



Encountering Islam and Local Culture in Massorong Tradition in the Mandar Bay

Sumarni*

Kementerian Desa, Pembangunan Daerah Tertinggal, dan Transmigrasi, Indonesia
Khalilah_nuril@gmail.com

Suardi Kaco

Universitas Al Asyariah Mandar, Indonesia
suardikaco@mail.unasman.ac.id

Abstract

This research delves into the encounter between Islam and local culture within the community of Teluk Mandar. Utilizing phenomenological, historical, and cultural anthropology approaches, the findings unveil that initially, the encounter was peaceful, yet encountered resistance from certain residents post their Islamic studies at the local boarding school, citing the tradition as contradictory to Islamic teachings. Nevertheless, the tradition perseveres as a means to uphold environmental equilibrium and foster a tranquil and prosperous life. Traditional figures retain their pivotal roles, with Islamic elements seamlessly integrated into the ritual. In summary, the encounter between Islam and local culture within the Massorong tradition reflects mutual influence, accommodation, and potential conflict, necessitating profound comprehension and dialogue to sustain community harmony.

Keywords: local culture, Massorong Tradition, Islamic, Mandar

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji proses encountering antara Islam dan budaya lokal pada masyarakat di Teluk Mandar. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologis, historis, dan antropologi budaya, hasilnya mengungkapkan bahwa awalnya proses encountering berjalan damai, namun mengalami penolakan dari sebagian warga setelah mereka mempelajari agama Islam di pesantren dengan alasan bahwa tradisi tersebut bertentangan dengan ajaran Islam. Kendati demikian, tradisi ini tetap dipertahankan sebagai media untuk menjaga keseimbangan alam dan menciptakan kehidupan yang damai serta sejahtera. Tokoh adat tetap memegang peran penting, sementara unsur-unsur Islam telah terakulturasi dalam ritual tersebut. Kesimpulannya, proses encountering antara Islam dan budaya lokal dalam tradisi massorong mencerminkan adanya saling pengaruh, akomodasi, dan potensi konflik yang memerlukan pemahaman dan dialog yang lebih dalam untuk menjaga keberlangsungan harmoni masyarakat.

Kata kunci: budaya lokal, Tradisi Massorong, Islam, Mandar

الملخص

إن الثقافة هي أحد النماذج للنظر إلى الشخصية التي لا تؤثر فيها فحسب، بل تشكلها أيضًا. وهذا يؤكد أن شخصية يكشف هذا البحث عملية التلاقي بين الإسلام والثقافة المحلية في المجتمع المحلي في خليج ماندار باستخدام المناهج الفينومينولوجية والتاريخية والأنثروبولوجية الثقافية، تشير نتائج البحث أن عملية التلاقي كانت سلمية في البداية، لكنها

*Corresponding author

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واجهت رفضاً من بعض السكان بعد أن درسوا الإسلام في المعاهد الإسلامية على أساس أن التقليد يتعارض مع التعاليم الإسلامية. وعلى الرغم من ذلك، لا يزال هذا التقليد قائماً كوسيلة للحفاظ على توازن الطبيعة وخلق حياة سلمية ومزدهرة. لا يزال الزعماء التقليديون يلعبون دوراً مهماً، في حين أن العناصر الإسلامية قد تم دمجها في الطقوس. وختاماً، تعكس عملية التلاقي بين الإسلام والثقافة المحلية في تقليد ماسورونغ التأثير المتبادل والتوافق والتعارض المحتمل الذي يتطلب فهماً أعمق وحواراً للحفاظ على الانسجام المجتمعي

الكلمات المفتاحية: الثقافة المحلية، التلاقي، الإسلام، المندار

INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2018, precisely on Friday, October 12, the community was shocked by the destruction of preparations for the sea alms tradition at Pantai Baru, Bantul, Yogyakarta by a group of people. Before this incident occurred, a mass religious organization in Banyuwangi had issued a statement condemning the Gandrung Sewi dance in Banyuwangi, on the grounds that this tradition was considered contrary to religious teachings.¹

The destruction of preparations for the implementation of the sea alms tradition in Bantul is not the first rejection of similar traditions and culture in Indonesia. Khamami Zada² writes how local Islam is often labeled as bad by groups who carry the slogan Islam Kaffah. For example, at a mosque in Jatinegara which was founded by Guru Marzuki, the founder of the first Islamic boarding school in Betawi, every time someone played qasidahan at the al-Bahri Mosque, they were immediately responded to by putting up pamphlets that read "sorry, the mosque is not a place to play ondel-ondel." Not only that, traditions such as shaking hands after prayer, collective remembrance and collective prayer that used to exist, have now been suppressed by those who control the mosque.

Transnational Islamic groups³ this seems to forget the history of how religions interact and communicate within a community with long-ingrained local beliefs. It is certain that every religion experiences encounters with the local traditions in which it is based. This encounter often results in mutual influence and even tension as a result of the negotiation process between the two. When Islam first entered the archipelago (Indonesia), its approach was very accommodating to the traditions and culture of the local community. The spreaders of Islam did not revoke the local identity of the community, but rather accommodated them in tolerant ways. This can be seen in the method of Islamization in various regions such as Java, Sunda, Sasak, Kajang and Dayak, where people still maintain their cultural traditions while adopting Islam with its own local charm.⁴ However, over time, these tolerant negotiation efforts changed with purification pressures that sought to present an Islam that was considered authentic, namely the same Islam that was brought from Mecca. This authentication process started tensions between religion and tradition, which previously had been friendly, but now their purity is starting to be challenged. As a result, groups

¹Aris Setiawan, "Kontroversi Sedekah Laut Dan Agama," *Tempo.Co*, last modified 2018, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/kolom.tempo.co/amp/1138921>.; Saputra Eko, Iswandi Syahputra, and Bono Setyo, "Pemberitaan Media Online: Studi Kasus Konflik Budaya Sedekah Laut Di Pantai Baru, Ngentak, Bantul, Yogyakarta," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora* 9, no. 2 (2020): 175-188.

² Khamami Zada, "Agama Dan Tradisi Kultural: Pertarungan Islam Lokal Dengan Islam Kaffah," *Tashwirul Afkar* 23 (2007): 7-21.

³ Aksa, "Gerakan Islam Transnasional: Sebuah Nomenklatur, Sejarah Dan Pengaruhnya Di Indonesia," *Yupa: Historical Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2017): 1-14.

⁴ A F Sjadzili, "Temu Tengkar Agama Dan Tradisi Lokal," *Tashwirul Afkar* 23, no. 1 (2007): 2-6; S Kaco, "Fiqh Lokalitas: Integrasi Hukum Islam Dan Budaya Lokal (Studi Pemikiran Hukum Kontekstual Abdurrahman Wahid)," *J-Alif: Jurnal Penelitian Hukum Ekonomi Syariah dan Budaya Islam* 4, no. 1 (2020): 29-45.

who feel the need to cleanse local traditions often use violent methods without dialogue with local communities, which results in destruction and stigmatization of superstition, heresy and superstition towards these traditions.⁵

Seeing the phenomenon of the encounter between religion and local traditions, where mutual influence occurs and can even lead to tension, it is interesting to research the massorong tradition, a tradition of coastal communities in Buku Village, Polewali Mandar Regency, West Sulawesi Province. "Massorong" or "attirioloang," which is also called manre-manre, is an annual tradition carried out by coastal communities in Buku Village with the aim of avoiding evil, carrying out ancestral pilgrimages, and establishing friendship with supernatural creatures, especially the 'kanene' (crocodile). believed to be the "guardian of the sea." This tradition is also a form of gratitude from coastal communities towards the sea because the richness of marine biota allows them to live well.

This research aims to examine the traditional practices of Massorong which have been inherited from generation to generation in the Buku Village community. Apart from that, this research also wants to highlight the encountering process between Islam and local culture in these practices, as well as how religion influences and is influenced by local traditions, including potential tensions that may arise from the combination of the two. The challenges faced by this traditional practice will also be explored, along with the views of religious figures on this phenomenon.

METHOD

This research uses a cultural anthropology approach with descriptive qualitative research methods.⁶ The data collection technique was carried out through three activities, namely observation, in-depth interviews with five traditional leaders, religious leaders and residents (see table 1), and documentation. The collected data was then analyzed through three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification.⁷

Tabel 1 List of Research Informants

No.	Name	Age (year)	Information
1	Sayyid Fadlu Al Mahdaly	50	Imam of the Syuhada Mosque, Polewali Mandar Regency
2	Wahyuddin	62	Traditional Figure and Head of Buku Village (1993-2007)
3	Tahanuddin	45	Book Village Traditional Figures
4	Paduai	55	Book Mosque Imam
5	Rado	34	Book Village Residents

DISCUSSION

A. Massorong Ritual Practices

The Buku people, like most Mandar people, live on the coast very close to the sea. They have a special name for the sea, namely "sasi'," while people who earn their living at sea are called "posasi'." A strong belief exists among the Buku people that the ocean located close to where they live has a high sacred value compared to other parts of Mandar Bay. Even though it is considered scary, the sea

⁵ C Sembodo et al., "Penyebaran Islam Di Nusantara Antara Kultur Dan Struktur," *Ulumuddin: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman* 11, no. 2 (2021): 237-253; Suprpto, *Dialektika Islam Dan Budaya Nusantara: Dari Negosiasi, Adaptasi Hingga Komodifikasi* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2020), 56-72.

⁶ Haris Herdiansyah, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif Untuk Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial: Perspektif Konvensional Dan Kontemporer* (Jakarta: Salemba Humanika, 2019), 157.

⁷ Sugeng Pujileksono, *Metode Penelitian Komunikasi Kualitatif* (Malang: Intrans Publishing, 2015), 152.

provides various benefits for them, including providing a decent living. Their children can pursue education at leading universities in South Sulawesi and West Sulawesi. The blessings of the ocean are not only felt by *posasi*, but also by traveling fish traders (*pa'gandeng-gandeng*), who come from various areas around Buku Village, such as Katumbangan Village and Katumbangan Lemo Village.

The sea, although it provides blessings and goodness to humans, can also be a source of disaster, disaster and even death. Like a coin with two opposite sides, the sea brings goodness, happiness and prosperity, but it can also cause destruction and anxiety. These disturbances can come from nature, such as erratic weather, high sea waves, hurricanes and whirlpools that can sink boats. Apart from that, fishermen also have to face disturbances from sea creatures, both visible and supernatural.

Knowledge about supernatural beings and mystical things has been part of people's beliefs before Islam spread widely in this region. Even though Islam has existed there for some time, traditional beliefs are still held by some Mandar people, including the Buku people. Belief in this mystical power is reflected in various ritual practices. Arifuddin Ismail stated that this belief resembles Hinduism which also recognizes the existence of spirits and supernatural things that have powers beyond human ability.

Pelras⁸ describes two forms of syncretism, namely esoteric syncretism and practical syncretism. Esoteric syncretism refers to a belief system originating from the early period of Islamization, spread through mostly oral texts, as well as some written by followers of these teachings, including in the Luwu region and in the To-Lotang tradition in Sidenreng. This belief is related to sacred places such as Cerekang in Luwu' or Bulu' Lowa in Amparita. On the other hand, practical syncretism does not have a definite conceptual formulation, but is carried out openly in South Sulawesi. Examples include rites related to life cycles, agriculture, house building, boat building, fishing, and medicinal practices. In this practice, spiritual entities (*to'alusu'*) and supernatural entities (*to-tenrita*) are often considered as intermediaries between humans and God

The complete offering consisting of food offerings is intended for spirits (*to-halusu'*), who are also known as invisible people (*to-tenrita*). Like other cultures in the archipelago, certain associations are given between the upper world and the lower world. The upper world is often associated with mountains, upstream rivers, coconut trees, the sun, hornbills, or male creatures, while offerings for the underworld are often associated with the sea, downstream rivers, areca palm trees, the moon, crocodiles, and monitor lizards, or female creature.⁹

The tradition of offering offerings to supernatural creatures in the ocean, carried out by the Buku community, is a form of respect, appreciation and a medium of communication to maintain harmonious relations with the supernatural world. This communication is realized in the form of traditions, which are carried out as an expression of the beliefs and cultural values of the community.

1. Preparation

Several days before the ritual, Wahyuddin, a traditional leader and former Head of Buku Village (1993-2007 period), set the date on Thursday, August 27 2020. The people of Buku and Samma Hamlet together collected donations and worked together to prepare everything for the ritual. The costs required are around Rp. 3,000,000. If citizen donations are insufficient, there are efforts to overcome the lack of funds. Apart from donations from residents, the Book Village Government also usually contributes, but not this year. The funds collected are used to buy ritual necessities,

⁸ Christian Pelras, *Manusia Bugis, Diterjemahkan Oleh A. R. Abu & N. A. Arsuka* (Jakarta: Nalar & École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO), 2006), 216-218.

⁹ Pelras, *Manusia Bugis, Diterjemahkan Oleh A. R. Abu & N. A. Arsuka*, 222.

such as rice, sticky rice, brown sugar, bananas, chicken, fish, shrimp, eggs, flour and various kitchen spices. Other ingredients such as banana leaves, coconut leaves, lemongrass and coconut are usually obtained for free from neighboring hamlets such as Belulu and Parabaya.

The day before the ritual, residents gathered at the house of the traditional leader, Wahyuddin, to help with the process of making food and ritual equipment. Another part of the community prepares food in their respective homes to be taken to the ritual location the next day. The majority of those who gathered at the traditional leaders' houses were women, forming groups with different tasks. They clean and cook fish, chicken and shrimp. Other groups make atupe' flowers, buras, balundake, sokkol, and gogos. Meanwhile, another group of women talked and made traditional foods such as cucur, baje', tallo' clams, beppa oto', bu'u-bu'us, paso'-paso', and bua sappang. Meanwhile, a group of men brought several stalks of yellow bamboo, or golden bamboo, which they had obtained from residents of Para'baya Hamlet, called Pua' Bahar. This bamboo will be used to make balsamuji in traditional houses, which functions as a place to place various types of prepared traditional food and cakes. Balasuji is the main ritual equipment or object that residents must prepare for the ritual.

Bamboo is often used in rituals because it is considered a ritual object that facilitates communication between the upper world and the middle world, and functions as a symbolic mediator in ceremonies. In some rituals, bamboo is stuck into the earth to receive blessing from the sky, especially in rituals held at the navel point of the earth to honor royal heirlooms or inaugurate a new king. Bamboo is also filled with clay bullets to produce sacred rattling sounds. This is reminiscent of the roles of male and female couples in myth, where the third element is an androgynous ritual object, reflecting both male and female characteristics.¹⁰

2. Core Process

The next morning, at around 06.00 am, several residents, especially women, were still busy in the traditional house preparing the food they had made. Not long after, Sanro Hj. Mara arrived to put the food in the balustrade. However, Wahyuddin, as a traditional leader, forbade him to do so before the arrival of the kali or imam of the Buku and Samma Mosques. After waiting for a while, the two priests arrived, and the procession of placing food on the balsamuji began with the burning of incense by Sanro Hj. Mara, while Wahyuddin and the two priests sat around Balasuji.



Figure 1 Sanro procession of putting food into Balasuji

Source: Sumarni & Suardi Kaco, 2023

After the incense is lit, Sanro occasionally orders one of the residents to pound the betel nuts that have been prepared. Crushed betel nuts are mixed with powdered whiting, gambier and water,

¹⁰ T Gibson, *Kekuasaan, Raja, Syeikh, Dan Ambtenaar* (Makassar: Ininnawa, 2009), 185.

then placed on betel leaves that are folded to resemble sitting cross-legged (*massulekka*), for a total of 9 betel leaves. Folded betel leaves are inserted between 9 free-range chicken eggs placed on a special plate and sprinkled with *banno'*. Then, Wahyuddin placed an opened pack of cigarettes and a wooden lighter on a plate containing eggs, betel leaves and *banno'*.

The next process is for Sanro to place the seven types of traditional cakes on the plates provided, with two plates prepared for each type of cake, one for the *balikuji* and another for the large tray. Each plate has nine cakes. *Balundake*, *gogos*, *atupe'* flowers, and *sokol patang Rupa* are also placed on nine plates each. Bananas are also prepared, with two combs for each type, one comb placed in the *balsamuji* and the other comb in a large tray. The two banana combs will be offered in a *barzanji* procession which begins with the reciting of prayers. Meanwhile, the remaining cakes and other food are placed on two trays which will also be taken to the sea, each equipped with a young coconut that has been peeled.

After the *balusuji* and the three trays containing bananas and food were prepared, Wahyuddin together with the Imam of the Samma Mosque took a red and white cloth, folded it, and placed it on the *balusuji*. Then, the Imam of Buku Mosque led the prayer, and all the residents in the house raised their hands solemnly. After the prayer ended with the recitation of *Surah Al-Fatihah*, Wahyuddin tied the four ends of the *Balusuji* with neath rope and called several men under the house to lift it. Several young women helped bring incense, drinking water, and two live village chickens (male and female). Residents rushed to the beach on the border between Buku and Panyampa (Tanjong Buku) villages, where the *massorong* ritual was carried out. Some residents departed from their homes, while others departed from the homes of traditional figures.

Several other residents left first carrying bunches of *loka manurung* (*kapuk* bananas). This *manurung* location will be burned, a process that takes quite a long time. A resident named Rado (34) explained in Mandar that this *loka manurung* would be presented to one of the Tanjong Buku guards who really likes grilled *kapok* bananas. "*Loka manurung pura tunu totia naolo'i panjagana Buku, rapangngi ita' di' e taue diang to tia ande diolo'i sannal, bassa tomi tiya di' e panjagana Bukue,*" which means, "It is the burnt banana *kapok* that is loved by custodian of Tanjong Buku. Just like humans, there are certain foods that they really like, and so do book keepers."¹¹

To reach the ritual site, it takes 15-20 minutes with a distance of 1 km from residential areas. Some residents walk, while others use motorbikes. From a distance, residents of Buku and Samma hamlets could be seen as well as several people from other hamlets such as Parabaya hamlet and Belulu hamlet participating in the group, carrying luggage that had been prepared since morning. They also brought tents to shelter from the hot sun and mats as a base.

After walking for a while, the group arrived at their destination, namely the location where sea water and river water meet. At the ritual site, more than 10 tents were erected, and residents took shelter under them while preparing the food they had brought. Other residents who had just arrived were busy setting up tents on the beach using supports made of scattered wood, which residents said was rubbish carried by the waves from the sea.



Figure 2 Barazanji reading procession on the beach

¹¹ Wawancara dengan Rado di Dusun Samma, 04 Juli 2020.

Source: Sumarni & Suardi Kaco, 2023

After all preparations are complete and the traditional leaders, mosque imam, sanro, and pa'bijaga are in place, the ritual begins with the reading of the barzanji in turns. The Imam of the Nurul Huda Mosque in Dusun Buku began the reading, followed by the former Imam of the Al-Ansar Mosque in Dusun Samma, several residents, the former Head of Buku Village Wahyuddin, and ending with the Imam of the Nurul Huda Mosque who also led the prayer in the ritual. In 2019, this ritual was attended by Sayyid Fadlu Al-Mahdaly, religious leader and imam of the Syuhada Mosque, Polewali Mandar Regency, but this time it was only attended by the District Government of Mapilli, Babinsa, and Babhinkantibmas.

Beside the Imam of the Nurul Huda Mosque, a female sanro with the title Hajjah occasionally looked at the sea while her mouth muttered. Children who blocked his view were reprimanded by Hj. Mara. After the Imam finished reading the prayer which ended with the recitation of Surah al-Fatihah, the residents simultaneously said "Amen" loudly so that all residents who were far from the tent could hear it. Saying a loud "Amen" is also a sign that all residents in the tent can eat the food that has been served. Even though the residents have started eating, the ritual procession is not finished because there are still important stages that must be carried out, namely massorong.



Figure 3 Drifting the balsamuji and food into the sea
Source: Sumarni & Suardi Kaco, 2023

The next process is Sanro Hj's turn. Mara and pa'bijaga to take on the role. Hj. Mara took a tray containing free-range chicken eggs, banno,¹² and several Rp. 2000, Rp. 10,000, and Rp. 20,000 which had been folded, then took the tray to the sea followed by residents. Balasuji was also taken to the seashore. One of the descendants of the pa'bijaga who knows the stages of the ritual procession explained that when facing the sea, a sanro or pa'bijaga must first empty his mind, focus on the ritual, and surrender completely to Allah SWT.

Sanro sat on the edge of the sea with an incense stick filled with fire in front of him, then he scattered the banno' three times while chanting a mantra softly, calling the guardians of the sea by their respective names. The Book of sea guards then appear, visible only to the sanro, pa'bijaga, and traditional leaders. Sanro greeted them seven times, shaking hands one by one, and communicating to make sure the preparations were sufficient, if not, begging to be completed. He also asked that fishermen be protected while at sea. After that, Sanro gave a little food to the sea guard to eat in its "subtle" form. Balasuji was then pushed into the sea in a massorong procession. Sanro warned residents not to eat food at the balustrade while it was still on the seafront, because sea guards still eat the "delicate". Then, one by one the eggs and two male and female chickens are washed into the sea as part of the ritual.

¹² *Banno* dalam bahasa Mandar adalah padi yang disangrai hingga meletup-letup.

After the massorong procession is finished, residents are allowed to eat the food at the balusuji. Deftly, they took food and scrambled to catch the chickens that were released. After eating together, some residents bathe in the sea, while others clean up leftovers. Some other residents returned to their homes carrying barakka' (local food that has been prayed for).

B. Encountering Islam and Culture

When Islam integrated with the socio-culture of the Mandar people who already had a value system and belief in ancestral spirits, the spreaders of Islam did not destroy this system directly. Instead, they accommodated local culture into Islamic teachings, creating a unique Islamic cultural identity. Examples can be seen in coastal rituals such as massorong, as well as in constitutional aspects such as the parewa sara' institution in the royal environment. Accommodation is also visible in the literature, arts and culture and life cycle rituals of the Mandar people. All of this is the result of a combination of Islamic teachings and typical local Mandar culture.¹³

The accommodation process called Islamic indigenization, citing Gus Dur's argument, is a form of reconciliation between Islamic teachings and local culture. For Gus Dur, reconciliation is not about uniting Islam with culture so that both lose their identity, nor is it about syncretism that mixes old belief systems with new ones. Indigenization of Islam is an attempt to consider local needs in formulating religious law without changing the substance of the law itself. An example is the roof of the Demak Mosque which used to follow the "meru" concept from the Hindu-Buddhist period with nine layers, then was changed by Sunan Kalijaga into three layers which symbolized the religious stages of a Muslim: faith, Islam and ikhsan.

The propagators of Islam implemented strategies to Islamize society's traditions by incorporating Islamic elements into traditional practices, such as reciting barzanji, saying basmalah before starting activities, conveying greetings, and reciting prayers to ask for safety and blessings from Allah SWT. These Islamic elements are abundant in every stage of the ritual carried out by the Buku community in carrying out massorong.

In this context, Sayyid Fadlu Al-Mahdaly, who is familiarly called Abba Taha, revealed that the ulama spread Islam in Mandar by prioritizing a values approach. People at that time easily accepted Islam because its spread was carried out peacefully without any coercion, and the process took place gradually. One of the strategies used is an accommodating attitude towards the traditions and culture of the local community. Therefore, it is not surprising that Islam Nusantara shows a strong character in coexisting with local culture.

The Sufistic approach used by the first generation of ulama created an awe-inspiring effect that made it easier for the ulama to introduce Islam slowly to the Mandar community. With this approach, the ulama organize strategies using cultural dialogue, where the culture that has taken root is not simply changed. This can be seen in the massorong ritual procession which has been going on for a long time and is still maintained by the people of Buku Village. Local cultural elements are still maintained in this ritual. First, the existence of pa'bijaga and sanro have an important role in the Massorong tradition, which cannot be done without the presence of both. Second, ritual equipment such as balsamuji, incense, gambier, areca nut, birtih and betel leaves are still used, although some of them are only used in certain rituals. Third, typical food for "sea guards" and traditional snacks are still mandatory in rituals, showing the continuity of local culture and beliefs in the context of Indonesian Islam.

The process of encountering through dialogue and negotiation allows some parts of local cultural products to be maintained, such as in the ritual processions carried out by the Buku community. This ritual does not eliminate all the old cultural products in it. For example, the tradition of preparing ritual equipment using betel leaves, incense, gambier, and serving various dishes such as sokol patangrupa is still maintained, inspired by pre-Islamic traditions. There are two things that make local traditions able to survive amidst the presence of new values. First,

¹³ Ahmad M Sewang and Dkk, *Sejarah Islam Di Mandar*. (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama RI, 2010), 101-121.

Islamists consider that local cultural products can be integrated with Islamic values by changing the symbolic meaning of ritual practices, undergoing a transformation of philosophical values even though their form remains constant. Second, people believe that cultural practices are ancestral heritage that must be maintained by the next generation.¹⁴

In the context of the Massarong ritual, there are elements of local culture that are still maintained in line with the components of Islamic tradition that are also used. One of the important elements in this ritual is the role of the mosque imam, who has an important role before and during the ritual procession. They are not only present when the balsamuji is filled with food and prayers and salawat are read to the Prophet SAW before leaving for the sea, but are also very much needed when the core rituals are carried out on the seashore and the community prepares to carry them out. Their role is reflected in the reading of the Barzanji which is preceded by the imam of the mosque or river and residents who are able to read the Barzanji in turns. It should be noted that both imams, sanro and pa'bijaga have different ritual functions, but both understand their respective positions well without being self-effacing. Their existence is the result of dialogue between Islam and local culture, where religious figures such as kali or mosque imams are present as partners in rituals, not to reduce local symbols such as sanro or pa'bijaga. In addition, the time for the ritual was chosen after the Eid al-Adha celebration, as a form of pilgrimage aimed not only at living humans and deceased ancestors, but also at the invisible "guardians of the sea", reflecting the respect for local beliefs that are also incorporated in Islamic context.

In the fishing community in Buku, there has been a significant change in theological orientation, which initially centered on local spiritual forces, now shifting towards Islamic theology. One example is the belief in "sea guardians" who are seen as creatures who embrace Islam, so that when sanro or pa'bijaga call them, they convey greetings. In addition, the entire series of rituals is also closely related to Islamic traditions, indicating the strong integration of local and religious elements in the lives of fishing communities in Buku.

In the tradition of the Buku community, the presence of cultural agents such as the Imam of the Mosque, which is part of the Islamic tradition, is present in rituals not to replace the role of sanro or pa'bijaga. On the other hand, the term Imam of the Mosque or annangguru was born from the process of meeting local culture and Islam, so that the annangguru is considered to represent the local image without losing his identity as a cleric. The two actors have different roles in the ritual and they cannot replace each other. The presence of both in the ritual is very important. The sanro and pa'bijaga remain sources of local knowledge in some matters, while the Imam of the Mosque or annangguru becomes the authority in religious matters. These roles are clearly visible in the ritual procession, where no one dominates or has a bigger role, but both share roles both before and during the core ritual.

The dialogue process between Islam and community traditions is reflected in cultural mechanisms involving local negotiations. Islam is not only taken for granted when dealing with local treasures; instead, these two entities are placed on an equal footing to dialogue creatively, avoiding placing one below which could lead to weakening. The combination of the two produces rich local interpretations, making Islam relevant to local realities. In this way, Islam, as a religion that has spread throughout the world, can have creative dialogue with local communities without the need for violence. Reconciliation between Islam and societal traditions is considered a natural and peaceful process without any attempts at conquest. This model of spreading Islam is different from what happened in the Middle East, where Islam spread through political domination.

C. Rejection Versus Acceptance

In several regions in the archipelago, the negotiation process which was initially tolerant and almost without conflict began to change due to the emergence of purification pressures aimed at bringing Islam that was considered authentic, namely Islam that was identical to its original

¹⁴ Arifuddin Ismail, *Agama Nelayan: Pergumulan Islam Dan Budaya Lokal* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012), 179.

teachings from Mecca. This group believes that existing customs have polluted the purity of Islam and need to be cleansed so that this religion remains pure from elements of shirk. Unfortunately, this pressure often leads to acts of destruction and even violence against residents.

In the past, the urge to purify the traditions of the Buku community, including the massorong ritual, was voiced by a number of Buku residents who were alumni of the Mangkoso Islamic Boarding School. The impact of this pressure was that the ritual was not carried out twice, in 1981 and 1982. Tahanuddin, a descendant of Ada' in Buku, revealed that Wahyudin's father had been influenced by Puangna Samang and Tongguru Mahamu' not to carry out the Massorong ritual, which led to a fight with Harani insisted on continuing the tradition. As a result, many people became sick, there was the sound of horses running, the sound of troops as if they were at war, and there was a sound as if it were a mappadendang.¹⁵

The implementation of the Massorong tradition has been rejected by a number of Salafi Islamic boarding school alumni, who are also part of the Buku community. They, with their religious knowledge, influence the traditional elders responsible for the tradition. Their views on the Massorong tradition are influenced by the fiqh perspective, considering it to be contrary to Islamic teachings, heresy and shirk. As a result, this tradition was stopped by traditional elders for two years. However, some traditional elders and other communities continue to fight for the implementation of this tradition, considering the strange events in Buku Village which are considered as a warning from the "Guardian/guardian of Tanjong Buku".

In the current context, the challenges that traditions such as Massorong often face come from Islamic groups who adhere to the ideology of purification. One of the Islamic organizations that is influential in the villages is the Tablighi Jama'ah, which strongly rejects traditions such as massorong, considering them to be acts of heresy and shirk. In Buku Village, there are quite a lot of Tablighi Jama'ah members. They often oppose the Massorong tradition and forbid their families from participating in its implementation. Several mosques in this village are used as centers for spreading their beliefs, where this tradition is often discussed. Even though they refused, they did not use a radical or extreme approach, and did not even convey it directly to the traditional elders in Buku.

Apart from rejection, there is also acceptance of Massorong traditional practices in order to preserve them, which comes from Buku residents and religious figures. The view of the Imam of Buku Mosque, Paduai, shows that the massorong ritual is considered a positive activity because it involves reading Barzanji and praying for safety for local residents. In addition, children are taught to memorize Barzanji, so that those who master it can participate in this ritual as part of training in memorizing Barzanji. In general, Buku residents view this tradition as an expression of gratitude to Allah SWT for the good fortune they have been given and as a prayer for safety in their activities, especially at sea.¹⁶

The view of acceptance of Massorong traditional practices also came from a religious figure, Sayyid Fadlu Al-Mahdaly, who provided an interesting explanation regarding this matter:

"The traditions carried out by the Buku people are a medium to teach us to maintain the balance of nature. It's just that people nowadays like to judge traditions like that, for example considering them shirk and so on, they don't see the other side of what our parents used to teach us. For example, when they want to cut down a tree, they first stroke the tree and say to the tree, 'I'm sorry, brother, because the time has come for it to be used'. There's an excuse there, why did they do that, because people in the past recognized that this universe was created for the benefit of mankind. It is beneficial if there is respect for God's fellow creatures."¹⁷

¹⁵ Tahanuddin (45 Tahun), Tokoh Adat Desa Buku, *Wawancara*, Dusun Buku, 20 Juli 2020

¹⁶ Paduai (55 Tahun), Tokoh Agama Dusun Buku, *Wawancara*, Dusun Buku, 20 Agustus 2020

¹⁷ Sayyid Fadlu Al-Mahdaly, Imam Masjid Syuhada Kabupaten Polewali Mandar, *Wawancara*, Polewali Mandar, 13 September 2020

In this perspective, it is important to understand that the Massarong tradition is a means used by ancestors to teach future generations about the importance of maintaining natural balance. Therefore, understanding their way of thinking is key. In the past, clerics faced the challenge of ensuring that Islam was accepted peacefully without violence or coercion. However, currently, the challenge is to convey the correct understanding to the public, without having to eliminate the tradition altogether.

According to Sayyid Fadlu Al Mahdaly, ulama in the past had a unique method of teaching people about the importance of maintaining the balance of nature. They often use threats and warnings regarding the dangers that might be posed by "sea guards," which could lead to disaster. In understanding their way of thinking, we must realize that attention to nature is an integral part of their thinking. Even though it seems scary, this approach actually shows their concern for environmental sustainability. However, amidst these thoughts, we also need to understand that the existence of other creatures in nature cannot be simply ignored. They are an inseparable part of a complex ecosystem and require equal attention in maintaining natural balance.

People still believe in the existence of other powers that are stronger than humans, such as the presence of "sea guardians". Although it cannot be denied that creatures other than humans, such as jinn, exist, this understanding only applies to an era when Islam had not yet spread widely in the archipelago. Therefore, this way of thinking is no longer relevant in the current millennial era, where information is very easy to access and knowledge is increasingly advanced. Almost every problem can now be answered with a scientific approach. This is different from the past, where parents did not have sufficient scientific understanding, and therefore, education was often delivered through threats. This threat is a strategy to encourage generations to take good care of nature, avoid over-exploitation, and use natural resources according to their needs.

According to Sayyid Fadlu Al-Mahdaly, natural disasters such as floods, landslides and fires are the result of human activities which are no longer able to protect nature properly but are exploited for personal and group interests in making maximum profits without thinking about the impacts that will result. The massarong ritual is one of the methods or media used by ancient people to bind humans to nature.

Threatening by frightening, as above, is an attempt to prevent people from being greedy, especially considering the generation that will be born in the future. This threat is not only related to the existence of a greater power that can cause disaster or calamity, but also indicates that there are errors in human behavior that might disturb Allah SWT's creatures. In this context, the Buku people's tradition of carrying out the massarong ritual aims to establish good relationships with fellow creatures of Allah SWT. This is done by respecting the existence of all creatures and providing good treatment to nature, so that nature can become a source of benefit for humanity, not the other way around

CONCLUSION

The encounter of Islam and local culture in the Massarong tradition in Buku initially occurred peacefully because the process of spreading Islam used a Sufistic pattern, which enabled the continuation of local culture. The role of the sanro and pa'bijaga remains important, while the presence of the Kali or Imam of the Mosque does not replace them, but has a different role that is equally important. Local cultural elements such as balasuji and traditional food are maintained, while barzanji recitation and Islamic prayers are also integrated. These two cultural elements combine to form a local Islamic identity. However, this process is not always peaceful; There was upheaval when pressure for purification emerged, considering the Massarong tradition to be shirk. This rejection came from Buku residents who attended the Mangkoso Islamic Boarding School in 1981-1982, causing the tradition to not be implemented twice. Despite the rejection, the spirit to maintain tradition remains strong. The challenges to the Massarong tradition are not that great, showing the resilience of the Buku community. This tradition is the result of the acculturation of

Islam with local culture, starting from the accommodative method of Islamic preaching. Despite the upheaval, these tensions are part of the negotiations between the two.

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