

Re-examining The Correlation between Islam and Adat Through Environmental Conservation

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ABSTRACT

The involvement of indigenous peoples in environmental protection is of significant importance. Due to their profound affinity for the natural world, they assume a pivotal role in the forefront of environmental preservation efforts. Conversely, the cultural practices and traditions of indigenous communities frequently encounter conflicts with the doctrinal principles of prevailing religions, such as Islam. Individuals who continue to uphold the customs and practices of their forebears, with the intention of preserving the harmony of the cosmos, are frequently labelled as primitive, animistic, irreligious, and such. The objective of this study is to reexamine the correlation between the cultural practices of the indigenous community residing in Kampung Kuta and the Islamic faith, specifically in the context of their endeavours towards environmental preservation. This study argues that the interpretation of rituals and traditions through the lens of intersubjective relationships might establish a connection between these practices and the preservation of the environment, as well as the application of Islamic principles in daily existence. The utilization of *pamali* and *pikukuh* customs aligns with the Islamic principles of prohibiting harm (*fasad*) and the idea of *Khalifah*. The significance of these two notions lies in their role in the conservation of the natural environment, as human behaviors influenced by their connection with nature have a direct impact on the current and future state of the environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The environmental issue has been widely acknowledged as the most significant challenge of the current century. Scholars have delineated that the environmental issue has precipitated calamities, alterations in climate patterns, worldwide temperature escalation, a diminishing standard of living, and the impending peril of planetary annihilation [1]. Consequently, the human race persists in its pursuit of shared resolutions to surmount the rapidly intensifying dilemma. The utilization of technological capabilities, analysis of geography and climate, persist as viable approaches in the pursuit of efficacious resolutions to the environmental challenge. Furthermore, the pursuit of regulations, legislation, treaties on conservation, and political will is also undertaken to facilitate the efficient execution of crisis management. Nevertheless, scholars argue that despite the availability of various technologies, they contend that these measures alone are insufficient. They critically notice that a fundamental issue underlying environmental degradation is rooted in human spirituality [1].

Furthermore, Pope Francis emphasizes the fundamental role of human activity in the current environmental challenges, as stated in his encyclical *Laudato Si* (LS 101-136). The author emphasizes the detrimental impact of human activities on the Earth and its components, encompassing both the non-living elements (e.g., soil, water, air, and weather) and the living elements (e.g., biodiversity of plants and animals). The impact of this matter on human existence necessitates its consideration as a theological matter (LS 63, 101, 139) [2]. These statements align with Lynn White (1967) who says that the Judeo-Christians have responsibilities in environment crisis due to the lesson in Bible which position human on the top and nature as the objects that fulfil humans' needs [3]. Consequently, human exploits the nature and invites the disasters. Hence, the connection between religion and environmental crisis becomes an interesting topic to discuss. Many

scholars from various countries have drawn this topic into different themes to get sustainable solutions for the environmental issues.

In Indonesia, religion is an important aspect of life. There are two reasons why we should concern ecology and religion in Indonesia [4]. The first is that Indonesia labelled as the lung system of the world due to the forests that cover almost a half of the country is under threatened. The forests get worse since the burnt forests happened in many regions in Indonesia such as in Kalimantan, Riau, Sumatera, etc. The pollute of the burnt forests danger the atmosphere and causes various diseases both of human and non-human being. This terrible condition needs a particular attention from all elements. The next is that religion plays an important role in every sector in Indonesia. The state requires all citizens to be religious, either as adherents of official religions or believers, as evidenced by the existence of a religion column on the identity card. It may become problem or solution. It plays a beneficial and negative function as a moral and political authority source. In addition, religion touches the psychological aspect of human [5]. There are positive effects of religiosity on the physical or mental health, life satisfaction, problem solving, etc. It encourages people to promote forgiveness, kindness, compassion, care for others including human and nonhuman being. In short, religion influences almost all actions of human.

Therefore, this paper will show the correlation between religion and environmental issue by elaborating the strategies of Kuta's indigenous people in encountering the environmental issues. In the environmental conservation, learning from Indigenous Religion is important and beneficial [6]. Many of the indigenous religions have, for instance, a cosmology that emphasizes an interconnectedness between mankind and nature. Most indigenous religions have, for example, environmental morals intertwined within their religious beliefs that make environment an important aspect of their life.

However, most of indigenous people including kampung kuta community are often negatively stereotyped by the surrounding communities as people that has left the teachings of religion due to their relation to nature. Their children are often ostracized by society. Some studies suggest that the people of Kampung Kuta not Muslims but animists [7] [8]. This is motivated by the interpretation of Islam using the paradigm of world religions that has led to discrimination against the Kuta community in carrying out rituals and traditions passed down by their ancestors. For example, the ritual of sacralizing the Leuweung Gede forest, which they consider a sacred place to worship. Based on Maarif (2019), the meaning of visiting the forest using the world religion paradigm will adopt the interpretation of Tylorian animism [9]. In addition, this paradigm places the God or supernatural being on the highest level followed by human (culture). Nature is in the lowest level. This hierarchical cosmology encourages human to have superiority against nature. Human places nature as object that could be exploited. The existence of nature is considerable if it can fulfill human needs. In response to this, Maarif (2019) proposed Indigenous Religion Paradigm in interpreting religion [9]. Hence, this paper will re-examine the correlation between Islam and *Adat* tradition in Kampung Kuta through Indigenous Religion Paradigm.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Adat and Environmental issues*

The perceived image of indigenous peoples in many civilizations might render their initiatives against environmental concerns highly effective in specific public spaces [10]. This positive perception stems from the indigenous peoples' deep connection and understanding of their natural surroundings, which allows them to implement sustainable practices and conservation efforts. Additionally, their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge often inspire others to take action and prioritize environmental protection. The

preservation of nature in Kampung Naga exemplifies the successful behaviour and attitude of indigenous peoples towards the environment, characterised by specific environmental ethics that prioritise balanced ecological relationships. This approach ultimately contributes to the sustainability of nature [11].

2.2 *Islam and Adat in Indonesia*

A misinterpretation arises over the assertion that Islamic law, namely *sharia*, dismisses the presence of local values, also known as customary (*Adat*) law, within a community situated inside a certain geographic jurisdiction [12]. The aforementioned paradigm is fundamentally flawed, since it fails to acknowledge that certain teachings within Islam involve the assimilation, modification, reform, and innovation of the traditions, customs, and customary laws originating from the Arab culture [12]. For example, the Ammatoa indigenous community, which labeled as 'animism' are, according to Maarif (2014), in line with stories in the Quran. Ammatoa's commitment to engaging in interpersonal relationships can be seen as an application of the Quranic notion of *huquq* [13].

Moreover, a crucial aspect is the implementation of a process of dialogue and dialectic, which facilitates the harmonious coexistence of Islam and *adat* as a unified value system [14]. This phenomenon of continuity is observed within the framework of acknowledging and embracing ideas and beliefs originating from external cultures. The method involves the placement of *saraq* within the framework of *pangngaderreng*, with pre-existing *adeq* pillars in Bugis community. Islamic traditions, including marriage, Hajj processions, construction of new dwellings, inheritance, and perspectives on *barzanji*, have undergone a gradual process of debate over an extended period of time. This acknowledgement recognizes the presence of Islamic perspectives as a result of the amalgamation of values stemming from the convergence of two distinct cultural backgrounds [14].

3. METHODS

The study was categorized as qualitative research; a methodological approach that involves an inquiry process aimed at understanding a social or human problem, drawing upon diverse traditions of inquiry [15]. This research focuses on exploring and interpreting the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals, rather than relying solely on numerical data. It allows researchers to delve deep into the complexities and nuances of a phenomenon, providing rich and detailed insights that quantitative methods may not capture.

Moreover, the data gathering methods employed in this study encompass observational approaches, informant interviews (specifically with *Kuncen*), documentation procedures, as well as literature reviews. The data sources utilized in this study encompass both secondary data derived from literature reviews, as well as primary data obtained through observations, interviews, and documentation. The data gathering process consists of three distinct steps. The initial stage involves field observation, when researchers directly observe the phenomenon under study. The second stage entails conducting interviews with traditional chiefs who serve as informants, providing valuable insights and perspectives. Lastly, the third stage involves analyzing the collected interview data alongside the observed field realities to draw meaningful conclusions. The findings derived from the study of observations, interviews, literature studies, and documentation are consolidated into reports or papers, which serve as valuable references and sources for future scholars.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 *A Thousand Pamali Village (Kampung Seribu Pamali)*

Kampung kuta is one of the traditional villages located in West Java, in Karangpaningal village, Tambaksari sub-district, Ciamis regency with a population of

285 people. Most of them work in agriculture, community forests, livestock, and trade. This village is known as the village of a thousand *pamali*¹ due to the number of taboos in carrying out their daily lives. For example, in building a house, the people of Kampung Kuta are required to obey several *pamali* traditions. one of them is that they are prohibited from using iron and roof tiles due to the myth that using roofs from the tiles is like living under land like a dead person buried. In addition, the effect of the broken materials will pollute the environment. The other traditions are that the house should in the shape of elongated; the direction and location of the house should consider other houses; and the positions of each room in the houses which has specific rules. Aside realizing the harmony of family life and among its residents, these rules generally contain meaning to maintain harmony with nature and fellow humans, strengthen the existence of Kampung Kuta, and provide the value of mutual attention, tolerance, appropriateness, beauty, and courtesy [16]. Furthermore, before they build house, they should have the ritual called *ngadegkeun* which aims to ensure that the house construction process can run smoothly and provide peace and blessings for its inhabitants. The ceremony begins by asking the elders for a "good day" to build a house, followed by a prayer led by the elders and the customary village head. After the prayer, the chicken head is buried by the puun on the land where the house will be built [17].

The commitment of Kuta's people in perpetuating their ancestral traditions in their daily life delivers them to have safe environment. Kampung Kuta is an example of a traditional Indonesian village that could be emulated in environmental conservation efforts. In 2002, the president of Republic of Indonesia at the time, Mrs. Megawati Soekarno Putri, gave them Kalpataru award as Traditional Village to Save the Environment and Customs in Indonesia [18]. In addition, the concept of Kuta's house was recognized as an earthquake-resistant house. This was proven when the earthquake hit

¹ *Pamali* means the taboo of words or actions

Pangandaran in 2006, none of the houses in Kampung Kuta were damaged. Hence, in addition to the concept of their houses being environmentally friendly, the houses protect them from earthquakes. There are many traditional values from Kampung Kuta that can be adopted to get sustainable environmental conservation.

4.2 Islam and Adat: Being Religious is Being Environmentalist

The concept of "Amanah karuhun" is a significant aspect in academic discourse. The term "amanah" refers to an object or responsibility that is committed to an individual by another person. Similarly, in the Sundanese language, the term "karuhun" serves as a synonym for the concept of ancestral [19]. The application of Amanah karuhun in daily life can be exemplified by the perpetuation of pamali and pikukuh. The source of influence can be derived from the verbal expressions and behavioral manifestations of an individual possessing significant impact. The concept holds significance in terms of the harmonious coexistence between humanity and the natural world, as well as their relationship with a higher power. Moreover, it is accompanied by a steadfast conviction that transgressions against this balance will result in repercussions [20].

The people of Kampung Kuta applies some *pikukuh* in preserving nature. There is a *mahkota pikukuh* which means that if people enter the forest, they cannot wear jewellery due to the myth that it will be lost. The next is that the springs in mountain areas and the downstream areas such as watersheds and river are used as the sources of water and processing food widely used by the people of Kuta Village, so the *pikukuh* prohibits people to damage the mountain or the ecosystem on the mountains. Damaged mountains and valleys will lead to natural disasters like floods, erosion, landslides, and others. In addition, in agriculture, the people are

prohibited to use chemical drugs in increasing agricultural yields, but they apply natural fertilizer for it [21].

Furthermore, in maintaining the sacred forest, the people of Kampung kuta work some *pamali* traditions. For them, Leuweung Gede becomes an *axis mundi*² and all its contents are part of the life system. It is primary axis of the sacred arrangement of the cosmos in which they live, a location at which a connecting ladder exists between the sacred and profane worlds. They do worship and communicate with the spirits of their ancestors in the forest. They believe that, in addition to God Almighty, supernatural entities such as Ambu Rama Bima Raksa Kalijaga, Prabu Mangkurat Jaga, Sang Mentil Putih, and Kyai Bima Raksa Nagara who reside near Leuweung Gede rule the ground they live on [22]. Ambu Rama means parents and Kyai means religious teacher, so when visiting the forest, people should care of their attitudes.

The pamali traditions dictate that access to the forest is limited to Mondays and Fridays [19]. Individuals seeking entry into the forest must observe a state of purity by cleansing their face or body at the Ciasihan sacred spring, situated in Kampung Kuta. Furthermore, individuals are expected to demonstrate environmental stewardship by refraining from activities such as damaging natural resources, disposing of waste improperly, carrying weapons capable of causing harm, disturbing wildlife, and wearing footwear within the forest premises. The presence of these restrictions can be attributed to the sacred forest's significance as a revered site for the propagation of Islam in Cirebon. The local community holds the woodland area in high regard, considering it a place of sanctity akin to a "mosque." According to prevailing beliefs, failure to adhere to these customs is said to provoke the displeasure of the ancestors, perhaps resulting in calamitous events for the

² The Axis Mundi, according to Mircea Eliade, is an essential symbol that represents man's relationship with the cosmos and higher entities. Man can attain a specific "stage" in his spiritual existence by positioning himself

along Axis Mundi, bringing him closer to a bigger and higher force.

community [23]. Therefore, these traditions have facilitated the establishment of a sustainable community lifestyle and possess the capacity to withstand the many impacts of modernization.

The essence of the *pikukuh* and *pamali* traditions in protecting nature leads humans to live in harmony with nature and do not change the existing natural form. Humans should adapt to the natural form without changing the existing form. The prohibitions contained in the *pamali* and *pikukuh* traditions are the form of preserving the purity of nature based on the commandments of God written in the Islamic scripture (Al-Quran). According to the *Kuncen*, the application of *pikukuh* is a manifestation of one of their life principles "*Leweung ruksak, Cai béak, Manusa balangsak*" which means that when the forest is damaged, it will have an impact on the exhaustion of water as a source of life. Therefore, humans will live in difficult. The *Kuncen* also said that this is an implementation of practicing the verses in the Qur'an about the prohibition of doing earth damage, as in Q.2:11; Q.28:77; Q.7:56; Q.30:41.

The word *fasad* (damage or corrupt) in these verses according to Gade (2019) is closely related to the law and ethics towards environment.

"In most instances of fasad in the Qur'an, the word for "earth" (al-ard) appears in the same phrase. These instances are specific commandments to specific persons or people. Typically, in the Qur'an's verses containing fasad, and when the term appears in conjunction with the appearance of the word al-ard, it is the latter key word that likely triggers it initially as an "environmental verse" on the part of English-speaking compilers."[24]

In addition, the concept of *pamali* and *pikukuh* also has similarity with the concept of *khalifah* in Islam as well as the Islam embraced by the Ammatoa community [13]. God delegated humans to be His representative on the Earth (*khalifah fil 'ard*) since humans are created in the best form (Q.95:04). This concept centralizes human as the centre of all ecosystem in the world. Humans have global influence towards ecosystem. Some Islamic

scholars have worked on the correlation between the concept of *khalifah* and the environmental issues [25]. Seyyed Hossein Nasr views this concept as manifestation of the *haqq* received by every creation including human, animal, plants, mountains, etc. "*According to Islam, each being exists by virtue of the truth (haqq) and is also owed its due (haqq) according to its nature*" [26].

Human beings must respect all the *haqq* of other creations. Humans have all the right and nature get the impacts from what the humans do. The position of human in the world is not only as the *khalifah* or vicegerency of God, but also as the servant of God (*'abd Allah*). Humans should balance their positions. They can apply the right as the vicegerency of God on the condition that they also realize that they are the servant of God that should obey the laws and the commandments of God including respecting other *haqq*. Moreover, by borrowing the concept of *Khalifah* according to Llewellyn, Maarif (2014) summarizes that to be a *khalifah* is to understand interpersonal relationships between creatures [13]. This description shows that there is correlation between Islam and *Adat* tradition since the practices of Islamic teaching can be interpreted by *Adat* and vice versa. Hence, through applying the *Amanah karun*, people of Kampung Kuta inherently apply the concepts of Islamic teaching in their daily life.

4.3 The Life Guideline for Human-nature Balance Relationship

The concept of applying *Amanah karuhun* leads the people to sacralise nature especially the sacred forest, *Leweung gede*. This act aligns with the concept of religion proposed by Nasr. He argues that religion is traditional knowledge that, if revitalized, will lead to the resacralization of nature [27]. Nature can be appreciated if humans view the sacral values on it. In this case, Nasr proposes the concept of "Theophany" which means "seeing God everywhere." Humans should understand the existence and the relation of themselves, nature, and God. This concept views the signs of God in Nature. In short, Nasr invites humans to contemplate that

nature of human is an integral part of nature, while the universe reflects divine power. So, in this context, taking steps to make peace and live in harmony with nature is the best way [28].

For the indigenous people of Kuta, carrying out Islamic laws and maintaining ancestral (*adat*) traditions are inseparable obligations. Kuta people position nature parallel to humans as God's creation. They believe that if nature is not treated well, it will also treat humans badly, such as the emergence of natural disasters. They realize that the availability of groundwater as a source of life is highly dependent on the sustainability of the Leuweung Gede forest. Nature and humans need each other to obtain life, so they deserve respect and appreciation. This shows that the relationship between the Kuta community and nature is subject-subject. Humans can be subjects or doers of work, and nature can act as a subject in responding to human actions. This relationship is referred to as an intersubjective relationship, which becomes the cosmology of Indigenous Religion Paradigm [9].

To understand the intersubjective relationship in Kampung Kuta, there are several principles [9]. The first principle is responsibility which implies that "what I do will affect me". Being responsible means that whatever we do will affect both ourselves and others. So, each subject in this relationship is responsible for ensuring each other's welfare. In the context of the Kuta community, this responsibility is shown through the ritual of entering the forest led by the kuncen. He will ask permission from the spirits believed to be in the forest to conduct worship and call them to perform their responsibilities in attending the ritual. The next is ethical implying that "what I do will affect others". The perpetrators of intersubjective relationships will realize that whatever is done, both positive and negative, will affect others. The prohibitions found in *pamali* tradition when entering the Leuweung Gede forest are some of the ethical manifestations of the Kuta community. They believe that if the prohibitions are violated, nature will respond to various disasters. The

last principle is reciprocity which means that "what I give is what I take, or what I take is what I give." Cox (2007) argues that reciprocity between the spirit world and the human community is essential to restore well-being and avoid further or ongoing disasters [29]. By giving rituals of respect to the spirits, the Kuta community believes that the spirits will protect the nature and ecosystem of the Kuta village from all dangers. Therefore, the ritual is a reciprocal relationship between humans and non-human beings in the forest.

5. CONCLUSION

To Summarize, Islam and *adat* as perceived by the wider community are like water and oil that cannot be united. The implementation of customary (*adat*) traditions in daily life is often labeled as a form of shirk or departure from Islamic teachings. This is motivated by the world religion paradigm that has hegemonized society as an effect of western colonialism in defining religion. The world religious paradigm has failed to define the meaning and traditions, so they get negative stereotypes from other citizens. However, if these rituals and traditions are interpreted using the intersubjective relationships, these rituals and traditions are a form of protecting the environment and applying Islamic concepts in everyday life. The people of Kampung Kuta prove that customs (*adat*) and Islam can work in harmony in protecting the environment. By adopting Islamic values and as a form of practicing the verses of the Qur'an, the *Amanah karuhun* customary tradition perpetuated by the Kuta community is a strategy of the Kuta community in dealing with environmental issues. The application of *pamali* and *pikukuh* traditions is in line with the concept of prohibition of doing damage (*fasad*) and *khalifah* in Islam. These two concepts are very important in preserving nature. The actions of people based on their relationship with nature will determine the condition of nature at the present and future. For example, sacralizing nature which represents the intersubjective relationship especially the forest as the place for worship and keeping

the forest as holy as a mosque is a form of their responsibility as human beings. It can be interpreted as the struggle of Kuta people in maintaining their forest from any environmental issues. They do not see nature as an object that can be exploited but as a subject that can act and respond to humans. Hence, the implementation of religion in Kampung Kuta manifested in Adat traditions evidence that religion plays an important role in environment conservation.

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