INTRODUCTION

This book is the result of a historical, sociological and cultural study on the Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual promoted by the Preservation Office of Balinese Cultural Values. In his forwards, the chairman states that this book is an effort to save the endangered cultural work and to load the local content in the areas where this work culture is alive and thriving (p. xi). Conducted in Trunyan, a village in which the daily life of the people governed by customary law, the result of the study presented in this book, as noted in the authors’ remarks (p. xii), provides a comprehensive understanding of Trunyan local genius as expressed in their customary rules, arts, rituals, and folklores.

Further, the authors also remark (p. xiii) that the thesis of this book is that the Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual is a unique traditions which reflect the cosmology of Bali Aga (Balinese indigenous people in Trunyan) as the ritual symbol of a religious and magical passage rite. In terms of the religious sphere, this ritual reflects the gods’ passage of the Trunyan ancestor, and in term of the magical sphere, it is associated with the meaning of fertility and the process of creation. The rite of passage reflected in this ritual holds a meaning of a three dimensional relationship (triniti) which includes birth (utpatti), life (sthithi), and death (pralina). The issue of the book is that the earthly life of the Trunyan people as a vivid reflection of their spiritual life is based on the understanding that beliefs which are central points to the Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual directs many aspects of the Trunyan social life.

SUMMARY OF CONTENT

The issues discussed in the book include four aspects: first, the background of Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual in Trunyan tradition; second, the correlation between ethnographical background and the conduct of the ritual; third, process and stages of the ritual; fourth, the function and meaning of the ritual (p. 6). The concepts applied as frame of reference to discuss the issues include the concept of tradition, ceremony and ritual, meaning and symbol in ritual, and the function of religion (p. 6-13). A general description of Trunyan village such as the geographical position, the history of Trunyan which is traced back from their legends, familial system, arts, and system of belief are provided to get a closer look at the Trunyan society (in chapter 2).

A data triangulation method is applied to reconstruct the origin of the name Trunyan and the people. Therefore, the data validity and realibility is done by comparing the data taken from their
folklores, such as myths and legends with archeological and written data, such as Trunyan inscriptions, the character of Barong Brutuk in their sacred art performance, and a chronicle of Pasek Kayu Selem (p. 60). The name ‘Trunyan’ is from the word ‘taru’ meaning tree and ‘menyan’ meaning benzoin (p. 28). This tree is not a kind of trees which grow in the Bali mountains. Thus, the name ‘Trunyan’ is only found in their folklores to legitimate Trunyan culture which includes a belief system, philosophy, norms, and tradition (p. 67).

Based on one of the Trunyan myths, the origin of the Trunyan people is believed to be from the descendents of a goddess who came to the earth to find a source of fragrance (a tree of benzoain). Supported by the archeological artifacts (chopper tools, proto hand ax, high backed chopper, and flat iron chopper) found at the edge of Batur Lake, it is known that the ancestors of Trunyan were nomads (p. 62). Besides the paleolithic and neolithic artifacts, megalithic artifacts were also found. These include great stone statues of Trunyan ancestors, rulers, and their god and goddess, named ‘Ratu Sakti Pancering Jagat’ and ‘Ratu Ayu Pingit Dalem Dasar’ (p. 95). Ratu Sakti Pancering Jagat was believed to be a descendent of Dalem Solo (Javanese King) who came to Trunyan, married Ratu Ayu Pingit Dalem Dasar from Trunyan, and their descendents were called Bali Aga or the original descendents of the Trunyan ruler (p. 64).

To honor and worship ‘Ratu Sakti Pancering Jagat’, Trunyan people perform the Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual. Based on the etimology, Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat is a ritual of ngusaba (meeting) held in the fourth month of the Balinese calendar, with a sacred buffalo sacrificed and offered to the great ancestor of the Trunyan people, Ratu Sakti Pancering Jagat (p. 144). A Barong Brutuk dance which is part of the ritual and act as a reflection of the Trunyan people’s spirituality describes the first time Ratu Sakti Pancering Jagat and Ratu Ayu Pingit Dalem Dasar met, the structure of authority, and the relationship between a king and his people through the characterization, plot, and setting (p. 81). This dance is offered by Ratu Ayu Pingit Dalem Dasar to her husband Ratu Sakti Pancering Jagat. This dance contains constructive, cognitive, and expressive symbols related to the Trunyan worshipped ancestors, Ratu Sakti Pancering Jagat and Ratu Ayu Pingit Dalem Dasar (p. 171). The Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual uses many kinds of offerings before and after the conduct (p. 56). The Legend and the dance are aimed to strengthen the belief system of the Trunyan people. The legend provides a philosophical base, the dance serves as entertainment, and the offerings are the reflections of attitudes and religious behavior (p. 106).

The Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual posseses several functions: first, the historical function is to reveal the origin of name of the Trunyan indigenous people (Bali Aga). Second, the religious function is to express religious emotion, therefore everything relating to the ritual conduct becomes sacred (p. 95). Third, the ritual also marks the social function to enhance the system of cultural values and togetherness. The values within the ritual reflect a socio-religious-ecological relationship which can be seen from the preparation of ritual artifacts to the ritual conduct (p. 107). Fourth, the ritual also reflects the social structure of the Trunyan people which can be seen from the division of responsibility to take care of the temples (p.128). The Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual also has symbolic and philosophical meaning. The religious philosophy can be seen from the use of symbols with life meanings (p. 156). The ritual has a socio-philosophical meaning of the human’s birth to the “virtual” world. This can be seen from the service and loyality of conducting the Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual (p. 162).

**ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION**

The book is readable and well-organized for the authors to present the explanation of the issues vividly and systematically. For some
points, the authors have some repetition in their explanation, such as in the burial ritual, the origin of the name “Trunyan”, and the people which refer to Trunyan folklores. However, overall, it is organized effectively. The interesting thing about the book is that the whole issues discussed reveals the uniqueness of the Trunyan people and traditions. It is like a circle in which one aspect is correlated to another. Thus, the book creates a wholeness; all are constructed to create one complete understanding about the Trunyan people and the Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual. The authors’ claim refers to the existence of the Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual to promulgate Trunyan people as the oldest community (Bali Mula/Bali Aga) in Bali, and to place animism as the central point of Trunyan religion and social life.

The book provides adequate support and evidence which prove the authors’ points. It emphasizes the historical facts and place the facts in the perspective of present societal reality. The authors’ claims are proven as something logical after reconstructing the process of the ritual. This kind of effort involves times, space, and people, and exercises the interpretation (Denzin, 2006). This reconstruction method makes it possible for the authors to trace the Trunyan myth within the Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual under the light of archeological artifacts. Thus, through such efforts, a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation is achieved (Althrichter, et al., 2002). The reconstruction of the ritual process applied is to uncover the meaning which attach to it.

The overview of the Trunyan community and the Ngusaba Trunyan Gede Lanang Kapat ritual presented in this book provides an understanding of how encounters between local wisdom and Hinduism influences can produce a certain religious rituals. This can be seen from the configuration of Tri Hita Karana and Tri Kona in Trunyan cosmology of creation. However, the authors seem to exclude the influence of Hinduism in that cosmology. Tri Hita Karana and Tri Kona are two concepts in Hinduism. Tri Hita Karana is one teaching in Hinduism which teaches the essence of balance between man and God, man with other humans, and humans and their environment. This teaching has been an important matter either as a doctrine or a concept in Balinese Society (Astiti et al., 2011). Tri kona are the three passages of life: Utpati which means birth, Stiti which means life, and Pralina which means death; respectively, these passages of life refer to the Tri Murti, the Gods in Hinduism: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. The worship of God as Tri Murti in every village in Bali is performed as a sacred medium to apply the concept of the spiritual life. Strengthening spiritual life by strengthening the system of worship is carried out to guide the people living in this dynamic worlds (Ardana, 2000).

It seems the issue of Hinduism’s influence on Trunyan cosmology of creation is excluded in the explanation in the book in order to emphasize the authenticity of the cosmology with its central point on the Trunyan Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual. The ritual is a distinctive ritual in Bali because it is a worship to Trunyan’s ancestors. However, this leads to a reduction in the meaning of the cosmology itself. It is stated in the book that the chronicle of Pasek Kayu Selem notes that since the second coming of Hindu people from Java to Trunyan which spread the teaching of Trimurti (p. 69), the influence of Hinduism should not be excluded in the efforts to relate the Trunyan Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual with their cosmology of creation. In this way, a fuller understanding of the relation between the Trunyan ritual and their concept of creation can be achieved. Following this exclusion is a critical question about the time that Trunyan Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual was first formed and performed. However, the concepts of Tri Hita Karana and Tri Kona within the Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat ritual may lead to a plausible
hypothesis that this ritual appeared after the influence of Hinduism in Trunyan.

CONCLUSION

This book is not only an informative piece of writing which reveals the “hidden treasures”-function and meaning-within Trunyan Ngusaba Gede Lanang Kapat, but is also a “one of a kind” book in which its “hidden treasures” are relevant to be applied in this globalized era where people tend to ignore the values of religion, morality, ethics, and manners. It is a book full of values which counters not only individualism, and secularism, but also pragmaticism. How to understand the origin of particular communities, their identities, and how their intrinsic and extrinsic aspects form their identities are inspiring matters that are implicitly offered in the book.

REFERENCES


