

# THE MEANING OF TRADITION “NJALANG” FOR THE PEOPLE OF MERPAS VILLAGE, KAUR REGENCY, BENGKULU

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**Abstract:** One of the traditions of grave pilgrimage that is still carried out by the community is the tradition of grave pilgrimage in Merpas Village Kaur Regency, Bengkulu known as *Njalang*. This tradition is unique because the grave pilgrimage is carried out jointly by villagers every 2nd day of Syawal. This research is aimed at analyzing the meaning of *Njalang* for the Merpas villagers from the perspective of symbolic interaction. The research method was descriptive qualitative. In-depth interviews and observations of participants were used as the techniques of data collection. The results of this research indicate that the implementation of *Njalang* tradition is a marriage between cultural activities and religious rituals that have meaning for the people of Merpas village. *Njalang* is defined as shared reality, as a tradition that creates joint actions and spiritual meanings within pilgrims. This article found something new that visiting the tombs of families and religious figures there are several similarities as well as differences in meaning. The meaning is emphasized on the implementation of the tradition together.

**Keywords:** Meaning, *Njalang*, Pilgrimage Graves, Symbolic interactions.

**Abstrak:** Salah satu tradisi ziarah kuburan yang masih dilakukan masyarakat adalah tradisi ziarah kuburan di Desa Merpas Kabupaten Kaur, Bengkulu yang dikenal dengan nama *Njalang*. Tradisi ini unik karena ziarah kuburan dilakukan secara bersama-sama oleh warga desa setiap hari ke-2 Syawal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis makna *Njalang* bagi masyarakat Desa Merpas dari perspektif interaksi simbolik. Metode penelitian adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan wawancara mendalam dan observasi partisipan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pelaksanaan tradisi *Njalang* merupakan perkawinan

antara kegiatan budaya dan ritual keagamaan yang memiliki makna bagi masyarakat Desa Merpas. Njalang diartikan sebagai realitas bersama, sebagai tradisi yang menciptakan tindakan bersama dan makna spiritual dalam diri jamaah. Artikel ini menemukan sesuatu yang baru bahwa mengunjungi makam keluarga dan tokoh agama terdapat beberapa persamaan serta perbedaan makna. Makna tersebut ditekankan pada pelaksanaan tradisi bersama.

**Kata Kunci:** Makna, Njalang, Makam Ziarah, Interaksi Simbolik

## A. INTRODUCTION

Grave pilgrimage activities have been carried out by Indonesians for generations and still exist in place from time to time. So the tradition of grave pilgrimage became a habit in a social community that has now become a tradition. Some literature has shown evidence that the tradition of grave pilgrimage is carried out by various peoples in the Archipelago, especially by the Muslim community. In Central and East Java, it is famous for the tomb pilgrimage of Wali Songo's tomb and the tombs of religious figures (Kiai) and the tombs of former kings. In Jakarta, famous for the pilgrimage to Mbah Periok tomb, in Palembang, famous for the implementation of kubro pilgrimage, in West Sumatra is known for the tradition of grave pilgrimage called *Mandoa Katompat* and *Ratik*, as well as other grave pilgrimage traditions.

The existence of the tradition of grave pilgrimage in the Muslim community in Indonesia has been controversial. Some people consider the traditions of grave pilgrimage to be a religious ritual that *bid'ah* even lead to the act of shirk. However, some argue that the implementation of the grave pilgrimage is a religious ritual that is allowed even recommended in Islam. The pilgrimage to the tomb was forbidden at first feared there was a disciple in it considering the belief of Muslims at that time was still weak, but after the coaching of Muslims was declared strong then the Messenger of Allaah allowed the pilgrimage of the tomb (Jamaluddin, 2015). In addition, the same view states that grave pilgrimages were initially forbidden to keep *aqidah* because in the pilgrimage there tends to be a reliance on the dead and acts of suspicion for glorifying the grave (Abusiri, 2018). The controversy of the implementation of the tomb pilgrimage was forbidden in ancient times because in those days it was still close to the time of the Jahiliyah, feared that there would be

slander of shirk and the implementation of the pilgrimage of the tomb is still accompanied by false sayings. Along with the development and progress of Islam, the ban on grave pilgrimages was removed and Islamic sharia encouraged Muslims to carry out pilgrimages to take lessons from grave pilgrimage activities (Nurhadi, 2019). Therefore, it is interesting to further study what lessons can be drawn from the tradition of the implementation of the grave pilgrimage.

The existence of grave pilgrimage in Indonesia is socially due to the implementation of pilgrimages that marry local and religious cultures (Najitama, 2013). The cross between religious rituals and local culture represents the diversity of the archipelago with flavors that have a variety of meanings (Divine, 2016). The tradition of carrying out grave pilgrimages that are still carried out in the midst of the Archipelago is not separated from the assumption of various people who consider the tradition of pilgrimage is a religious ritual that is in line with local cultural values (Mujib, 2016). The tradition of grave pilgrimage from a cultural perspective considers that the pilgrimage is a systemized symbol to honor the spirits of the ancestors interpreted into action so that it has its meaning for the perpetrator (Ismawati, 2012). It means the existence of the grave pilgrimage that still exists in the midst of society due to the cultural and religious values inherent in it.

Reinforcing the above opinion, some literature recognizes that the existence of the tomb pilgrimage is maintained because it has the meaning of religious rituals for pilgrims. Pilgrimage to the tomb is one way to build and raise awareness of the ritual that man as a servant of Allah Swt who will die (Rohmawati & Ismail, 2012). In line with this, another view states that the fact of the grave pilgrimage is that the pilgrims always remember death and the hereafter, with the pilgrimage activities raising awareness that one day will become the inhabitants of the tomb (Mujib, 2016).

Research studies on the tradition of grave pilgrimage are reviewed from a motivational perspective stating the same results, that the implementation of grave pilgrimage activities is not separated from the spiritual motivations that exist within the pilgrims. The motivation of pilgrims who make qubro pilgrimage is because in the implementation of the pilgrimage there is a spiritual or religious value (Amri & Maharani, 2018). If previously the meaning of the ritual pilgrimage of the tomb as a means of remembering death, then

other findings about spiritual value are thought that the motivation of pilgrims in visiting the tomb is for the activities of *wasilah* in praying, rejecting *bala'* and spiritual practice (Sylviana, 2018).

One of the implementations of grave pilgrimage that to this day still exists in the middle of the archipelago is the tradition of grave pilgrimage carried out by the people of Merpas Kaur Regency, Bengkulu. This activity is popular as “*Njalang*”. The implementation of the grave pilgrimage (*Njalang*) in this area is unique from most grave pilgrimage traditions that are common by the people in general. If in general the pilgrimage of the grave to the tomb is carried out individually or in groups of families, then *njalang* activities are carried out jointly (*jam'ah*) by the villagers. The pilgrimage is simultaneously performed only at a certain time, which is routinely performed every 2nd day of the *syawal* in the Hijri calendar. In general, the tradition of grave pilgrimage packaged in the form of rituals is usually carried out to the graves of religious figures. However, *Njalang* is a procession of grave pilgrimages that visit the family cemetery in the public cemetery park in the village. This uniqueness is interesting to study more deeply, to enrich the knowledge about the implementation of the pilgrimage of the grave.

Research studies on grave pilgrimages have been widely conducted. In general, the growing research is a study of research objects that visit the tombs of influential religious figures in the past. For instance, research study on the analysis of the meaning of pilgrimage in Mbah Periok tomb, the findings show that the meaning of pilgrimage to the tomb of Mbah Periok as a mediator (*wasilah*) to pray because the figure of the Mbah Periok tomb is believed to have *karamah* and blessing (Chaer, 2014). In line with the research, research on the meaning of the tomb pilgrimage of Habib Anis Al-Habsyi shows the same result that the motivation of pilgrims coming to the tomb is to look for *barakah* over the overwhelmed Habib Anis Al-Habsyi (Mashar, 2018). Another research study is about *kubro* pilgrimage in Palembang city community in the perspective of Max Scheler value hierarchy, the results show the same thing that pilgrimage as a means of self-introction, fostering togetherness, as well as respect for the scholars (Amri & Maharani, 2018). The findings of the more detailed research presented in the study of the communication of the ritual of the grave pilgrimage *atib ko ambai*, namely the purpose and function of the implementation of the grave pilgrimage is to commemorate the services of the earlier scholars, the sequence in the ritual procession in to Islam contains

the values of decency, the value of solidarity and the value of obedience, adherence to religion and customs (Badri & Yesicha, 2019).

Another research study on grave pilgrimage is research with research objects that visit family tombs. Research study of the tradition of grave pilgrimage in Kuantan Malay community, the findings show that the implementation of grave pilgrimage contains wisdom reminding people of death and as a means of praying for spirits that are in the tomb (Jamaluddin, 2015). Another research study on grave pilgrimage is the tradition of *katompat mandoa* and *ratik tagak on rayo anam* day in Jorong Sikaladi Nagari Pariangan Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra. The results of his research found two things, the first pilgrimage from a religious perspective means praying for the spirits of deceased families, adding faith, and the process of charity worship and reminding of death, the second from a cultural perspective of establishing friendship, establishing togetherness and principles of togetherness (Nofia, 2018). The two findings in this study reinforce the previous argument, that the existence of pilgrimage implementation is present because of the marriage of religious and cultural significance.

Although previous research studies analyzed the meaning of the implementation of the grave pilgrimage, there have not been many research studies that specifically review the pilgrimage of graves that visit the family's own tombs, especially grave pilgrimage activities carried out jointly (*jama'ah*) in a village community. In addition, previous research studies on the meaning of the tomb pilgrimage are limited to religious and cultural perspectives that are studied in general, rarely using the theoretical basis of thinking about the study of meaning. This article tries to contribute thought to the meaning with the object of grave pilgrimage research, in order to complete previous research studies from a communication perspective. Based on these thoughts, this article aims to analyze the meaning of *Njalang* conducted by the people of Merpas Kaur Regency Bengkulu from the perspective of Symbolic Interaction.

## **B. NJALANG IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSION**

*Njalang* procession is a tradition of grave pilgrimage in the village's Public Cemetery conducted jointly (*jama'ah*) by the villagers of Merpas, Kaur Regency, Bengkulu. Until now there is no literature capable of deciphering the history of *Njalang* implementation in the village. Interviews with local

people showed similar results, none of which were able to explain in full when *Njalang* was started in the area. Merpas villagers are only able to explain that the implementation of *Njalang* tradition has been done through generations by villagers.

*The Njalang* tradition is carried out every 2nd day of Syawal in the Hijri calendar. However, before that date the preparation of *Njalang* activities has been carried out since the last 10 days of Ramadan. At the preparatory stage, public cemetery cleanup activities are carried out by villagers coordinated by the village government. People who do not have time to directly help this activity will usually make a donation in the form of finance that will be purchased various equipment and necessities for funeral cleaning. In essence, the entire village community of Merpas is involved in the preparatory stage.

The core activities of the *Njalang* procession were carried out on the 2nd day of Syawal in the Hijri calendar. The procession starts in the morning, from 08: 00 am to 11: 00 am. *The Njalang* procession began with the village head’s speech. In his speech, the Village Head conveyed information about the activities of the village government including the management of village silences. In addition, the Village Head appealed to the villagers who present at the cemetery to maintain and preserve *njalang* activities through generations. It is encouraged for parents to tell their children to keep *njalang* tradition because in *njalang* activities have many positive activities obtained.

After the speech from the village government, islamic religious rituals were performed, namely the delivery of *tausyiah* and the reading of *yasin*, *tahlil* and praying together. In *tausyiah Njalang* activity usually Islamic messages conveyed by the speaker are emphasized in preparation for the face of death and the journey of man after death. *Da’i* invites people to reflect on death by looking directly at the cemeteries around them. It is confirmed that man after life will certainly meet death and after that will be buried like his relatives who are in the cemetery.

After *tausyiah* finished in *njalang* activities, then continued with other Islamic religious rituals, namely the reading of *yasin*, *tahlil* and prayer jointly by the community led by imam of the Village Mosque. This religious ritual is performed by the community with the aim of sending their practice to the families of those who have died and are buried in the village cemetery. All communities are obliged to recite *yasin*, *tahlil* and pray for their families together.

The last procession of *Njalang* tradition is to enjoy the cookies that have been prepared independently by each of the people present. The people usually taste each other's cookies, while chatting with each other. After that, the villagers shook hands apologizing to each other at the moment of Eid al-Fitr. After all the people have finished shaking hands with one another, the series of *Njalang* activities ended.

### **C. SYMBOLIC INTERACTION AS ANALYSIS**

The communication perspective considers that all social activities have meaning. One of the commonly used approaches to understanding meaning in a social activity in German terms is known as "Verstehen", this approach is commonly referred to as interpretive, an approach that seeks to explain the meaning of an action (Bungin, 2006). One of the relevant theories that seeks to explain the meaning of an action is the symbolic interaction theory of Mead and Blummer's work adopted from sociological and psychological thought.

Mead and Blummer's theory of symbolic interaction became a researcher's foothold to uncover the meaning of the *Njalang* tradition symbolic interactions born of sociological and psychology discipline then evolved into theories that helped researchers to analyze social phenomena related to meaning. Symbolic interaction emphasizes social interaction in order to understand human behavior, understand the definitions, meanings and processes established by humans in advance which contain elements such as social roles, traditional structures, rules, laws, objectives, and so on (Aksana *et al*, 2009). Considering the implementation of *Njalang* is a grave pilgrimage activity carried out in a jama'ah (together) by a social community in which there are social interactions between individuals, the researchers held the view that the theory of relevant symbolic interaction is used to analyze the practice of *Njalang* tradition by the people in Merpas village, Kaur Regency, Bengkulu. Symbolic interaction is a relevant theory for researching the way humans communicate or can understand meaning (Stephen W. Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2012).

The theory of symbolic interaction is in principle a thought in the field of social science that is very complex. The theory of symbolic interaction is based on the main concept of Mead's thinking, namely society, self and mind. This article only takes a part of the symbolic interaction theory which is based



on the basic concept of the initiators of Herbert Mead and Blumer, namely that meaning is created through shared reality, meaning emerges from social interaction, and meaning about an object emerges from within one's own thoughts (Griffin, Andrew, 2019).

Mead's first thought was about society (society). The life of a community group (society) consists of cooperative behavior of group members which requires individuals to cooperate in the way others understand us and we must understand others. This means that the process of mutual understanding between members of the community will create meaning (Stephen W. Littlejohn et al., 2012). Based on this idea, Blummer argues that individuals respond symbolically to their environment, physical objects and / or social objects based on the meaning contained in their social environment (Ahmadi, 2008). Humans act based on the meaning of an object (object and social) and meaning is not born individually but is the result of shared reality (Griffin, Andrew, 2019). The *Njalang* tradition is a social object that is carried out continuously by a social community. It is possible that the implementation of this tradition is born out of a shared reality in the community.

Another concept proposed by Mead is about oneself which creates joint action. Based on Mead's thoughts about self, Blumer is of the view that in a social community group action consists of stable and repetitive patterns that have a permanent meaning for members of the community (Stephen W. Littlejohn et al., 2012). The presence of a social activity such as a grave pilgrimage is not separated from an interlinkage of smaller interactions, this is referred to as a joint action.

Social action begins with a push from within by involving perceptions, the presentation of meaning, mental repetition, consideration of alternatives and refinement which results in meaning for the communicator. Individual actions that are carried out continuously from the past, then form the meaning of the individual (Stephen W. Littlejohn et al., 2012). The meaning that is interpreted by individuals can change from time to time in line with changing situations that occur in social interactions (Ahmadi, 2008). Referring to the previous literature that the motivation of the grave pilgrims who makes the pilgrimage is because there are spiritual values that come from within the pilgrim (Sylviana, 2018). This means that the tradition of *njalang* grave pilgrimage allows for a burial in the pilgrim.



## **D. THE MEANING OF NJALANG IMPLEMENTATION**

*Njalang* is a religious ritual as well as a product of local culture carried out through generations by the people of Merpas Village, Kaur Regency, Bengkulu. The funeral cleaning activities carried out by the village community in preparation for the implementation of the *Njalang* procession show evidence that the *Njalang* tradition is a cultural tradition. In addition, other evidence which strengthens that the *Njalang* tradition is a tradition of cultural value is the volunteerism of the village community to bring cookies, share tasting cookies, and interact with each other by shaking hands by asking for and forgiving each other between the people at the moment of Eid. Apart from being a cultural product, the findings show that in the *Njalang* tradition there is a procession of Islamic religious rituals. This can be seen in the presence of a *tausiyah* (lecture) procession of Islam delivered by religious leaders during one of the sessions of the implementation of *Njalang*. The reading of the yasin, tahlil and prayers carried out by the villagers at the cemetery further proves that the *Njalang* procession is an Islamic ritual. This means that the existence of the implementation of *Njalang* is in line with the findings of previous research that there is a marriage between culture and religion (Najitama, 2013).

The continuity of the *Njalang* tradition in Merpas village which is still practiced by the community is due to the meaning of this tradition. The symbolic interaction perspective guides this article to describe the meaning of implementing *Njalang* for the community in Merpas village. Based on the findings and analysis, the research findings show that the implementation of the *Njalang* tradition in Merpas village, Kaur Regency, Bengkulu is the result of shared reality, there is joint action in the implementation of the *Njalang* tradition, a series of *Njalang* traditions creates an interpretation of meaning in pilgrims.

### **1. *Njalang* as Shared Reality**

The findings of the researcher shows that the *Njalang* tradition is routinely held every year on the 2nd of Shawwal in the Hijri calendar. For decades, the *Njalang* tradition has never been implemented in Merpas village. There is no specific recommendation from any party to hold the *Njalang* tradition. Every member of Merpas village community already understands that every 2nd day of Syawal, they must hold *Njalang* tradition. The people of Merpas village consider the *Njalang* procession to be an obligatory tradition

for those who must be carried out. *Njalang* tradition is considered as a cultural treasure that must be maintained and preserved. This can be interpreted that the *Njalang* tradition has become a shared reality for the people of Merpas village. This finding is in line with previous research that the implementation of the grave pilgrimage is a tradition of adherence to customs and culture (Badri & Yesicha, 2019).

Evidence which strengthens that the *Njalang* tradition is a shared reality is the participation of all members of the Merpas village community in *Njalang* activities, without differentiating. The people who are present and participate in the *Njalang* procession are those who live in the village and the migrant communities who return to their hometowns. Male and female members of society, from adults to children, upper class to lower class economic people all blend into one unit to carry out every procession in the *Njalang* tradition.

The awareness of community members in Merpas village to hold and attend the *Njalang* tradition is the result of a shared reality process. This is in line with Herbert Mead & Blumer's view that there is cooperative action between fellow community members who understand each other so as to create shared meaning (Stephen W. Littlejohn et al., 2012). The presence of the Merpas village community in the *Njalang* tradition has proven that individuals in a social community have given symbolic responses to social objects as stated by Blummer (Ahmadi, 2008). Finally, the people of Merpas village socially interpret the *Njalang* tradition as a cultural tradition of the village community.

## **2. Joint Action**

The implementation of the *Njalang* tradition in Merpas Village if examined further, not only from a cultural perspective, it has created a collective action. This joint action can be seen from two actions, namely working together to clean the cemetery and bring the cookies voluntarily in the *Njalang* procession. These two activities show that in the *Njalang* tradition there is a value of togetherness between communities.

The value of togetherness in the *Njalang* tradition shown in joint action is in line with the findings of previous research. The meaning from a cultural perspective of organizing the grave pilgrimage together is to raise the principle of mutual cooperation (Nofia, 2018). One of the values contained in

grave pilgrimage activities is to be a means of fostering togetherness between communities (Amri & Maharani, 2018). The function of the grave pilgrimage contains the values of solidarity between communities (Badri & Yesicha, 2019). This article complements the previous findings that the value of togetherness between residents who carry out the tradition of the grave pilgrimage still occurs, although in a different study object. This strengthens the argument that the traditions held together can strengthen the values of community togetherness.

#### **a. Mutual Cooperation in Cleaning the Tomb**

Preparation of the implementation of *njalang* tradition is carried out since the last 10 days of Ramadhan. One of the things that were done at the preparatory stage was that the community cleans the village cemetery together. Funeral cleaning was carried out willingly by the villagers, without any coercion from any party. There was involvement of the village government, but only to coordinate or regulate the course of cleanup activities not on the state of ordering the community to carry out cleanup activities. This means that funeral cleaning activities were carried out voluntarily by villagers.

Most of the community was involved in the funeral cleaning work together; however, there were some villagers who cannot attend cleaning activities. The consequence for people not being able to attend funeral cleaning activities was to provide material donations in the form of money. These donations were used by the villagers to buy cleaning equipment. This means that the villagers who were not present at the funeral also took action in the process of cleaning the cemetery. It can be concluded that all the villagers of Merpas, without exception carried out joint acts of funeral cleaning.

The joint action in the form of cleaning the village cemetery willingly by the community is a manifestation of the self-concept that was realized by Mead & Blumer. Both argue that a social community undertakes collective action that is patterned and has a fixed meaning for its members (Stephen W. Littlejohn et al., 2012). Voluntary mutual cooperation is a tradition that originates from oneself in rural communities. If there is no mutual cooperation, there will be feelings of guilt from the person living in Merpas village. The implementation of the *Njalang* tradition has created the meaning of joint action, namely working together in cleaning up public cemeteries.

## **b. Voluntarily bring cookies**

The findings of the study show that in the implementation of the *Njalang* tradition on the 2nd of Shawwal, one of the processions carried out was eating cookies together and exchanging cookies for each of the *Njalang* participants. These cookies were not specially prepared by the *Njalang* organizing committee, but it was brought voluntarily by the villagers who attended the *Njalang* tradition. The cookies brought by the dominant community were Eid cookies.

The Eid cookies that have been brought in independently are eaten together by the community. Then, people usually exchange the cookies that they bring. Eid cookies as a means for the community to greet each other between residents. You could see a resident greeting other residents through the Eid cookies; he was commercializing tasting the Eid cookies from their family. In this moment, people can see interacting with each other and there is an activity of shaking hands as an effort to forgive each other on Eid al-Fitr. Volunteering to bring Eid cookies and sharing between citizens is evidence that in the implementation of *njalang* tradition there is a patterned social action. The act of exchanging cookies followed by interacting with each other by shaking hands to forgive each other in the moment of implementation of *Njalang* tradition has created the meaning that in the implementation of *Njalang* there is a joint action. This is in line with the premise of symbolic interaction which holds that the implementation of a social activity cannot be separated from smaller interrelationships (*Joint action*).

## **3. Inner meaning of the pilgrims**

A social object is not only interpreted collectively, but the object is interpreted privately which in turn creates inner meaning of the pilgrims. The research findings indicate that the social object of the *Njalang* tradition has created inner meaning for the Merpas village community. The inner meaning consists of two things, namely the activity of *Njalang* as a means of remembering death and *Njalang* as a means of reminiscing about family members who have died.

### **a. *Njalang* as a means of remembering death**

There are several Islamic religious rituals in the series of implementation of the *Njalang* tradition, namely in the form of listening to tausiyah delivered

by religious leaders. The messages of Islam in this *tausiyah* tend to emphasize the message of death. People are asked to prepare themselves for death by doing a lot of good deeds and leaving sinful deeds. The procession of listening to *tausiyah* about death is a means for people to self-evaluate their actions in life. Reflecting on what has been done, counting the good that has been done as a provision for the face of death. It means that *njalang* tradition is defined by society as a tradition to remember death.

This finding shows that the meaning of *njalang* tradition is the same as other grave pilgrimage traditions, that the pilgrimage of the tomb has a spiritual meaning that remembers death (Rohmawati, Ari; Ismail, 2017). The essence of carrying out the pilgrimage to the grave is to remind people of death and to raise awareness that someday they will become residents of the grave (Mujib, 2016). Although the two research contexts above are examining the tradition of pilgrimage to figures, it turns out that they have the same meaning as visiting family graves. Furthermore, other findings those are in line with the context of this study, namely visiting the family graves show the same thing. The grave pilgrimage among the Kuantan Malay community contains wisdom for pilgrims, which is a reminder of death (Jamaluddin, 2015). One of the meaning of pilgrimage from a religious perspective is reminding about death (Nofia, 2018). It can be concluded that the implementation of the grave pilgrimage in the context has a fixed meaning for pilgrims, namely remembering death, even though the object being visited is different.

This article further provides an analysis that the grave pilgrimage was born from the place of the ritual. The funeral which is the location for listening to *tausiyah* about death creates a more wisdom atmosphere for the community, compared to hearing messages of death elsewhere. Religious leaders who deliver their *tausiyah* occasionally point to funerals as a media in conveying their *da'wah* messages. This condition makes each individual listen to religious messages about death seriously. The combination of the message and the location to listen to the message makes the *Njalang* tradition interpreted as a medium for remembering death. Even though it is in two different traditions, this article strengthens the opinion in the previous article that the carrying out of the grave pilgrimage is a religious tradition that contains wisdom reflections on death (Rohmawati, Ari; Ismail, 2017). The grave is a place for someone to reflect on the level of his mistake in order to always prepare for death (Wynn, 2015).

This article makes a new contribution to the reflection on remembering death. The phenomenon of listening to messages about death and the location of listening to direct messages at a funeral in the *Njalang* tradition creates a stronger reflection of death. The combination of the ritual and the location of listening to taustiyah about death carried out in the *Njalang* tradition add a sense of solemnity for pilgrims. The grave pilgrimage procession which is interpreted as a reflection of death in the *Njalang* tradition creates a new meaning in the pilgrims. This is in line with the concept of mind in symbolic interactions, namely actions that are carried out continuously and will create new meanings within the individual and these meanings occur according to social interactions (Ahmadi, 2008).

#### **b. As a Media for Inner Meeting with the Deceased Family**

Another religious ritual in the implementation of *njalang* tradition is to do the reading of yasin, tahlil and praying together. This procession is carried out with the aim of sending rewards to deceased family members. The villagers of Merpas believe that the reward of reading yasin, tahlil and do'a performed at the time of *njalang* tradition will reach the spirit of their family members who are in the grave. Furthermore, the villagers of Merpas believe that performing the ritual of sending prayers to family members while performing the *Njalang* tradition can relieve the longing for these family members for seeing family funerals in person.

This finding is in line with previous research which holds that the meaning of the grave pilgrimage is a means of praying for the deceased's family. Pilgrimage to the grave as a means of praying for the spirits who are in the grave (Jamaluddin, 2015). The religious perspective holds that the implementation of the grave pilgrimage tradition means praying for the spirits who have died (Nofia, 2018). Although these findings are consistent, this article provides a new analysis that the tradition of the *Njalang* grave pilgrimage is not limited to praying for the deceased's family. It is furthermore as a means of inner meeting between pilgrims and family members who have died.

The religious ritual of reading yasin, tahlil and prayer together in the *Njalang* tradition has given rise to a new meaning in the pilgrims. Merpas villagers believe that the ritual of reading yasin, tahlil and praying for the families of the dead can be performed at home or at any other time besides on the 2nd of Syawal. However, the rituals carried out in the *Njalang* tradition

create the meaning that these rituals can be used as a means of inner meeting that treat longing with their family members. This phenomenon is explained in the concept of mind in symbolic interactions which holds that interactions in social objects can be interpreted by creating new meanings within individuals (Stephen W. Littlejohn et al., 2012).

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings and analysis, this article concludes that the *Njalang* tradition is a tradition of unity between social activities that contain cultural values as well as traditions containing religious rituals. This article supports previous research studies that have the view that the existence of grave pilgrimage is still carried out by the people of the Archipelago due to the inclusion of pilgrims who carry out the tradition of grave pilgrimage. The tradition of *Njalang* grave pilgrimage is interpreted by the villagers of Merpas, Kaur Regency, Bengkulu as a common reality which means this tradition is considered as a village culture that must be preserved. In addition, the findings indicate that the *Njalang* tradition is interpreted as an activity that creates action, namely that the community jointly cleanses the cemetery and volunteers to prepare consumption for *Njalang* activities. Last, the findings show that the meaning of the *Njalang* tradition for the people of Merpas village, Kaur Regency, Bengkulu is interpreted as a means of remembering death and mental encounters with deceased families, this meaning arises from the individual minds of pilgrims.

This article confirms the meaning of the grave pilgrimage tradition that visits the family graves by visiting the graves of religious figures. Although the object of study differs between the tradition of visiting the graves of religious figures and the tradition of visiting the graves of families, in some ways the meanings had born of pilgrims show similarities. Among them are the spiritual meaning and the meaning of togetherness between communities. This means that the meaning becomes a permanent meaning for pilgrims who visit funerals. The meaning of togetherness between communities is very possible because of the pilgrimage activities carried out together. Meanwhile, the meaning of the grave as *wasilah* is not seen in the tradition of visiting family graves, this is possible because people understand that *wasilah* only comes from the guardian character of religious leaders.



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