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Compromising Religious and Cultural Moralities Within Munanese Katoba

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Abstract

The abundant research on the dialectical process between religion and tradition focus in Javanese (Geertz (1950); Woodward (1999); Hefner (1990); Beatty (1999), Bugis-Makassarnese (Matulada, (1976); Pelras, (1993); Robinson (1998), or Sumatranese (Bowen, (1993); (Sager, 2008). However, studies that really deal with Munanese tradition in SE Sulawesi are limited. This is suprisingly due to the fact that the interplay of the process of religion and local tradition are typical element of Indonesia Islam, not only in Java, Sumatra and Makassar, but also beyond that spreading pocket of Islam. However, the interplaying process of religion and local tradition are typical element of Indonesian Islam. In this paper, I explore the ritual of *katoba* as the coming of age ritual among Munanese people that involves the process of Islamizing the children. In doing so, this study explore the way Munanese accommodate Islamic teachings within the domain of local tradition, especially understand how local community of Muna construct moralities in one tradition, which is called *katoba*. The construction of morality forming cultural moralities and religious moralities are compatible each other and mutually support and strengthen the character education of children. Based on the idea of ritual as a rite de passage, I would argue that *katoba* serves compromising religion and tradition, as well as a morality education which contains theological, social, and ecological moralities as wells.

Keywords: “rite de passage”; “religion and local tradition”; “Indonesian Islam”; “religious morality”; “cultural morality”

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1. Introduction

The practices of Islam in Indonesia could not be separated from local culture, because Islam in different area was not born in the zero cultural influences. This is what makes Islam spread across the archipelago with the unique and distinctive one compared to Islam in other parts of Muslim world, even quite far from Arab. Indonesian Islam has been built the configuration of Islam Java, Islam Aceh, Islam Sasak, Islam Minang, Islam Sunda, and many more. Plurality and heterogeneity of Indonesian society that shape a wide variety of ethnic groups, religions, cultures (Dayak, Bugis, Javanese, Sasak, Madura, Minang, Banjar, Bali, and others) has given the local variant of Indonesian Islam. Those variants are not cut off from the roots of Islam, but has been acculturated with local traditions.

Studies on Islam in Java much confirm this phenomenon, such as Jay (1969); Nakamura (1980); Koentjaraningrat (1985). Those studies emphasize that there are not such absolute differences between devout Muslims (*santri*), syncretism Muslim (*priyayi*), and nominal Muslims (*abangan*) as Geertz's thesis (1976). Java religion was described by Geertz in the typology of *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi* has been corrected a lot. Among Osing community in Bayu, Beatty (1999) found that the difference between tradition and religion in Java community so blurred; there is no specific differentiation between *santri* and non-*santri*; even once the nominal Muslims do worship, their commitment to Islam is definitely unquestioned (Pranowo, 2009).

Some researches above confirmed that acculturation happen in many cultures between tradition as root of culture and Islam which came earlier. However this studies not only underlines the the process of compromise between tradition and religion, but also understand how local community of Muna construct morality in one tradition, which is called *katoba*. The construction of morality forming cultural moralities and religious moralities are compatible each other and mutually support and strengthen the character education of children.

Base on that framework, this paper aims to capture local Islam in the community which can be seen in the way local people understand and interpret Islam in their life, by focuses on one initiation rites among Munanese society of Southeast Sulawesi was called *katoba* ritual, especially on formation of cultural and religious moralities are mutually support and strengthen the character education of children. *Katoba* is the initiation ritual performed on boys and girls around the age of 7-14 years which is called the ceremony of being Muslim (*upacara pengislaman*). This is a dominant ritual in Munanese society and become a public ritual. As a public ritual, it done individually or collectively involve not only the nuclear family and extended family, but also society as a whole.

Looking at the morality of Indonesian young generation to day is decrease although many effort has been done to maintain the morality of young people either in formal, informal, and nonformal institution. It is time to have an alternative model of education that not only increase the cognitive abilities of children, but also train the emotional sensitivity and cultivate good habits that will produce Indonesian people who has knowledge as well as an awareness and appreciation of good values. One alternative could be offered is a model of character education that is rooted in national values that could be found in the local culture, such as in ritual.

The use of cultural values in *katoba* ritual as a model of building morality becomes important that imply in a whole series of *katoba* process; in performance, in the advisory given orally, even after *katoba*. Morality values is not only the relationship to God vertically (theological), but also horizontally (social), even upon the environment (ecological). By using interpretive perspective, I would argue that *katoba* ia not a simply as the local tradition, but built the framework of compromising religious and cultural moralities as wells, that contains the theological, social, and ecological moralities at once. It could build cognitive, emotional-affective, and through habituation and a good deeds (psychomotor).

2. Research Methods

This paper is qualitative method by using interpretive perspective to analyze how Munanese people regard themselves as Munanese and Muslim as wells. Through in-depth interview and live in daily life with Munanese, this study try to look at how Munanese try to negotiate the cultural and religious identity in some time to educate children about the morality without separate each others.

3. Findings

The ritual indicates some actions repeated continuously and gradually, characterized traditionally, describes the action that symbolizes important values within society. Therefore, a ritual in some ways is communication, at least in terms of the transformation of values through generations. Communication embodied in ritual consists of symbols and certain meaning. Symbol is the smallest unit of ritual which contains so much information and can be tangible: a specific object, activities, words, relationships, certain events, gestures (Turner, 1967). Ritual consists of



narration and action (Tremmel, 1976), while Koentjaraningrat (1972) explain that ritual component consists of tools of ritual, place and time of ritual, as well as leaders and participants of ritual.

Ritual could be a way to emphasize something important in society which is called the morality values. Morality values actually could be found in accordance with the nation values and one of them through ritual. Alwasilah (2009: 50) mentions that there are number of traditional educational practices (ethno-didactic) that proven instill the good values for building morality values. In society, there are exemplary values, the transformation of values and morality within family and society could be guidelines of life. Exemplary values and moralities as affirmed by Gluckman&Crocker (in Wagner, 1984) gives a clear message positively. Building morality base on cultural values is considered quite relevant and useful compare to the education initially with a structural approach allegedly had experienced many failures. With cultural values-base, building morality is expected could improve the quality of education by balancing all aspects; not only knowledge, but also emotional and practice of values in everyday life. With cultural values-based, children are introduced to the cultural values prevailing at that time.

Katoba must be undergone by every child both boys and girls in Muna. This obligation said to be closely alongside their names are preceded by *la* for boys and *wa* for girls. The addition of the word *la* and *wa* is an abbreviation of the creed *syahadah* in Islamic tradition: *Asyhadu an(la) ilaaha illallahu, (wa) asyhadu anna Muhammadarrasulullah*. These obligations go hand in hand with the duty of parents to hold *katoba* for their children as part of a way to purify them (*ali kita*). Along with every child undergo *katoba* and the duty of parents to hold it, then *katoba* also always linked to the morality values of children in their lives. Once people deed bad behavior is always said "they didn't follow the advice in *katoba*" or "they didn't undergo *katoba*".

As a dominant ritual, *katoba* could be used as a media not only for cultural and religious marker as a muslim but also for transferring the morality values. In addition, the position of *katoba* is a public ceremony that involves a lot of people make *katoba* as a strategic role in providing the cultural values for children. Building morality values base on the *katoba* ritual will construct a solid morality of children that built slowly. In a ceremony, each individual is placed in the moral categories (Swantz, 1970). Thus, each individual has the responsibility to maintain the good morals. Once the morality of individuals begins to build, will increase a family morality and ultimately affirm the society. Mulder (1999) argue that a social order is largely determined by the morality of the people who play a role in it. Morality is awakened from the small level (the members of family) will be more solid slowly. In addition, Dhavamony (1995: 183) assert that a tradition can renew the functions and life in society.

In the procession of *katoba*, the main practice is verbal symbol which is contains the pledge repentance and *syahadat* as an entry point to becoming Muslim. Repentance requires certain conditions in order to accepted by God. There are stages must be passed before the children pledged *Toba* (repentance). Before saying *istighfar* and *syahadat*, the Imam beforehand informs and teaches the child about the way to repent. These admonitions are very important and could be a sacred teaching in the process of a child's everyday life. The way of repentance is four; three things related to human beings and one related to God. Three things related to human beings are; (a) Regretting the bad deed (*dososo*). This regret covers three cases, the bad deeds arise from the intentions of the heart (*dukuno lalonto modaihano*), bad deeds arise from the words (*pogau modaihano*), and bad deeds arise from the actions (*feelino podiu modaihano*); (b) Avoiding matter could plunge someone to the same or other mistakes (*dofekakodoho*), which arise from the heart, words and deeds, and stay away from things that are related to human rights (*hakkunaasi*); (c) Eliminating the tendency to make mistakes (*dofomiina*), related to the heart, due to the words, as well as deeds. One thing relates to God is Allah's decision and provisions (*botuki*). The decision to be forgiven is the right and authority of God and only seek forgiveness from Allah is the right of human beings.

After children are taught about the way of repentance (*isaratino toba*), imam leads child to pledge forgiveness and creed of *syahadah*. First of all, imam leads child to read *surah* Al Fatihah and furthermore lead to pledge *istighfar*. *Istighfar* used to pronounce in the form of long *istighfar*, but in other practice it was pronounced in short *istighfar* with three times. After pledge *istighfar*, children lead to the praising *syahadat*. Communication between imam and child along with tied a white cloth around each finger. White cloth which bonding finger symbolizes a strong commitment to hold engagement and responsibility both for Imam and child. The next stage in the procession of *katoba* is admonition consist of three main points, namely the teaching of obedient to parents (*lansaringino*), purification (*kaalano oe*), and keeping the balance relationship between human beings, God and nature.

Katoba tradition celebrated at the age of 7-14 years, an age of puberty. Puberty in Muna society is biological as well as social. Muna puberty rite also becomes a maturity initiation. Puberty is characterized by the body's biological rhythm comes along with the social puberty. This social puberty celebrated culturally has the consequences for the new status as a Muslim. In this context, *katoba* indicates the biological puberty as well as social puberty (Zainal, 2015). *Katoba* not only heralded the onset of the child's puberty, but also the change of status as a Muslim. La Fontaine (1985: 14) in study of initiation rituals of many cultures confirms that despite the initiation ritual could be performed at the age of puberty, but the ritual is more focused on social change rather than natural change. *Katoba* implemented in children puberty, it was not implemented at an earlier age. *Katoba*



conducted at puberty also indicate that the status of Muslim needs to be confirmed at a mature age which is considered as a mark of maturity.

4. Discussion

4.1 Social, Ecological, and Theological Morality

The procession of *katoba* consists of three main points: first, the process of repentance (*dotoba*); second, repentance and pledge of Islamizing; and the third is *katoba*'s advice which consists of three main advices, obedience to parents (*lansaringino*, process for purification (*kaalano oe*), and the balancing relationship of three subjects (human, God, and nature).

Advice is given by Imam to the children as guidance to repent (*isaratino toba*) relating to three cases, the man's relationship with God, man's relationship with nature, and man's relationship with human beings. Through this teaching, *katoba* want to build the moralities messages in balancing relationship with other human beings and relation to nature horizontally and also a vertical relationship with God. This moral message constructs a balancing relationship between social (*hablumminannaas*) and theological (*hablumminallah*).

4.1.1 Relation to Humans

Human relations are one morality teachings in Muanese society and become important advice in *katoba*. Muanese society has a certain concept to explain the morality, namely *hakkunnaasi*. *Hakkunnaasi* are human rights or rights that others should not be violated. Violates or depriving others either trivial or severe considered taboo in society.

In teaching *hakkunnaasi*, there are imams who give advice in direct advice and some using metaphors. In using metaphor, the advice consists on teaching of human relationships in general as well as teach the social relations between men and women. For many cultures, the issue of relationship between two sexes is something important in initiation rituals. The relationship between men and women set in the rituals and associated with sexuality and culturally introduced first in puberty rite or ritual initiation (Cory, 1948; Beidelman, 1997; Shaw, 1982). Initiation rites in some societies regulate sexuality while emphasizing gender differences between men and women. Gender and sexuality are two things that are interconnected and inseparable. With the ritual, people build the morality character among society members indirectly. The construction of character and morality is obtained through adulthood rituals. It is a cultural education, as well as affirmation of social differences (gender) identity through differentiation people whether men and women (Beidelman, 1997).

In *katoba*, the advice given by imam to the boys will be different to the girls. In many *katoba* practices, the imam clearly uses a different sentence metaphorically to explain the two sexes. Some *katoba*' advice to the boys are prohibition to overstep or mound sweet potatoes, papaya, grapefruit or mango belongs to someone else and local language said that "*Koe mefindahi kokarawuna ghofano atawa gholeno labuno, kobhakeno palolano atawa kobhakeno methawa*". It means "You must not step on sweet potato, pumpkin, eggplant or sweet potato of others". While the girls are advised to not picking eggplant belong to someone else, such a sentence is often given in the form of "*koe meuta kobakeno palolano*" means "Do not pick others eggplants". The symbols mentioned in the imam's advice refers to the symbols of maleness and femaleness. Sweet potatoes, papayas, grapefruits or mangos are symbol of women femininity and eggplant is a symbol of male masculinity.

Another *katoba*'s advice thought by imam in other versions. The imams gave the advice of *katoba* for girls is prohibition to hand over the papaya plant, oranges or mangoes are being guarded as follows "*Kadekiho dua waane oomu nimesalono aitu, bhae kadekiho dua alae oomu gholino sonigholino*". It means "Do not always leave it to who ask and do not always take the money purchase". Men who want to buy should inquire in advance and request permission to their parents (*Ane Ompu-mpu omegoli mefeenaghao deki nae amaku bhanai inaku. Nahumundagho kaawu amaku bhae ianaku it naembalimo it omegholi*) means "If you intend to buy, you should ask first to my parents. If they agree, then you may buy it". Buying (*omegholi*) in that advice means propose.

Stepping over or tread (*mefindahi*) is a symbol of misbehavior to women without propose process or interfere with women who already belong to someone else. Picking up (*meuta*) is a symbol of tampering partner or husband of certain women. The metaphor mentioned in *katoba* refers to the symbols of the relationship between men and women. This teaching shows the codes of morality and social ethics are universal and very high values. With the metaphor, someone prohibited to intrusive someone else's couples or married and vice versa interfere with husband's someone else.

Hakkunnaasi understood in various meaning in Muna society. Everyone has their own interpretation to explain this concept. However, the various meanings have remained underline one thing that it become a code of morality which is taboo to be broken. Violation of this morality will cause damage even misfortune. One traditional



leader, KM explained that *hakkunaasi* as advised by imam in *katoba* refers to two meanings. First, human rights and the second meaning is a right that will make damned if breached (*naasi* in local language means harm).

The first meaning of *hakkunnaasi* is deeds relating to the deprivation of human rights. One traditional leader of Muna, SI explained that "Every human being has the right respectively. If the island has a population of 300 thousand people, there are 300 rights in the Muna island." He said that "freedom will die when they hit each other freedoms". Thus, the right person as a human being is not absolute rights if such rights have been colliding to the other's rights. If these rights are in conflict, then society will chaos. So the meaning of *hakkunnaasi* in his understanding is the death of right when it crashed into the other's rights.

The second meaning of *hakkunaasi* indicates that the violation of human rights in the Muna society would cause a misfortune. According to one traditional leader, KB, the fall of a person into bankrupt and contempt or suddenly stricken with a chronic or on the accident is believed to be due to violation of *hakkunaasi*.

Hakkunaasi becomes central morality in maintaining the order of life. Every relationship between each other, interactions, and everyday behavior is always associated with this concept. The teaching of *hakkunaasi* is a keyword in explaining and affirming the importance of maintaining the attitude and behavior of human beings. For many traditional leaders in Muna, when the teaching of *hakkunnaasi* well understood by everyone, then society will be peaceful. SI explained that by living the meaning of *hakkunaasi* we do not need for polices, judges, or prosecutors, because each person aware his right not to clash with the other's rights. With the understanding and appreciation of this, many elderly man in Muna very guarding the behavior carefully to not offend others, keeping the offense eyesight and hearing, speech and actions offense as taught in *katoba*. Heart offense even though little bit they think will lead disaster, calamity, and misfortune.

4.1.2 Relation to God

Human beings as servants must always maintain the attitude and behavior, because they are tending to do mistakes and sins. Therefore, if human beings do mistake and sin he was required to repent. The repentance is an important part of servitude to Allah. Explaining this condition, imam of Wuna's mosque explained that as a servant of God, human being must always prohibit the bad intentions in the heart (*bhahi sonohala niatino dukuno lalo*), the impolite words (*bhahi sonohala bhoasao*), and the ugly deeds (*bhahi sonohala feelino podiu*). The heart, words and deeds mistaken are three key words as the sources of human mistaken. In *katoba*, God has the absolute right and power to decide to accept or reject the forgiveness (repentance) of human beings.

In such advice, Imam said that after child declare the repentance as taught to him, then the decision whether it accepted or not was submitted to God. Allah has the sole power and right in human being's life, including whether He accepts repentance of His servants or not. This concept is called *botuki* or right/power to decide. Allah has power over His creation. If humans make mistakes and sins, he is required to always repent. Humans have an obligation to seek forgiveness for the mistakes and sins of his accomplishments. Only Allah who has the absolute right to grant a pardon or not.

God becomes the sole authority to decide something. So, if humans make mistakes and sins to one another or mistreatment to the nature in which he lives, he should apologize. After that he was required to repent and seek forgiveness to Allah. Mistakes and sins do in relationship among human being, he must be apologizing to the people who hurt, then handed and ask forgiveness to Allah, as well as the mistreatment to nature. Above all communications and interactions made by man, God becomes the main goal and the end of all life decisions.

4.1.3 Relation to Nature

How importance to respect to nature, so it needs to be taught in *katoba*. The advice of imam in respectfully the natural environment is related to relationship between men and women in metaphorical words. A symbol may refer to other meanings, but it is also could be as it so. The symbols in the ritual may contain denotative and connotative in once (Swantz, 1970: 68). When Imam said that "If you walk in the middle of the garden, do not step over the sweet potatoes of someone else". Another advice given to girls: "If you walk in the garden, do not picking up the eggplant belongs to someone else". Advices given by imam has two meanings; the explicit meaning (denotative) and implicit meaning (connotative). These meaning of advices may be indeed a metaphor that refers to another meaning (connotative), but people also believes that the sentences not only has the symbolic meaning but also the meaning as it was (denotative).

Explicitly, advice taught by imam provide the lesson not to treat the plants arbitrarily. Imam taught that if stepped on someone else's garden should not be stepped on and must get rid of the first plants that block. If willing to pick up, let ask permission first to the owner and if someone want to pick it up, do it in a good way, not snatched away. If treating plants by stepping or picking arbitrarily, then the plants will be damaged and offend the owner of the plants.



The Imam of Wuna's mosque provide an explanation of how all the elements of nature in the world should be treated well. He describes it as follows:

“... Wood if not used, is not allowed to cut haphazardly. Rope, if not used is not allowed to disconnect. Stone, if not used is not allowed to be thrown. Ground when not in use is not allowed to be dug haphazardly. Water when not in use is not allowed to stream at random, fire if not used shall not carelessly ignited ... (Handwriting of imam Wuna about procession of *katoba*).

The elements mentioned above are the nature's elements that close to human life; wood, rope, stone, earth, water, fire. These elements are also believed are elements in the creation of man, therefore it could help the life of humans. The elderly men in Muna especially in past time is very close and respectful to the nature where they live. This is confirmed by imam who said that the teacher of human beings is the universe. That is why the elderly people in Muna is very close and able to read the signs of nature, even they are highly dependent and helped by natural signs that gave them. Teaching to appreciate and respect the natural surroundings shows that the morality lesson is very noble. Teachings asserted in *katoba* for imams and traditional leaders are lesson to treat the natural surroundings in a good way. This teaching highlights the eco-social values in Muna society.

Relationship among human beings, with God, and with surrounding nature shows the importance of maintaining balance in life. Humans need to maintain relations with fellow human beings, because he is prone to make mistakes. To the surrounding nature, human respect and appreciate as a way to appreciate all the creatures of God. Humans also have to keep their behavior in order not to violate the prohibition of God. Furthermore, he surrendered and repented to Allah as the absolute owner of the rights of humanity and the rights owner for granted and not granted human's repentance. This is the teaching of balancing between social-humanity values, ecological values, and theological values. If translate in religious understanding, then the balance is achieved in two ways at the same time, a balance between the relationship to God through vertical relation (*habluminallah*) and horizontal relation to human beings and nature (*habluminanaas*).

This concept asserts the importance of balancing between theological and social relations in human life. Maintaining a good relationship with God, even if carried out in whole day and night, it would make no sense if people at the same time also hurt other human beings. God has an absolute right to accept people's repentance, but submission to God made after requested apology from people who hurted. Theological faith in Muna society will be achieved after gain the social faith. This believe shows that people in Muna assert the balancing relationship between communication with humans, with nature and with God, a balance in social and the theological relations as wells.

5. Conclusion

Ritual is not something meaningless. *Katoba* is very important to be present continually because of its function as an axis or pivot for the status of Muslims is something could be simply disappeared, let alone replaced. If the ritual no longer exists, people not only lose one mechanism to invest the social morality and theological values, but also loss of their social identity as Munanese Muslim. If morality is missing, then the meaning of *katoba* will necessarily be lost.

Ritual build social-theological morality through the sacred narratives. In this context, the message of morality constructed as a process that mutually strengthen each other, that is through knowledge that is taught in the narrative process. *Katoba* is an initial foundation on building social and theological morality, both in relation to God, to nature, and to fellow human beings.

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