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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----------------------------|
| Editorial | |
| Table of Contents | <u>xxi</u> |
| 1. The Development of Management Model Program of Vocational School Teacher Partnership with Business World and Industry Word (DUDI) <i>Romi Siswanto; Sugiyono; Lantif Diat Prasajo</i> | <u>365</u> |
| 2. Educational Revitalization of the Children with Special Needs at an Inclusive School <i>Made Kerta Adhi; Ni Putu Seniwati</i> | <u>385</u> |
| 3. Project-Based Learning Evaluation from Students' and Supervisors' Perspectives: A Qualitative Research at Polytechnic Malaysia <i>Ramlee Mustapha; M. Ichsan M. Nasir; Sadrina</i> | <u>397</u> |
| 4. Learning Local Wisdom for Character Education: an Insight from Choblong Sundanese Village in Indonesia <i>Ira Miranti; Nurjanah; Nina Dwiastuty</i> | <u>408</u> |
| 5. Cultural Traditions of Khanduri Blang in Reubee Village Aceh, Indonesia <i>Muhammad Arifin; Abdul Manan</i> | <u>427</u> |
| 6. Higher Education Transformation: To what Direction? (A Look at the transformation of Ar-Raniry State Islamic University) <i>Safrul Muluk; Habiburrahim</i> | <u>447</u> |
| 7. The Implementation of Village Fund Policy in Improving Economy of Village Society (Case Study at Kuala Sub-district of Nagan Raya District) <i>Ar Royyan Ramly; Wahyuddin; Julli Mursyida; Mawardati</i> | <u>459</u> |
| 8. The Teacher Movement in Indonesia in Post Soeharto Era: Between Democratic Citizenship and Civic Engagement <i>Rakhmat Hidayat</i> | <u>479</u> |



9. **The Attitude of the Language of Ex-Combatans and the Victims of Armed Conflict of Aceh Post-MoU Helsinki**
Sanusi; Azwardi; Rusli Yusuf; Muhammad Iqbal [493](#)
10. **The Actor Domination in the Collaborative Governance in the Lampung Province Central Government Displacement Policy: An Ambivalent**
Maulana Mukhlis; Nasrullah Nazsir; Mudiwati Rahmatunnisa; Neneng Yani Yuningsih..... [507](#)
11. **Cultural Activities, Legal and Public Policy of Bali On Desa Pakraman and the Response of Prajuru the Traditional Village Management Kuta**
I Wayan Wesna Astara..... [525](#)
12. **An Analysis of the Implementation of Islamic Brotherhood Value on the Students of MTsN Jeurela Sukamakmur**
Aulia Rahmi..... [549](#)



**Learning Local Wisdom for Character Education: an Insight from Choblong
Sundanese Village in Indonesia**

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LEARNING LOCAL WISDOM FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION: AN INSIGHT FROM CHOBLONG SUNDANESE VILLAGE IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe the various local wisdom and describe the diverse character education, which contain in local wisdom in the Sundanese society of Choblong, Cisarua village located in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia. Observation method is the best way to collect information and understand local culture in a society. The local wisdom of these Choblong villagers is believed to have a useful contribution to the values of character education that must always be taught and preserved for the benefit of subsequent regeneration. The local wisdom of the Choblong village can be penetrated to school curriculum for preparing their next generations and the cultural preservation. Although there are many adjustments required when immersion between local culture and school curriculum, but it is possible if the applications of carefully selected local culture are given in their local environmental settings.

Keywords: Local Wisdom, Character Education, Sundanese, Local Culture



A. Introduction

Indonesia - with thirty-three provinces - consists of numerous and diverse ethnicities as well as religions and beliefs. Each ethnic has its own unique way to express its cultural identity. This way of expressing identity is made of habits, day-to-day living, food and beverages, dances, housings and architecture, games and riddles, musical instruments, religious ceremonies, and languages. All of these so-called cultural identities shaped by the local people offer us multitude local wisdom, which enables us not only learning their personalities and beliefs, but also adopting their wisdom for the benefit of educating character.

Goundar (2015) reports issues on culture perseverance. She mentions that the local traditional changes have become national changes to the Fijians due to rapid globalization and modernization. Local culture and traditions such as dress code, hairstyle, eating habits, language, weddings, and funeral nowadays have a mixture of western style and the strong influence of Christianity. The report took perspectives from respondents from various genders, economic and marital status. According to the respondents, the cultural changes took places by three influential factors such as intermarriages, employment, and migration (Goundar, 2015). The first factor is defined by the respondents as a collection of 'mixed feelings' to what culture to adopt, while the employer has supported the changes on language use, social habits, and environments, as well as time management. In addition to that, the younger generation who mostly migrate to other places for study or work purpose adopt the destination cultures and or traditions and bring it back to their origins; such action is presumed as being 'unappreciative' (Goundar, 2015: 143). Goundar (2015: 146) argues that the most feasible solution to the perseverance of local culture, heritage, and identity lies on "a large extent on the strengths of the traditional religions". Some studies on the strong relation of local wisdom and education have been conducted these recent years, including the concepts of using local wisdom as a substantial tool for enhancing creativity, intellectuals, and building leadership skills (Sternberg, 2001, 2003), existence of local characters of a

particular culture in modern and global environment which promoted universal concepts (Dahlani, 2015), immersion of local cultures in school curriculum and educational settings in a hope of merging knowledge and a taste of local culture to students' learning (Cheng, 2002; Jungck & Kajornsin, 2002; Mungmachon, 2012).

Hence, it is true that culture has its relation to power (Foucault, 1980), in which creating a culturally embedded thoughts and practices – to more considerable extent – of a society; as Smart (Powel, 2015) pointed out that “Foucauldian analysis asks of power: 'how is it exercised; by what means?' and second, 'what are the effects of the exercise of power?'”. By this conceptual being of ‘power’ and ‘culture,’ we ask similar queries: how cultural power is exercised – through what and to what degree it can be applied, and – in the end – what do we receive in using such cultural power? In order to make use such a high cultural power into the character education, this paper has two aims: (1) describing the local wisdom of the Sundanese Choblong village and (2) enlisting kinds of wisdom applicable to education character. The selection of Choblong village (the word ‘village’ often said in Malayan language as ‘kampong’ signaling a remote place secluded from urban areas) is based upon the availability and willingness of the people to open their homes to the researchers and receives trainings of English as a foreign language despite of their Islamic traditional religious views. The desire to open themselves is a symbol of their appreciation to cultures and its differences projecting their inherited local wisdom (See in Hughes & Batten, 2016 and Lewis & Ponzio, 2016).

Therefore, this is the standing point of this article: to use one of Indonesian local wisdom into power namely character education. The character education enables a human being to see and interpret their own selves in deciding to change and to change another person. It can be said that strengthening the traditional wisdom with its significances could enable the potential engagement to ethical consideration within the learning process, (Huda, Jasmi, Mustari, Basiron, & Sabani, 2017).



In Indonesia, character education should be built since childhood by teaching the students of elementary level the fundamental values contained in Pancasila. It is hoped that in the future they will become strong characterized persons.

Indonesian department for national education and curriculum establishes eighteen traits for developing education character (Syarbini, 2012) as follow:

- 1) Religious. Obedience in performing one's belief, while developing tolerance towards others' beliefs.
- 2) Honest. Being honest here is based on the effort to made one as a reliable and trustworthy personality.
- 3) Tolerant. It is one's character traits who appreciate differences in others' religious beliefs different from the person.
- 4) Discipline. The trait describes one with excellent self-control and consistent behaviors, including the person's reaction towards rules and regulation.
- 5) Hard-working. An effort shows a strong determination to produce and create something.
- 6) Creative. Both thinking and performing something to be able to come up with inventions and/or discovery.
- 7) Self-reliant. It is a trait which shows one's self-sustaining ability to finish given tasks.
- 8) Democratic is a way of thinking, behaving, and acting based on the understanding of one's and others' rights and responsibilities.
- 9) The constant learner is a character in which made one is always eager to learn and understand something.
- 10) Being broad-minded help ones become aware of the way they think and act are based on the benefits of others and the people of the country.
- 11) Embracing one's own national identity is more than a concept or philosophy, but the way of thinking and doing things for the benefits of their country, the people, socio-cultural environment, economy, and politics.

- 12) Being able to appreciate or acknowledge a goal is thinking that helps one to succeed and reach out for better things ahead; not only for one's self but also for others.
- 13) Communicative becomes one's goal when the one shows an ability to cooperate with others.
- 14) Peace-loving is another trait that one should show in one's behaviors rendering a peaceful and acceptable manner within a community.
- 15) Becoming a big reader means one can make time for oneself to read and share readings with others.
- 16) Having environmental awareness is a trait needed to preserve nature and prevent destructive behaviors toward nature and its environment. In addition to that, it is also an action when one wants to restore the damaged environment to its original being.
- 17) Having social awareness enables one to be willing to give help to others without having something in return.
- 18) Responsible is a trait one's needed to complete one's tasks and obligations; not only to one's self, but also to others, community, and the country.

These are the character traits which are considered as highly praised to be in ones' day-to-day living, both individually and socially. In addition to the character traits, most Indonesians understand local wisdom is habit derived from their ancestors' adopted as it also carries sacred values among particular societies. Thus, local wisdom consists of values, ideas, and perspectives of the locals who adopted these, in which understandings that these values, ideas, and attitudes hold wisdom, scared values followed by the society (Yusoff and Hamzah, 2015 and Karibi, 2015, see also in Nurhasanah and Nida, 2016).

Local wisdom is a system of values and ways of living of a particular society in interacting with their environment, namely social and moral values existing in a community related to social interactions and balance in nature. These elements constitute and shape the society, which



affects their thinking, habits, and ways of perceived things. Local wisdom sometimes has to do with a set of moral values in the society and its surrounding, i.e., nature. Some experts have various conceptual perspectives on local wisdom described as any forms of “knowledge, science, beliefs, and understanding as well as ethics or habits that guide human beings in their day-to-day living within their ecological system” (Keraf, 2010). The so-called ecological system, thus, can be conveyed humans as forms of intelligence and ability to perform managing strategies of the universe in order to preserve the balance of existing cultural environment for centuries; the system that has been through numerous processes and setbacks done by humans (Wahono, Widyanta, & Kusumajati, 2001). While Wahono and Keraf emphasize on ones’ intellectual and knowledge in setting up values in a community, Indonesian Bill No.32 on environment preservation and management (The Indonesian House of Representative, 2009) describes local wisdom as sublime values to manage, protect, and preserve the environment in which the community chooses to live. Local wisdom is often understood as paradigms, ideas, concepts, values, and perspectives of local society.

B. Method

Ethnography method is the most suitable way to observe and indicate local wisdom in Choblong since the technique allows us to collect rich descriptions of local culture. The method helps researchers to identify, acknowledge, describe, and understand the culture from the locals’ perspectives. The best ways to observe are blending in with the locals and interviewing them. The first move the writers had to do was to merge themselves into the locals’ daily activities starting from the morning to night. One-day observations developed into weeks and months, with one three-week interval for each month. The three-weeks interval for each month was the weeks when the writers took time off – detaching themselves from the locals for reasons that the writers could spend one week at the village only when delivering a community service



designated to the local school teachers there. The one-week stay was the best time for building communication with the locals and observing their habits. The writers asked the local teachers if there were any local events, they were involved in that month. They shared their stories in forms of oral communication, while the writers took notes – in this matter, the notes are treated as field notes. The oral communication in this matter is treated as interview results. The reason for the writers did not employ formal interview was the naturalness of the speech event might be disrupted by interview forms, recording tools, and recording camera. Other than the school teachers receiving training at that time, the writers had other conversations with the local neighbors near the schools and living areas. Due to the limitation of time and funding, the observation lasted for five months although, in the discussion below, there are several events occurred in twelve months' time. These events were collected from the interviews with the locals when they shared voluntarily other habits they would do in the following months. The writers consider the events held in these twelve months' time as a piece of evidence for their consistencies in preserving their local culture.

C. Research Finding

Currently, with thirty-three provinces officially approved by the Indonesian government, each region shares cultural diversities portrayed through their local wisdom. Therefore, it is sensible to try as soon as possible to preserve the local wisdom inherited by the predecessors. One of the ways to keep the heritage is by introducing the various local wisdom to others through cultural dance, ceremonies, and architecture, music and musical instruments. These are the means of how the local wisdom can be well-looked-after for future generations as the local wisdom teach its people to live in harmony.

Harmonious living is the essential teaching of local wisdom, that seems lost its place in the millennial generations. Some examples of Indonesian local wisdom are traditional games mostly played by children:



galah asin, *ular tangga*, and *sundah mandah*. These games send messages to the people playing them – especially children, namely trustworthiness, communication, teamwork, responsibility, and social awareness. They are the lessons learned to shape the children’s personality and traits. While emphasizing the children’s characters, there is also another example of local wisdom in which values are teachable to adults, i.e., traditional ceremonies like *Ngaben* and *Rambu Solo*. Balinese *Ngaben* ceremony and Toraja *Rambu Solo* ceremony are rituals of sending the deceases to their next lives by burning the corpses as a way to deliver them to the last resorts. These, too, teach us family values and responsibility, as well as tolerance.

Despite the richness of the local culture from the example mentioned above, we cannot avoid that most of Indonesians these days deeply emerged themselves in technology advancement. This statement does not mean that we act as oppositions to technology in any form, yet the impact somehow is inevitable, i.e., globalization, modernization, and Puritanism. These can be seen as threats to the local culture and local wisdom, but also can be instruments of spreading the culture and its values to the global world. Indonesians need to be aware of these issues and be able to raise awareness for preserved the local wisdom and merged it to the modern, day-to-day living. It takes a village to raise the awareness of preserving local culture. The past government campaign on safeguarding domestic product was successful. It was through a slogan “*Aku cinta produk lokal*” (Eng. ‘I love local product’), “*Aku cinta buatan Indonesia*” (Eng. ‘I love Indonesian Made’), and financial-sector-related slogan “*Aku cinta Rupiah*” (Eng. ‘I love Rupiah’). However, those slogans have faded away and almost never been heard among the young generations.

D. Discussion

West Java province of Indonesia consists of 18 regencies and nine cities with Bandung as the capital city. Bogor is one of the cities in West



Java located in 106°48' east longitude and 6°26' south latitude, and Choblong village is located in sub-district Cibereum, under Cisarua district of Bogor city in West Java (see appendix 2). The village is located near Salak Mountain and Pangrango Mountain, which suggests an air-fresh and cold region to live. Looking closely at the society living in Choblong village in West Java, we see simple people with the strong religious belief and friendly at the same time. In around 2000, the number of children graduated from senior high school level is only 0.1% because most of them sent to *Pesantren* (a non-formal Islamic study) after finished elementary level. Religious activity is a must done activity and running in every person's blood since all of the villagers are Muslims. Hence the public activities are mostly related to their religious beliefs. There are some communal activities frequently held in the village, such as:

- 1) Daily Readings. They are held almost every day starting from Monday to Sunday, daily prayer is held at the local mosques, Islamic schools, and the villagers' houses. The villagers meet and greet either in the morning or in the evening. They read *surah Al Waqia'ah* after down prayer and afternoon prayer, *surah Yasin* every Thursday night. The villagers also study the *Kitab Kuning* (a book contains Islamic teaching). The character education that can be revealed are religious (to Allah SWT), discipline (always attending the daily reading), constant learner (always learning in each readings), and communicative (among the villagers attending the daily reading).
- 2) Haul. It is a commemoration for deceased family members, ancestors, or influential people in the village. The family usually forms a committee in charge of certain tasks among the family members since it is held in celebration at the house of one's deceased relatives or a local mosque by inviting neighbors and family members, and usually taken days to arrive at the peak of the ceremony, that is by visiting the tomb of the commemorate deceased. The ceremony consists of some events: Al-Quran reading, *tabligh akbar*, *istighosah akbar*, *tahlil*, and



telling stories about the commemorate deceased so as to become an example to the living. After the ceremony ends the deceased family members usually give the invited villagers *the berkat*. The main issue in *Haul* is actually a prayer from the villagers for the death, while the commemoration itself is a form of culture in the society. The character education that can be revealed are religious (the prayer), social awareness (giving the "*berkat*" to the invited villagers), responsible (tasks division among the committee in charge in the ceremony), and self-reliant (the committes finishing the given task).

- 3) Delivering *kupat* to neighbors and relatives several days before Eid Al-Fitr days. Families cook their *kupat* together with the side dishes such as coconut curry beef dish and vegetables. Delivering *Kupat* is more like a charity covered by culture in Choblong village. The character education that can be revealed is Social Awareness (delivering *Kupat* to The neighbors as a charity).
- 4) Fasting together days before celebrating Eid Al-Adha usually starts from date 1 to 9 according to Dzulhijah the Muslims' calendar. During this period, Choblong villagers must obey rules of fasting like fasting in Ramadhan. The fasting ritual is stated in *Al-Qur'an and hadits*. It is started from dawn until sunset and during this time; they must be able to hold hunger, anger and must carry out good deeds like honest, helping other people and so on. The character education that can be revealed are religious, honest, discipline, peace-loving, social awareness and responsible.
- 5) *Maulidan*. Celebrating the birthday of Prophet Muhammad is known as *maulidan*. This celebration is more like a culture to Choblong villagers. It is an expression of happiness and joy as well as an honor to the Prophet. It is also an expression of love Prophet Muhammad. *Maulidan* is a celebration held in a Mosque and attended by Moslem community around the mosque and other Moslem invitee from other mosques. They are all together read

- Sholawat* (praise to Prophet Muhammad in songs). The character educations that can be revealed are tolerant and communicative.
- 6) *Rajaban* celebrates the Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad. Since the essence of this celebration is the ascension, the villagers hold a prayer meeting at two prominent mosques at Choblong, Al-Amin, and Al-Ikhlas. It is actually a culture to them. For celebrating this occasion, the villagers cook some dishes at their own houses and exchange the dishes with the neighbors. The character educations that can be revealed are communicative and social awareness.
 - 7) *Bersedekah* or *amal jariyah* (in Eng. alms). It is a charity works, either giving food, shelters, helps to other people in need without asking favors in return. The character education that can be revealed is social awareness.
 - 8) *Bongsangan*. *Bongsangan* is a bamboo woven food storage. Dishes are put in *bongsangan* and are delivered to the nearest local mosques. Sometimes the villagers also add some drinking items and fruits in the storage. The belief is that bringing *bongsangan* is a similar act of doing alms. The character education that can be revealed is social awareness.
 - 9) *Assyuro* is another celebration specified to orphans. Usually, the women of the village cook rice porridge served to their neighbors and other children who come visiting the houses. The essence of this activity is doing alms to the needy. Store owners frequently give their food items for free not only to the orphans coming to their stores but also to other children who are not orphans. This has been done for a long time at Choblong village. The character education that can be revealed are social awareness and responsible to the orphans.
 - 10) *Tahlilan*. A commemorative ceremony of a deceased family member which usually ranging from three days, seven days, 15 days, 40 days, 100 days, and 1,000 days. *Tahlilan* is a culture to the villagers. It is a kind of prayer for the late. During *tahlilan*, the



deceased family members usually invite neighbors to the ceremony and read *Surah Yasin* and other prayers. After the ceremony, the deceased family members give *berkat* to the Moslem invitee. The character education that can be revealed are religious (the prayer), and social awareness (giving the *berkat* to the invited villagers).

- 11) *Akikah*. Statement of grateful to Allah SWT on a child's birth by sacrificing animals, in this case Indonesian people usually sacrifice goat or sheep instead of buffalo. Like the akikah sacrifice, the sacrificial ram, sheep or buffalo represent a gift. (Manan, 2017). Since akikah's rule is stated in Islamic teaching, for the have family in Cobleng village, it becomes an obligation to celebrate Akikah within 7 days of birth. Meanwhile, for those villagers who cannot afford to celebrate Akikah due to financial difficulties or other reason, they can celebrate it later on after the time is appropriate. Scarifying the animal or animals is not only a matter of giving the animal's flash only to people but also it is served with *nasi berkat* (a box of rice and other menus including *satay* and *gulai* of the scarifying animal) The character education that can be revealed are religious (to Allah SWT) and social awareness (to people around).
- 12) *Israk Mi'raj*. Prophet Muhammad SAW journey from *Masjidil Haram* to *Masjidil Aqsa* then from *Masjidil Aqsa* to *Sidratul Muntaha*, in this journey Alloh SWT order Prophet Muhammad SAW and the follower to pray 5 times a day. Indonesian people usually celebrate this on the month of *Rajab* and it becomes of national holidays in Indonesia and people held this celebration in mosque. *Israk Mikraj* celebration, conducted for one to seven days in the month of *Rajab* (Manan, 2017). Praying 5 times a day becomes a must to all Chobleng villagers. They must obey it and be discipline with the pray time. The character educations that can be revealed are religious (doing the 5 times praying a day as the result of the prophet Muhammad journey), social awareness

(among the people celebrating Israk Mi'raj) and discipline (the time of doing the 5 times praying a day as the result of the prophet Muhammad journey).

These religious and cultural educations are executed in their daily living from year to year. The Choblong villagers are considered as religious people for they believe when the religious ceremonies are held, they will learn good virtues from such ceremonies (Syarbini, 2012), i.e., religious honest, tolerant, discipline, self-reliant, constant learner, communicative, peace-loving, social awareness and responsible. These have become the villagers' tradition, which they considered as the local wisdom of Choblong village. Based on the description to each point above, the character educations that can be revealed from the local wisdom among Choblong villagers are seen in the following table:

Table Character Education of Choblong Village

| Local Wisdoms Character Education | Daily Reading | Haul | Delivering Kupat | Fasting | Maulidan | Rajaban | Charity and Good Deeds | Bongsangan | Assyuro | Tahlilan | Akikah | Israk Mi'raj | TOTAL |
|--|---------------|------|------------------|---------|----------|---------|------------------------|------------|---------|----------|--------|--------------|-------|
| Religious | √ | √ | | √ | | | | | | √ | √ | √ | 6 |
| Honest | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Tolerant | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Discipline | √ | | | √ | | | | | | | | √ | 3 |
| Hard-working | | | | | | | | | | | | | - |
| Creative | | | | | | | | | | | | | - |
| Self-reliant | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Democratic | | | | | | | | | | | | | - |
| Constant Learner | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Broad-minded | | | | | | | | | | | | | - |
| Embracing one's own national identity | | | | | | | | | | | | | - |
| Appreciate or | | | | | | | | | | | | | - |



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| acknowledge a goal | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Communicative | √ | | | | √ | √ | | | | | | | 3 |
| Peace-Loving | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Big reader | | | | | | | | | | | | | - |
| Having environmental awareness | | | | | | | | | | | | | - |
| Social awareness | | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 10 |
| Responsible | | √ | | √ | | | | | √ | | | | 3 |

We can see one primary element in these twelve local and religious ceremonial events (with social awareness is the most dominant character education), which is public involvement in each of the event. The communal celebration of the events has become the strength in building a sense of togetherness in both thoughts and actions. The villagers are committed and dedicated to their religious beliefs, thus preparing themselves to celebrate each event in groups. The key here is the willingness to get involved in preparations and ceremonies. Parents, in this case, share their excitement by having their children to be included in the activities creating a character building for them to respect the elders, their religious beliefs, and their local cultures. The community involvement is a cultural power received by the Choblong villagers in order to shape the next generation for future cultural preservation (Powel, 2015). When Choblong people have their local culture passed on the next generation, then this culture can remain strong and can maintain its power is through the traditional religions (Goundar, 2015). What they do not realize this condition that they actually have taught their children the character education through all the religious activities which are done daily, weekly or annually and these activities are still undergone by the inheritance.

The daily practices regarding the character education included in religious activities of Choblong villagers can be seen from one family in the village. In 1077, the family of Mr. H is the first family occupied



Choblong village and due to the marital bonding, the community became larger. That is why social awareness is the dominant character education since almost all villagers in Choblong are family. They care one another and always ready for helping other families in difficulties.

Mr. H is an *imam* (prayers' leader) in *musholla* (a place where people have their prayer together in the community). But since there are so many rented houses in the area of the village, besides becoming an *imam*, he is also a rented house attendant and some villagers there as well. The house belongs to another person. Every morning, after doing down prayer, Mr. H and other attendants goes to the house and does some household chores and goes home at noon. Then every time the prayer time comes, Mr. H always goes to *musholla* and leads the prayer and other villagers become his *makmum* (prayer's followers). Mr. H leads the Al Qur'an reading while his wife does the same things as well every Thursday night at one foundation and *Shalawatan* every Monday afternoon at home.

There are other jobs that usually the people in Choblong village do in their daily living, like farmers, coolie, and kiosk attendant. Though they have jobs to earn a living, still every time there are religious ceremonies held in the village, they always take part in the activities like what have been discussed previously. The person is so responsible with his job but they are also responsible to their religious activities. It means that the value of strong education character has actually become a part of their 12 religious and culture events and there are 10 character educations found in the events, i.e. religious honest, tolerant, discipline, self-reliant, constant learner, communicative, peace-loving, social awareness and responsible.

E. Conclusion

The contrasting area in which the village is located brings out the beauty of this village due to its contrasting background of solemn and family-virtuous atmosphere compare with its modern surroundings. The



people of Choblong still exist not only for their similar religious status, but also for their strong bound in maintaining their local culture lived within themselves, in their very heart - believing every human being is connected to each other. The local wisdom of the Choblong village can be penetrated to school curriculum for preparing their next generations and the cultural preservation. Although there are many adjustments required when immersion between local culture and school curriculum, but it is possible if the applications of carefully selected local culture are given in their local environmental settings.

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