

## **The Indigenous Tradition of Mutual Cooperation in Farming System at Tidal Swamplands by Banjar Tribe Farmers in South Kalimantan, Indonesia**

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**Abstract:** Mutual cooperation (or gotong royong in Indonesia language) is one of a unique culture Indonesia are loaded with noble values, so it is very necessary to be protected and maintained. Culture of mutual cooperation is widely available in rice farming system, Banjar tribe called with baarian term. Banjar tribe society called the rice farming system with bahuma term. This study aimed to describe the culture of indigenous tradition of mutual cooperation in the activities of Banjar tribe farmers. The research method is descriptive qualitative. The research location in Tamban village (Barito Kuala Distrik, South Kalimantan, Indonesia). Subjects were kapala padang (farmer leaders) and farmers. Data were collected by observation, interview, documentation and literature studies related to mutual cooperation by Banjar tribe farmers in rice farming system. Analysis of data using an interactive model by Miles and Huberman. The results showed that the indigenous traditional of mutual cooperation in rice farming system is divided into several activities, they are: balangai handil, batabat, manatak ampar/marimba, mamuntal, bahangkut, batanam, marumput, mangatam, bahandup pig/bagarit pig dan mahampang rat.

**Key words:** Mutual cooperation, Banjar tribe farmers, farming system, unique culture, tribe called, farming system

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The social cultural values that have become nation's characteristics or collective personality are widely found in Indonesian community. During times, Indonesia is known as a friendly, polite and harmony living nation. Foreign researchers that had done various social research in Indonesia (Geertz, 1983; Wolf, 1983; Scott, 1988) acknowledge the existence of Indonesian traditional local wisdom, including the local wisdom in many social cultural lives.

Cultures as legacies that cannot be separated from each nations, they shaped unique traits that differentiate a nation to another. Mutual cooperation is one of Indonesian culture that contains many positive values. Some references mentioned that mutual cooperation has been the philosophy basic of the nation. Mutual cooperation is said to be the result of Pancasila affection, which means that the values in Pancasila are contained in mutual cooperation (Subagyo, 2012).

Mutual cooperation or gotong royong in Indonesia language derived from Javanese language. The word "gotong" can be interpreted as "carry" or "lift". The word "royong" can be interpreted as together. In another words, "gotong royong" means lifting something together or doing something together. Mutual cooperation

participation can be in the form of material, financial, physical, spiritual, skill, thought sharing or constructive advice.

Almost all cultures in the archipelago recognize the term "mutual cooperation". This tradition even has been recognized since the IV christian century. In Bali, the community has a strong mutual cooperation value in subak tradition which is a traditional institution that functions to unite the farmers in order to manage irrigation and utilize it together. Besides that Balinese also engaged in mutual cooperation activity when they are having various religious ceremonies (Suyastiri, 2012). Furthermore, Rahmawati gives an example of mutual cooperation that is acknowledged in Dayak Ngaju tribe in middle Borneo; known as mamapas lewu. Traditional ceremony mamapas lewu aims to cleanse and purify Palangkaraya City from the influence of evil spirit. Traditional ceremony mamapas lewu cannot be held in personal but all the Palangkarayans hand by hand helping each other, including in sharing outlay.

In Trenggalek community, East Java, also found a form of mutual cooperation in nyandran ritual. The performance of ritual custom "nyadran" by the Ngantru community of Trenggalek regency as the expression of their gratitude to the All Mighty God also as an effort to recall the Duke Menak Sopal's merit who strived for the

interests and welfare of the Trenggalek community whose majority are farmers. In nyandran ritual, mutual cooperation of the people and neighborhood around Ngantru village considering that plenty elements are needed to be prepared since the up-coming until the D-Day of nyandran ritual being held. Bolaang Mongdow tribe in North Sulawesi know the value of mutual cooperation culture which manifests in the momosat/mokidulu tradition, a tradition of Bolang Mongdow tribe in which they give help to a family who has plans on having a marriage event by giving hand, things, even money (Fajarini, 2014).

Seen various facts presented above, therefore it is not surprising when Bintarto (1980) explained that mutual cooperation is a characteristics or specific character of Indonesia nation. As Indonesia nation characteristic then mutual cooperation as social activity can be found in all Indonesian communities, even though it is known with different names or terms.

The Banjar community (especially farmers) had known the term mutual cooperation as baarian. Baarian tradition is a cultural value preservation form that is still practiced by Banjar tribe farmers up to now. The word baarian means that taking turns in mutual cooperation each day from one location of rice field to another locations of rice field that belongs to the members of the community with the same amount of days used and different work results. So does the amount of the labor or members who join in the mutual cooperation activity should be payback with the same amount of labor or members. Baarian tradition is a form of mutual cooperation; in which the activity that the farmers do before and after planting paddy until harvesting process are integrated. The Baarian activity performance is influenced by the feeling of togetherness between people of the community that the people practice it voluntarily without any assurance in the form of fee or any different form of payment, so that this mutual cooperation will not need official committee instead of announcements to people about the activity and when the activity is being held.

The importance of this research because mutual cooperation as Indonesian culture with its various terms from all around the archipelago, needs to be kept and preserved; for mutual cooperation is full of positives values to strengthen the unity and entity of Indonesia nation. Through mutual cooperation, togetherness can be created and can minimalized dispute misunderstanding that can cause conflict in the middle of society living. As mentioned by collete that mutual cooperation has been rooted and spread widely in the life of Indonesian community and as the most important genuine regulation

in development. Kartodirjo (1987) stated that mutual cooperation is not only the unique Indonesian characteristic but a form of typical agrarian community solidarity.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research method is descriptive qualitative through preliminary studies. The main purpose of this research was to describe the culture of indigenous tradition of mutual cooperation in the rice farming system of Banjar tribe farmers. The research location in Tamban Village (Barito Kuala Distrik, South Kalimantan, Indonesia). Subjects were kapala padang (farmer leaders) and Banjar tribe farmers. Data were collected by observation, field survey, in-depth interview, documentation and literature studies related to mutual cooperation by Banjar tribe farmers in rice farming system. Data were analyzed using an interactive model (data reduction, data display and conclusion) by Miles and Huberman (2014).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The farming system of Banjar tribe farmers in South Kalimantan which is known as "bahuma" has been done by the community for generation to generation, they form a knowledge system through experience and various trials, so that it is included as an adaptive process towards the surrounding environment. The adaptation skill makes the local knowledge can survived up to now a day. The bahuma activity done by the community of Banjar tribe farmers is mostly executed in the tidal swamplands with peat type land. The peat area is flooded with river water tidal that is turned into continuous paddy rice field by the farmers and even become the center of paddy production (Kebijakan, 2008).

The rice farming system in the tidal swamplands has different uniqueness towards the other paddy field that is not located in the tidal swamplands, they are: gradual seedbed system (done 2-3 times) dancing paddy planting system (the harmony of hand gestures in planting the paddy seed, one hand holding tetujah (a traditional tool to planting paddy), the other holding seed. The floating seedbed (the seedbed is done from small raft and floated on the water surface), harvesting using raft tool (the harvesting system that is impossible to do in irrigated field, the use of tajak (a traditional tool to cut down the grass or weed), tapulikampar cultivating system (tabas-puntal-balik-ampar) baarian tradition (mutual cooperation in rice farming system) and many more uniqueness. The unique in paddy cultivation above is

actually a form of local wisdom of agriculture in swamp area that is inherited through generations (Riza, 2014).

The Banjar tribe farmers have known the term of mutual cooperation activity as *baarian/bahahandipan/marambai*. The term *baarian* is used by the Banjar tribe farmers who live in tidal rice field area around Barito River. The term *bahahandipan* is usually used by the Banjar farmer community who stay around the edge of Martapura and Nagara river. While the term *marambai* is usually used by the Banjar tribe farmers who live in Rantau, Tapin regency.

Mutual cooperation *baarian/bahahandipan/marambai* in cultivating the rice field started from cultivating the soil or cleaning the land that will be planted with paddy, until plating the paddy and harvesting the paddy. *Baarian* tradition (mutual cooperation) of Banjar tribe farmers is divided into several activities, they are: *balangai handil*, *batabat*, *manatak ampar/marimba*, *mamuntal*, *bahangkut*, *batanam*, *marumput*, *mangatam*, *bahandup pig/bagarit pig* dan *mahampang rat*. The following explanations will describe each *baarian* (mutual cooperation) activity done by the Banjar tribe farmers.

*Balangai handil* is a mutual cooperation activity in cleaning the river to all rice field owners who live around the river or *handil* to expedite the rice field irrigation. *Handil* is a canal that is dug in the area of rice field to irrigate the field. The object that is worked by the farmers in the mutual cooperation activity are cutting the grass or water hyacinth that grows in the river and digging the creek that already shallow. After *balangai handil*, the next activity is *batabat*. *Batabat* is a mutual cooperation activity that is performed in the area of tidal field that is located on the edge of big river in the low-land and performed during the approaching dry season when the water level is receding. The purpose of this activity is to prevent the rice field of drying on the dry-season. With the existence of the existence of *tabat* or dam that is created hand by hand, water control can be done by opening and closing the *tabat* or dam closer at high tide or low tide.

After *tabat* or the dam has finished, the next step is *manatak ampar/marimba* activity. *Manatak ampar/marimba* activity is mutual cooperation activity that is executed in the tidal field. *Manatak ampar* means cutting the grass in the rice field using trowel. This tool functions to cut down the weed and turned a small amount of the rice field soil without lifting pyrit. This kind of land cultivation is usually called as minimum tillage or zero tillage because only a small amount of the soil been eroded for the trowel kerfing. During *manatak ampar/marimba*, usually the rice field is flooded with water as half-knee high, so the trowel

will makes the weed cutting easier. This activity is done simultaneously from one rice field to another with the same amount of days.

The next step after *manatak ampar/marimba* is *mamuntal*. *Mamuntal* is the mutual cooperation activity to cultivate the grass that resulted from swiping, shaped like *puntalan* or clump. The clumped grass aimed to increase the temperature in the grass so that the decomposition process will runs faster (the grass will be rotten sooner). The diameter of *puntalan/clumped* grass is around 30-40 cm. the clumps are arranged in an array and floating in the middle of the rice field. If the grass has rotten, the farmers will carry it out to the *galangan/batangan* (dike) or can be spread around the rice field. *Puntalan/clump* that is spread out functions as organic fertilizer to fertilize the soil.

To spread *puntalan/clump* of the grass that has been rotten, usually Banjar tribe farmers do it together, hand by hand. The term that is used for this activity is *bahangkut*. This *bahangkut* activity is a mutual cooperation activity in which the farmers carry away the grass that has been clumped and put it on *galangan/dike*, this activity usually started at the coming planting season in tidal rice field, the clumped grass will damage the paddy seed because it carried out by water flow and damage the paddy seed.

*Baarian balangai handil*, *batabat*, *manatak ampar/marimba*, *mamuntal* dan *bahangkut* are the activities of preparing the land before planting the paddy in the swamp area. Swamp area according to Riza (2014) is sub-optimal land which means that the land has limitation because of the inherence such as acidity, iron, sulfur and high organic acid levels. Therefore, swamp area cannot be planted directly; it needs to pass through cultivating steps to reduce the acidity and the iron level contained in the soil.

The next process after cultivating the soil is planting the paddy seed. In this activity usually the owner of the land himself who do the planting. Before the paddy be planted, first the paddy seed is put into the ground that located higher (so the soil will not be flooded) until the paddy clump is seen. The term planting the paddy seed by the Banjar tribe farmers is *manarandak*. After the paddy clump grows (about 30-40 day), the next step to plant paddy can be done together/*baarian* starting from *batanam*, *marumput* until *mangatam* (harvesting) process.

*Batanam* is the activity of mutual cooperation in planting the paddy. In *baarian batanam* (planting paddy), there can be found a job desk. There are some who take or pull out the paddy seed, some who do the get the paddy seed to the provided soil and some whose task is planting

the paddy. In other words, there is supporting activity between one and another in the process of cultivating the paddy in the field. Banjar tribe farmers used a tool named tetujah. The tool (tetujah) is used to make hole on the soil so the paddy can be planted. Planting system using tetujah is known as dancing planting system. It is named so because the move of planting the paddy using tetujah is in tune as dancing when creating the hole in the soil, taking the paddy, putting it to the hole and pull out the tetujah.

Not long after the paddy in the field has been planted, there is marumput activity. Marumput is a mutual cooperation activity in cleaning the wild plants that can be seen around paddy plants. This marumput activity is executed when the paddy is tall enough and by that time, there has been many wild plants grow between the paddy plants.

The local variety of paddy usually harvested after 8-10 months since seeding. The term used by the Banjar tribe farmers is mangatam. Mangatam is the mutual cooperation activity in harvesting the paddy. This research is done in turns between members that join baarian activity. The tool used by the Banjar tribe farmers to harvest the paddy is ranggaman (ani-ani). Local variety paddy characterized by tall plant about 100-200 cm tall and grains that less simultaneous in reaching the time. The use of ranggaman (ani-ani) suits the condition because by the tool, the paddy that has reached the harvest time can be selected.

Besides mutual cooperation in bahuma process, mutual cooperation also done to prevent the animal pest. This form of mutual cooperation is known as bahandup pig/bagarit pig and mahampang rat. Bahandup pig/bagarit pig is the term for the activity of pig hunting in Banjar tribe language. Wild boars hunting are done together, hand by hand, in a farm field at the highland that is located on the edge of shrubs where the wild boars live. The wild boars are actually doing no harm to the paddy but they usually destroy cassava and sweet potato that plants by the farmers. This activity is done by blocking the shrubs where the wild boars hide. The tool that is used to hunt is usually spear and hounds. While mahampang rat is an activity in order to slay the harvest mouse. The harvest mouse are usually bred near the rainy season and destroy the paddy on the farm. The tools that are used to hunt are cleaver and hampang (mousetrap) that is used to trap and hinder the hunted harvest mouse.

Baarian tradition that can be found in Banjar tribe farmers is usually executed at planting season up to the harvesting process. Baarian tradition by the Banjar tribe farmers exist until now. The activity of mutual cooperation that is performed by the Banjar tribe farmers through baarian tradition is in line with Wolf (1983) about the life

of mutual cooperation that many is found in the villagers community or agrarians that is known in the terms of Peasant Community. A form of alliance in the farmer's society can be manifests in many forms such as relasi komprador relation in South America Amerika Selatan, mir in Russia, atau musha'a in South East (Wolf, 1983). Furthermore, Wolf explains that the alliance life that become the bases of social relation of the farmers in the villages is a traditional mechanism for the farmers to support the living or survival strategy by sharing resources with the neighbors and blood-related family in their hard times, for instance: a neighbor is out of oat, then a family can borrows oat from another household.

Traditional mechanism to share risks when harvesting is failed, in their hard times or when they need a bigger resources to celebrate ceremony or festival. That principal, according to Scott is known as reciprocity moral principal, a principal of benefiting each other with no money-based profit; instead, it is based on the hope of acquiring a hand-back when the time comes. The principal of reciprocity moral based on a simple idea that everyone who have been helped should help back. Besides sharing food, farmer's community also used to share jobs and other economy resources.

It is in line with Scott (1988), mutual cooperation become one of farmers community traditional mechanism to share risks when harvesting is failed, in their hard times or when they need a bigger resources to celebrate ceremony or festival. That principal, according to Scott is known as reciprocity moral principal, a principal of benefiting each other with no money-based profit; instead, it is based on the hope of acquiring a hand-back when the time comes. The principal of reciprocity moral based on a simple idea that everyone who have been helped should help back. Besides sharing food, farmer's community also used to share jobs and other economy resources.

Farming tradition requires the farmer community to work hand by hand since spreading the seed, planting it, growing it, until harvesting. This tradition also happens to Banjar tribe farmers, in which the Banjar tribe farmers work hand by hand through baarian tradition started from preparing the land until harvesting the paddy. Mutual cooperation becomes a way of life, a way of surviving and alliance forming in peasant community that shaped the community association or Ferdinand Tonnies term (Soekanto, 1982) is called as the community of gemeinschaft. Because of that it is not surprising if mutual cooperation grows in village society or rural community that characterized by farming (agrarian). This matter is proposed by Bintarto (1980) that mutual cooperation is a concrete social behavior and a value of social life that is inherited in the life of Indonesian villagers. The tradition

of mutual cooperation can grow strong in the villages is because farming life needs a huge togetherness in preparing the soil, planting, cultivating, until harvesting the harvest.

So thick of the farmer community life with the tradition that characterized by mutual cooperation, makes it clearer that mutual cooperation way of life, togetherness and helping each other functionally is needed by the farmer community to support the continuity of their lives. It will be different with industrial community life that more prioritize individualism achievement ethic in their jobs and lives. Mutual cooperation as Indonesia nation characteristics especially for they who lived in the country is applicable hereditary, so that it shaped a real social behavior which lead to formed the value of social life. The existence of the value has caused mutual cooperation is always created in community life as cultural legacy that needs to be preserved. In relation to mutual cooperation as cultural value, therefore Bintarto (1980) stated that.

The values in Indonesian culture system contain four concepts, they are: human is not alone in this world but surrounded by its community, the people and surrounding environment. In that macrocosm system, he can find himself as a small element, that is carried out by the Greatest nature circle process. Therefore, human is naturally depends on every aspects of his life towards the others. Because of that he must always try his best to get and keep on good relationship with others showed by the spirit of equality in soul and feeling and always try as best as he can to be and act conform, try to act and do equally to the others in the community, showed by the spirit of equal dignity and prestige.

The existence of value system makes mutual cooperation always be preserved and needed in various aspects of life. Therefore, mutual cooperation will always be in many shapes that match with the community cultural condition where the people are living. Having mutual cooperation tradition in the life of Indonesia community showed that mutual cooperation is a local wisdom value that needs to be kept in the present, future and the next generation lives. The mutual cooperation value can be used positively in the community life especially in the effort to move the solidarity of the people. Social solidarity needs to always be strength then, so Indonesian nation can face the hardship that threaten the community life, such as natural disaster, social and political conflict.

### **CONCLUSION**

Mutual cooperation cannot be rejected as Indonesian nation heritage characteristic. Therefore, its existence need to be preserved. This kind of pattern is a real form of mechanical solidarity that can be found in the life of

community. Mutual cooperation has honorable value should be exist and keep being part of life that up hold humanity. Because in the activity of mutual cooperation, every action is performed together without looking at one's place in society; instead one's involvement in the activity until the involvement suits the expectation. Banjar tribe farmers recognize mutual cooperation as baarian in the bahuma activity. The baarian is performed starting from planting rice until harvesting process in which the Banjar tribe farmers do the activity together. The activity of mutual cooperation (baarian) that is executed by the Banjar tribe farmers has several terms such as: baarian balangai handil, baarian batabat, baarian manatak ampar, baarian mamuntal, baarian bahangkut, baarian batanam, baarian marumput, baarian mangatam, bahandup pig, mahampang rat.

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