

Catholic Church's View of Cultural Values in the Mecaq Undat Tradition

Willyam Romi^{1✉}, Simon Devung², Fabianus Lana³

^{1,2,3} Catholic Religious Educatio, Samarinda, Indonesia

✉ email: willyroni71@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The Mecaq Undat tradition is a form of gratitude carried out by the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan tribe, after the harvest once a year. This tradition has cultural values such as cooperation, mutual respect, mutual assistance, and spirituality, starting from preparation, to the peak of the Mecaq Undat event. This study was conducted to see how the Catholic Church views cultural values in the Mecaq Undat tradition of the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan tribe in Datar Bilang Ilir village. This study uses qualitative research with an ethnographic approach, and the data collection techniques used are interviews, observation and documentation. The informants in the study were the traditional head, traditional representatives, community leaders, Parish Priest and two Catechists. Based on the research conducted, cultural values such as cooperation, mutual respect, mutual assistance and spirituality in the Mecaq Undat tradition carried out by the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan tribe, run with the teachings of the Catholic Church, because it contains values of love and brotherhood which are a means of spreading the Gospel. The church is called to be present in culture and to unite the people in fellowship (Koinonia).

Keywords: *Mecaq Undat; Cultural Values; Fellowship.*

INTRODUCTION

Over Indonesia possesses a rich cultural heritage of local wisdom. Local wisdom can be defined as a cultural richness encompassing a Way of Life that incorporates wisdom and lifelong wisdom. Local wisdom is typically passed down from generation to generation, manifested in tangible and intangible forms, such as language, literature, art, traditional ceremonies, and so on. (PDSPK, 2016) Indonesia's abundant natural resources, as well as the rich culture, traditions, and ethnic groups spread throughout the country, are abundant. Indonesia's cultural richness is influenced by its own social customs. Culture influences its identity, both in social life and in its traditional culture.

Traditional ceremonies held by local communities provide positive direction for their attitudes and behaviors, both towards the community and outsiders. These traditional ceremonies are passed down from generation to generation and serve as a valuable resource for Indonesian socio-cultural relations. Every traditional ceremony held by a community certainly holds significance for its own culture, as each culture possesses its own norms and values, each with its own unique meanings.

As stated in Article 32, paragraph 1 of the 1945 Constitution, the State promotes the advancement of Indonesian national culture among world civilizations

by guaranteeing the freedom of the people to maintain and develop cultural values. (Triwardani & Rochayanti, 2014) This means that Indonesian people have the freedom to maintain and develop their own cultural values. Cultural values comprise a number of perspectives or thoughts regarding the most valuable and worthwhile things in human life, identifying the basic principles that develop their culture, which is respected and protected by the state (Triwardani & Rochayanti, 2014).

Indonesia boasts 1,340 ethnic cultures, a diversity that is a rich asset and a global tourist attraction. Culture is formed from many complex systems, including religious systems, political customs, language, clothing, buildings, and artwork (Kayan, 2018).

Indonesian culture is always passed down from generation to generation (Derung, 2021). Culture is preserved in each culture, such as the harvest festivals held by the Dayak people of East Kalimantan. Dayaks often hold rice harvest festivals, which have become a cultural phenomenon (Efriani et al., 2021). Dayak people have a variety of rituals that are part of the local community. Cultural values are concepts embedded in the thinking of individuals within a society and are fundamental to human life. Cultural values are abstract, encompassing the thoughts and implementation of values in the behavior of their adherents. Cultural values influence the way people think and act within society and provide a foundation for development, such as the relationship between humans and God, the relationship between humans and nature, and the relationship between humans and society (Hafidhah et al., 2017).

The relationship between humans and God is the beliefs and convictions held by a community group. This relationship often determines moral values, ethics, and life goals. The relationship between humans and nature, which encompasses human interaction with the surrounding environment, is similar to the culture shared by humans, despite differing perspectives and practices shared by humans. The relationship between humans and society, which encompasses a community, includes social rules, ethics, and norms that govern communal life. This relationship between humans and society encompasses values of solidarity, such as mutual cooperation, respect for elders, and togetherness. These are cultural values shared by the Dayak people (Sulha, 2020).

A *Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare is playfully written about the exploration of love, marriage, and the unrealistic expectations that can inexorably come along with them. This essay will explore how marriage is portrayed as limiting and difficult but ultimately worthwhile.

Commensurate with its origins in a court marriage, this drama speaks throughout for a sophisticated Renaissance philosophy of the nature of love in both its rational and irrational forms. This is shown by depicting that there then existed a significant disparity in the expectations placed on men and women. Hermia embodies this struggle as she defies her father Egeus's wishes to marry Demetrius, showcasing her desire for autonomy and true love rather than just fulfilling her duty to her society.

Conversely, men are generally afforded a broader range of achievements and aspirations. They are encouraged to pursue careers, adventures, and personal accomplishments that can lead to social recognition. Demetrius, for instance, initially pursues Hermia out of a sense of entitlement, thinking he can claim her because that is what society expects of her.

Another example is the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta. Their relationship is rooted in conquest and power dynamics, which reflect the expectations of a hierarchical society. Theseus, as the Duke of Athens, represents a figure signifying his authority, and his marriage to a conquered queen, Hippolyta, suggests that marriage can also be about control and possession rather than something much purer.

Traditional values reflect a commitment to their customary laws. This is evident in the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan tradition. The harvest festival, known in the Dayak Kenyah language as Mecaq Undat, has been practiced for generations by the Dayak Kenyah. This traditional ceremony is usually held annually after the harvest. According to Catholic teachings, the harvest festival is a tradition of thanksgiving. This tradition is crucial for faith in Jesus Christ.

A sacred tradition, passed down through generations, must be in keeping with the teachings of Christ. It is the pinnacle of the Catholic Church's faith. Since the 3rd century AD, the Church has been celebrating harvest festivals as a form of thanksgiving to God, as is still practiced today. The rice harvest represents a blessing from God to His people. The harvest is offered to God as an expression of gratitude. In keeping with modern developments, the Dayak Kenyah continue to uphold and maintain the Mecaq Undat tradition in their cultural life, guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church.

What God has given from the success of his people must be appreciated through cultural rituals that form the basis of their identity. In these rituals, they must relate to the teachings of the Church, the faith of the people, and the creation of harmony between local traditions and the Catholic Church. found that the Church always strives to establish fellowship with various existing cultural patterns and makes the main message to Christ, who brings good news and elevates human dignity to clarify and elevate the customs of the nations to positive ones. As is found in the five tasks of the Church, especially koinonia (Communion), where God calls humans to salvation not individually, but through the meaning of fellowship. The Church tries to invite people to cooperate with each other, respect each other, love and help each other.

METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic approach. The primary objective is to gain an understanding of the Mecaq Undat tradition of the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan tribe in Datar Bilang Ilir village, as well as the cultural values it embodies. An ethnographic approach was chosen because it allows researchers to directly observe and participate in community life to understand cultural practices from an internal perspective (Arofah Aini Laila, 2017).

This research focuses on data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. The tradition is used to describe social interactions, symbolic meanings, and the Catholic Church's perspective on cultural values such as cooperation, mutual respect, mutual assistance, and spirituality within the tradition. This research was conducted in Datar Bilang Ilir village, Long Hubung District, Mahakam Ulu Regency, East Kalimantan Province.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Mecaq Undat Tradition

The Mecaq Undat tradition is performed by the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan after the harvest. This tradition is a way of expressing gratitude for the year's harvest. This tradition is held annually in April and May. The term Mecaq Undat comes from the Dayak Kenyah language, meaning to pound rice in a mortar to make rice flour (Marleni K, 2017). The rice is pounded in a long mortar prepared at the Balai. This rice-pounding activity is a core cultural symbol of Mecaq Undat, as the pounded rice will be used to make undat, a typical Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan dish, and this undat will be distributed to the community.

Preparation for the Mecaq Undat tradition is the initial stage, involving all members of the community, both men and women. This process begins with collaborative activities. The initial activity is carried out by the men, who go together into the forest to collect bamboo and firewood. The bamboo and wood are then brought to the Balai. Women also begin collecting rice and bringing it to the hall. The rice is then soaked and dried together. This process is part of the preparation of the food that will be used in the Mecaq Undat ritual.

The Mecaq Undat tradition of the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan community in Datar Bilang Ilir Village involves several stages, including an opening prayer. Before the Mecaq Undat ceremony begins, the community holds an opening prayer as an expression of gratitude to God. The prayer at the Mecaq Undat ceremony fosters strong bonds of tolerance and brotherhood among religious communities. Prayer leaders can be various religious figures, such as pastors and priests, depending on who is present. The presence of prayer leaders from various backgrounds, both Catholic and Protestant, demonstrates the interfaith tolerance within the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan community. This connects faith with the diversity of cultures and beliefs within the community.

Advice (pekatuk) is a crucial part of traditional ceremonies, conveying advice and imparting positive values for communal life. This advice-giving (pekatuk) is performed by traditional leaders and other important figures in the community, such as traditional chiefs, village heads, and other traditional figures. Within the cultural context, the Mecaq Undat tradition, which incorporates elements of advice-giving (pekatuk), is a crucial way to maintain social structures and harmonize sound cultural values.

Dance and choirs showcase various cultural arts, including traditional Dayak Kenyah dances such as the solo dance (Kancet Lasan), the same-movement dance, and the choir, all performed in the Dayak Kenyah language. These artistic performances represent the community's joy and gratitude for the year's harvest. Following the prayer and advice-giving (pekatuk), the next important stage in this tradition is the pounding of rice, a core cultural symbol in Mecaq Undat. Because the pounded rice will be made into a typical Dayak Kenyah food and the rice will be distributed to the community.

Cultural Values

The Mecaq Undat tradition still strongly upholds cultural values inherent in the social fabric, such as cooperation, mutual respect, and spirituality. As stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 949 (Acts 2:42), the first disciples in Jerusalem persevered in the teaching of the Apostles and fellowship. They always gathered to break bread and pray (Paul II, 1992).

a. Values of Cooperation

The value of cooperation, such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong) in the Mecaq Undat tradition practiced by the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan community, represents a form of community togetherness, aligning with the apostles' example of fellowship, such as gathering bamboo and wood, throughout the Mecaq Undat process. The Mecaq Undat tradition involves the entire community working together. The Catholic Church views the value of this cooperation as an activity that exemplifies koinonia, specifically the fellowship of God's people living in love, serving one another, and building a life together. As stated by the Apostle Paul (Romans 12:5).

For we, though many, are one body in Christ. The Second Vatican Council, in Lumen Gentium No. 1, stated that God's people are called to build a close communion with God and the unity of all humanity (Moraes Correia, 2024). Therefore, the value of cooperation in Mecaq Undat represents a form of inculturation of koinonia, combined with faith and fellowship, demonstrated in concrete actions for the common good. The Church always tries to establish alliances with various existing cultural patterns and become the main point of proclaiming Christ who brings good news and elevates human dignity to clarify the customs of nations with positive things (Kiawan, 2018).

b. Values of Mutual Respect

Mutual respect is a culture that exists in the Mecaq Undat tradition practiced by the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan community. The value of mutual respect forms awards such as giving an honored seat to parents, giving the opportunity to speak to community leaders. Cultural values such as mutual respect for others in the Mecaq Undat tradition are values that go hand in hand with the Church's duties. Because the church always strives to do such things. The teachings of the Catholic Church provide a strong theological foundation for the precious value of respect for others, to live in koinonia, namely, the fellowship of God's people based on love for others. The Second Vatican Council in Lumen Gentium no. 32 emphasized that in the body of Christ, there is no difference in human dignity; all are one in Christ. Respect for others is a good cultural moral and in the development of faith (Moraes Correia, 2024). The Mecaq Undat tradition opens up space for all parties without discriminating against one from another.

c. Mutual Help

Mutual assistance in the Mecaq Undat tradition carried out by the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan tribe, there are strong social values among the community, which is not

only seen in the active participation of residents, but also concern for the socio-economic conditions of the community, and helping each other when experiencing difficulties. Mutual assistance in the service of love is taught by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* no. 199, stating that the life of true faith must be realized in active love for others, especially those who are most vulnerable (Jelantik, 2020). The value of mutual assistance in the Mecaq Undat Tradition becomes a means of inculturation of cultural values that run with *koinonia*, which always helps others to realize a living faith in action in the midst of community life.

d. Spiritual Values

Spirituality in the Mecaq Undat tradition is a prayer offered at the beginning and end of the Mecaq Undat tradition, as an expression of faith and gratitude of the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan people to God for the blessings of the harvest they have received. The prayer is often led by religious figures, both Catholic priests and Protestant priests who are present at the event. The Catholic Church in *koinonia* sees that the fellowship of faith embraces broader social realities, including dialogue and cooperation between religious communities. Vatican Council II in *Lumen Gendium* no. 1 teaches that "the Church is a sign and means of close unity with God and the unity of all humanity" (Moraes Correia, 2024). The Mecaq Undat tradition begins and ends the entire series of traditional activities with interfaith prayer, a manifestation of the spirit of *koinonia* rooted in love, mutual understanding, and recognition of God's presence in the togetherness of life. The Church does not reject cultural forms that contain ancestral values, including local cultures that bring people into true brotherhood and do not conflict with the Catholic faith.

Table 1. Cultural Values in the Mecaq Undat Tradition from the perspective of the Catholic Church

No.	Values of the Mecaq Undat Tradition	The Catholic Church’s View	Desription
1	Cooperation	The congregation is passionate about fellowship (<i>koinonia</i>) to build togetherness.	The Mecaq Undat tradition reflects collective solidarity.
2	Mutual Respect	Showing love and appreciation for others, from all religions present	Being respectful to fellow citizens, both Catholic and non-Catholic
3	Mutual Assistance	The spirit of helping across religious communities	During the preparation and implementation of Mecaq Undat, residents help each other

			regardless of their status.
4	Spirituality	The Mecaq Undat tradition includes prayers as an expression of gratitude to God	The Mecaq Undat tradition includes opening and closing prayers.

The Catholic Church views the Mecaq Undat tradition practiced by the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan tribe as having values aligned with those of the Catholic Church, particularly in the spirit of koinonia. These cultural values strengthen community ties.

The Catholic Church's view

The Catholic Church's view of the Mecaq Undat tradition among the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan community is a positive one. As stated in Catechism No. 952, "All things are held in common (Acts 4:32)," a true Christian possesses nothing that he or she does not consider to be the common property of all. Therefore, Christians must always be willing to alleviate the suffering of those in need. This demonstrates that the lives of Christians should be characterized by a spirit of sharing and caring for others. Cultural values such as cooperation, mutual respect, and spirituality align with the teachings of the Catholic Church. The implementation of the Mecaq Undat tradition, emphasizing shared harvests and prayer for the common good, serves as a concrete manifestation of the Gospel spirit in local cultural activities.

In the document "Lumen Gentium," Vatican Council II, No. 1, teaches that the Church is a sacrament of salvation, a sign of communion with God and the unity of all humanity. Therefore, all forms of communal life that embody the values of love, solidarity, and respect for human dignity are considered participation in the life of the Church. The Mecaq Undat tradition embodies a very real spirit of koinonia. The Church affirms that the values of cooperation, mutual respect, mutual assistance, and spirituality in the Mecaq Undat tradition are values of fellowship. The Church's perspective fosters a spirit of inculturation, a meeting between the gospel and local culture. Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, stated that "Culture is the place where faith and life meet; a faith that does not become culture is a faith that is fully cultured."

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the Mecaq Undat tradition, practiced by the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan community, is a cultural heritage used as a thanksgiving for the harvest. This tradition contains strong cultural values, evident in the values of cooperation, mutual respect, mutual assistance, and spirituality that strengthen the bonds of life within the Dayak Kenyah Lepoq Jalan community. The implementation of this tradition begins with preparations involving the entire community, such as through mutual cooperation activities, and continues through the main event, which includes an interfaith opening prayer, counseling, cultural arts performances, and finally,

the pounding of rice. This entire process forms a dynamic of communal life that aligns with the values of the Church.

In the teachings of the Catholic Church, the cultural values embodied in the Mecaq Undat tradition can be understood as a form of koinonia, namely, the fellowship of God's people living in love and service. The views of Catholic Church leaders, both priests and catechists, emphasize that the Mecaq Undat tradition does not challenge the Catholic faith but rather serves as a space for inculturation, embraced through the Christian faith. The Church sees that local culture contains values of love and brotherhood, which serve as a means of proclaiming the Gospel. As stated in *Evangelii Gaudium*. The church is called to be present in culture and unite people. Thus, Mecaq Undat continues to strengthen the life of the community. The church is called to be present within the culture to bring true communion.

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