

## Research Article

## The Tradition of Tahlilan on Ternate Society

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the implementation of tahlilan, society perspective towards this tradition, and the factors of the tahlilan existence on Ternate community. The study was designed in the form of qualitative descriptive research by applying field research, theological normative, and socio-cultural approaches. The data were collected through interview and documentation. The result showed that tahlilan for Ternatenese is nothing but the momentum where family, relatives, friends, and surrounding communities gather to recite some hayyibah sentences (hamfdalah, takbir, shalawat, tasbih), Qur'an verses, dhikr, and other prayers. Ternate society believes that tahlilan is crucial as a medium of da'wah. There are many positive benefits felt by the people of Ternate such as psychological, social, economic, and importantly religious awareness. In religion side, tahlilan is a minfestation of love for Islam and the cultivation of the monotheism concept. The development of understanding and awareness in Muslim religion also lead to a process of evaluation and change in the implementation of tahlilan. In this case, Islamic da'wah succeeds in influencing the socio-cultural life of Ternate community. The tahlilan tradition can exist til now because it is considered to still have coherence with Islamic values, customs and culture. Ternate society still hope that the tradition of tahlilan will last forever. However, there has been no inheritance or regeneration model for tahlilan implementers since the process of regenerating the rituals of tahlilan has proceeded naturally so far.

**Keywords:** Tradition, Tahlilan, Da'wah, Ternate

## Introduction

Islam is a religion blessed by Allah SWT, to be preached to all humanity. Max Muller said that Islam is a religion of da'wah that seeks to spread the truth and it is considered as a noble duty (Arnold, 1981: 1). The Prophet Muhammad, in preaching with wisdom and understanding the psychological conditions of the madah he faced, knew the exact time to speak and to be silent (Azis, 2004: 159), to whom he was facing so that he could arrange his da'wah strategy (Rosyidi, 2004 : 4). The missionary journey at the time of the Prophet described the attitude of tolerance and respect for others despite different beliefs. The Prophet put forward dialogue and deliberation in preaching rather than indoctrination against people who were new to Islam. This da'wah model has produced one of the agreements of peace and friendship between Moslems, Jews and other groups in Medina, which in general are as follows: 1) Being good neighbors; 2) Helping one another and facing enemies togeteher; 3) Defending those who are persecuted; 4) Advising one another; 5) Respecting religious freedom (Sadzali, 1993: 10-16). This model has made significant development of Islamic da'wah in various parts of the world (Schuon, 1994: 25).

Zuhdi said that the process of Islamic preaching in Nusantara / Indonesia needed to deal with an empirical realm (Zuhdi, 2012), where cultural patterns were very diverse, resulting a negotiation process that led to acculturation. In every acculturation of culture, human beings form, utilize and change things that cover their needs (Muarif, 2001: 251), which is then known as local genius (Zuhdi, 2012). Local genius is the ability to absorb while holding active selection and processing the influence of foreign cultures, so that a unique new creation

can be achieved, which is not found in the territory of the nation that carries its cultural influence.

In the process, Islamic da'wah has influenced every aspect of Indonesians' life. However, the basic pattern of local traditional culture is still strong, so there is assimilation between traditional culture and Islamic culture. Tradition or customs is one that includes religious systems and traditional religious ceremonies within the cultural sphere. One form of the customs carried out by the community in several regions in Indonesia is tahlilan (*talkin*). Although the tahlilan tradition has become the wisdom of the archipelago in Indonesia, until now there are still differences from the scholars regarding the law and its status. Al-Banjari (Fauzan, 2006: 1-16) mentions three important things associated with the tahlilan law. Firstly, if the tahlilan is intended as worship and a medium to get close to Allah (*bertaqarrub*), then it is *bid'ah* because the essence of *bid'ah* is to do some acts with the intention of worship and *taqarrub* to Allah that has no basis in the *syar'i* argument. Secondly, if it has no intention to worship, but it is still conducted in the appointed time from the 1<sup>st</sup> day, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup> to 1000<sup>th</sup> day and haul (once a year), then this is the *tasyabuh bil kufar* which is also called *hadharah* (a way of life based on beliefs or perceptions) of other religions, in this case animism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Thirdly, reward in tahlilan, such as dhikr and sending a dua to those who have died, may be conducted as the law is regulated as long as it is not intended to conduct worshipping to God of adressing the death and it is also not carried out in the certain days of other religions' belief. However, if it is conducted to strengthen the love of society to Islam by reading the verses of the Qur'an, dhikr and praying to ask for forgiveness and helping from Allah as well as using it to deliver da'wah in lecturing and

studying activities (while the time is not decided) then it can be done.

Ternate is one of the areas where the people still maintain the tahlilan tradition nowadays. Every Friday night is held in the Sultanate of Ternate to instill the values of aqeedah/faith, ketauhidan/monotheism, sentences of tauhid which is attended by the public (Julkiram, 2012). Ternate is an open area since the colonial era. It used to interact with foreign cultures and it begin to conduct the open interaction of purification movement of Islamic teachings these days. However, the people of Ternate are still solid in maintaining the tahlilan tradition without significant changes. Therefore, it is very intriguing to analyze the implementation of the tahlilan tradition, the assumptions of Ternate community towards the this tradition and the causes leading to the continuity of tahlilan in the community of Ternate City.

### Research Methods

The design of this study was descriptive qualitative with field research, (Nasution, 1992: 17), normative-theological and socio-cultural approaches (Nata 1999: 28). The normative-theological approach is an approach that emphasizes the basic teachings of religion, while the socio-cultural approach is an approach to examine how the social, cultural and religious conditions of the community. The data collected in this study are based on primary and secondary data. Purposive sampling and snowballing sampling techniques are used to select the informants. Meanwhile, purposive sampling is a way of selecting candidate with specific considerations and objectives (Sugiyono, 2016: 300), whereas snowballing is a chain technique in determining the subject of research from one person to another. However, to guarantee the quality of data, key informants were determined, namely the sultanates in the Bobato hereafter, religious leaders and educational figures. To validify the data, reseracher used triangulation techniques that are in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. After the data is obtained by the researcher either using library research method or field research method, the data is processed and analyzed qualitatively, starting from the stages of data collection, data reduction and data display (Usman, 2008: 87). Then, to sharpen the meaningfulness of the research findings, the researcher used data processing methods below in order to formulate a complete and objective conclusion.

### Da'wah Concept

The word da'wah in Arabic comes from *دعو* which means that the basis of attracting something is through sound or words (Zakarīya 1389/1969). The word *دعوة* for example, means to hail, call, invite, and entertain (Dār al-Masyriq, 1977: 216). Then the isim fail form of the word is *الداعى*, plural *دعاة* *muannas* *داعية* plural *داعيات* which means people who persuade others to something such as their religion or their mahzab (Al-Masyriq, 1977: 216). The word da'wah in the Indonesian Language Dictionary means: broadcasting or propaganda, religious broadcasting among the community and its development (the call to embrace, to learn and practice the values of religion) (Team of Dictionary Compiler, 2000: 181). The term da'wah is used in the Qur'an with 211 forms (Al-Baqi, 1991: 326). The results of the analysis of these verses are known that the term of da'wah used in the Qur'an has a broader meaning than the definition of da'wah which is often used by

Muslims, including inviting to hell or crime. This can be seen in the Qur'an of Surah al-Baqarah: 221.

أُولَٰئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ  
وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Those (Al-Mushrikun) invite you to the Fire, but Allah invites (you) to Paradise and Forgiveness by His Leave, and makes His Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) clear to mankind that they may remember. (Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1989:53-54).

In da'wah area, the term da'wah tends to be used to designate the process of da'wah which is in favor of the Islamic teaching. This can be seen from the definition stated by the scholars (Mahfudz, 1952: 17). Aceh (1971: 6) and Sheikh Bahy al-Khuly (1952: 27) who all agreed that da'wah is "encouraging people to obey Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, to do good as well as to call upon goodness and prevent evil actions so that humans can gain world happiness and hereafter".

### The Tradition of Tahlilan

Tradition or customs is one that includes religious systems and traditional religious ceremonies within the cultural sphere. The scope of culture embodies all life (spiritual life) and livelihood (physical life) of humans, which contains: (1) religious systems and traditional religious ceremonies; (2) social organization system; (3) living livelihood systems; (4) technology systems; (5) knowledge system; (6) art, and; (7) language (Shils, 81:12). Edward Shils in his book "Tradition" also states the definition of tradition, namely:

"Tradition means many things. In its barest, most elementary sense, it means simply a tradium; it is anything which transmitted or handed down from the past to the present. Tradition that which is handed down includes material objects, beliefs about all sorts of things, images of persons and events, practices and institutions (Shils, 81:12).

Understanding the tradition stated by Shils that according to inherited from the past to the present, where inherited includes an object, trust in something, behavior and institutions. The tradition in the Anthropology dictionary is as similar as customs which is some habits that are magical-religious from the life of an indigenous population including cultural values, norms, laws and interrelated rules, and then becomes a fix system or an exact rule which covers all the conceptions of the cultural system to regulate social actions (Arriyono and Siregar, 1985: 4).

The word tradition in Indonesian means (1) hereditary customs (from ancestors) that are still practiced in society; (2) assessment or assumption that existing methods are the best and on point (Center Language Dictionary Compilation Team, 2008: 1727). In Islamic literature, tradition is known as "Urf". The use of the concept of urf is an effort to define the law so that the various symptoms and core functions are the same as an essential function of law and can be found in various human cultures (Khalil, 2009: 167). Therefore, the word "urf" attracts an attention of various Islamic scientists. According to Rasyad Hasan Khalil, the etimological definition of urf is "something that is considered good and accepted by common sense" (Efendi, et al, 2005: 153). Abdul-Karim Zaidan states the term of urf which is something that is no stranger to one society because it has become a habit and unites with their lives in the form of actions or words (Anhari, 2008: 110). According to the Usuliyin Ulama, Urf is "what can be understood by humans (a

group of humans) and they run, whether in the form of actions, words, or leaving (Wahab. 1994: 123). Khallaf (1993: 133), assumes that *urf* is derived from mutual understanding of the people regardless of social stratification. Referring to the various definitions, Abdul Wahhab Khallaf stressed that "there is no difference between *al-urf* and customs" (Ansori. 2007: 2). Tradition or custom is a habit in society and becomes one of the social needs that is difficult to be left behind and heavy to be released. Therefore, Ansori said that Islamic law is very concerned on the customs of local communities (Supardan, 2011: 207).

All of the above meanings can be generalized that tradition is anything that is conducted by humans for generations from every aspect of their lives (Sztompka, 2007: 70), in the form of faith, beliefs, symbols, values, rules, and ideologies which are all relics from the past that is still preserved nowadays (Hanafi, 2003: 2). In this context, tradition has a cycle of reciprocal influence in community life as Hanafi said that tradition is born from and influenced by society then society emerges and it is influenced by tradition. Tradition was originally a form, but eventually it became a conclusion and premise, content, form, effects and actions of influence and influencing (Rahman, 2010: 209).

The scholars of the *ushul fiqh* divide the *urf* into three types (Sholihin, 2010: 151), among others are:

- a. In terms of the object involves two types, namely: Firstly, *Al-urf al-lafdzi* (habits involving expressions). It is the custom of the community to use certain pronunciation / expressions to express something, so that the meaning of the phrase is understood and crossed the minds of the people. The second is *Al-urf al-amali* (habits in the form of deeds). It is the custom of the community that is related to ordinary actions or civil affairs. Ordinary deeds is the actions of the people in their life problems that do not associate with the interests of others such as work holiday habits on certain days of the week, the community eat special foods or drink and wear certain clothes in special events. Example: the habits of the people in buying and selling that the goods purchased are delivered to the buyer's house by the seller, if the goods purchased are heavy and large, such as refrigerators and other household appliances, without additional costs.
- b. In terms of coverage, the *urf* is consisted of two kinds, namely: Firstly, *Al-urf al-am* (general habits). It is a certain habit that is applied widely in the community and in all regions. Secondly, *Al-urf al-khas* (a special habit) is a habit that is implemented in certain regions and community.
- c. In terms of its validity from the perspective of *syara*, '*urf* is divided into two which is first called *Al-urf al-shokhih* (a habit that is considered valid). It is the habit that prevails in the society that does not contradict the texts (verses or hadiths), neither eliminate their salvation, nor bring harm to them. Secondly, *Al-urf al-fasid* (a habit that is considered worst). It is a habit that contradicts the arguments of the *syara* and the basic rules that exist in *syara*.

One form of tradition that lives in society is *tahlilan*. *Tahlil* in language comes from the word "*hallala*" (*yuhallilu*, *tahlilan*) which means reading the sentence *la ilaha illallah* (Agus, 2006: 99). *Tahlil* is often done in congregation in fulfilling thanksgiving and in funeral homes. The ritual of *tahlilan* is usually conducted in two stages that are reading the Qur'an verses or *dhikr* and ended by prayer. The fundamental of the *tahlilan* tradition which is one of the Islamic teachings suggests

us to conduct *dhikr* to Allah. *Dhikr* is a suggestion that is ordered by the Messenger of Allah (Rasulullah) which can be conducted together or individuals. *Dhikr* has an important role to link the human beings to Allah. In religion, rituals are commonly known as worship or prayer. Every religion teaches various kinds of worship and prayers at certain moments that can be called as *dhikr* (Q.S. *Al-Dzariyat*: 556). According to Imam Syafi'i, *dhikr* in *tahlilan* is a must thing to do. Allah has ordered His servants to pray to Him even to His Messenger. If god allows muslims to pray for those who are still alive, then it is permissible to pray for their relatives who have died and the prayer will absolutely be sent to them (Sholihin, 2010: 162-163). Next is the serving dishes for *tahlilan* congregation. Hadrat al-Shaykh K.H Hasyim Asyari stated: "*Tahlil* at the *Sadaqah* event (reward) targeted for the corpse accompanied by the absence of something that caused the prevention of the *shadaqah* is not categorized as *bid'ah*" (Sholihin, 2010: 154-156). Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, an Islamic scholar, explained that the determination of *Sadaqah* on specific days is only a habit of the society (Sholihin, 2010: 154-156).

The command to give guidance to the death person is contained in a hadith which states: The Messenger of Allah said: Do *talqin* (the practice of instructing the deceased at the graveside after burial) to a Muslim who has died with *la ilaha illallah* (Muslim, 1991: 48). According to Khairuddin (2015), the ritual ceremony of *selamatan* death is the principle of Javanese culture that describes animism, dynamism, Hinduism and Buddhism. After Islam entered and instilled in Javanese society through the *da'wah* delivered by Wali Songo in the mean of spreading Islam persuasively and approached culturally, it created a distinctive cultural acculturation between Islam and Javanese. This process is without removing the roots of the local tradition, yet what is done is only to replace the readings with Islamic readings or praises. Thus, *selamatan* which was initially influenced by Hindu and Buddhist teachings is then replaced with Islamic principles and teachings. *Selamatan* is an embodiment or appreciation of gratitude for everything that God gifts. The *selamatan* tradition is an intermediary for living people / families to send prayers to deceased families.

## Results and Discussion

### The Pre-Islamic Beliefs of Ternate Society

The original belief of Ternate people before Islam was animism and dynamism, besides that there were still other beliefs which were derivatives of the belief in supernatural spirits as explained by Busranto Latif Prayer in an article "*Recognizing the Types of Magical Spirits in the Ternate Sultanate* (Wonge, Jin, Meki, Caka, Puntiana, Giki and Moro)" (Prayer, 2014).

Abdul Hamid Hasan explained that generally pre-Islamic Ternate people maintain and trust supernatural beings to ask for help either for defense, healing, or harming the other people. Here is the description:

"... therefore, every tribe or soa in the Sultanate of Ternate competes to seek their supernatural friends, satan/devil, which can be helpful for them such as protecting them from enemies, helping them in warfare and curing them from illness. There are several satan's names in Ternate which can be friends such as *caka*, *wonge*, *meki* and *jinn*. Commonly, the four demons are same. People (owner) who makes the devils as friend must provide a place at the corner of house and prepare *sesajen* (offerings). If the owners want help from the devil, they must carry out the ceremony and present the offerings that have been determined. The

large-scale event carried out by each tribe towards their friends is called legu. In the implementation, all members of the family coming from one tribe must be present at the ceremony to be recognized by the satan friend. That is why all ethnic groups in the Ternate Sultanate must have satan friends (caka, wonge, meki, jinn and others). The ethnic groups which are actively-listed in the Sultanate of Ternate are 42 soa which formally have a permanent function in their duties in various regions. ... each tribe devotes to give the service to the Ternate Sultanate which is consisted of several large and small islands, so that every soldier must equip themselves for his bodily resilience by having friends who always accompany them in the Sultanate's duties (Hasan, 2001: 195 -196).

### **The Implementation of Tahlilan Tradition in Ternate City**

Each region must save the potential of local wisdom as a form of intellectual treasure expressed through the cultural rituals of each region. One of the potentials of local wisdom is the tahlilan ritual that has been inherent in some Indonesian Muslim communities in general and Ternate in particular. There has been a lot of literature that discusses the tradition of tahlilan in many places in Indonesia.

When analyzing from its historical background, actually the tahlilan ritual in Ternate society does not originate from Islamic teachings, but it is from the local culture, Hindu-Buddhist community before the presence of Islam. Then, it is preserved in the religious practice of the Islamic community after an attempt of acculturation between the religious teachings and the local culture. Universalism of Islamic teachings is very dynamic in interacting with various dimensions of human life, including customs or traditions of culture and civilization. The presence of Islam as a religion does not reject all customs that have prevailed in the community, but adopts it as part of the Islamic culture itself by refining and perfecting it with the values of noble character in accordance with the shari'a teachings. The Ternate Muslim community is part of the historical reality where the meeting of Islamic da'wah with socio-cultural reality is able to influence the environment so that the formation of new social reality (Ahmad (ed): 2) such as tahlilan. In the other words, tahlilan is an acculturation of Islamic teachings with Ternate's local culture. In line with this, Widiana (2015) after conducting a study of "Islamic struggle with local culture", found the meaning of acculturation as a concept to describe the long process of meeting two or more values between Islam and local values where individuals, groups and communities are located to stay with the culture they already has. What will happen in this process, such as substitution, syncretism, addition, declaration, formation and even rejection, must be understood as part of their love for old (local) values on the one hand and the learning process to understand new values (Islam) on the other side.

Tahlilan is a gathering forum involving many individuals in a community or congregation. This ritual is a change from previous habits, where people who usually gather do things that are prohibited, such as gambling and drinking (Umar, 2018). In this case, there has been a negotiation process between the perpetrators of Islamic da'wah and the condition of society as explained by Zuhdi (2012) that the process of Islamic da'wah in nusantara must cope with an empirical realm where a negotiation can be denied due to a cultural diversity that generates a pattern of adaptation or acculturation between the customs of the ancestral heritage on Ternate society and the teachings of Islam. This is in line with Geertz's findings in his research on Indonesian society, mentioning two things that

predominantly influence the dynamics and social structure of Indonesian society, namely religion and local culture. The social structure of Indonesian people can be classified into three groups which are santri, priyayi, and abangan. This classification proves the existence of the dominant religion and local culture in forming social structures (Marus, 2018). The elaboration of religion and local culture shows a social pattern of religious Indonesian society, but still clung to ancestral culture in social interaction.

For the people of Ternate, tahlilan is nothing but the gathering of relatives, acquaintance, along with the surrounding community, reading several verses of the Qur'an, dhikr, and prayers. In its implementation series, before the recitation of the tahlil, people would read various verses of the Qur'an and various sentences of thayyibah (for instance hamdalah, taqbir, shalawat, tasbih and so on) to add a sense of self-approach to the creator (Allah). The reading of tahlil is repeated hundred times even up to thousand times). Ternate people generally understand that the tahlilan program is a ritual ceremony to commemorate the day of death and thanksgiving events.

The tahlilan for death is conducted gradually starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> day to the 10<sup>th</sup> day even the 11<sup>th</sup> day. In the range of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> day, the 7<sup>th</sup> day is chosen as the big dina (big day). However, there are also some people who choose the 9<sup>th</sup> day as a big day. The difference in big dina is found in all Ternate sub-districts. In Moti subdistrict, most of them decide the 7th day as the big day, while only a small number of them prefer the 9<sup>th</sup> day. In Hiri subdistrict, most of the people decide 9<sup>th</sup> day. In Ternate Island, the 7<sup>th</sup> day of death is preferred by a large number of people to conduct the big day of tahlilan. The difference in the determination of the big dina between the 7th and 9th days is due to the differences in following the teachings of the predecessors. Nevertheless, this is not the substance of the tahlilan program. The public believes this is not a big deal, because it is more conditional (Kaidat, 2018). After the implementation of tahlilan, followed by the serving of food in a variety of ways, depending on the customs that are admimted in that area. Basically, there will be much food "more than usual" which tends to resemble a joyful menu.

The tahlilan tradition in Ternate is a materialization of culture / customs and religion so that it becomes an activity that is psychologically-bound. Tahlilan contains deep meaning in its implementation as a good practice presented by the executor. However, the implementation of tahlilan for Ternate people was inspired by the powerful meaning of religion. Religion is the controller that is interpreted as a spirit which in dolabololo terms (wise words of Ternate) is a custom of matoto religion (customs based on religion). This is in line with Geertz's term "religion as cultural system", that is described below:

Religion as a cultural system is: a system symbol that aims to create feelings and strong motivation, easily-spread, and hard to lost in a person, by forming perceptions of a general order of existence and attaching this conception to factual emanations and in the end feelings and motivations will appear as a unique reality (Pals, 2011: 342).

Based on Geertz's perspective, it can be conceptualized in the da'wah side that tahlilan is a medium for religious preaching. This is shown by the various positive effects felt by Ternate society in the areas of religion, psychology, social and economy.

In religious side, tahlilan is about the love of the thayyibah, tahmid and tahlil recitations or in the form of monotheistic cultivation, sanctifying God and worshiping God. The implementation of tahlilan motivates the human beings to be able to read the Qur'an and memorize it correctly. Tahlilan also

indoctrinated the community on the pattern of leadership, that a leader of the tahlilan program must have a track record in obeying the religion. The demands of the community are so high on the implementation of religion, especially the implementation of obligatory worship (5 times of daily prayer) and noble character. In this case, the tahlilan tradition became a set of ceremonial activities that has the power to internalize and actualize religious teachings as well as to introspect the worldly life and remind worshipers of preparation for the afterlife. In this context, da'wah has been actualized through the tahlilan program, as Shaykh Ali Mahfudz stated that da'wah is: encouraging people to do good deeds, follow the rules, and prevent evil actions in order to gain happiness in the world and the hereafter (Mahfudz, 1952: 17).

Psychologically, tahlilan can provide peace in mind for people who experience grief. In this context, Komaruddin Hidayat explained that reading the verses of the Qur'an could reassure and entertain family members (Hidayat, 2006). This is because the expert always advised that the Qur'an was a miracle of the Prophet that could cure the anxious, broken, regretful, and worried hearts (Yana, 2012: 48). Those are the reason that has tahlilan lovers utilize the dhikr recitation as an antidote for person who are left by the loved one forever. Sending prayers through tahlilan will make the feelings peacer and calmer.

In the social aspect, the tahlilan tradition is realized to have a social impact, especially in fostering social life. The tahlilan program can strengthen social relations among the people who rarely meet one another. Besides, it can resolve family conflicts naturally because tahlilan can create the power to conduct self-introspection among those who has a conflict to calm down the emotion that will result the sincere forgiveness.

In the economic aspect, tahlilan leads to economic cooperation, where citizens help one another voluntarily in overcoming economic limitations. Tahlilan managed to realize the creation of a mutual cooperation movement through its implementation. Therefore, there is no reason not to carry out tahlilan due to economic shortcomings. Community members have overcome economic problems so that the implementation of tahlilan continues to run normally without doubt over the economic limitations experienced by the host. Yana (2012: 102) explained tradition relating to social solidarity: tradition is carried out more as an obligation and the community tend to feel things incomplete unless they implement it. Whereas according to Emile Durkheim (Agus, 2007: 102), ritual ceremonies and worship are aimed to increase solidarity. It means that the ceremonies conducted by a community group are to eliminate preference to individual interests. People who carry out solemn rituals are in common interests. It seems that Durkheim reduced the meaning contained in religious ceremonies to the integrity of society or social soidarity. However, there are also many acts of worship which are carried out individually such as prayer, dhikr, tahajjud and so on.

Hence, the tahlilan tradition became a medium of da'wah to fill the psychological and socio-economic space, then Islamic religion has always been a system of value for society at the end. Looking at the condition of the Indonesian people at a time when they were hit by an identity crisis, eroded the value of nationalism, the proliferation of apathy and individualism, as well as the depletion of solidarity which resulted the radicalism and terrorism (Ma'rus 2018). Unfortunately, the omission of theological concepts in every academic and scientific debates is commonly happened these days. In connection with this, the tahlilan tradition becomes the significant program to be conducte to contribute more to the national da'wah agenda such as being actively-involved as

public medium to instill the national values that are degraded.

### **The Ternatenese Perspective towards Tahlilan Tradition**

Essentially, Ternate people understand tahlilan as a tradition that has been carried out by the ancestors hereditarily. It even happened before the arrival of Islam. At the time the ancestors still believed to animism. Before the arrival of Islam, the community assumed that spirits that had been revoked from their bodies would roam around the house for seven days. After that, they will leave the place and will return on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup> day and on the 1000<sup>th</sup> day after death that was why the people were scared of the spirit disruption and casted a spell according to their beliefs. The Ternate society hitherto believe in the existence of the great soul, but that belief had been implied into Islamic values. The Ternate society claims that one element of faith is believing in the unseen. This supernatural belief is interpreted so widely, not only the matter of monotheism, but also the journey to the life of hereafter and the life of the hereafter itself (Adjidji, 2018). The recitation of the Qur'an in the tahlilan ritual is related to the dimension of faerie, in addition to the social life dimensions.

Normatively, tahlilan is considered as a ritual of occultation (dimension of faith) while the symbols in its implementation are a form of materialization of the philosophical meaning towards the local wisdom of the indigenous people in Ternate (Ma'rus, 2018). It can be interpreted that the tradition of tahlilan in Ternate is a manifestation of people's understanding from the values of occultation (Islamic faith) and local wisdom dimension which are then expressed simultaneously and become part of the culture / tradition on Ternate society. As Al-Zastrow et al (1999: 166-269), stated that: "Religion is besides having an absolute dimension of faith in God, it also has another dimension in the form of culture which creates the various symbols of rites". Furthermore, in Geertz's research, it was stated that culture as a pattern of meaning or ideas contained in the symbols in which people broaden their knowledge of life and express their consciousness through those symbols. (Pals, 2011 : 338).

The tahlilan tradition has created a collective passion in expressing solidarity and kinship nuances. As a result, if this tradition is violated or neglected, it will loosen the perfection of kinship atmosphere among Ternatenese. In line with this, Yana (2012: 48) defined that the tradition which is implemented largely is an obligation of the community and it feels incomplete if they do not perform it. Even further, the implementation of the death ceremony has grown the opinion that the ritual has a legal norm to be conducted. If they ignore that norm they will likely obtain social sanctions which will be underestimated. To illustrate, there were community members experiencing grief (passing away) and at the time the family did not carry out the tahlilan program, so it would be perceived as someone who violated customs and culture. That illustration is in line with the Geertz's opinion: "culture is socially made up of structures of meaning in terms of a set of signs by which people carry out an action, they can live in it or accept reproach of that meaning, then eliminate it" (Pals, 2011: 338).

It is known that the community considers the tahlilan tradition to be a series of activities that are full of kindness. From the aspect of monotheism, tahlilan recitations contain praises and impose the greatness of God Almighty. In the social aspect, the community considers the meal to be served in Tahlilan as a tribute to the jamaah presence. They spend time and energy to attend tahlilan ritual. In addition, the jamaah presence is an exact situation to donate in the name of the death person by the banquet they serve ,for example they are willing to serve some chickens, cows or goats to make the tahlilan program

successful in the big dina. However, based on data collected, it is known that the case is not an obligation, but is merely voluntary for those who carry out tahlilan.

The development of understanding and awareness in Muslim religion also raises criticism, negotiation and adaptation to Islamic values. It is evidenced by the existence of various minor changes to the tahlilan implementation which are considered irrelevant with the religion. Changes often occur in the process of implementing tahlilan which is surely contradictive to religion (Senen, 2018) such as the implementation of the tahlilan at asr, magrib or isya prayer. Now, its process has been adjusted, so it will not hinder the praying obligation. That is why, tahlilan often holds either after ashar or isya prayer. The figure of religion or the jamaah of the mosque is heading to the tahlilan place after performing asr prayer or magrib prayer. In short, the implementation of the tahlilan tradition in Ternate undergoes an evaluation process based on religion. Communities strongly maintain the essence of religion because they believe that all forms of tradition can change and adapt to the demands of religion. The condition of society in the implementation of tradition is in accordance with the Budiyanto's opinion (2008: 652) that "the relationship between religion and tradition culminates in negotiations. It is when religion with a set of doctrine can suit with various cultures that already exist in society. Then, some efforts will be taken to change the traditions that have been owned. It is in this area that the negotiations are applied even though these negotiations are limited to certain things which lead to changes in tradition. In this phenomenon, one of which should step aside to follow other (Marasabessy, 2018). The process of change experienced in the implementation of the tahlilan tradition in Ternate society, both changes in material content and changes in its implementation is an evidence that Islamic da'wah in Ternate is more dynamic and capable of influencing the environment including the implementation of the tahlilan tradition.

### **The Sustainability of Tahlilan Tradition in Ternate Society**

Ternate society including the government in fact still maintains the tahlilan tradition and hopes that the tradition will last forever. Unfortunately, these expectations are not followed by strategic and technical steps. Until now there is no organization that is responsible for inheriting the tahlilan tradition in a well planned and organized ways. Both the government and the sara agency as well as administrators of the mosque have not considered to establish an institution that is responsible for the inheritance of the tahlilan tradition. In these days, the process of inheriting tahlilan occurs naturally and runs without being planned and organized. The generation of tahlilan was formed by itself through active participation in the tahlilan program. The research found several fundamental reasons that led to the sustainability of tahlilan today, as follows:

1) The influence of the sultanate government. Sultanate organizations have a huge influence on the transmission of tahlilan culture and traditions. The Sultanate is an institution that safeguards cultural values and simultaneously runs an Islamic da'wah mission (Julkiram, 2018). The structure of Sultanate has a bobato hereafter section which is in charge of serving the community regarding affairs of the hereafter or worship cases and da'wah mission. This position must be occupied by figures who have high spiritual qualities including the ability to lead the course of the tahlilan ritual (Marus, 2018). Until now the sultanate government is still active in carrying out da'wah mission and maintaining historical assets and

cultural values of Ternatenese. The Ternate community is classified as a community that has long lived under the influence of the sultanate where customs and religion are power to strengthening solidarity and unify the community. Therefore, customs and religion become a value system that is meaningful to the life of society. If customs and religion are still maintained, tahlilan is. It means that tahlilan still exist in life because it basically synergizes with religion. Tahlilan is a culture / custom, so people who do not carry out tahlilan are considered as people who are anti culture and civilization. Tahlilan cannot be lost because it aligns with customs, religion and culture (Dara, 2018). In this context, tahlilan is interpreted as an activity that instills the monotheism to God and the love for the Prophet. From the perspective of da'wah, Adam Marus (2018) revealed that tahlilan was used as a medium of da'wah for the Ternate sultanate and its form is cultural which included various events related to humans. This form continues at any time with various events ranging from people born, circumcisions, khatam Qur'an (recitation of Holy Qur'an from beginning to the end), entering adulthood, marriage, organization of death event and et cetera. That is why tahlilan has been maintained as celebration rituals, both joy and sorrow.

- 2) The Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) organization as a national organization which exists at the local level. It is also known as NU that is a religious organization whose task is to carry out da'wah mission, sovereignty and safeguard the noble values of the Indonesian people. NU believes that the tahlilan tradition does not contradict to Islamic law, but it is associated with what has been sanctified by the Prophet. Prayer, rewards from reading the Qur'an and shodaqah, can be sent to the death people. In short, according to NU scholars, there is something we can learn from the tahlilan namely social worship, especially tahlil which is carried out in congregation. In the tahlilan tradition, fellow Muslims will gather to create a relation among them. Besides, Allah blessings are granted through the food served which is also part of social worship.
- 3) Family demands. Familiarly, there are demands to take the parents' role where one child in one family should be motivated to take an important role in tahlilan and stimulated to be actively learn the tahlilan knowledge because this is not an easy role carried by the figures.
- 4) Shara Agency. Shara Agency is religious and traditional figures as well. The process of inheriting the tahlilan is carried out within the mosque. The jamaah that have the ability to read Qur'an are directed to learn the systematic material of tahlil reading. In addition, there is a process of inheritance through non-formal education, for some people who are considered capable of doing it (Abdillah, 2018).
- 5) Trust in occult dimension. Tahlilan is considered as an activity that must be conducted when it is struck by a death accident. Even people feel scared if they do not carry out the tahlilan, because it is categorized as violating the customs of their ancestors. Feelings of fear are also overshadowed by supernatural things where often the spirits of the deceased (someone who has died) come to the family through dreams by requesting something<sup>81</sup>. The community has totally believed that tahlilan is a necessity to be conducted to accompany the deceased spirits on the journey to hereafter.

### **Conclusion**

Ternate society in traditional era was fragmented in the dominance of cultural orientation which made the values of

local wisdom from the ancestors strong embedded in society's lives. As time went by, Islamic da'wah was delivered with a cultural approach so that a negotiation process took place which displayed the social pattern of the religious Ternate community, but still clung to the ancestral culture that appeared in the form of tahlilan. In this context, Islamic da'wah succeeded in infiltrating Islamic values into the culture of Ternate society that is why new entity (tahlilan) was created. Tahlilan for the Ternate people is a gathering momentum of the relatives, acquaintance, and surrounding communities by reciting various sentences of thayyibah (hamdalah, takbir, shalawat, tasbih), Qur'an verses, dhikr, and prayers. Generally, Ternate people understand that the tahlilan tradition takes a strategic role as a medium of Islamic da'wah. It benefits the society positively such as gaining a wide religious preaching as well as psychological, social and economic impacts. In the religion side, tahlilan increases the love of Islam and the cultivation of the concept of monotheism. The implementation of tahlilan motivates people to be able to read the Qur'an and memorize it correctly. Tahlilan also indoctrinates the community on the pattern and soul of religious leadership connected to obligatory worship (5 daily prayers) as well as creates noble character among the people. In this case, the tahlilan tradition contains the inspiration for the internalization and actualization of religious teachings. Meanwhile, the psychological benefit of tahlilan is that can provide a peace of mind for people who experience sorrow or grief. Reading the verses of the Qur'an and dhikr can reassure and entertain family members who face the family death. Moreover, tahlilan stimulates suggestions that prompt the people to conduct self-introspection towards worldly life and activate imagination in the afterlife. Tahlilan tradition is recognized to strengthening social relations and reconciling family conflicts in the social side. On the other case, in the economic side, tahlilan leads a togetherness among the society in overcoming the limitations. The development of understanding and awareness in Muslim religion contributes a critic to evaluate the implementation of tahlilan. It can be proven by the existence of various small changes to its implementation which are considered not relevant anymore to Islam. However, ternate society still maintains the tahlilan tradition because they strongly believe that it has a coherence between religious values, customs and culture. They claim that the tahlilan tradition has become an urgent need for people today and in the future, considering the decline of nasionalism distortive phenomenon. People are trapped in acts of apathy and individualism as well as depletion of solidarity which results in the emergence of radicalism and terrorism. The more pathetic is the omission of theological concepts in every academic debate and scientism. In this context, the tahlilan tradition becomes captivating in filling the national da'wah agenda, presenting as a da'wah medium and strengthening to the national values. However, there is no standard pattern regarding the process of tahlilan inheritance. Therefore, this study recommends several things as follows: 1) There is a need for a specific institution that handles the implementation of the tahlilan tradition, so that the inheriting process is organized, patterned, measurable and sustainable as well ; 2) A need to reorient and structuralize the systematic implementation of tahlilan so that it can open a da'wah space effectively; 3) Further studies about the tradition of tahlilan are needed and also a research about purification of the Islamic teachings, especially in Ternate city.

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