

Eating in the Mosquito Net

Moslem Community Tradition In West Kalimantan

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Abstract: The heresy between religion and culture reinforces the continued existence of the traditions of society. The cultural diversity preserved by the community is a cultural treasure that needs to be taken care of and gained the attention of the government and the local community. This article observed "Eating in Mosquito net" that is one of the traditions preserved by Moslem communities domiciled in the village of Sungai Kupah Kubu Raya district West Kalimantan. This research employs qualitative research with anthropological approach to see the life of the Moslem people who preserve unique tradition of eating in the mosquito net. Using observation, interviews, and documents as the tools of data collection, the research has found that *eating in the mosquito net* is a form of local culture tradition that is accepted and preserved by the Moslem people as combines religious values with cultural values. Furthermore the people also claim that even though such ceremonial is not a part of theological conviction of Islam, performing it will not impurity their *aqida*.

1 INTRODUCTION

Every devout follower or adherent of a religion will bear witness to the truth of their own religious teachings. Such testimony is obviously natural and therefore a dogmatic attitude is inevitable, which sees the teaching of religion as absolute, valid for all time, unchanging and irreversible, and illustrates ideal values and rules, particularly when seen from revelation perception.

On the contrary, from another other point of view, the nature of diversity itself seems to be "human". This implies that internalization of the teaching is completely affected by a variety of factors, either the background of a person as an individual or as a member of the social unity somewhere. In this context, religion is no longer simply a sacred doctrine, but has been established in such a way that life institutions as well as belief conception (in the form of myths), have become socio-cultural phenomena in certain society. Therefore, there is no single religion capable of manifesting its followers in the same characteristics and patterns, though they essentially claim to be the followers of the same religion. This type of diversity has been mentioned by experts as "expression of the teaching", and while others view it as "culture".

Islam as a religion that thrives in Indonesia, is inseparable from these two views. The Islamic religion, which is believed to be universal, is in fact different in its local aspects. In this case, the belief is local in accordance with the conditions of society, history, environment, and culture. The fact is certainly understandable because Islam was not revealed to a society without culture; indeed it was introduced to a community that already had its own beliefs and traditions.

Sungai Kupah Village has approximately 3,174 people who are 95% Moslem, the rest are Christian and Confucian. The indigenous people of the region are ethnic Malay, mostly of Bugis descent. In fact, they have no direct connection with the ethnic Bugis on the island of Sulawesi. However, according to local residents, their ancestors originated from the "Bugis Land". It could be four or five generations before them who were the native people from the province in the eastern part of Indonesia. These people travelled to many islands and then settled to assimilate with local people as it happened in many coastal areas of West Kalimantan. Their "Bugisness" can be observed from their habit of using the Bugis language in everyday conversation in addition to the Malay language.

Moslem families in this area have a special tradition of ritual intended to honor their deceased ancestors. The tradition, believed to be “imperative” in its implementation by local residents, is known by the term “*makan dalam kelambu*” (eating in the mosquito net). The ritual ceremony is performed in the evening attended by all members of the core family and led by a religious leader or commonly called a shaman who acts as a prayer leader. In this ceremony, various forms of processed food consisting of sticky rice in various colours and side dishes are provided. After “saying praying” to the food, it is consumed by each member of the family and distributed to the relatives or neighbours.

The term “eating in the mosquito net” is because the ritual is performed in a mosquito net, a kind of tent made of thin cube shaped cloth with four corners tied with a rope and hung in four corners of the house. In addition, some people also call it “eating with shadows”, this is because the activity is carried out in the evening in a dimly lit place so that the shadow of each member of the family will be obvious. Based on the sources quoted from Sungai Kakap profile, it is known that the number of households in the village of Sungai Kupah is about 848 with 90% of them embracing Islam. The eating ritual inside the mosquito net is not performed by all Moslems in this Village. The data obtained from interviews with local community leaders estimated that approximately 350 households still routinely perform these rituals annually, and the implementation schedule is not always the same for every family. For them, there is a belief that should the ritual be abandoned, it would disrupt the peacefulness of the life of family members because they will be disturbed by the “spirits” of dead family members.

2 METHODOLOGI

This research is essentially qualitative research. The approach used in this study is the anthropological approach. To collect qualitative data, this study used the instruments of observation, interviews, and documents.

The data were collected through observations, interviews and documents. Reviews were made using the process of analysis of data found on the field and collected data. First, the analysis was carried out in the field at the start of data collection which consisted of 1) checking, 2) organizing, and 3) coding. Second, after the data were collected: 1) meaning, 2) interpretative, and 3) conclusion.

The family under study reported that they have performed this ritual of *Eating in the Mosquito Net* regularly once in two years since 1992. The head of the family (Nawawi) and his wife (Fatimah) reported that before 1992, they never carried out the ceremony. Nevertheless, in fact, their families had routinely performed it long before they got married. And now they have four children, two females and two males. Initially they never performed the ritual but at the time of the birth of their third child, an important and crucial event happened to his wife. It almost took the lives of his wife and child, which is believed as a sign of “work” that they have neglected so as to have bad consequences. And the work in question here is a ritual associated with the respect for the spirits of their ancestors. That is the ritual of honour which is carried out by “feeding” their shadows in the mosquito net. Therefore, since then as suggested by the elders, the family has revived the tradition of *Eating in the Mosquito Net* and made it a mandatory ritual that must be routinely implemented. They also believe that if the ritual is neglected, it will come disastrous for the family. So they always remind each other of not forgetting to implement it because the spirits of their ancestors also need to be given a part in the daily life of the descendants who are still alive.

3 COMPONENTS OF RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

Basically, religion can be defined as a set of rules and regulations that govern man's relationship with the unseen world, especially with God, regulating human relationship with other humans, and people with their environment.

In that definition, religion is seen as a doctrine manifested as a sacred text. The relation between religion and human beings, and in particular the activities of the followers of religion, is not covered in the above definition. Furthermore, social scientists, sociologists and anthropologists, whose main concern is culture and society, have tried to see and study religion according to a perspective which is consistent with the patterns of their own sociological or anthropological fields and approaches. The studies have been conducted in an effort to understand the meaning and the nature of religion in the life of humans as an individual or as a member of the community (Bonotti & Seglow 2017).

Among the efforts anthropologists have made to understand the nature of religion in human life, including Islam as a religion embraced by a society

that had a previous culture, a number of works have been published. The works, among others, serve to analyse the diverse religious life of Moslems which is completely affected by the local culture. For example, the work of Geertz (1963) on *abangan* religion, *santri* and *priyayi*. The study shed light the variations of Islamic beliefs in the life of Javanese society in accordance with the context of the environment and culture, rather than the study of Islamic theology. Similarly, Suparlan (1995) conducted research on the Javanese Islam in Suriname. In the study, it was revealed about the variations of the traditional Islamic beliefs (prayer facing westward) and modern groups (prayer facing eastward). The study shows the dynamics of Islam living in Suriname Javanese society and not about Islam in the holy texts of the Qur'an and Hadith.

The concept of religion is broken down into five components each having its own role, but as part of a system, it is closely related to each other. The five components are: (1) religious emotion (Rahman & Shah 2015); (2) belief system; (3) ritual and ceremonial system; (4) ritual and ceremonial properties; (5) religious people, as illustrated in the scheme below in figure 1.

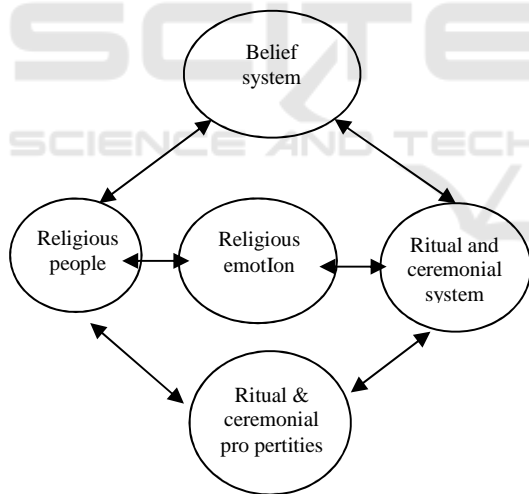


Figure 1: Components of Religious System.

Religious emotion that causes humans to have a religious attitude is a vibration that moves the human soul. Religious emotions can sometimes emerge as a mixed fear of believing in the unseen and sacred, without giving further explanation. This religious emotional component is the main component of religious symptom, which creates a religious system of all other socio-cultural systems in Indonesian society.

The belief system in religion is the mind and the idea of man about human belief and conception of God's attributes, about the existence of the supernatural (cosmology), about the occurrence of nature and the world (cosmogony), of the hereafter (eschatology), about existence and characteristics of the supernatural powers, the spirits of the ancestors, the natural spirits, the gods, the demons, the ghosts, and other unseen creatures (Mair 2013). In addition, the belief system is also concerned with the value system and the system of religious norms, moral teachings, and the teachings of other religious doctrines that govern human behavior.

All the components of the religion in their function are closely related to each other. However, the framework of these five components is only useful as an intellectual framework to facilitate the analysis of religious symptoms in the human society anthropologically.

4 PROCESS OF EATING IN THE MOSQUITO NET

Eating in the mosquito net is one of the ritual traditions routinely performed by some Moslems in Sungai Kupah Village. This activity can be classified as a ritual or religious ceremony which is usually performed in important moments such as marriage, child birth, after the Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha, or after carrying out rice harvest. In fact, sometimes there are people who also routinely organize it without following a certain moment.

They, the Moslem families who still preserve this cultural tradition, are Bugis descendants (Baharuddin & Ismail 2015). Even though they are not directly related to the Bugis people on the island of Sulawesi, they are "refer to themselves" as Bugis (*To Ugie*) and speak the language of the region fluently. Even their elders do not speak Indonesian fluently but they can communicate in the Bugis language flawlessly.

This ritual is not performed in the same period. Some perform it every year; others once in two years. Some carry it out when there is a big celebration in the family such as weddings, etc. Thus there is no standard provision regarding the period of its implementation or the most appropriate time to implement it. It depends on the habits of each family and sometimes depends also on their readiness in terms of time and funding.

There have been no accurate data on when the ceremony of *eating in the mosquito net* was first carried out. However, it can be concluded that this ritual is not only performed in Sungai Kupah Village

but also implemented in many areas in West Kalimantan, especially Kubu Raya and Pontianak districts, such as Teluk Pakedai, Wajo, Jungkat, Sungai Kakap, and Sungai Ambawang. This is based on the information from residents of Sungai Kupah who reported that their relatives living in the region also still carry out this tradition. In fact, this tradition has been passed down from one generation to the next.

5 THE PROPERTIES

The process of performing the ritual of *Eating in Mosquito net*, as well as other rituals still use a variety of properties. Based on the results of observations during the implementation of ritual in the house of one of the residents, the properties used can be divided into two categories, namely in the form of food and non-food offering as follows:

- Glutinous rice of four colors. It is a food made from glutinous rice or commonly called “*pulut or sokko*” in the local language. Made in four colors namely white, black, yellow, and pink. The black is made from black sticky rice, the white from white sticky rice, while the yellow and pink come from the white sticky rice added with food coloring. The dish is placed in a container of a rather large plate and arranged next to each other. So it looks like a round flower with four different colors. In the middle of the dish is a boiled chicken egg that has been peeled.
 - Local Chicken. Made in the form of a dish of *gulai* or grilled chicken, which must be male chicken not female, and not other species such as egg-laying chicken. There is also a requirement of this chicken dish should be in the form of roasted whole chicken complete with its internal organs dressed like *sate*.
 - *Berangan* Banana. It is not allowed from other species, and should be a comb, no matter the quality or quantity as long as it is a comb of banana.
 - *Leppe-leppe*. This dish is made from glutinous rice wrapped in long-shaped coconut leaves.
 - *Ketupat*. A rectangular dish made of rice and wrapped in coconut leaves.
 - *Tumpe-tumpe*. It is a kind of side dish made from a mixture of shrimp and flour. It could also be called shrimp nugget, fried and served with the *bale*.
 - *Bale*. It is a Bugis language for fish, a side dish served as a complement and preferably in the form of marine fish cooked by frying.
 - *Beras Duduk*. It is a term for an amount of rice inserted in a medium-sized basin then placed on top of it or placed alongside a comb of *nipah* banana and an old coconut that has been removed from its outer shell but still has its coir.
 - *Padi duduk*. It is the same dish as *beras duduk*, but the rice is replaced with *padi* (rice grain).
 - Yellow Rice. Made from yellow-colored rice, can be derived from turmeric or from artificial coloring.
 - *Breteh*. This property is made from glutinous rice dry-fried so that it breaks like popcorn.
 - Rectangular mosquito net. It is a tent-like property made of white or light-colored fabrics, hung using a rope hooked in the four quarters of the room, as a place to hold a ritual.
 - Umbrella, used to temporarily cover the dish in the center of the mosquito net before the ritual begins.
 - *Tae Bani* Candle. It is a candle-like lighting tool made of a honeycomb.
 - *Parang Andre Becing*. It is one of the prerequisite properties that must exist; this tool resembles a knife but in smaller size and not sharp.
 - *Sok lari* or *Won Kai*. It is woven thread of three colors: red, green, and yellow; made for specific purposes and woven like a hair braid.
 - Bamboo; Small bamboo with a diameter of approximately 5 cm and 30 cm long.
 - *Fappesse Felleng*: a mixture of keminting or kemori herb with coconut oil.
 - *Minyak bau*, a kind of perfume with the smell of a typical scent purchased at the Arabian store.
 - *Sirih pinang* (betel and nut): a set of equipment to chew betel leaf, gambier, lime, and areca nut.
- All of the properties and objects used as mentioned above are required to be provided prior to the ceremony. The core family members must perform the ritual, both parents and all the children. Completeness of properties in this ceremony is arranged and managed by the handler or leader of the ritual, but the procurement of raw materials is done by the host itself. The preparation for all of this ceremony can take up to three days, depending on the quantity and quality.
- The materials described in points 1-7, are food ingredients to be consumed. While the materials in points 8-12 are food not to be consumed. The materials in points 13-20 are ritual properties in the form of objects that must be provided. Thus it can be a family inventory and can be borrowed from relatives if not already owned. The costs required to prepare all kinds of properties and materials vary from family to family. The size depends on the

quality and quantity of materials used. While the leader or handler who is an elder trusted to lead the ceremony usually comes from their own relatives so it is not necessary to pay for his service. The leader may be a person who is not a close relative and will be rewarded, not with money but with some food, usually put on a tray filled with various types of food that is not much different from the dish in the ceremony.

6 DISCUSSION

Among academics and social activists in particular, religion is seen not only as a set of teachings (values), dogma or something normative, but it is also seen as a case study, an interesting case study of how religion is seen as an object of study for investigation. In a cultural perspective (Goplen & Plant 2015), is seen as how the Divine becomes historic in the practice of exegesis and social action. Thus, religion is not something untouchable, but it can be observed and analysed because it can be seen and felt. In religious society such as Indonesia which places religion as part of an Indonesian identity, there are certainly many interesting religious issues to reveal. We will never know the religious secrets of society until we conduct research, and this is inseparable from research on the behaviour of religious followers.

Human beings are historic creatures, historical actors, wisdom-makers of historical values, and not infrequently victims of history. Various teachings of Religion in different qualities have emerged in the community. According to the historical statement, religion always serves as an absolute statement for life, both as a motivation and the formation of human character or morals that cannot be rejected by anyone. In fact, scientists are often very interested in conducting research, especially in social, religious and cultural fields.

Religious study is an academic study of religion as a social reality in the form of texts, sociological institutions or social behaviour that is born or as the embodiment of sacred belief. In other words, religious research is an academic study of doctrine and diversity.

Reflections of the "religious" attitude in each community sometimes cannot be separated from the history of civilization and local culture. One example is the procession of *eating in the mosquito net* which has long been carried out by some Moslem communities in the village of Sungai Kupah in Sungai Kakap Subdistrict of Kubu Raya Regency. Although there is no basis for the implementation of the ritual,

they remain convinced that it can be done and not against theological beliefs. It has even become "mandatory" as a routine ritual to be performed.

Judging from the process and the purpose of its implementation, the ritual is much related to the culture of paganism that is usually done in the former religion of Hinduism and Buddhism. The primitive religion of Paganism is a behavior of people who do not use reason and are more dominant in irrational beliefs. (Arifin, 1998;11).

This is seen in the process of implementation of the ritual that uses a variety of offerings, both in the form of foods and special objects. In addition, the procedure also still requires the fulfilment of various requirements that are still mythical. In reality it is difficult to rationalize various activities related to beliefs. The fact that they are also Moslems who believe in *aqida* (creed in Islam) also observe the teachings of Islam.

The process of implementing this ritual uses a lot of different materials and properties, both in the form of food and other tools. This indicates that this ritual is certainly closely related to the tradition of offerings commonly found in pagan religions, as well as the traditional beliefs of Indonesians before the introduction of Islam such as animism or dynamism. This can be seen in the research findings. The root of the culture of the local community might have encouraged the ritual to be performed, not the theological conviction because rituals in Islam do not recognize such intermediaries. However, the principals act on behalf of it as part of the prayer to the Creator to ask for salvation and avoid calamities. This can be seen in the collaboration which is conducted with the recitation of prayers and rejection of calamity that always accompany the ritual.

This religious ritual basically evolves according to the environment or tradition that results from the process of human creativity. Rituals (religious ceremonies) are not based on the rules of worship but on the *Muamalah* (relationship in Islamic life) domain, so as to avoid polytheism. The essence of the ritual is nothing but to know God or the Creator; yet God does not resemble any form, cannot be sensed by the human senses, cannot be represented in human, but God is close and far away and is over everything and cannot be described with anything.

Rituals are not a primitive behaviour that is considered incompatible with the development and rationality of religion, because religion cannot always be rationalized. Every believer has the right to express his ritual forms (religious ceremonies) that cultivate his closeness to God Almighty. Apparently, this is the reason why a group of Moslems in Sungai Kupah

Village still preserves the meal ceremony in the mosquito net, although they also believe that mandatory worship such as prayer is also a means to get closer to Allah. It is evident from their opinion that there are many ways to convey a desire to the Creator and this ritual also comes with the same purpose. Thus, it can be said that the construction produced in the form of ritual of *eating in the mosquito net* is the result of the uniqueness and satisfaction of what has been done, be it the ancestral heritage or the adoption of local culture, and even it is believed to provide peace of life for those who perform it.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of this study either in the form of field findings and analysis, it can be concluded as follows:

The ritual of *eating in the mosquito net* is still preserved by some of the Moslems in Sungai Kupah Village in Kubu Raya Regency. This ritual is related to the respect for the spirits of their ancestors. They believe that the spirits still need a “meal,” and are represented by a procession in a mosquito net where the shadow of each person is clearly visible, and when they eat, the shadow is also eating.

In the context of cultural science it could be assumed that the ritual of *eating in the mosquito net* is merely a tradition that continues to be preserved by a particular community, and should not be classified as a religious ritual. This is certainly acceptable because as followers of Islam, they still carry out the required religious rituals such as prayer, fasting, and other Islamic pillars. From their perspective, the tradition of *eating in the mosquito net* is merely to preserve the ancestral culture and not to add to the number of required rituals.

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