

The Relationship between Local Wisdom and Islam regarding the Ka'ombo Ritual in Buton's Lambusango Forest

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ABSTRACT

Forms of local wisdom are very diverse, starting from certain ceremonies, certain crafts, and certain activities that are considered beneficial for human survival. Local wisdom is indeed aimed at maintaining the original characteristics of each region and is beneficial for the people in that region, but how does Islam assess local wisdom? The relationship between local wisdom and Islam is mutually sustainable towards environmental preservation by using Ka'ombo in the Lambusango Forest, Buton. This is a qualitative study that employed the phenomenological research approach, in which in-depth interviews and observations were used to obtain data. The result of the study shows that the Ka'ombo ritual is included in al 'Urf al-Khash, namely customs that apply in society and in certain areas, in this case a special tradition in the Buton Sultanate that the Buton people continue to preserve until today. As for its validity from a syara' perspective, the Ka'ombo ritual is included in al-'urf al-shahih, namely customs that apply in society that do not conflict with texts of the Quran or Hadith, does not eliminate its benefits and does not cause harm to those who practice Ka'ombo.

Keywords: Local wisdom, Religion, Ka'ombo, Lambusango Forest, Buton

Introduction

Community life always involves culture. In addition to relationships among individuals, society also refers to relationships with culture (Qorib, 2015). This relationship is inseparable as culture itself develops throughout people's lives. No society is lacking of its own culture (Lateni et al., 2020). The relationship between Islam and local culture is a reality and this has become a general trend. This is because prior to the introduction of Islam, various local traditions and beliefs functioning as an inseparable part of community life have been integrated into the social and cultural system of society (Turasih, 2022). Various traditions and cultures that exist in human society function to fulfill the instinctive desires of human needs. Arts, for example, functions to satisfy the human instinct for beauty, the knowledge system functions to satisfy the instinctive desire to understand, as well as other functions that humans need (Fathoni, 2006).

Ka'ombo is a ritual often carried out on the island of Buton. According to the people of Buton, ombo means a prohibition on appropriating or destroying an object or goods. They understand

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that marine resources in the Ombo area are prohibited from being appropriated or damaged (Risnawati et al., 2019). In general, ombo is a legal provision regarding the prohibition of encroaching, damaging or doing something in a certain area (land or sea) within a certain period of time. The community members in the kadie area are aware of the phases in implementing the ombo rules. The first phase is the ombo period, which is the initial period of closure or prohibition against utilization of certain marine resources (I. I. Silmi, 2020). Furthermore, following the first phase, an annual ritual is held, and during certain periods as required by the sultanate or the people, then through the traditional Utarangi ceremony ritual, the community along with traditional leaders secure or select natural resources suitable for utilization and make sure other sources grow to replenish the natural resources they have taken (Carpenter, 2014).

Ka'ombo is not just a traditional ritual, it also reflects the integration between local culture and Islamic teachings that have been embedded in the lives of the Buton people. The rituals performed in Ka'ombo are often accompanied by Islamic prayers, showing how these two elements influence and strengthen each other. Although Ka'ombo originates from local wisdom, the application of Islamic values in this ritual corroborates cultural adaptation to changing times without abandoning traditional roots.

Local wisdom has several main functions, namely as a bulwark to maintain existing culture in society, as a filter to sieve foreign cultural practices, which are most likely not in accordance with the developing values or norms in Indonesia, and as a means to maintain fraternal relations between generations (Asrina, 2019). This is supported by the Quran, An-Nisa verse 1:

“O humanity! Be mindful of your Lord Who created you from a single soul, and from it He created its mate, and through both He spread countless men and women. And be mindful of Allah—in Whose Name you appeal to one another—and honor family ties. Surely Allah is ever watchful over you.”

Muslims are obliged to assess everything based on predetermined guidelines, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah according to the understanding of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (Gomes, 2017). The local wisdom existing in each region will be a very in-depth study since it relates to the principles of aqidah, one of which is faith in Allah (*tawhid*).

Therefore, research on the relationship between local wisdom and Islam regarding the Ka'ombo ritual in Lambusango Forest is key to understand how the people of Buton preserve their traditions while maintaining their religious belief. In addition, this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the role that local wisdom and religion have in environmental conservation efforts and social relations of the local community.

Methods

We conducted this research by using qualitative methods with a phenomenological research approach. According to Creswell, qualitative research is conducted under natural conditions in which many behaviors and humanitarian events occur (Fathoni, 2006). We would like to emphasize that qualitative research analysis is done by describing the experience of a phenomenon experienced by individuals in everyday life. Such affirmation is in line with the phenomenological research approach, which has 3 principles, namely: (1) refers to reality; (2) understands the meaning of events and form of connection with the interactions of individuals within specific social situations; (3) researchers do not involve themselves in events. Phenomenology is an approach initiated by Edmund Husserl developed by Martin Heidegger to understand human experience.

Phenomenology is in line with Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann's ideas of social construction, which was the theory we used for analysis in this research. Berger and Luckmann's idea of social construction states that the reality of life is socially constructed, in which each

individual experience is inseparable from society. Social reality is built on three dialectical stages, which are (Husain, 2014):

1. Externalization, the stage in which society is seen as a human product. This stage is a process of both physical and mental human self-expression to strengthen the existence of the inner public self.
2. Objectivation, is the result of an externalization process in the form of objective reality of individual experiences in society. Society is seen as an objective reality as a process of intersubjective social world interaction experiencing institutionalization.
3. Internalization, is the stage of re-absorption of the objective world into individual subjective elements. Humans are seen as the product of society where the symptoms of external reality are also internal consciousness.

We conducted the research in Sangia Wambulu Village, Baruta District, Central Buton Regency. This research involved Sarano Wali traditional stakeholders and the Sangia Wambulu Village community. The informants in this research were Lakina Wali and Sarano traditional stakeholders, and the local village community. We collected research data through observations, interviews, and documentation. Research data consist of field notes, interview results, and documentation, which were validated by member checking, i.e., we conducted follow-up interviews of the informants to cross-check the research results.

The Local Wisdom Perspective of Ka'ombo

In the context of Butonese people's lives, the relationship between local wisdom and Islamic teachings is closely intertwined. Islam, which has been an inseparable part of Butonese people's identity for centuries, is not only accepted as a religion, but also adapted to the traditional values that already existed. Local wisdom such as Ka'ombo finds its synchronization with Islamic teachings in terms of preserving nature, mutual cooperation, and respect for the lives of other living things. Islamic values such as human responsibility as caliphs on earth in preserving the universe are in harmony with the values contained in Ka'ombo. Ka'ombo serves as a mechanism for wise natural resource management. The Lambusango forest, which is part of the Ka'ombo ritual, is considered sacred, so there are customary rules that prohibit cutting down trees or poaching in certain areas. This shows how local wisdom serves as an ethical guideline in preserving nature.

Ka'ombo is often found in the Lambusango Forest, especially close to local people's houses. Ka'ombo is believed to be a way to keep the surrounding area safe from people destroying or appropriating things in the area. Ka'ombo is usually placed on the side of trees. According to local community beliefs, if you were to take the Ka'ombo, you would be punished, without having the owner of the Ka'ombo legally punished because the Ka'ombo has supernatural powers. From the perspective of local wisdom, it is actually a traditional way of protecting the community's natural resources (Julien Rolland et al., 2019). Ka'ombo includes prayers done by local traditional elders, these prayers mean a form of ownership or control, but it is important to understand that Ka'ombo is a prohibition. This means that there is a prohibition on appropriating things that are not rightfully yours, and if it is violated, you will receive sanctions (Dini, 2021).

Ka'ombo is believed to have values that lead to the creation of harmonious relationships between human and nature. In the context of environmental protection, Ka'ombo plays an important role in preventing theft or damage caused by the activities of unknown individuals. Ka'ombo is implemented through Sarano's responsibility as an institution trusted by the local community. Through its leader called Lakina, Sarano maintains a role as a guide and guardian of the implementation of customary rules in the community's territory and locations, both around and outside the Ka'ombo area. There are 2 traditional roles identified in Sarano, namely: (1) Cunggono Pasi, the guard and site administrator who maintains sustainability in traditional areas; (2) Cunggono ngapa, the person in charge of guarding and prohibiting illegal appropriation

or destruction of the local area (Fatmawati, 2021).

The Ka'ombo mechanism consists of the opening and closing of existing locations. The closing of Ka'ombo sites is called toomboemo, while the opening of the Ka'ombo is called bukaano Ka'ombo. During the process, both toomboemo and bukaano Ka'ombo entail traditional rituals by preparing betel nut as an offering to those believed to be guardians of the sea. This is followed by prayers recited by traditional elders. A condition noticed on the field is that the coral reef ecosystem at the Ka'ombo location is recovering. Previously, many coral reefs were damaged due to frequent fish bombing, which in the Ka'ombo region tended to be higher, although not significant (Sumbulah et al., 2022).

In the regulatory context, the application of Ka'ombo, including sanctions, is regulated through the Sarano Wali customary institution. To maintain ecosystems on land and at sea, Sarano Wali regulation states that "we shall not destroy natural resources, both on land and at sea" and "we shall use natural resources fairly, both on land and at sea". Marine Ka'ombo was established with the aim of developing the marine area where Ka'ombo is applied to function as a "fish bank" and maintaining ecosystem balance so that the availability of captured fishes can be guaranteed. In 1950, Sarano agreed that the Ka'ombo area would include forest, mangrove, and coastal areas. This agreement lasted until 1960 and was outlined in the book *Kasawa Culadha Tapetape* based on oral traditions (culadha tapetape). This included rules regarding social sanctions for violators. Butonese people are aware of the concept of Ka'ombo or areas that cannot be cultivated (Rolland et al., 2019) since it has a protection function, safeguarding their plantations and villages. People who clear land in this area will be sanctioned and fined by the local community. Ka'ombo is an instrumental local wisdom because it includes normative elements. Ka'ombo is a prohibition on the appropriation of forest products within a certain period of time. The normative value of Ka'ombo outlines the legal provisions for community behavior in relation to efforts to manage and preserve biological environmental ecosystems. For the Butonese people, Ka'ombo is a set of binding and coercive values. Additionally, Ka'ombo is also defined as something that contains magical elements, hung on plants (Karimulla, 2020).

The aim of implementing Ka'ombo is to prevent irresponsible human actions. This is intended so that existing forest resources can be used in a timely manner and remain available to everyone. The prohibition outlined in Ka'ombo does not mean that it is absolutely prohibited. It cannot be exploited, it is only protected so that it is not damaged. The forest should not be destroyed, resources are appropriated based on interests, a consensus decision. The restricted area (Ka'ombo) is usually not allowed to be tampered with due to the presence of historical sites in the forest area. However, another function of the area is as a conservation area, protecting springs or sloping areas from landslides during the rainy season. The concept of forest management as described above basically already exists among Butonese society and has been passed down from one generation to the next. The Butonese people, through adaptation and interaction with the environment, have created values, mindset, forest institutional systems and laws that are in harmony with the conditions and availability of natural resources around them. In the regulatory context, the application of Ka'ombo, including its sanctions, is regulated through the Sarano Wali customary institution. To maintain ecosystems on land and at sea, Sarano Wali regulation states that "we shall not destroy natural resources, both on land and at sea" and "we shall use natural resources fairly, both on land and at sea". Marine Ka'ombo was established with the aim of developing the sea area where Ka'ombo is applicable to function as a "fish bank" and maintaining ecosystem balance so that the availability of captured fish can be guaranteed. In 1950, Sarano agreed that the Ka'ombo area would include forest, mangrove, and coastal areas. This agreement lasted until 1960 and was outlined in the book *Kasawa Culadha Tapetape* based on oral tradition (culadha tapetape). This includes rules regarding social sanctions for violators.

Butonese People's Knowledge about the Concept of Ka'ombo

Due to the function of Ka'ombo in protecting the people's plantations and villages. Those who clear land in the protected area will be sanctioned and fined by the local community. Ka'ombo is an instrumental local wisdom because it includes normative elements. Ka'ombo is a prohibition on the appropriation of forest products within a certain period of time. The normative value of Ka'ombo outlines the legal provisions for community behavior in relation to efforts to manage and preserve biological environmental ecosystems. For the Butonese people, Ka'ombo is a set of binding and coercive values. In addition, Ka'ombo is also defined as something that contains magical elements, hung on plants (Dirno, 2023).

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Ka'ombo is one of the cultural heritages in the (traditional) Buton community and has been carried out for generations by the Butonese people. These traditions generally contain teachings about the sustainable preservation and utilization of natural resources (forests, land, and water). Ka'ombo in general is an example of traditional wisdoms still implemented by local communities that helps to maintain natural resources so that it can provide sustainable livelihoods for local communities. Therefore, the local wisdom observed in the research location, which grows and develops in local communities, includes Ka'ombo. Butonese people adhere to certain customary rules for controlling or utilizing the land and natural resources in their village. The Ka'ombo customary rules not only regulate resources based on area, it also regulate resources based on their ecological, social, and economic functions (Fitanti, 2019).

The Butonese do not want members of the Buton society to individually manage agricultural land, they want it to be done collectively instead. First, a community meeting was held to determine which locations would be cultivated this year. After they hold deliberations and determined the location, otherwise known as *Patoroano Dalapa*, which is to determine the location for cultivation. After determining the location for cultivation, the *tambori* is carried out by the *parika*. This is usually called a *Pawang*, and the Parika is aware of that. So, the land was determined first through deliberation, there was deliberation on the land owned by Sara.

In addition to these rules, communities also have their own customary rules regarding land use by parties outside their community. They are generally open regarding the granting of land use, be it to the government, the private sector (companies), and other commoners. However, *parabela* (traditional leaders) will initially discuss the matter with all customary figures regarding the granting of such control over utilization of land. Regarding specific matters in the use of existing land, so does the community consider the pros and cons for their community, as well as the perceived use of the land does not conflict with their local wisdom (S. M. Harahap & Hamka, 2023).

Individual control of land is divided into land control for building houses, agricultural land, and plantation land. With regards to land for building a house, the people's right to utilization lies in the building of the house, not the land. They have the right to build a house within an unlimited period of time while still paying attention to existing customary rules. Meanwhile, when it comes to controlling agricultural land, the power of community members is very limited. All members of the community have the right to Ka'ombo. The community has the right to determine Ka'ombo. Community rights also include the use of land and prohibition of entry to land. Ka'ombo is personal, rights are attached to individual ownership. Meanwhile, for general Ka'ombo, people are required to obey customary rules regarding Ka'ombo and have the right to prohibit it.

Two types of cultivation systems are observed in the location of study, the first is the Ome garden, which is an individual land plot without any attachment, it is only conveyed to Sara that "we are cultivating here in my parents' garden" (we have Turakia). On the other hand, "the common land areas are decided by holding a community consultation to determine which location would be cultivated this year." There are three sanctions for violators of Ka'ombo rules, namely: light sanctions in the form of a warning; medium sanctions in the form of a strong warning; and heavy sanctions in the form of social punishment or fines. The sanctioning mechanism is preceded by a traditional ritual. This is done to provide information to the entire community that there has been a violation of the Ka'ombo rules. There are four serious sanctions relating to forest issues, but this customary sanction is not only a forest issue, only 3 of which have occurred. These sanctions are decisions based on customary law, including forest destruction. Firstly, those who violate the rules will be fined. The fine is called *rimbici*, *karimbici* which can be paid in kind; the fine is a public order and is in the public interest. The administration of sanctions is led by Sara Hukumu and Sara Adati. A fine system called *bhoka* is applied to impose sanctions on violators of Ka'ombo.

The Islamic Perspective of Ka'ombo

Ka'ombo is a tradition that has ensued for a long time and continues to be preserved by the community. Islam accepts customs as stipulated in the Islamic jurisprudence or *fiqh* (I. Ihwan, 2023): "the origin of customary law (social rituals) is that it doesn't matter as long as there is nothing prohibited by Allah in it."

Custom, which in *ushul fiqh* is called '*urf*', is a form of *mu'amalah* (relationship of interest) that has become customary and has been ongoing continuously (constantly) in society. The custom in question is a habit which entails an element of benefit and no harm, or the benefits outweigh the disadvantages, and customs substantially contain beneficial elements. '*Urf*' is divided into several aspects:

- a. In terms of object, '*urf*' is divided into '*urf qauliy*' (habits in the form of speech) and '*urf amaliy*' (habits in the form of actions);
- b. In terms of scope, '*urf*' is divided into '*urf 'âm*' (general) and '*urf typical*' (special). '*Urf 'âm*' (general) is a habit agreed upon by all throughout the country, e.g., bathing, dressing, and maintaining cleanliness. Whereas Typical (special) '*urf*' refers to customs agreed upon by people in some areas, certain groups or residents of a country, such as certain customary traditions.
- c. In terms of validity of good and bad assessments, '*urf*' is divided into '*urf sahih*' and '*urf fasid*'. '*Urf 'sahih*' is something that is known and does not conflict with shariah, it also does not justify anything haram and does not cancel what is obligatory. Meanwhile, '*urf fasid*' is something that is known, but it goes against shariah, or it makes what is haram haram, or cancels mandatory provisions.

Ulama who practice custom as a legal proposition established four conditions for its practice:

- a. The custom is of benefit.
- b. The custom applies generally and evenly among the people within certain environment.
- c. The custom has been in effect before the case in which the law was to be determined.
- d. The custom does not conflict with the text. The application of customs is also mentioned in the rules of *al-'adah muhakkamah* in terms of practically recognizing local culture and giving light and a religious touch to these traditions in cases where they conflict with Islamic teachings (Carpenter, 2014).

In a cultural ritual, there are values of cultural locality and universality of Islamic teachings which have synergized and been internalized in culture as evidence of Islam's concern for ancestral culture with cultural Islamization strategies, such as Ka'ombo, which has existed since pre-Islamic times, and then adopted Islamic teachings in carrying out the ritual (Fatmawati, 2021).

Based on the description above, it can be understood that local culture plays a very important role in the process of formulating Islamic law. Ka'ombo is a form of implementation of local culture, which previously had Hindu Buddhist nuances, then interpreted into Islamic law, which in this case is the custom of the Butonese people. The Ka'ombo ritual, in terms of its object, is included in *al-'urf al-'amali*, namely community habits relating to ordinary actions or *muamalah*. Whereas in terms of scope, the Ka'ombo ritual is included in *al 'urf al-khash*, namely customs which applies in society and in certain areas, in this case special traditions in the Sultanate of Buton, which subsequently continued to be preserved by the people of Buton to this day. As for its validity from a *syara'* perspective, the Ka'ombo ritual included in *al-'urf al-shahih*, i.e., the customs that apply in society, does not conflict with the texts (Quranic verses or hadith), does not eliminate the community's benefits, and does not bring harm unto them.

Conclusion

Ka'ombo has long been practiced by the people of Buton, prior to the arrival of Islam until today, but the paradigm has shifted and Ka'ombo is considered a manifestation of local wisdom that functions to maintain the balance of nature, strengthen social solidarity, and preserve local culture. This tradition also plays a role in maintaining the sustainability of the Lambusango Forest environment through conservative customary rules. Although this tradition has changed over time, the essence of Ka'ombo as a tool to maintain harmony between human, nature, and spirituality remains intact. Thus, Ka'ombo can be seen as an example of how local wisdom plays a role in nature conservation efforts and the preservation of cultural values, while also demonstrating the flexibility of local culture in accepting change without losing its identity.

The fusion of local traditions and Islamic teachings is seen in the practice of the Ka'ombo ritual, where prayers and spiritual values from Islam are combined without losing the original essence of this tradition. Although it has undergone adjustments over time, Ka'ombo remains an important symbol in the lives of the Butonese people, representing respect for nature and spirituality. Ka'ombo, from a local wisdom perspective, also plays a role in preserving the Lambusango Forest with customary rules that emphasize forest protection. Islam adds a religious dimension that enriches the meaning of this tradition, making it an important tool in environmental and cultural preservation. This relationship shows how local wisdom and religious teachings can unite harmoniously in overcoming environmental challenges and maintaining the cultural identity of the community.

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