritual context. Some people in Albania beseech the guests invited to their newborn ceremony to designate their baby's name (Doja, 2006). The Albanians have a newborn ceremony that is different from baptism. Baptism is acceptance of the child into the Christian faith and is generally also the name-giving rite in Christian countries. Nevertheless, baptism is rarely integrated into naming rituals of pre-Christian origin. Additionally, the newborn babies in Albania are christened in church, after they are labeled by their final name in the ceremonies conducted specifically for that matter. This is specific to the Albanian case. Most Christian groups do not have a name-giving ceremony separate from baptism. This is not unlike the view of the Oreon Buddhists in northern Bangladesh that their tradition of child delivery, including naming arrangements, is a purity ritual, although some procedures in the ritual may differ from other Buddhist ethnic groups (Barua, 2014). On the contrary, Japanese parents are reluctant to be involved in ceremonious activities associated with the naming process, due to the slight social burden of naming their babies (Unser-Schutz, 2019).

In the Islamic tradition, selecting the good name is a must, and it is done usually while performing the ritual of sacrificing a goat or sheep, which is known as *aqiqah* (Gatrad & Sheikh, 2001). Other societies, such as the Igbo people in Africa as explained by Anyachonkeya (2014), also consider that a name must deliver a certain meaning referring to prayers and expectations for the baby. In addition, there have been various reports on the belief that a personal name contributes to the power of its bearer. According to Anyachonkeya (2014), a given name can affect the bearer by the expression of antagonism held by the name giver — usually parents — toward the named person. Thus, the name can have an impact on the **19**sonality as the child identifies himself with his name. Moreover, a name **plays a significant role in the organization of one's ego and behavior** (Murphy, 1957). For the Mashona people in southern Africa, names are very important because they are seen as very closely related to the individuals

and their existence. For example, when a baby often cries, it is a sign of a spirit demanding to change the current name to a new one (Wieschhoff, 1937). The Javanese communities in Indonesia believe that giving a name to their infant encloses an extensive communal element. One manifestation is that such action can reflect social undercurrents within the local area (Askuri & Kuipers, 2019).

The traditional rituals for the newborn, which are frequently influenced by religious values, have established status and meaning in societies. As an example, people of Logoli, in Kenya, consider the rituals performed for the newborn as a prelude of rituals embedding the baby in its new environment as well as introducing it to the early education of religion (Kayeli, 2012). Similarly, the Acehese community always echoes *bang²* and *qamat³* (a call to pray) to newborn babies, both male and female. This ritual is intended to make the baby become a person who always believes in Allah the Almighty and the Prophet Muhammad (Manan, 2020). Platenkamp (2010) describes such rituals as rituals to introduce the baby to society: the process of introducing and socializing. Hence, the initiation to Islam begins in the early days of a person in Islamic society, especially in Aceh.

Such rituals exist widely within the community of Islam. Khademi et al. (2016) explain customary rituals for a baby in Islam; one of them is giving the name. The general purpose of giving the name is to distinguish a person from others, but it also becomes the right of the child from his father to have a good and meaningful name. Islam taught that a newborn is as clear as colorless white paper. Parents should educate the baby about the value of Islam, starting with the beginning of life. One part of this effort is to choose a good Islamic name.

Acehnese people, known as a society within the bounds of *sharia*, also have a distinctive tradition in naming babies; it is an Islamic traditional ritual (Haidari, 2019). Since the introduction of Islam to Aceh in the 9th century (Hasjmy, 1994), the tradition of giving a name has been intertwined with earlier beliefs and customs, which makes it even more complex and more sophisticated. These

² What one must say when the one who calls to prayer (Arabic, *muazzin*) finishes reciting "the call to prayer" (Acehnese and Indonesian, *azan*).

³ "The call to begin prayer" (Arabic, *iqamah*) is recited by the caller who calls them to begin to pray as follows: *Allāhu akbar* 2x (Allāh is the most great), *ash-hadu al-lā ilāha illallāh* 1x (I bear witness in my heart that there is no deity except Allāh), *ash-hadu anna Muḥammadan rasūl allāh* 1x (I bear witness in my heart that Muhammad is the messenger of Allāh), *hayya 'alas-salāh* 1x (make haste towards prayer), *hayya 'alal-hayāt* 1x (make haste towards welfare), *qad qāma tis-salāh* 2x (stand for prayer), *Allahu akbar* 1x (Allāh is the most great), *Lā ilāha illallāh* 1x (there is no deity except Allāh).

traditions still exist until the present day. In Aceh, people preserved and maintained such traditions, as portrayed in the people living in the village of Blangporoh, South Aceh. They still maintain the tradition, consisting of a series of rituals with distinctive meanings that express traditional values which must be preserved. In addition, this tradition is one of the ways to connect the newborn into a progressively expanding set of kinship relations, besides giving him/her a starting point in life and a road map home. Therein lies the significance of studying the meaning and traditional values of those rituals.

Methodology

This is an ethnographic study applying qualitative methods. The data were gathered from 2020 to 2021 using meticulous field observation and in-depth interviews, as well as document study to gain related and significant data. Then, qualitative data analysis was done following Miles and Huberman (1994), namely data reduction, data display, and concluding.

Results and Discussion

The ceremonies for celebrating newborn babies and giving the name consist of several rituals, as explained in the following.

The recital of the *barzanji*⁴ at the *khanduri*⁵, performed to symbolize the process of “bringing the baby down to the earth”, especially for the first baby (Acèhnese *aneuk phōn*), has become a tradition in Blangporoh village. Reciting *barzanji* was common in a social religious event as in *khanduri mò'lōt*⁶ or

⁴ In Acèh, *kitāb barzanji* is used as the main source and it has already inspired the 'ulamā' of the boarding school to write other similar works in the summary of *seulawet* and the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad. The difference is that the summary works of the Prophet's birth are not written in Arabic. It is not the same as the original *kitāb* which is written in Arabic. The name *barzanji* is taken from the writer of the *kitāb* (book). That is, Syekh Ja'far al-Barzanji bin Husén bin Abdul Karim (Manan, 2015).

⁵ The Acèhnese people sometimes say *kenduri*, *kanduri*, *kawuri*, *kauri*, *kenuri* and *kanuri* instead of the word *khanduri*. *Khanduri* (Indonesian, *kenduri*) is a popular Islamic term in Southeast Asia, indicating a ritual meal given on a number of occasions. Islamic prayers and blessings are often part of the *khanduri* and include Islamic elements to the ritual meal in order to make it essentially an Islamic festivity (Federspiel, 1995).

⁶ The *khanduri mò'lōt* is performed in all villages either in the *mò'lōt* month (on or after the 12th day of Rabī' al-Awwal, the third month of the year) or in one of the two following months. From this the two subsequent months derive their names of “younger brother *mò'lōt*” (Acèhnese, *adòë mò'lōt*) and “final *mò'lōt*” (Acèhnese, *mò'lōt aké*). During a *khanduri mò'lōt*, a 'ritual meal' is also prepared and consumed. Those who live in other

circumcision and marriage rituals. Recital of it is an expression of happiness (Manan, 2015), and is also deemed a religious service or a kind of worship. In other parts of Indonesia, such tradition is termed *kenduri* or *kenduren* (Javanese language). It is conducted merely to rejoice in the natal day of a Javanese infant. A similarity between Acehese and Javanese people is that the ceremony held is not mainly for naming the baby (Askuri & Kuipers, 2019).

The recital of *barzanji* was held early in the morning. The *barzanji* was recited by a group of Islamic traditional educational institutions (*dayah*) under the instruction of a Sheikh (Acehese *gurée*). The baby was placed in a decorated rattan swing (Acehese *ayōn awé*) in front of the *barzanji* gro¹ by a maternal relative of the baby. It is said that the recital of the *barzanji* is an expression of love for the Prophet Muhammad and that the reciters and those listening will thereafter get “help” (Acehese *sy¹ feuat*) in the afterlife. First, they started by sitting on the floor close together. There is a lack of formality, but solemnity is significant. As it is about to begin, a small white incense (Acehese *keumenyan putéh*) is burned and its fragrance helps intensify the spiritual atmosphere. The *sūrah al-Fātihah* is recited and its merit flows directly to the Prophet, his wives, his descendants, his companions his followers, those who are dead and those still alive (Manan, 2015). This part of Alquran was a commencement of ¹most every ceremony in Islam as it is named *umul kitab* (the core of Quran). As the white incense is burned at the opening of the recital of the *barzanji* at the naming of the baby, the following *do'a* is uttered:

Bismillāhir-Rahmānir-Rahīm.

In the nam¹ of Allāh, the merciful, the especially merciful.'

Hai kēmēnyan putih, ambo tau asal mulo angkau.

'Hai white incense, I know the origin of your creation.'

Angkau jadi dari sir Allāh dan sir Muhammad.

'You are created from the sacredness of Allāh and Muhammad.'

Angkaulah yang banamo burru ¹wāhum.

'You are named *burru da'wahum* (calling something).'

Angkaulah yang ambo imbau dan suruah sakatiko.

'You are the one whom I call and ask for a moment.'

Angkaulah yang menyamapaikan niaik ambo

'And you are the one who fulfills my intention.'

¹ villages belonging to the same collection of villages (Acehese, *mukim*) are the guests of a single village and receive a formal invitation through a messenger of the head of the village (Manan, 2015).

This is the *do'a* for burning incense (Acèhnese, *do'a tot keumenyan*). The leader, who is well acquainted with *barzanji* and who has a good chanting voice, takes lyrics of several Arabic verses from it. Each contains appeals to Allāh to give the highest dignity to the Prophet, his ancestors and his descendants and merit to his companions, his followers, participants, and all Muslims (Manan, 2015). At the same time, as the smoke of incense is billowing, the first lyrics of verses from *barzanji* are recited by the leader.

The purpose of burning white incense, it is said, is to call up the angels so that they will pray together with the *barzanji* reciters. Their prayers will then be carried to Allāh by the angels, at the same time reporting to Him that the *barzanji* has been done for Nadia.⁷ Then, the *imām* takes the microphone and he says to all the people in attendance that the recital of the *barzanji* today is for the new baby, Nadia, in this way 'naming the baby'. He continues: "We all hope that she will always obey Allāh and both her parents and will devote herself to her family, to her religion and her state." The *imām* together with his twenty followers then pray for the welfare of the Prophet Muhammad, which is called *seulawet* in Arabic, three times with the following translation: "O Allāh, we call down blessings on our master Muhammad, the illiterate Prophet⁸, and on his family and his companions, and we greet them all in peace." The chant is then followed with the *sūrah* of *al-Fātiḥah* (the first *sūrah* of the Quran), which is recited once. After that, the recital of the *barzanji* begins through a microphone and loudspeakers. As a result, the sound of the recital can be heard throughout the village. First, one religious person recites it, and after that, it is recited by each of the other reciters in turn (Acèhnese, *meugiléran*). When one reciter⁹ feels tired, then another reciter starts and at a certain part of the *barzanji* book, the reciters recite together. Whilst this is going on, many cakes, cookies and other snacks are served by the baby's maternal grandfather for the reciters and the other guests.

At first, the *barzanji* is recited while sitting on the mat; all reciters taking turns and all followers stand up when one of the reciters recites the phrase *nūran yatala'la u sanāh* (Arabic, with the very bright shining). They then recite the verses in Arabic from the *barzanji* book together while standing.

⁷ Other villagers with whom I discussed the burning of white incense (Acèhnese *keumenyan puteh*) at the start of the recital of the *barzanji* did not answer. They seemed reticent to answer my question. Their only answer was, "Burning incense is a habit from our previous elders' culture that cannot be forgotten when the *khanduri* is started".

⁸ The Prophet's illiteracy is considered proof of the divine origin of the finely poetic Quran.

⁹ In Blangporoh the reciters were teachers at Sheikh Muda Waly's boarding school, the *imām*, the muezzin who calls people to pray (Acèhnese *bileu*), and the one who cleans the mosque of Blangporoh village (Acèhnese *khadam*).

It is said that these verses are Abdul Muthalib's poem for his grandson, Muhammad. After his birth, Muhammad was cradled in his arms while being taken around the Kaaba (the shrine of Islam or 'Allāh's house') in Mecca reciting these poems. The group of performers stood as a symbolization that the soul of the Prophet Muhammad comes to the *barzanji* group because his name is recited. "What we practice today is what the Prophet's grandfather has done for him. Therefore, we all have to stand up to honor the coming of his soul." Many villagers say that anytime a person prays for the Prophet Muhammad's welfare, his soul will come to him or her.

At this time, the baby is taken from the decorated rattan swing by the maternal relatives one after another, each holding the baby up in his hands just as high as his chest. One of the *barzanji* reciters brings a small tray containing five sweet cakes called *agar-agar* pudding ('jelly cakes'). They are made from flour, sugar, salt, and 'vanilla essence' (Acèhnese *panili*), rice flour and clove leaves in five different colors and given by the baby's aunt (mother's sister).¹⁰ The baby is then brought around to the middle of the group. While reciting the *barzanji*, the *imām* and the other *barzanji* reciters¹¹ take *agar-agar* pudding and give it to the baby to taste. This ritual is called *peucicap* ('giving first taste') by Blangporoh villagers.

The ritual of *peucicap* is performed by religious men (Acèhnese *ureueng malém*) who are in high positions to perform the tasks in question so that the baby will, later on, be devoted and behave well (Lianda 2015, 37). This is based on the local belief that the baby will later imitate the character of the people who performed *peucicap* for it. In other words, *peucicap* must be performed by '*ulamā*' (Arabic, Islamic scholars) or by religious men or women because this will influence the baby's future character. In this sense, the ritual of *peucicap* is a transfer of the character of the givers to the baby as the receiver to create a good person. Its aim is to establish an identity between the givers and the receiver, the baby so that the baby will grow up to be like the people performing the *peucicap*.

¹⁰ When the descendants are from the family of *syarifah*, *said* etc. (the title of the descendant of the Prophet Muhammad), '*ulamā*', and aristocrat, more than five various colors of *agar-agar pudding* 'gelatin' are provided. Usually, they are provided in seven colors. This means that these families are higher level than ordinary families.

¹¹ The ceremony of *peucicap* is performed by devoted men, famous within this group for their good behavior with the hope that the baby later on will be devoted, famous and very well behaved. One says, "Another way of *peucicap* is that the *imām* will press his thumb into sugar (Acèhnese *saka*) or some other kind of sweet food; e.g. *agar-agar pudding* and then press this thumb lightly onto the baby's lips (Acèhnese *langet-langet*)."

The *agar-agar* pudding is deemed to embody the desired qualities, as all givers want the baby to be 'sweet'.

What I saw was that the persons who performed the *peucicap* were the *imām* of the village followed by several religious persons, religiously learned male graduates¹ from Islamic boarding schools (Acèhnese *dayah* or *ranggang*), who teach the students at the Islamic boarding school (Acèhnese *aneuk ranggang* or *dayah*) of Sheikh Muda Waly. These pious people are chosen to perform the *peucicap* ritual due to their impeccable moral conduct since they have a strong *makrifat* (the knowledge between worshipper and Allāh) and the ability to ritually communicate with Allāh by praying for the child. The *peucicap* ritual is a transfer of character from the givers to the baby to create a good person.⁶

The *peucicap* starts with the words "*bismillāhsirrah_mā nirrah_īn*" (in the name of Allāh, the entirely merciful, the especially merciful) in a soft voice and continues with the following words:

<i>Beumameh lidah.</i>	'Please be a sweet tongue.'
<i>Beupanyang umur.</i>	'Please be a long life.'
<i>Beumudah rezeki.</i>	'Please be an easy livelihood.'
<i>Beudithèe lam kawom.</i>	'Please be famous in your group.'
<i>Beuta'at keagama</i>	'Please be devoted to religion.'

Each *barzanji* reciter takes a small piece of *agar agar* pudding and then by turns gives a small taste of it to the baby; this ritual called *peucicap*. The aim of *peucicap* is that the baby will 'have a sweet voice' (Acèhnese, *mameh suara*), 'have a good smile' (Acèhnese *mudah senyum*), 'have a good mind' (Acèhnese *get akai*), and 'have a good life' (Acèhnese *get haté*). In short, the baby, it is hoped, will be good in everything. The *muazzin* (the one who calls people to prayer; Acehnese, *bileu*) then sprays perfume on each person who performed in the *peucicap* as a symbol of nobility. One of the elderly religious leaders in Blangporoh explained that the various colors of the *agar-agar* pudding symbolize that the baby will be able to face various problems in its life and will be able to find good solutions to them.

After performing the *peucicap* ritual, the baby was placed back in the decorated rattan swing in the middle of the *barzanji* group. The swing was decorated with colorful paper by relatives from their mother's side. The colorful papers used to decorate the swing were bought by the baby's father with the agreement of the baby's mother. The swing is completed with two colored ropes. The first rope, made from colorful knitting wool, is tied to the front of the swing, in front of the baby. Another similar rope is tied to the back of the swing, at the back of the baby. An *imam* from the boarding school holds the front rope and the back

rope is held by the *muazzin* from the mosque. Those two then take turns to give the baby a ride on the swing. This is done so that the baby's heart will later 'hang' in the mosque since the *imām* and the *muazzin* spend much of their time in the mosque. In other words, it is hoped that the baby will, later on, follow their behavior and become a devoted Muslim. It is said, "The baby's feet may be on the earth but its heart must be in the sky."

The actions of the *imām*, the *muazzin* and the other *barzanji* reciters are believed to influence the baby's future conduct. The baby will follow the *imām* and the other religious people to make the next generation better than this one. The baby was still in the decorated rattan swing when the *barzanji* reciters ended the recital and sat down again. The baby was very patient; from the beginning to the end of the *barzanji* recital, she listened to the recital and never cried. The *imām* then recited a short prayer (*do'a*) to conclude the session, and all participants followed him by holding their hands up and at a certain part of the prayer they all intoned *āmīn* (please accept this prayer oh Allāh) until they finished with one last *āmīn*. Delicious food is then served to them after the recital of prayers. After finishing eating, each *barzanji* reciter is given 10,000 Indonesian Rupiahs (IDR) for good luck (Acèhnese *sideukah*) from the baby's father who acts as the ritual leader on that day. Each person also receives a packet of yellow glutinous rice wrapped in banana leaf (Acèhnese *sabòh kulah buleukat kunèng*) from the baby's male cousin (its mother's sister's son) before they all leave to go home.

In the ritual of *peucicap*, sometimes the baby also was given a taste of sugar and salt by a member of the family. If the baby is a male, he is given a little salt (Acèhnese *be euk sira*) in the hope that his voice will become salty (Acèhnese *masén*). Salty here means that people will follow what the baby says when he grows up. Vice versa, if the baby is female, she will be given a little sugar (Acèhnese *be euk saka*) in the hope that she will have a sweet voice (Acèhnese *mameh su*) and will behave well so that she will have no difficulty getting an excellent marriage partner. In this way, salt-giving or sugar-giving symbolizes the imparting of a part of the child's personality.

The next step is that the *imām* shows the *sūrah* of *Yāsīn* and an Acèhnese dagger with a curved handle (Acèhnese *rencong Acèh*) to the baby. The *sūrah* of *Yāsīn* is shown to the baby with the hope that the baby will later become devoted to his/her religion (Acèhnese *ta'at bak agama*), whereas the dagger is shown to the baby in the hope that the baby will later be able to remain truthful as well as brave against wickedness in life.

Giving gifts

On the day of the *barzanji* all invited relatives of the baby, plus other invited neighbors and guests, came to the house of the baby. The same thing happens

when someone dies or gets married. The difference is that when someone dies the relatives and the village people come without invitation.¹² About two weeks before the baby is born, the baby's paternal grandmother brings a child's mattress, pillows, a swing, and cloth to wrap around the baby's stomach after it has been sprayed with betel juice (Acèhnese *ija tumpèe*). Meanwhile, the maternal grandmother gives the baby a gold ring and a pair of gold earrings on the *akikah*¹³ day. This objectification of the social qualities embodied in the senior female relatives of the baby makes it possible to transfer these qualities to the child. The same idea is manifested by placing the child with its feet on a bundle of grass. One makes the child bathe in water and makes it stand on grass to let it grow large and tall (Platenkamp, 2010). The gold ring and a pair of gold earrings offered on the day of *akikah* for the baby carry the wishes for the future prosperity of the baby.

As the *akikah* ritual was held, the invited villagers along with the relatives of the baby attended. Some of them came earlier to help cook the *akikah* ram but most of them came at about 12 mid-day to eat together. Nobody came empty-handed. They all brought gifts. These gifts are called *neumèe* (things brought). The village people feel embarrassed if they bring nothing to the *akikah* celebration. One young man said, "I will not come if I bring nothing; at least one kilogram of sugar must be brought to the *akikah khanduri*." Men usually bring one kilogram of sugar or fish or eggs, or they will give IDR 5,000 to IDR 20,000 instead. Men give it directly to the baby's father and some men give it to the baby's maternal grandfather. The female guests also bring gifts that have been wrapped

¹² When a person dies in the village, the villagers come to help the family of the dead person in various ways soon after they get the news. Some will give money to the dead family as charity (Acèhnese *seudeukah*), some will bring food, some will help to make a coffin (Acèhnese *keurenda*), some will dig a grave where the corpse will be buried, and others will arrange things for the dead. The things to be arranged for the corpse are bathing it, wrapping it in a white cloth, praying over it, and burying it. In Blangporoh the dead body is often prayed over at the boarding school of Sheikh Muda Waly, where the prayers are directly led by one of his sons as the leader of the boarding school. The family of the dead person from both the husband's and the wife's side, the villagers and the students of the boarding school all pray for the deceased before burying him/her. These prayers are called *shalat jenazah* (Indonesian, prayers for the corpse). The family of the deceased will feel relieved if many people pray for their relative (Manan, 2016; Manan & Arifin, 2019). Village people believe that the more people pray (asking for forgiveness) for the dead, the more the sins of the departed will be absolved by Allāh.

¹³ *Akikah* (Arabic *Aqiqah*) is the sacrifice of animals in Islamic law, as a form of gratitude for Muslims to Allah about the baby being born.

in colorful paper containing clothes for the baby called *kado*¹⁴ and give these directly to the baby's mother and the maternal grandmother, who places the gifts in the correct order in the baby's mother's room after they are received. The closer the relation to the baby is, the more expensive the gifts are. The baby's mother says *alhamdulillah* (Arabic, all praise is due to Allāh) because she has many gifts for her baby. She admits that after the *khanduri* she does not need to buy baby's clothes for a year. The names of the givers are written on their gifts and some are written inside them. These names are kept by the baby's mother. In time, the givers will hold a celebration and the baby's mother will give a gift of the same value or even more back to the givers in return.

Some female guests bring food for the baby to ensure 'that it will always have good food to eat in the future', and some others bring cakes as well as clothes. The baby's parents and maternal grandparents receive the gifts from the people who come that day. This is important in the celebration because later on when someone invites this family, they will remember whether they came to this celebration or not. This tradition is a part of the Blangporoh's *adat*. During the study, all the people always come to their village celebrations unless they have a definite reason not to be able to do so. If they are sick at the time of the celebration, the gift will be given to the celebration holders soon after asking their children to reciprocate the gifts. Alternatively, they might wait until the givers hold another as part of a circumcision or marriage ritual in later years.

As a part of name-giving rituals, this is analogous to what the Drenica followers did in Kosova (Pirraku, 1978). During the *akikah*, after receiving the gifts, the father and the maternal grandfather invite the guests to eat. Two tables are prepared. One, on the right, as you come in, is for the male guests and the other on the left is for the female guests. The guests freely take as much as they want to eat. This is called *ala perancih* (French way or self-service) in Blangporoh and other parts of Acèh. *Ala perancih* has been applied in most celebrations in Blangporoh and other parts of Acèh. The reason is that not many people are needed to arrange the meals. However, one of the disadvantages of *ala perancih* is that not all guests have the opportunity to meet the family members who hold the *khanduri* since they provide a place to put the gift (money) after eating the food. In the same way, Buddhists in North Bangladesh have a ceremonial feast as a welcoming party to the newborn. The gifts like clothing, fruits, toys, baby cribs, accessories, money and the like, are presented by family members or close relations (Barua 2014). This is not different from what Hindu believers do too.

¹⁴ The word *kado*, which comes from the French *cadeau*, is used here rather than the more traditional Arabic equivalent *hadiya*.

Shaving the baby's first hair

After the *barzanji* recital, as the last ritual on the day of *akikah* the baby is taken by the baby's maternal grandfather from the decorated rattan swing to get its first hair shaved. This ritual is called *syuko manyak*. The hair of the baby including the eyebrows is cut by the midwife. The shaven hair is collected in a white cloth by the baby's father. As the baby's hair is shaved, it is held by its father. Meanwhile, the mother is in the house receiving gifts from the guests who come late.

After shaving, the baby's father gives IDR 10,000 to the midwife who has shaved the baby's hair. After that, the hair is weighed by the baby's father, then that weight of the hair is converted to the value in rupiah of the same weight in gold. This rupiah amount is then given by the baby's father to the poor as charity. Similarly, Muslims in the United Kingdom weigh the cut hair to be substituted with silver equivalently. This rite is conventionally performed on the seventh day after birth (Gatrad & Sheikh, 2001).

The shaved hair of the baby is then placed in a bowl with a lid made from a young coconut, then buried. Symbolically, this burial takes with it any diseases or dirt that accompanied the child at birth. The aim of giving money to the poor in this case is also to protect the baby from disease. In the past, the shaved first hair of the baby was sent to a Sheikh in Mecca to be 'blessed' and the baby would be safe from any diseases¹⁵ after the hair was converted into money, and this 'religious money' is given by the baby's father to a poor person as charity. The process of blessing is practiced not only by the Muslim community. Oraon Buddhists residing in North Bangladesh also ask for blessings from their monks (Barua, 2014). This kind of wish is indeed mandatory to guarantee that the newborn baby has a blissful life.

Naming the baby

The father names his baby officially after its hair has been shaved. The baby was named, yet, the process of announcing it toward the people was officially

¹⁵ It is pertinent that Blangporoh village belongs to the district of West Labuhan Haji. Labuhan Haji is a harbor that used to be a point of departure for pilgrims to Mecca. The Sultan had opened this harbor in South Acèh at Labuhan Haji for the pilgrims to go to and return from 'the Holy Land', Mecca. Snouck Hurgronje (1906) writes: "We must remember that before sailing ships were replaced by steamers as a means of conveyance to Mecca, Acèh was a great stopping-place for almost all the pilgrims from the Eastern Archipelago". In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the pilgrims from Southeast Asia passed through Acèh as 'the gate of the Holy Land'. Until now, Acèh is called *Serambi Mekkah* meaning the veranda of Mecca as its nickname because of its historical ties with the Islamic holy land, Mecca.

considered as a series of baby-naming rituals. An “unofficial” name was given by the midwife when she cut off the umbilical cord (Acèhnese *talòe pusat*). That name was taken from the Prophet Muhammad’s ancestors or descendants; e.g. Abdullah, Abdul Muthalib, Hamzah, etc. for a male baby or Aminah, Fatimah, Aisyah, etc. for a female because they were pious and close to Allāh. This name is changed on the day of *akikah*¹⁶ if the baby’s parents do not agree with it. The new name is given for the ‘soul’ as well as for the body of the baby. In naming it, usually the baby’s father asks for advice from the *teungku kampong* (village religious leader) about a good and appropriate name for the baby. The baby is then given a name by her parents or the *teungku kampong*. The *teungku* directs the naming process following the context of Islamic teachings (Manan, 2020). At the same time, the baby’s parents hope to get a ‘blessing’ for it from the *teungku kampong*.

The way of naming the baby began by holding the head of the baby then starting with the words *bismillāhirrah̄mānirrah̄īm*. Next, the baby’s father continued giving the name by saying “I named you...” then he ended with the words of the *al-Fātiḥah*. Then, everyone there recited *sūrah al-Fātiḥah* from beginning to end slowly. Reciting this *sūrah* after naming the baby aims at keeping it safe through the prayer and having it “blessed” for its whole life.

In choosing a name for a baby, the chooser should get advice about the science of names. A good name must be chosen for a baby as its name is considered to be like a prayer. The name is thus a *do’a*. Therefore, personal names should be selected from the Quran. Most low-educated parents in the village request a name for their child from the children of Sheikh Muda Waly, one of the famous Islamic scholars in Aceh, before the baby is born. For example, the name of the baby’s uncle is Shuaidi, which was given by Abu Nasir Waly, one of the children of Sheikh Muda Waly. In addition, names are believed to have a direct relationship to character and fortune, good or bad. If the baby is quite often sick after the naming, usually the father will change the baby’s name for another name because the first name given is not considered appropriate. After all, it did not bring good fortune i.e. good health. Acehnese people are suggested to call babies with obnoxious referents, such as ugly, dull, tiresome, small, horrifying,

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¹⁶ For the male baby two rams or sheep are recommended to be sacrificed. If the *akikah*’s slaughtering is not possible on the seventh day, it may be performed at some later date, even when the child is quite grown up. Blangporoh people consider *akikah* to be recommended (*sunat*) rather than required (*wājéb*). *Akikah* is not mentioned in the Qur’ān, but in Hadīth. Many families hold the *khanduri* without killing a ram. For this reason, most people in Blangporoh village refer to the *khanduri* as a *khanduri peutron bak ie* rather than as *akikah* (Manan, 2019).

awkward, and so on, instead of beautiful ones like pretty, handsome, adorable, genius, et cetera. This is intended to expel rudiments of bad behavior (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2014). Moreover, if a name is too 'high' or demanding, the individual may not be able to bear this burden and will fail in life. Conversely, a name that is too 'low' could hold a child back. A person's problems later in life may be diagnosed as being due to an ill-fitting name, and the name may then be changed (Bowen, 1993). Usually, changing the child's name to suit its character is done before he/she starts going to primary school.

Aceh, as the gate of Islam coming to Indonesia in the past, today integrates Islam in all aspects of life, which indirectly includes injecting the elements of Islam into the names of babies (Manan, 2020). Islamic names can be derived from the words or phrases of the Quran, names of prophets and their families, and other religious, signified and implicated meanings, as has been discussed above. Those names can be in one, two, three, even four words, although the latter are considered too long. Both short and long names are legally registered in various institutions. Complications can arise when male Muslim names in the medical record in the United Kingdom are not registered with real names, but personal names followed by personal father's name. Additionally, it is applicable for female Muslim names having titles on their names, as in the case of some Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, or when their husband's name is added to their own if the woman is married (Gatrad & Sheikh, 2001).

The series of rituals of naming babies portrays the influence of Islam within Acehese society. As time goes by, the naming system is shifting from one-word Islamic names originating from the Middle East to two-to-four-word Islamic names which combine Islamic elements from the Middle East and elsewhere with local and national cultures (Bakti et al., 2018). Indeed, this shift cannot be separated from the perspective of the current parents. Some may have been through problematic moments, explicitly in the era of the 1990-1998 Military Operation Area in Aceh, when the province went through dark times during and after the war. Another depressed period, the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, can also contribute to this condition. Although for Acehese people, this calamity is regarded as God's trial and perhaps even a sign of affection addressed to them, the civil war and tsunami made parents re-think the importance of Islamic tradition in a rational and 'objective' way.

Female circumcision

The ritual of female circumcision nowadays is not an obligation, but has formerly been performed as part of a series of baby-naming rituals in Aceh. It was done formally on the day following the day when the baby-naming ritual was performed although name-giving took place soon after the baby was born.

Circumcision remains a matter of animated discourse in the lay press and medical research. Both Muslim and Jewish communities apply it only to males as has been prescribed in the Hebrew Bible (*Genesis* 7:11). Still, the female version lingers, being practiced in some countries including Indonesia. It is alleged that it is customary and it had been invented before the dawn of Islam (Gatrad & Sheikh, 2001).

This custom is also practiced by the Tugen community in Kenya and other pastoralist societies (Jerono, 2019). As part of the newborn ritual, female circumcision is organized by them after the process of bestowing praise names on the baby. In my study location, female circumcision is performed when the mother stops breastfeeding her child. When a female child is two years old, she is old enough for Islamic teaching as elaborated³ in the Holy Quran. At this time, the child can squat (Indonesian *berjongkok*).¹⁷ This ritual is called *peusnat*, and its implementation is quite similar to that performed by the Acehne people. However, several processes are crucial for it. The first implemented process is the decision-making and its notification, which takes place in the child's family. Usually, this discussion involves *niniak mamak* (brothers or sisters of the child's mother). If the discussion about 'the third debt' is agreed upon, then a celebration will be held (Manan, 2020).

Unlike male circumcision, there is no public celebration for the female. If any is done at all, the ritual is done very secretly.¹⁸ Even the father does not know when his daughter is circumcised. In addition, not the entire family, both distant and close relatives, are invited. This haste is attributed to fear that the daughter should mention it in her childish innocence as soon as she can speak. The mother who wants her daughter to be circumcised gives a plate of glutinous rice to the *imām* by saying she has a wish (Acehne *na hajat*) without further elucidation. The mother does not say the word 'there is a wish' to the *imām* openly but he fully understands what the child's mother means.

Although there is no ceremonial significance, the ritual of 'cooling'¹⁹ (Acehne *teupōng taweu*) is still performed before the girl is circumcised. A

¹⁷ For the male child, in general, the people of Aceh perform the ritual of circumcision on every adolescent boy (9 to 13 years). Two factors influence this ritual, namely, the physical condition of the child and the economic state of the child's parents (Manan, 2020). ¹

¹⁸ Unlike in Blangporoh, West Labuhan Haji South-West Aceh, in Kluet Utara, South Aceh, there is a big celebration for female circumcision (Lianda, 2015), but the daughter's marriage is of importance and ceremonial significance too. ¹

¹⁹ The Acehne sometimes say *kenduri*, *kanduri*, *kawuri*, *kauri*, *kenuri* and *kanuri* instead of the word *khanduri*. *Khanduri* (Indonesian, *kenduri*) is a popular Islamic term in

handful of the yellow sticky rice with coconut stir-fried with palm sugar is taken on a plate from the tray containing the ingredients for 'cooling'²⁰, together with a whisk to spray the water of *teupōng taweu* on the girl. The midwife utters *bismillāh* "in the name of Allāh", then places the small amount of the yellow sticky rice with coconut stir-fried with palm sugar on the girl's right ear. At the same time, she intones "*Lagèe bu lekatnyo mekeumat-keumat, bak mekeumatkeh llme yang kameuruno*", meaning 'this sticky rice was sticky, so please stick and do not let the knowledge you learn disappear.' She then takes a bowl from the 'cooling' tray containing several kinds of leaves that have been tied in a bunch to be used as a whisk to spray the water of *teupōng taweu*²¹ on the girl. The next step is that she takes a glass from the tray which has been filled with mixed rice and unhusked rice.²² She scatters them on the girl and people standing around the girl. By doing so, she hopes that the child will acquire modesty and not arrogance in her later life.

The midwife who understands a lot about Islam then performs the circumcision. By using a razor blade, the tip of the clitoris (Acèhnese *aneuk tét*) is scored a little bit with a shallow cut. This is said to symbolically control a woman's carnal desire (Indonesian, *hawa nafsu*). Some say that women have more carnal desires than men do, yet at the same time, they are more inclined to feel shy. The girl is then bathed and ablutions (Acèhnese *dipeutung ie seumayang*) are performed by the midwife. Both her hands are held up in the direction towards Mecca (Acèhnese and Indonesian *kiblat*) and at the same time the midwife utters the two words of testimony (Acèhnese, *dua kalimat syahadat*): "I bear witness in my heart that there is no deity except Allāh (Arabic, *ash-hadu al-lā ilāha illallāh*), and I bear witness in my heart that Muhammad is the prophet of Allāh (Arabic, *wa asyhadu anna Muhammadarrasulullāh*)." From that moment

¹ Southeast Asia, indicating a ritual meal given for a number of occasions. Islamic prayers and blessings are often part of the *khanduri* and include Islamic elements to the ritual meal in order to make it essentially an Islamic festivity (Federspiel, 1995; Manan, 2014).

²⁰ The ingredients for 'cooling' are the leaves of an areca nut (as a talisman), a stalk of the leaves of *manèk manoe* (traditional flowers of Acèh becoming a symbol of fertility), the leaves of *cocor bèbèk* (*bryophyllum pinnatum*, as a cold condition), a stalk of coarse grass with its root (symbolizing a strong and sturdy life), the medicinal leaves becoming a remedy for fever (Manan, 2014).

²¹ The water of *teupōng taweu* consists of water and rice flour. Sometimes the Acèhnese say tasteless flour (Acèhnese *teupong tabeu*) instead of *teupōng taweu*.

²² Rice and unhusked rice symbolize modesty and not arrogance; they also symbolize honor and glory (Manan, 2014).

on, the girl has officially become a Muslim and in return, the mother of the child gives the midwife some money.

Regarding female circumcision, the *imām* told me of a *ḥadīth* from the prophet narrated by at-Tabrani, who said: "The prophet said to Ummu 'Athiyah bin Qais, a female circumciser in Medina, please circumcise a little bit but do not circumcise much because it is more beneficial for a husband." One student from the village's boarding school says that there is an explanation in *kitāb l'annah at-Thalibīn* stating circumcision of women should be performed by way of scratching a little bit on her clitoris as it can increase the enjoyment of sexual intercourse. Along these lines, Az-Zuhaili (2002) wrote that circumcision for women should only cut as little as possible of the skin located on the top of the clitoris (Arabic *farj*). It is not recommended to cut 'the comb of the vagina' (Indonesian *jénggér*) to still be able to easily reach orgasm during sexual intercourse. Originally, circumcision was introduced by the Prophet Ibrāhīm, then it was continued in the Islamic religion in every teaching given by the pre-Islamic prophets, and is again affirmed in the Quran and *ḥadīth*. Thus, such has become Islamic teaching and it belongs to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, explains the *imām*.

From the perspective of Islamic law, circumcision is obligatory for men, whereas for women it is not. The *imām* says: "For people viewing circumcision as good for their daughters, do so, and I agree with this practice; but for those who do not do it, it is not sinful because circumcision for daughters is no more than to honor the women themselves." In addition, from a medical perspective, circumcision can clean the body. The genital area tends to be moist and unclean, a breeding ground for microbes where also urine may be left. This can be minimized by female circumcision so that it will be cleaner and thus skin diseases can be avoided according to some medical doctors. Male circumcision can reduce the risk of penis cancer, while for females it may decrease the rate of cervical cancer (Hayashi & Kohri, 2013). By performing circumcision on women, men and women will have a deeper enjoyment of sexual intercourse as the sensitive nerves around the woman's genitals are not disturbed by the genital valve (Indonesian, *katup*) so that more sensation can be felt during sexual intercourse (Arabic *iltiqa al-khitanain*). This is an idea that supporters of circumcision offer to argue for what is seen by many as permanent bodily mutilation in biomedical, 'objective', logic.

When speaking to the *imām*, I mentioned that nowadays many people contend that circumcision for women collides with human rights because it can cause problems and restrict their sexual enjoyment. The *imām* replied that this was because they did not yet fully understand Islamic teaching. He added that the Islamic religion teaches its followers to behave well. One teaching is to restrain their desires including restraining *hawa nafsu*. The midwife above held

the same view. The *imām* contends that circumcision for women can act as a brake (Acèhnese, *rèm*) to control their *hawa nafsu* as *hawa nafsu* of women is bigger than that of men although they can hide it with feelings of shame, which are also greater than in men.²³ When a man responds to *hawa nafsu*, he has been led away from Allāh and behaves like an animal (Siegel, 1969).

As Acehnese tradition is infused with Islamic values, women's feeling of shame (Acèhnese *malè*) is of significance. It maintains the social order in society as men are considered 'fragile' (Acèhnese *rapoh*) creatures, easily tempted, unable to resist the temptation of a woman's carnal desire. This is very different from free sex, which has become a symptom of social change in many countries, especially in the big cities. It must be stressed that in Aceh, circumcision for women is done not to wound their clitoris but to 'remove' a membrane covering it.

Conclusion

The ritual of naming babies consisted of a series of rituals with distinctive meanings that express traditional values which must be preserved: reciting *Kitab Barzanji*, giving the gift, shaving baby's hair, naming the baby, and occasionally, female circumcision. These rituals were highly infused with the value of Islam, as the Acehnese society is suffused with Islamic tenets; Aceh is the only province in Indonesia that implemented *sharia* as its law. The ritual of naming babies in Aceh was still well maintained, except female circumcision as the family now tends to perform it at medical facilities especially in the urban areas, or not at all.

Rituals bring meaning to the lives of people in traditional societies, and Acehnese society is no exception. The series of rituals surrounding the naming of babies had significant meaning to the Acehnese people in shaping the baby's future character as a member of society and in creating its identity as a person with socially valuable qualities. This traditional ritual is one of the ways to integrate the newborn into a progressively expanding set of kinship relations. It gives him/her a starting point in life and a road map home. The baby is received properly by the community, in addition to showing the community that the newborn baby is accepted by its family. In short, it was a symbolization of the integration of a new member of society.

²³ A man's nature in the Acehnese conception consists of *akal* or rationality and *hawa nafsu*. By using *akal*, a man can know Allāh's command and control his instinctive nature that is *hawa nafsu*. However, there is always a struggle between *hawa nafsu* and *akal*. Therefore, man needs religion in order to guide his *akal* (Manan, 2015; Siegel, 1969).

This study, nonetheless, stops short of investigating in depth the specific patterns of naming since it is limited to the anthropological aspects. In addition, wider areas covering more than one village are necessary to work out the detailed concepts of naming. Further researches may compare the variation in the process of naming babies between two or more communities ethnographically.

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