

Environmental Conservation of Muslim Minorities in Raja Ampat: Sasi, Mosque and Customs

Ismail Suardi Wekke,¹ Bobby Samra², Nurlaela Abbas³, & Nurlaila Harun⁴

¹Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri (STAIN) Sorong, West Papua, Indonesia
E-mail: iswekke@gmail.com

²Department of Architecture, Universitas Lancang Kuning, Pekanbaru.Riau, Indonesia
E-mail: boby@unilak.ac.id

³Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin, Makassar, Indonesia
E-mail: nurlaelahabbas@gmail.com

⁴Faculty of Law, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia
E-mail: laila.harun@iain-manado.ac.id

Abstract: The form of symbolic understanding of religion and the rules reflected in symbols for their own circles. Three terms used in this research are sasi, custom, and conservation. Sasi is a practice of adaptation to the nature that is run as part of interaction between Raja Ampat society and their environment. This qualitative research using in-depth interviews and non-participant observations were employed to assist the data collection. Interviews were conducted on a series of subjects consisting of Muslim community leaders, mosque imams, mosque administrators, village heads, members of political parties, and district governments in Raja Ampat Regency, West Papua Indonesia. Meanwhile, the observations were carried out in several opening and closing activities and attending several deliberations in mosques. The study lasted for six months, starting from April to October 2014. To meet the objective of data triangulation, the time was extended until December 2014. This study also conducted directed discussions with experts and researchers in the college environment as much as three series. The series of discussions involved experts from the Polytechnic of Maritime and Fisheries, State Islamic High School (STAIN) Sorong, and Muhammadiyah University of Sorong. These three forms were repeated and also with sufficient frequency to ensure the reliability and accuracy of data already obtained. This article shows that there is a dynamicization between religious practices and more technical applications in the form of environmental conservation, thus giving birth to sasimosque which has uniqueness in vernacular architectural design as well as an institution that leads the native ritual. In the end this study also found Sasi Mosque serve as institutions to support the preserving of the environment.

Keywords: Sasi, Mosque design, Mosque function, Customs, and Raja Ampat

1. Introduction

An effort to maintain the harmonious relationships between human beings and nature or the wisdom of being one with the nature or creator it seems existed in almost every ethnic including the native Raja Ampat in West Papua. Many of the native in Raja Ampat Island were Moslem that tried to preserve this philosophy of life. The Raja Ampat location on the bird's head of the island of Papua, with Waisasi was chosen as the center of government located on the island of Waigeo. The Moslem community of Raja Ampat occupies a coastal area. This geographic location of sea and mountain becomes very influences with the native activities. The study of Islam in Papua is a necessity to explain that Islam actually has experienced spreading and encounter with many environments, not only in large islands in the western part of Indonesia. This article tried to discuss the existence of sasi, mosque and native custom in relation to the actualization of environmental conservation by Muslim minorities in Raja Ampat.



Further, studies on Islam and ethnicity customs (henceforth custom) have been described many scholars including Taufik Abdullah, that explained that they are mutually reinforcing among custom and religions (Islam) or strengthening each other. However, there also a potential for conflict that is always a constraint in the relationship of both. Moreover, the relationship between Customs and Islam has its ups and downs and there is also a dynamic transformation to form its own dynamics relations to sustain the social order [9].

Other studies that showing Islam and Customs can have a dynamic relationship were explained by Abdullah, Martinez and Radzi, showing the integration among it into the legal system that adopts the 'urf and subsequently become positive law in the legislation (Malay marriage case) [13]. This reiterates that customs are in fact the answer that the formation of the law can begin by identifying the prevailing in certain environments. Thus, this study see its relevance to put these study as basic thinking and distinguish there has been no specific research on Customs and Islam in the context of the Muslim minorities of Raja Ampat. In other word, previous researches have specifically examined the relationship between customs and conflict, values, and marriage, while customs can be used as a source of law based on the understanding of the local community while this article specifically examines the position of customs as a local wisdom that is driven by the existence of the mosque. The research gap proposed by this study is specifically explores Indonesian custom and Islam in the context of Muslim minorities in Raja Ampat. Therefore, three focus of this study that is going to be explored are *sasi*, native custom (*adat*) and Mosque conservation.

Sasi is a ritual or practice of adaptation to the nature that is run as part of interaction between native Raja Ampat and their environment. With varying understanding and religious expression, each group treats the environment in accordance with religious rituals they follow [2]. *Sasi* means also witnesses, intended as a testimony of residents of a region to abstain from certain behavior with regard to the environment. Thus there will be no one who commits the offense and then argues for a reason of not knowing the time and the area subject to *sasi* status. In the context of a witness, when opening and closing an area or a certain period as a *sasi*, a ceremony is performed. This is to give testimony to every citizen that the place is subject to *sasi*, including times where they are prohibited to perform any activity in the area that has been set as *sasi*.

As for *adat* or custom, is a legal instrument although it is sometimes not institutionalized in writing in each community [5]. It is a tradition that is run as a social demand and a part of social agreement that must be executed. When executing it, someone will get peace. Along with the demands of modernity, implementation of customs is a form of community resilience where in the midst of life with other communities they are still trying to carry out activities believed to be part of the ancestral heritage [3]. Meanwhile, conservation is part of efforts to maintain environmental excellences. The desire to always maintain the inhabited area is managed using local understanding [4]. This serves as a means to bridge the understanding of society with the goal to be achieved.

While mosques not only serves as place to pray but also an institutions that hold the authority to regulate environmental management including the execution date of *sasi* ritual. It should be based on the agreement between the mosques congregation, to decided the timing of harvesting, maintenance, and the activity of the relation between human and the centralized environment in communication are facilitated by mosques leaders. The selection of mosques leaders tends to be based on seniority and descent. The duties and responsibilities of mosques leaders are carried throughout life. When a leader of a mosque died, re-election is done. With strong belief in the existence of mosques leaders and their election agreed in all villages, then the community also gives greater confidence, not only in regulating the affairs of worship within the scope of the mosque building, but also reach out to the common affairs among Muslims [9] [3].

2. Method

This research used qualitative approach. The design of this study used two main characteristics to perform the analysis, namely a constant comparison of data and emerging categories and theoretical sampling of different groups to maximize the similarities and differences of information. With these categories forms of findings were found later. From the findings, the data theoretization was formed to answer the research question. The research approach was chosen based on the suitability between the research objectives and the research subjects so as to facilitate the collection of data in the field. In-depth interviews and non-participant observations were made throughout the data collection. The data were collected by using interview list instruments and observation sheets. Interviews were conducted on a series of subjects consisting of Muslim community leaders, mosque imams, mosque administrators, village heads, members of political parties, and

district governments. Meanwhile, the observations were carried out in several opening and closing activities and attending several deliberations in mosques. During the course of the research, the researcher's presence was endeavored not to be realized by the community so that the activity takes place naturally. Preobservations also conducting by, the researcher sought to interact with the community for three weeks to minimize alienation and also bring about acceptance within the mosque's congregation.

The study lasted for six months, starting from April to October 2014. To meet the objective of data triangulation, the time was extended until December 2014. This three-month opportunity was an opportunity to re-check data repeatedly. Triangulation process was done in three forms, namely, first, to check the subjects of research in other villages where resources were tracked to various corners of the Raja Ampat with different subjects but the same topic. Then, checking the data in the same study area with the research subjects had diverse professional backgrounds. Finally, conducting directed discussions with experts and researchers in the college environment as much as three series. The series of discussions involved experts from the Polytechnic of Maritime and Fisheries, State Islamic High School (STAIN) Sorong, and Muhammadiyah University of Sorong. These three forms were repeated and also with sufficient frequency to ensure the reliability and accuracy of data already obtained.

This research was conducted in Raja Ampat Regency, West Papua. The research was limited to coastal villages, while villages located in the mountains were not selected as research sites. This was carried out as an attempt to impose limits on the study of the relation between Customs and Islam in a more specific context, namely the factor of *sasi* and mosque. The limitations of this study are only because it was implemented on large islands and did not reach some small areas.

3. Result and Discussion

With several limitation this study comprehensively describe relations among; *sasi*, Islamic religion representing by mosque that serve as institutions and the native custom in Raja Ampat. The discussion on findings presented in three main section below, it tries to cover the concept, the role and acculturation of *sasi* ritual, mosque philosophy as well its function and native custom dynamic acculturation .

3.1 The Concept: *SASI MOSQUE*

The existence of mosque is very important for the Muslims' as it is the place to worship Allah. Mosques are one type of the buildings which symbolise Islamic architecture. In Arabic language, this word is known as 'masjid' coming from the word 'sajd'. In architecture terminology, the word 'mosque' refers to a building used for the prayer activities. The mosque design therefore should portray symbol of prostration, which reflects to the meaning of 'masjid' as well as a time marking that connected past, present and future [10]. "In architecture, the measurable factors of the building design therefore should be symbolised by concept of prostration to His creations, which reflect to 'how the mosque is designed' in relation to the existing surrounding environment. Islamic architecture co-relates to an expression with an act of devotion in the mosque design. An expression of its physical form and space should reflect to the surrounding environment as its prostration values.

The geographical condition in Raja Ampat region that surrounded by sea and spaced by mountain becomes a reference for the native Raja Ampat traditional mosque designed. As a result, it were created a mosque that carry not just a concrete building for praying but also as an institution that leads and direct the native. It was found also as a place that accommodate the traditional customs, tradition and ritual including *sasi* itself. Even though a classical vernacular design of mosque in Raja Ampat were also found has a space function that quite similar with others mosque around the globe such as: building orientation to qiblat direction, entrance gate, Ablution (wuduk) area, veranda area (serambi), Prayer hall, Niche area (mihrab), Sermon podium (mimbar), main roof design and minaret. Moreover, it is shaped most strongly by the regional traditions of the time and place where it was built. As a result, style, layout, and decoration can vary greatly. Nevertheless, because of the common function of the mosque as a place of congregational prayer, certain architectural features appear adopt a native philosophical in its vernacular design. Mosques for the native seems not only a place to do a worship, it is also transform become an institutions that hold the authority to regulate environmental management for certain occupation such as traditional ritual such as *sasi*. Based on the agreement between the mosques congregation, the timing of harvesting, maintenance, and the activity of the relation between human and the centralized environment in communication are facilitated by mosques.

In connection with mosque, the existence of *sasi* is integrated with the mosque, both in physical and spiritual forms, so there is attachment between Muslims' hearts with their places of worship. Mosque is not only a place of ritual and worship of *mahd'ah*, but also reaching a wider scope in the field of society. Mosque became a pioneer of pilgrims in connection with the efforts of environmental conservation. It helps maintain the continuity of living things, in the form of plants and animals. This is believed to be the manifestation of the task of preserving life on earth. Long before Islam was accepted by the native, the *Sasiritual* is divided into two types, namely intentional *sasi* and unintentional *sasi*, after Islam came and attach in their society, the *sasi* rituals were still maintain however some changes were made e.g the spell, time and people who leads the ritual ceremony. Mosque in the end has role to manage and preserve the tradition. For example, *sasi* ritual both opening and closing ceremonies become mosque responsibility to conduct in the end. Moreover, the unintentional *sasi* is the rule of law that applies throughout the time for certain behavior and treatments such as the ban on catching fish with bombs and potas, including the use of trawls monitored by the mosque as well as church and tribes courts. In other case, such as when a family will perform a wedding ceremony or a certain celebration approved by the leader of the mosque, they may take anything from the sea and the forest according to the purposes and time specified by the mosque leader. While unconditional sanctions are applied throughout the term, this is unconditional so that there is no reason for anyone to take anything from either region.

The opening and closing of *sasi* are held in ceremonies at the mosque. The closing is in the form of *zikr* togetherly and performed simply, followed by a prayer then asking to the God the blessings of nature in the form of His grace abundantly for human prosperity. In contrast to the closing, the opening was done lively in a joint meal. The mosque is decorated with yellow coconut leaves shaped like sea animals, prepared food to eat together, and then continued with the announcement of the start of harvesting fish, sea cucumbers, *lola*, and lobsters. It could be in one opening period there are certain animals that should not be captured at all. Thus, at the opening of *sasi*, shall be informed in the opening time what sea animals may be taken. Sometimes the sea in the cultivation area may be harvested, but some marine biota species should not be touched at all. All the devices established in the mosque are an integral part of the community's activities. The function of the mosque is in an essentially expanded environment, no longer limited to the physical function only. With the authority to manage, held and preserve of *sasi*, the mosque becomes the essential for the society, so that the emotional attachment is not limited to the aspect of spirit alone. Moreover, the mosque also concerns the livelihood, the existence of the environment, and the unification of the community for a wider and tangible role. The decision of the *sasi* starts from the proposal of the pilgrim or the observation of the leader of the mosque in a certain period of time so that a *sasi* is needed to give the abundance of fruit and also to maintain the certainty of the harvest.

3.2 Environmental Conservation: The Role of Mosque

The role of mosque is more solid than just being a place of prayer and recitation. Strengthening the capacity is needed to make mosque as the center of all the activities of Muslims in their respective regions. The combination of *sasi* with mosque becomes a form of how Islam is integrated with Customs. Both are actually strengthening each other. The mosque becomes a place of prostration, at the same time becomes a public building used together for the ceremony, ritual or other functions that involves the natives. Mosque holds a central position as the existence of village hall or church for the natives. Together, all these three building became the center of communication among their respective citizens. If mosque is worshipplace for Muslims, church is dedicated to Catholics and Protestants, while village hall facilitates all of them. The mosque institution becomes an integral part of the life of the village community. The mosque becomes a facilitator of all the needs of its citizens. Not only in matters of worship but also in daily needs, including negotiations on mutual cooperation, deliberations to determine the right days to start construction of public facilities, and to help people in need of financial assistance in times of disaster or family celebrations. In matters concerning the harvest, as part of the needs of people's lives, mosque becomes the center for deciding what is considered strategic and generally applicable to all worshippers.

Many activities can take a place in it from meetings to discuss mutual interests can be conducted in the mosque. Especially since the beginning of a tradition that carried on from generation to generation, the mosque was built with one of the goals is to accommodate the need to accommodate large numbers of people accommodate participants. Population growth continues to evolve over time, while settlements are not increasing, so some newly established citizens choose to live in other areas. One of the main considerations is the limited land.

Mosque as a religious institution as well as a pillar of customs is given the confirmation of the role it has played for centuries. Through the enactment of the Raja Ampat Regency regulation, the mosque is getting stronger as the organizer of interests of the pilgrims in their respective neighborhoods. Despite the publication of the local regulation nothing has changed, the participation of the government and politicians has increased, followed by the increased portion of campaigns and more socialization has raised the awareness to maintain the existence of *sasi* ritual itself. Through local government policy, supported by community boards, mosques were given an authority to play as a main key to strengthen common interests, and to provide a place for environmental protection activities.

3.3 The Dynamic Acculturation of Islam and Customs

This study shows that the practice of *sasi* implemented in Raja Ampat is actually adapted from the Maluku and North Maluku region, because Raja Ampat is geographically and culturally very close to the kingdoms of Ternate and as well as Bacan and Jailolo the origin four kingdoms or Raja Ampat were this region attached its history in it. in the ancient times Tidore. As such, the practice of *sasi* is developed and adapted to each environment in accordance with the state of the territory, although the meaning used contextually may undergo changes and developments. The came of Islam dynamically acculturate with the local custom, since Islam coming in peace in this region, most of the principles as long it not forbid by the syariah Law in Islam will be accepted in some modification. From time to time since Islam came the tradition, ritual or community function were discuss together among them

The religious leaders and traditional/customary leaders sat together and deliberated the interests of the community by using the mosque institution as the starting location to discuss the solution and solve the problems that arose. Likewise with the customary institutions already present first before the arrival of Islam in the land of Bugis. With the arrival of Islam, it is precisely that customs have adapted and maintained a tradition that is not contradictory to the religious philosophy [15], so that Customs are preserved are Islam-based Customs [14]. The existence of mosque *sasi* becomes part of the legal establishment necessary for the setting up of the Raja Ampat community. This phenomenon occurs because of a unique interpretation in the context of the interpretation of Islamic teachings [16]. Islam is no longer seen merely as a teleological aspect which then stops at the process of sharia containing the teachings of worship only. But more than that, the spirit of Islam is grown to help to preserve the environment. Religion serves as a pillar to foster awareness in protecting the environment, as in conservation practices undertaken. *Sasi* may differ in meaning. For example, in research on the religious nature of Raja Ampat fishermen, *sasi* is interpreted as oath. Although different in terms of meaning, but the practices that run in every region have the same concept. This is sustained by the attachment between Religion and Customs so that it can be productively encouraged also by the presence of customary leaders who are also religious leaders. *Sasi* can survive because it gets religious justification, of which comes from the spirit of Islam.

However, their research was limited to the study of *sasi*, mosque as an institutions in relation to marine conservation. Thus, the particularity of this study emphasizes the study between Islam and Customs in relation to environmental conservation. Yet, the variables studied is the existence of mosque which is the main support capacity of the implementation of *sasi*.

4. Conclusions

This article shows that there is a dynamicization between religious practices and more technical applications in the form of environmental conservation, thus giving birth to mosque *sasi*. By using mosque instrument to institutionalize *sasi*, the residents gave the environmental management authority to the mosque leaders of their own choosing. *Sasi* means two things, namely testimony and prohibition. In these two meanings, coupled with the meaning of *sasi* as an oath, it becomes a tool to make certain areas or goods to be protected from excessive exploitation. Meanwhile mosque *sasi* is interpreted as a *sasi* organized by mosque institution in Muslims congregation and residences. Moreover, Mosque institutions serve as a support for preserving the environment. The existence of a religion symbolized by mosque is part of the interaction of Muslims. The encounter of people with different faiths provides an opportunity for dialogue and then together to translate religious messages in practical form. This is done as a form of demands. It also explains that religion actually goes hand in hand with its adherents. For that reason, religion is no longer in abstract norms, but it is managed in the form of beliefs that can be applied more operationally in everyday life.

this study main finding some how showed the encounter of Islam and daily practice in the form of local wisdom were realized and implemented in the *form* of their *sasi* which serves to maintain the continuity of nature which is carried out with the spirit of religious and keeping the tradition. Meanwhile, mosque as concrete building and institutions becomes a means to run the objective and It was found it were strengthening each others

5. References

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