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PHILOSOPHICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL NATURE OF THE INDONESIAN MAUBESI PEOPLE'S NATONI RELIGION

Abstract

The Atoni people of East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, is a community with cultural values in the form of lyrics or dances to celebrate momentums in the lifecycle such as birth, marriage, death, welcoming guests, and the change of seasons, especially the planting season. This research is carried out in Maubesi village, North-Central Timor Regency. This is a qualitative type of research. The data is collected through profound observation and interviews. The researcher becomes the critical informant, and the data is analysed descriptively. From the results of this research, it may be concluded that the rites of the Natoni religion for the Maubesi People, North-Central Timor, East Nusa Tenggara is worship to Uis Neno, which is a belief inherited from the ancestors with special rites. These rites involve the customary structure, including the king, which is completed with rice and betels, and the slaughtering ceremony. This makes the Natoni religion a force or local wisdom which binds the Maubesi people who have embraced other religions such as Catholic and Protestant to carry out the syncretism process, revising the values of that belief. Such rites are then defined as the same as worshipping God the Almighty.

Keywords: religious rites, Natoni religion, Aaubesi people, Atoni tribe.

Introduction

As we know, a community is a living unit of human beings who are related to one another and continually bound by mutual habits and identity. The communal life may be said as a social system in the society, and there are elements of the social system. Basically, the elements of the social system in society are the people who depend on one another as a whole. In this dependency, the group of people is absolutely and firmly integrated. As long as the individuals in the society group still depend on each other and still have behavioural similarities and harmony, the social system elements will run its function. The elements of the social system in the society are specifically social status, social roles, and social differences among the individuals who are related

to each other in a social structure (Berry, 1981).

The interdependent interactional relations between a person and other people or between people and the environment are forms of interaction that use a medium, a tool, or symbols that are connotated and which may be understood holistically through social contact (Blumer, 1967). The relations between the social contact and the creator or *Uis Neno* in the views of the Timor people, the Atoni tribe, is carried out through idioms used in the form of lyrics, which in it lies magical and forceful values which bring happiness, suffering, or sadness, which is usually called Natoni.

The Natoni religion is a part of the Atoni people, which has an essential role as a customary language that is communicated through certain methods as a part of the teachings of the an-

cestors to express feelings and desires to the Creator of the universe and to obtain abundant crop in every planting season. Natoni is not only a customary expression during the planting season. But it is also used in every customary event, which is part of the local people's customs. Apart from that, Natoni has a structure that binds a person by giving everyone certain roles in every customary meeting. The customary structure of the Natoni religion is similar to a kingdom structure or a modern organizational structure. This is because there is a clear division of roles and because there are magical senses. This is why some take the roles of the king (*usif*), the lieutenant (*kapitan*), who has the role as an extension of the King's hand, the head of the tribe (*tobe*), the customary leader (*amnasit*) and the member or the people (*tob*).

Each structure has its own role. The king or *usif* is the territorial owner or the ruler. Meanwhile, the lieutenant or the *kapitan* is the person who has the role of preparing the animals for sacrifice. The *tobe* or the head of the tribe has the responsibility to control the territorial boundaries. The territorial coordinator of the tribe is also called the *nakaf*, or the coordinator of the tribe in every worshipping season or every offering, who prepares for a tribute to the king. Then, the *tob* is the common people who must be obedient, who must comply, and who must always be present in every Natoni ceremony.

The customary and the cultural structure shows the functionality of the socio-cultural system and structure. Parsons (1949) suggests that the actions of an individual or a group are influenced by three systems, which are the social system, the cultural system, and the personality system of each individual. We may link an individual with the social system through his/her roles and status (Parsons, 1949). In every social system, an individual is positioned in status and has a role which is according to the norms and the regulations which are created by that system; and the behaviours are also determined by their personality type (Sarwono, 1993).

In the sociological analysis (Parsons, 1949), if analysed from its vertical structure, it is clear that there is local compliance with the rites. This has spiritual values and meanings; thus, each person will carry out the roles sincerely. This is because the target is not financial gain, nor is it a social admiration. But it is a hope for the help of *Uis Neno* (God) for the prosperity and the welfare of all customary people in that area.

The Atoni people are a community who has cultural values in the form of lyrics or dances as a form of buffer to the lifecycle that they live in every day. Momentums in the lifecycle, such as birth, marriage, death, welcoming guests, and the change of seasons, especially the planting season, are carried out through customary processes both in the form of dances or lyrics.

The expression of lyrics in the Natoni to the ancestors of the *Uis Neno*, including those in the death ceremony, uses a one-direction communication. This means that this communication must be sensed abstractly on the transcendental values by emphasizing the aspect of the human beings' powerlessness, who seeks the *Uis Neno*'s mercy, who has the power over nature (cosmos). Then, an *Atonis* (a believer of the Natoni religion) knows which expression is the most accurate one to be used. The speaker has obtained a type of inheritance of oral habit, which is self-taught, not through a learning process. This means that the skill to communicate in Natoni comes to people who are given magical powers which cannot be rationed. Their ability to speak the customary language as a highly sacred rite cannot be copied by the people or the Atoni people, especially the Maubesi people.

In the anthropologic analysis, the Natoni is called folklore, as it is inherited orally by the ancestors. According to Danandjaja, folklore comes from the words *lore* which means tradition and *folk*, which is part of the culture, which is inherited orally or through an example that contains gestural movements or reminding tools. Because of that, the folklore is explained as part of the culture, which is spread and inherited from

generation and generation, traditionally in different versions, both orally or using examples which are completed with movements or reminding tools (Danandjaja, 1971, pp. 1-2).

As a religion, the Natoni expression or lyrics have high and specific values of the rite. This is because those expressions or lyrics are not only created by human beings but are also obtained naturally. In the people's understanding, it is believed as a spiritual language that is only granted to certain people. Because of that, not everyone can be an *atonis*, and neither can the leader of the tribe or the customary leader. In the cultural structure of the people, Natoni is always taught to every generation so that there is no pessimistic attitude towards the disappearance of the Natoni as a religion and as a belief. In reality, it is difficult to understand the Natoni religion and it is regarded as a spiritual language that is only granted to certain people. In the life of the people in Maubesi District, there is a king and seven tribes with a total population of 3220 people. Yet, there are only 9 (nine) *atonis*, or only 0,64 percent of the total population.

There are even tribes that do not have people who become *atonis*. This is because that tribe has not been given the honour by the Uis Neno to have an incarnation of the god to the descendants of that tribe which may become a Natoni speaker, as the worshipping inheritance to the *Uis Neno*. It may be that the tribe does not have an *atonis* because that tribe does not make Natoni a religious procession to maintain and preserve their culture anymore. Meanwhile, there is the coming of other religions and beliefs from the outside, which are embraced by the Atoni people. Such beliefs are thought to be more rational. Thus, the ancient religions are abandoned.

According to Berger and Luckman (1990), in this life, there are regulations or laws which become the guide for social institutions. These regulations are products of human beings to preserve social order. Thus, even if the regulations in the social structure are binding, there is a chance that there are 'violations' carried out by

individuals. The violation of regulations is caused by the externalization process, which changes the individual. In other words, there is the inability of the individual to adapt to the regulations which are used to maintain that social order. Because of that, the problem of change is present in this externalization process. In a society that emphasizes 'social order', individuals make great efforts to adapt themselves to the social roles which have been institutionalized. Meanwhile, in a society that prefers 'social disorder', there are more dislikes in adapting to the institutionalized social roles (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

In this case, what is included as the objective reality in society is legitimization. The function of legitimization is to make institutionalized objectification become rationally objective. For example, mythologies, apart from having the legitimization function towards actions and behaviours, also becomes rational when the mythologies are understood and executed. There needs to be a social organization to maintain that universe. This is because, as a historical product of human activities, all universes which are socially developed will experience change due to human actions. Thus, there need to be social organizations to maintain them. When that maintenance is built upon full power, the status quo will happen (Poloma, 1979).

The change in the people's attitudes to accepting external religions and cultures is regarded as acculturation. The change of beliefs and cultures in the past and the present is caused by the opening of the information and modernization currents which spread to any people of this world. The change or acculturation is a form of religious and cultural amalgamation, which may also eliminate the previous culture by changing it to a new culture that is regarded as more established and which is thought to be better in fulfilling the people's needs.

Acculturation happens when groups of individuals who have different cultures interact directly and intensively. Then, there are great changes in the cultural pattern of one or both of the

aforementioned cultures. The many variables include the differences between the cultures, the conditions, the intensities, the frequencies, and the spirit of brotherhood in the dominative or the submissive relations, and whether or not there is an interactive influence.

The analysis of cultural change has happened across the globe with all of its consequences. It also affects the behavioural patterns of the Atoni people in general and specifically those in Maubesi village. Even so, there are still many communities and tribes in the Atoni people who care about and who try to preserve and maintain the Natoni. The efforts to preserve the Natoni culture include preserving the various ceremonial activities in the political and socio-communal aspects, for example, during the marriage and death ceremonies and also the ceremonies for the farmers before the rainy season.

The people's collective awareness to develop and preserve that inheritance does not come without reason. This is because the Natoni lyrics do bring not only luck but also bad luck to the people who violate the values and the norms in those lyrics. Such bad luck may cause death, as the communication developed directs to the spiritual aspect, which is only understood by several special people who have the authority as an inheritance and an incarnation of the ancestors and the Uis Neno.

Thus, the main problem of this research is, 'How is the role of the Natoni religion rites towards the Maubesi people in North-Central Timor?'

Research Method

This research is carried out in Maubesi village, North-Central Timor Regency. In line with its substance, this is a qualitative type of research. The data collection is carried out through profound observation and interviews with the informants, including the customary figures (*usif*) and the religious figures in the Maubesi village using the snowball technique. The re-

searcher becomes the key informant (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987). Then, the data is analysed descriptively (Miles & Huberman, 1992).

Discussion

Natoni as a Media of Worship to the Uis Neno as the Planting Season Approaches

The planting season is an important time for the Atoni or the Timor farmers, especially those in the Maubesi village, as described by Natoni figures, Thimoteus Tan and Wenseslaus Leu, Pius Fanu and Fransiskus Fanu (personal communication, March 18th, 2018). This planting season is so important that the ancestors in the past made this season have sacred values, as it highly influences the survival of the people in general. The sacredness of this season is the custom of offering animals of sacrifice in the form of a bull a sacrifice to the Uis Neno, who is hoped to fulfil all wishes of the Natoni actors, and so that the Uis Neno may make the land fertile and multiply the crop yields. The Timor people believe that the Uis Neno has power over the universe. It is the Almighty who may give fertility to the land and who may multiply the crop yields. The people have experienced such benefits due to their prayers, worships, and sacrifices which have been accepted by the Uis Neno.

The sacredness of the ceremony in the Natoni religion has been experienced during the planting season. Some of the customary figures prepare all things needed for that ceremony, including bulls and white cocks as animals of sacrifice.

Natoni is not merely a common culture as a media to be observed by observing the actions of those who believe in and who carry out the Natoni as crazy or irrational people. At a glance, it may be seen that what is carried out by the Natoni believers is only a myth. But it becomes a problem if there are efforts to inhibit or cancel the Natoni ceremony. That person will directly experience a disaster, and there will be direct anger toward nature. There is a belief that Aton (the Natoni God) will inflict disasters on a person

who prohibits the Natoni and the rituals, such as the death of a family member or that person will suffer from diseases.

For people outside of the Natoni, that belief is developed to preserve the Natoni teachings. The people outside of the Natoni regard the forms of disasters, namely the death of the family members or being inflicted with diseases as regular events, considering that every person will eventually die and people commonly suffer from diseases. They believe that there is no correlation with the Natoni prohibitions. But the real disaster is the emergence of conflicts or disputes between groups of there is a lack of tolerance. This principle is accepted by community members who do not embrace the Natoni religion. Thus, because of this tolerance, no conflicts happen as each religion has its own philosophies and teachings.

There is a long history of the people's beliefs towards the magical powers of the ancestor spirits, and that of the plants and the animals, in line with the development of the human civilization in the prehistorical era until the modern era. In certain tribes, the worshipping rites of primitive religions still go on as the planting season or the harvesting season approaches.

McLennan (2017) was the first person who

tried to link totemism with the general history of human beings. In this series of his articles which were published in the *Fortnightly Review*, he started to show that totemism is not merely a religion but it is also a plurality of beliefs and practices which appear, even in the most developed religious systems (McLennan, 1870, 2017). McLennan even stepped further and stated that all forms of worship and praise towards animals and plants might be observed in primitive people.

The worship of plants and animals has multiple causes which cannot be generalized into merely one type if not followed by a great simplification. But, with an exaggerating statement, this simplification also brings advantages, as it may attract the attention of the experts to give more attention to the important meaning of the totemism history. For some of them, the experts on America have long opined that totemism is related to a definitive social organization, which is based on the division of the society based on clans (Jones, 2005).

These are the lyrics in the Natoni religion rites to ask for help from God the Almighty, as stated by Nelson Banani (personal communication, March 20th, 2018).

Table 1.

Natoni Lyrics Asking for God's Help

Local Language	Bound Translation	Free Translation
<i>Uis Neno, ma Uis pah, etko fat bianam ne bian</i>	King of the Sky and King of the Earth behind the other rock	'God behind the rock and the wood.'
<i>Apohot ana 'at neo paham nifu netum ma ne nonof</i>	Protector, holder of the earth, pond of the hills and valleys	'To the protector and the dweller of the hills, the ponds, and the valleys'
<i>Haim totem akum ma tani, nopem ma ne ulan</i>	We ask for drops and dew, clouds and rain	'We ask for drops of water, dew, clouds and rain.'
<i>Oh Uis Neno ma Uis Pah</i>	Oh, King of the Sky and King of the Earth	'The god behind the rocks and the wood.'
<i>Amnen hai han sananet ma hai han sakoit.</i>	Listen to God, the voice of pleas and the voice of requests	'Listen to our pleas'

For the people of the Maubesi District, the Natoni religion's rites are not merely a cultural establishment in the form of a circulation procession or what is commonly called a ritual. But the researcher tries to find what becomes the perspective of the viewpoint, the manner of giving meaning or values on Natoni to the Maubesi people. Regarding that, the researcher tries to dig information from some interviewees who understand the Natoni or those who are participants or congregations, those who are Natoni followers, and also those who have ancestors from the Maubesi district but are born outside of the North-Central Timor, especially the Maubesi district. We also interview those who have lived outside of the Maubesi district since an early age. Those who pursue education may also have different viewpoints. We also interview those who are fanatic towards the Catholic religion and also those who have limited religious knowledge on their perspectives towards the Natoni religion. In this case, a Natoni speaker says as follows:

The current Natoni is different from the early Natoni, before the coming of the Catholic religion, where the Natoni lyrics and the objects are limited to Uis Neno. In the viewpoint of the ancestors, Uis Neno is the Ruler who has power over the universe, as understood by the people as the profane. Meanwhile, all objects and materials in the Natoni ceremony are currently linked to God the Almighty in the Catholic perspective, with lyrics on the acknowledgement of God's power. But from the socio-anthropologic point of view, it is described as a form of syncretism, which is an effort to merge the Natoni in the context of the Catholic religion's understanding. Thus, the Natoni process or ritual may be understood as a form of worship to the Almighty God by asking for rain as an element

of prosperity and fertility through some stages, where the last stage is giving an offering to God Almighty.

Based on the statements above, it can be sensed that there is a shift in the meaning of the Natoni as a religion because the Natoni is not a cultural inheritance of the Catholic religion. Yet, it is an inheritance of the Timor ancestors with the meaning of praise to Uis Neno, which has the connotation as the Almighty God, or a super-creature who has supernatural powers which may give mercy to the worshippers who ask through a polite and an orderly manner. It must be orderly and even structured according to the correct stages; thus, the ceremony may be accepted, or in the religious term, it may be granted.

Then, a citizen who is only a participant in the Natoni ceremony describes his experience of the rite as follows:

Personally, I do not understand nor do I comprehend the rituals in the Natoni. But I have the belief that what is said and offered is something that has highly sacred values. Thus, after the ritual, rain directly comes. Once, there is a story of a person who does not believe in the power of Natoni. Then, that person recklessly stole the bull meat after offering it to be eaten with his family. Then, all of them were hit by a disaster, and they even died. This means that it wasn't the bull meat that was poisonous. Nor is meat the cause of death. But it is believed that the Ruler is angry and mad, thus taking the lives of the people who took the meat, which actually has supernatural powers from four sides, as a form of substitute for that meat of offering. From then on, the people became very scared, and they did not want to have history repeat itself. In the Natoni procession, there

must be silence. The participants cannot cough, sneeze, or make noises as they may anger the god and face death (Y. Kaauni, personal communication, March 19th, 2018).

The authors obtained some information from several interviews with embracers of the Natoni religion. They had similar opinions on the obligation to stay calm during the ritual, like those who cause disturbances or make noises will be cursed with death (J. Kriba, M. Yago, H. Driba, P. Heja, personal communication, March 20th-21st, 2018). Based on the explanation above, it may be understood why the people are very obedient in participating in the Natoni ceremony, even though they do not literally understand the meanings of the lyrics of worship spoken by a Natoni and also the worship in the Natoni religion ritual. But the people believe that the Uis Neno is a transcendental creature that has the power to make it rain and to make the land fertile, which then yields abundant crops to be consumed and to be kept as seeds to then be planted in the next season. Thus, the compliance of the people to the Natoni culture is not only due to their fear of the ancestor spirits' anger. But it is also because they have experienced the blessing of an abundant crop. This is related to their lives' interests and desires and also affects their survival.

Then, a young man who is from the new generation, who has gone forth and lived outside of the tribe and has pursued education outside of his community, states as follows:

According to us, Natoni is a customary language or a customary expression that has a spirit. It has been the custom of the people since the time of the ancestors, which should be carried out as a form of gratitude to God (Uis Neno), who has fulfilled the living necessities of the people. But as the new generation, we fail to understand what Natoni really is, as it comes as irrational. Is Natoni a

god? If it is, why is it so evil? Even if it has mercy by giving abundant rain and abundant crop yields, if one time, before the rainy season, there is no Natoni ceremony, will the rain not come? Will there be a crop failure? There needs to be an experiment so that the society is not stuck within the rite system, which is far from the beliefs of the people in this current modern era (Y. Tapoin, personal communication, March 19th, 2018).

Based on the opinion above, Natoni is a religion that is full of gratitude to Uis Neno, even if that culture is believed to be irrational by the new generation. But when that ritual is carried out as a form of gratitude for the blessings received by the humans and for the virtues of the Ruler of the Universe, thus it may be guaranteed that this culture will keep on existing so long as it does not contradict the religious values believed by the people. Thus, it will not be grounded in the development of the era.

The Ritual of the Natoni Religion as a Religious and a Cultural System

From the cultural perspective, the Timor people see the Natoni culture as one of the elements which are tied closely to the life of the Atoni people. Because of that, there are some aspects which must be given the main attention, which are the aspects of the fall, the shift, the fading, and the disappearance of the Natoni culture as an oral culture which is carried out through lyrics, which are related to the divinity or the vertical concept, or the interaction between human beings or the horizontal concept.

The Natoni customary ceremony in the Sonaf Mnasi Maubesi (Sonaf Afeanpah) has the aim to ask for rain from four points of the compass and also to ask for the blessings of the gods/the ancestors are described by Wenseslaus Leu, a social figure who practised the Natoni (personal communication, March 14th, 2018) to the writer

as follows:

In this ritual ceremony, two sows are killed, one black and one red. The two sows, one red and one black, symbolize *Metmeno malio i o, kejula ma ik elo* (the request for rainfall/*ul upu, ul timo*). After all, Natoni congregations carry out the customary ceremony in the sonaf Mnasi by chanting the Natoni lyrics, which requests for the four powers from the four points of the sky; which are the east, west, north, and south (*Kolan Ha, Siun Ha, Es Oenun Es Bahaen Es La se Es*

Lato, teu Kupang, Oelai, Babau Nok Panmuti Nennom Banam Pun,am Biteno, Es Humus Es Oe hain, Es Kob Kobe, Es Besteo). In the Atoni people's perspective, especially the Maubesi people, they have natural authority over each point of the compass, thus, all people in Natoni have the right to special lyrics.

These are the lyrics spoken during the offering, as chanted by Nelson Banani (personal communication, March 20th, 2018):

Table 2.

Natoni Lyrics during Offering

Local Language	Bound Translation	Free Translation
<i>On pah ma nifu ma af on Uis Neno pah mnatu nifu ne mnatu</i>	Like the earth and the lake and the contents like the King of the Sky and the King of the Earth gold lake of gold	'Like the <i>Uis Neno</i> who blessed the contents of the earth with lakes and gold.'
<i>Neu onme lo'en neno ma lo'en ne pah</i>	To how to prostrate in the sky and prostrate on earth	'Like the earth prostrating to the sky.'
<i>Uis Neno, ma Uis pah, etko fatu bianam ne bian</i>	King of the Sky and King of the Earth at the other rock behind	'The god behind the rock and wood'
<i>Oh Uis Neno ma Uis Pah</i>	Oh, King of the Sky and King of the Earth	'The god behind the rock and wood'

The social reality above shows a transcendental concept in human relations, both vertically with God the Ruler of the World and horizontally with other people. Thus, there will not be any distortions even with the various developments in science and technology. According to the embracers of the animistic theory, dreams are a starting point of religious evolution. Meanwhile, according to the embracers of the naturist theory, some natural symptoms are the starting points. Both believe that the seed of conflict between that which is sacred and that which is profane must be found within nature itself. Worships do exist, which is stated as 'totemism' by ethnographers (Durkheim, 2017).

Natoni as a Religious System

The term *religi* in Indonesian is a transla-

tion of the word religiosity in English. The term religion derivates from the term religiosity. In psychology, this concept is often called religiosity. Religiosity (plurality) is manifested in all aspects of human life. This must be differentiated from religion, as the connotation of religion usually refers to the institutionalism which is active in juridical aspects, regulations, and punishments. Meanwhile, religiosity regards the aspect of the conscience and personalization of that institution (Shadily, 1989, p. 67).

The definition of religiosity based on the dimensions stated by Glock and Stark (in Ancok & Suroso, 2005) is how far the knowledge, how strong the faith, how diligent the act of worship, and how profound the religious belief someone has (Ancok & Suroso, 2005).

Based on the descriptions above, it may be concluded that religion is a belief that grows within a society and is inherited from generation to generation with all of its consequences. If that calling is carried out well, thus happiness will be the reward. In consequence, those who leave or who violate the teachings will be punished or will face sanctions.

Similar to religion, in the understanding of the Atoni tribe, it is called the Natoni, which has the connotation of religion. This is because society believes in God in a form and a substance that they can understand, based on the rites in carrying out the beliefs. The Oxford Student Dictionary defines religion as a belief or the presence of a supernatural ruling power

which creates and controls nature. In Arabic, the term religion is called *Ad-din*. This word contains the meaning “domination”, “subdue”, “compliance”, and “habit” (Azyumardi, 2000).

Nasution states that religion or belief has the meaning of a knot that must be held and which must be obeyed by humans (Nasution, 1986). The knot mentioned comes from a power higher than the human beings as a supernatural power that cannot be observed by the five senses. Yet, it has great power towards the human life daily, as seen in the oral lyrics in the Natoni ritual event as follows, as chanted by Nelson Banani (personal communication, March 20th, 2018):

Table 3.

The Greatness of the Uis Neno in the Natoni Lyrics

Local Language	Bound Translation	Free Translation
<i>On pah ma nifu ma af on Uis Neno pah mnatu nifu ne mnatu</i>	Like the earth and the lake and the contents like the King of the Sky and the King of the Earth gold lake of gold	‘Like the <i>Uis Neno</i> who blessed the contents of the earth with lakes and gold.’
<i>Neu onme lo'en neno ma lo'en ne pah</i>	To how to prostrate in the sky and prostrate on earth	‘Like the earth prostrating to the sky.’
<i>Uis Neno, ma Uis pah, etko fatu bianam ne bian</i>	King of the Sky and King of the Earth at the other rock behind	‘The god behind the rock and wood.’
<i>Oh Uis Neno ma Uis Pah</i>	Oh, King of the Sky and King of the Earth	‘The god behind the rock and wood.’
<i>Amnen hai han sananet ma hai han sakoit</i>	Listen, God, the voice of pleas and the voice of requests	‘Listen to our pleas.’

Based on the explanation above, through the *Atonis*' belief in the Uis Neno as God and also the worshipping ritual carried out by the *Atonis*, it is clear that the Natoni is not a mere cultural belief. Natoni is a traditional religion that comes from the Atoni tribe that inhabits the North-Central Timor Area. This is a belief towards the power which rules over the universe, which they call the Uis Neno with all of their equipment, rituals, and worships so that the people's lives will always be blessed during the planting season and the harvesting sea-

son of the crop.

Conclusion

The rites of the Natoni religion are carried out by the Maubessi people of North-Central Timor as a worshipping ceremony to the Uis Neno, which is a form of belief inherited from the ancestors with a special ritual that involves the customary structure, including the king, the Naisaban lieutenant, the tobe, and the amnasit which is completed with a ceremony of sacrifice, where

sows, a bull, and a white cock are slaughtered, completed with rice, betel, and betel nut to be offered. Apart from that, the Natoni is also a form of gratitude and thankfulness to the Uis Neno (God) with lyrics of religious rites which have given the blessing of rainfall, which then yields an abundant crop harvest for the interest and the survival of the people.

The rites of the Natoni religion are held on strongly as a form of local wisdom which ties the relations between humans, god, and the natural environment surrounding them by the Atoni people in Maubessi, North-Central Timor, who then embrace other religions such as Catholic or Protestant. There is then the syncretism process which revises the values of that belief so that there is no misinterpretation. That ceremony is not the same as worshipping God the Almighty, but it is only culture and a custom. This social reality shows a concept of divinity in the human beings' vertical and horizontal relations with the embracers of other religions in the North-Central Timor so that there is no distortion even with the development of modern science and technology.

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