

Review of: "Pela Gandong and Christian Education in Culture and Society Practices"

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Indonesia has fascinated ethnographers due to its diverse cultural traditions. This research article explores the rich literature surrounding a remarkable indigenous practice, which the authors invariably call the *Pela Gandong* culture. To this ethnographer, the research paper shows interesting parallelism with Clifford Geertz's classic work on religious tradition in the *Religion of Java* (1960). Geertz famously described the Javanese ritual meal called *Slametan*, which he identifies as a 'core ritual' or symbol at the centre of the Javanese religious system. Geertz analyses various concepts which hold the Javanese society together. He identifies three religious traditions, namely *Abangan* (a syncretism of animistic, Hindu-Buddhist, and Islamic elements found among the peasant class), *Santri* (pietist Islam), and *Priyayi* (a gentry variant of Javanese religion concerned with art and mysticism). In a typical Geertzian analysis, Geertz identifies a 'core culture' that gives meaning, cohesion, and commonalities to a tripartite society and is susceptible to differences and conflict. The *Pela Gandong*, which the authors argue is a cultural process or tradition, and not necessarily a religious value, can be seen as a viable force promoting religious tolerance, peacebuilding, and cooperation between communities in the Allang society in Indonesia.

The *Pela Gandong* culture, like Geertz's *slametan*, creates social unity for those participating in it. However, the case of *Pela Gandong* moves much beyond the ritual space, including inter-faith, cross-cultural, and international affairs. Probing the 'culture core' deeper, the authors give a fascinating insight into the variants of *Pela Gandong* in different cultural contexts. However, a detailed ethnographic description of *Pela Gandong* vis-à-vis conflict resolution and peacebuilding in everyday life of the communities would have given more critical insight into the concept. The article attempts to relate Christian education, which the authors theorise through the lens of Christian theology, with the indigenous worldview. The paper argues that the values inherent in *Pela Gandong* cohere with Christian values. However, the praxis in everyday social and cultural transactions remains beyond the scope of this paper. Sociologically, *Pela Gandong*'s culture may be seen within the broad social capital theory. However, the region's rich culture and history underpinning the concept make the *Pela Gandong* culture interesting, innovative, and unique.

Reference cited

Geertz, Clifford. *The Religion of Java*. 1960. Glencoe: The Free Press.

