

# Religious Values in Environmental Conservation of Traditional Society in Wakatobi Island

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**Abstract:** Wakatobi is one of the *Bharata* that belongs to the governance system of Buton Sultanate. Therefore, as an ex-Islamic kingdom, certainly, Buton has various local wisdom in the life its society. One of the local wisdom can be seen in the system of their environmental conservation. This study made use of ethnographic approach; so, the researcher would like to expect that society might access multiple information related to the values that had become the foundation of environmental conservation in Wakatobi through this study. With this approach, the researcher would also like to expect that he gathered the data regarding how the society of Wakatobi viewed the Islamic values in their environmental conservation. The results of the study show that the biosphere heritage in Wakatobi land has been a genuine artwork by the traditional society of Wakatobi, which has been based on the Islamic values. Some of these values are internalized through *kangkilo* doctrine that includes: (1) *kangkiloawalu* (early holiness); and (2) *kangkiloakhiri* (final holiness). These values then have implications for their actions toward the environment. Several conservation concepts that have been based on these Islamic values can be seen in the forest, the *kaindea*, the *motika*, the *menani* (Napoleon) fish, the environmental management, and the shell (*rondora*, *untu*, *watu*). Also, the values of *rahmatan lil alamin* can also be found in the prayers that these traditional society utter when they are planting a tree.

## 1. Introduction

Wakatobi has been one of the *bharata* that belongs to the governance system of Buton Sultanate. In 2003, Wakatobi was expanded into an autonomous region in the Unified Nations of the Republic of Indonesia. Therefore, as an-ex Islamic kingdom, Wakatobi certainly has various local wisdom in their life that stems from the Islamic values. One of the local wisdoms can be seen in the system of environmental conservation that has been applied by the traditional society there [1]. In 2012, Wakatobi was appointed as the earth's biosphere heritage by UNESCO.

One of the Islamic values that can be found in the life of Wakatobi society is the concept of *thaharah* or holiness. This concept then becomes known by the local society as the concept of *kangkilo* or *kabusa* or *kili* [2]. It is this concept that then becomes the basis of various actions, both in the context of tradition and in the context of a family. It is these Islamic values that become the fundamental values of multiple activities performed by Wakatobi society, including in conducting the environmental conservation in their culture. However, these values then start fading along with the development of science and technology in the Wakatobi generation – Buton [3]. As a consequence, the Islamic values that have been inserted in all norms within the traditional society are considered



irrational. Various myths that contribute to the traditional society-based environmental conservation are destroyed by the Muslim society there alone, because they consider that every single aspect should be Arabian; whereas, the local values that have been perfectly acculturated into the Islamic values are considered as something that breaks the *tauhid* and as a blasphemy. This generation can only retrieve the aspects of *syariat* while their Elders in Wakatobi have packaged the Islamic values into various myths [3] that have been in acculturation with the Islamic values. This matter can be seen from the local society's belief on *imbu* (sea ghost), a myth that has been turned into a story with *waliullah* meaning.

Therefore, a study about the Islamic values in the environmental conservation within the Wakatobi traditional society is an effort to uncover multiple discourses of traditional society-based environmental conservation on the one hand and an effort to eliminate these values due to the increasingly rational Wakatobi society. In addition, the presence of several religious schools which have been more radical and does not have tolerance to the acculturation between Islamic values and the local culture puts the space of environmental conservation in Wakatobi in a worse situation [4].

## 2. Method

This study makes use of ethnographic approach; as a result, it is expected that the researcher may access various points of view among the local society regarding the values that the Wakatobi-Buton society hold in conducting the environmental conservation within the traditional society of Wakatobi. Radcliffe Brown and B. Malinowski stated that modern ethnography is differentiated from the preliminary ethnography based on the important characteristics, namely that these characteristics do not heavily pay attention to the matters that have been related to the cultural history of a community group [5]. Their main attention is in the present life, namely about the way of life that the related society hold. According to the view of the two anthropologists, the objective of ethnography is describing and establishing a social and cultural structure of society. Therefore, the researcher perceives that conducting interview will be insufficient; he would like to do a participatory observation along with the informants in this study. Then, the paradigm development in this study has focused his efforts to find how the society organize the culture in their mind and use the culture in their life [5]. The analysis in this study is not merely based on the researcher's interpretation; instead, the analysis has been a structure of mind from the traditional society that the researcher has brought about. Since the objective of this study is finding and describing the organization of ideas from society, the researcher's understanding of the language study becomes highly important in the method of this study. "By gathering the history of life and by using a mixed strategy, a language will appear in each phase of the process in this study."

In relation to this statement, Spardley defined culture as something under observation within the ethnography. In addition, culture also serves a learning process that has been implemented for interpreting the world around them and for designing behavioral strategies in dealing with the world. In his view, Spardley did not consider ethnography as a method for studying "other culture," a small isolated society; instead, he considered ethnography as a method for studying our own society, the multicultural society all around the world. Then he summarized his ideas into "Progressing Research Path" that consists of five principles namely: (1) a researcher is suggested to use one data gathering only; (2) a researcher is suggested to identify the main steps in the data gathering technique; (3) for example, a researcher should identify 12 main steps in an ethnographic interview from Spardley; (4) every main step should be performed sequentially; (5) a researcher should provide problem solving as part of his social responsibility; and (6) this research should not be intended to science-to-science anymore. The core of "New Ethnography" by Spardley is the effort to pay attention to the meaning of an action that impacts individuals whom we would like to understand through their culture. In performing the field work, an ethnographer concludes human culture from three sources: (1) what society says; (2) how society act; and (3) artefacts that have been used. However, in this article, Spardley focuses specifically on the conclusion drawing from what society have said. An ethnographic

interview is considered more able to explore the structure of mind within the society under observation.

Thereby, the results of this study are expected to disassemble the mind regarding the basic values of environmental conservation that lies in the awareness of Wakatobi traditional society. If within the last several years Wakatobi has been awarded by UNESCO as the earth's biosphere heritage [6], then actually Wakatobi is a representation of Islamic values that have been in acculturation with the values of the local culture [7]. Therefore, the basic values of environmental conservancy in the Wakatobi traditional society might be explained in the following sessions.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

#### 3.1 Islamic Values in the Environmental Conservation of Wakatobi Traditional Society

Based on the results of the study, the researcher has found several fundamental values that become the foundation of Wakatobi society's culture in conducting the environmental conservation within each sub-ethnic of the traditional society. The achievement that the traditional society have in preserving the environmental preservation then has been appreciated by the world as the Wakatobi earth biosphere heritage. All of these are the authentic work of Wakatobi traditional society, which has been based on the Islamic values.

Several cultural values that hold important role which influences their paradigm and action in conducting the management of environment within the Wakatobi traditional society have been constructed by the doctrine of *kangkilo* (holiness). This doctrine includes: (1) *kangkilo awal* (early holiness); and (2) *kangkilo akhir* (final holiness). These values then have implications for the traditional society's paradigm and action in dealing with the environment. Several concepts of conservation that have been based on the Islamic values can be seen in the forest, the *kaindea*, the *motika*, the *menani* (napoleon) fish, the shell, and the coral (*tondora*, *untu*, and *watu*).

##### 3.1.1 *Kangkilo as the Fundamental Value*

Wakatobi society are a society that consists of multiple ethnics from all over Archipelago. Some society says that Wakatobisociety comes from Adonara in East Nusa Tenggara (Tomiasociety) [8] And some say that Wakatobi society are related to Wangi-Wangi society who come from Kei in Molluccas [1]; then, there are also traces from Chinese society in Binongko, Malay society in Tomia [9], and Javanese society in Liya [10]. Some other society also says that Wakatobi society has originally come from the remaining Tulukabesi troopers under the reign of King Hitu [10–12]. All of these statements lead to the long history of Wakatobisociety, who geographically settle on the east-west and south-north sailing direction. The trail of that long history can be found from multiple artefacts that have been found in Wakatobi. From these artifacts, one may find the process of acculturation between the local society's (Melanesian) culture and the other cultures such as Islam, Malay [9][13], China, and India. The arrival of Indian society (Hinduism and Buddhism) certainly has played its role in the early cultural formation in this region; it is certain that the arrival of these societies would influence the local society's knowledge in managing the environment [4].

The arrival of Islam in this region can be traced through the story of Tindoi in Wangi-Wangi Island [14], the story of Moori in Tomia Island [8], and the story of Culada Tape-Tape In Binongko Island [15]. The story of Islam in converting the society of Tukang Besi Island into Moslem cannot be separated from the role of Buton Sultanate in the past. From this long period of Islam, Wakatobi then have Islamic heritage in the form of noble values which become the doctrines [16] In their life management, including the environmental management. This statement is apparent from each of the traditional conservations that always have myths related to holy society or *waliullah*.

Understanding the *kangkilo* deeper, the Wakatobi traditional society recall *kangkilo* [2] As a ritual that includes *fudhu*, *mandi*, and *junub*. However, for Wakatobisociety holiness or *thaharah* does not only take the ritual form but also the doctrine form in their social dimension. It is in this social dimension that *kangkilo* has become the values that base the traditional society's mind and behaviors

in establishing the relationship between the human beings and the deity, among the fellow human beings, and between the human beings and the environment.

The doctrine of *kangkilo* then is divided into two categories by Wakatobi traditional society namely *kangkiloawalu* (early holiness) and *kangkiloakhiri* (final holiness). According to la Musidu (40), *kangkiloawal* is a doctrine that sets the regulations for maintaining the self-holiness, which includes physics, mind, and sense, among Wakatobi traditional society. In the concept of understanding among the traditional society, this early holiness stage urges that all food and beverage that comes into the body should be in a holy condition. The food and beverages should not be *haram* due to uncleanness or inappropriate belonging [17].

With this doctrine, Wakatobi traditional society decides to be hungry than to eat the food that they do not deserve. This doctrine then becomes the fundamental value of the belief that Wakatobi traditional society holds; they will not take the goods that do not belong to them and this also includes the environmental management. A fisherman who has internalized this doctrine will never catch napoleon fish because the fish does not belong to the society since they regard this fish as *sara* fish (*teika nu sara*). This decision is certainly based on the knowledge regarding *sara* [14]. Regarding the Napoleon fish that has been very vulnerable to extinction if they are massively exploited. Therefore, the traditional society will let go the Napoleon fish back to the environment because *sara* has required them to return it before the *sara* [14]. If the fisherman eats the Napoleon fish, then he will just deface his physics, mind, and sense. According to the doctrine of *kangkilo*, this is a form of mind and action that might deface one's self. The traditional society will not destroy the forest due to the values of *kangkiloawal*. They will protect the forest, and they will not take away what does not belong to them. If they take the woods out of the forest without having the permission of *sara*, then they might deface themselves.

*Kangkiloakhiri* (final holiness) is a doctrine that Wakatobi traditional society believes to be the form of final holiness. According to their understanding, *kangkiloakhiri* is a doctrine that has been related to all the things that come out from themselves, and these things might take the physical form (action), manure, mind, and sense. These things may not degrade the sense (toward the deity, the human beings, and the environment). In the context of environmental preservation, Wakatobi traditional society lives this doctrine by not destroying the forest (*motika* And *kaindea*) and the coral. Even thinking about destroying the forest and the coral has been considered as disturbing and destroying their holiness. These values then influence the Wakatobi traditional society's paradigm and action in conducting the environmental conservation. Several regions that become the conservation area of Wakatobi traditional society are Tindoi traditional forest, Wabue-bua forest, Bungi Longa forest, and Kaidea Teo forest that is under the traditional territory of *kadhia* Wanse. Then, Malarau forest and Lagiampa forest are the conservation area under *Kaindea*, Mandati [1]. Next, Kapota forest becomes the conservation area of Kapota traditional society while Mangrow forest in Binongko Island becomes the conservation area of *kadhia* Wali traditional society. In Tomia Island, by the way, there is a conservation forest that still survives up to date and this forest is located in Suo-Suo Fortress under the conservation area of Kawati Tonggano.

Then, the traditional sea conservation areas are located in *sangiatondo* sea, *sangia tanjung patipelong* sea (Tongano traditional society), and *ujutondoa/ pasikeawa'altadhupaleasea* (let's get drunk) that belongs to the traditional area of *kawati* Waha. Then, there is also another sea conservation area in front of the eastern part of Onemai, known as Nuko. This area is considered sacred by the local society. Another region under the area of KawatiWaha is PasiTumundu or the coral that has been sunk in front of Tomia Harbor. However, these conservation areas are not considered sacred anymore because of the educational modernization; as a result, nowadays society believes their logical thinking more. The shift from the world of mythology to the world of science (Western style), and the arrival of radical Islam that highly pays attention to the Arabian symbols have influenced the paradigm of Wakatobi society in recent years.

The efforts to not degrading the surrounding environment can be traced from the prohibition to insult these sacred places. Tomiasociety knows a term *sakito*, which has been a prohibition to insult;

according to this doctrine, these sacred places should not be degraded with inappropriate utterances, behaviors, and actions. Sahrudin in an interviewing said that, “*Karang kokoh* as many meanings; they can be *Homali*, *karamah*, and *sangia*”. He said that *karangkoko* has been one of the traditional areas in Wali, which myth is that this place has many guardian spirits; they often see something strange in this place along with the abundant number of sunken ship. Society should respect Karang Koko by not saying inappropriate words around this place. The fisherman, especially, should accept the amount of their catch; however, if they have good catch then they should be careful because this area belongs to *waliullah*. This myth becomes a concept of continuous fishery activities within Wakatobi traditional society.

Moreover, in the region of *Kawati* Timu, there is Liang Kuri-Kuri which has become the myth of *waliullah* (holy society) settlement. In this area, society can see *sangia* (sacred traditional forest). In this cape as well, there are canon and a plate-like stone disc that has been used for performing rituals. Society will come here for praying and this is the reason why that belief still survives in the life of Wakatobi traditional society. One of the rituals that are usually performed here is the ritual of throwing away *loloa* for casting out evil spirits. In this ritual, society will read prayers for Allah from the evening until the dawn. It is very important to throw the *loloa* appropriately; otherwise, a huge catastrophe might fall upon the village. This society cast out the *loloa* with Islamic prayers and expectation that the village will be avoided from the big catastrophe.

Other areas of sea conservation can be found in several *untu* such as UntuWa Ode, UntuMelambi, and also in several Tondora. Although these conservation areas are protected by myths, there is a structure of thinking that lies within each member of traditional society there. The myth of *Untu Wa Ode* and *Untu Melambi* says that the two *untu* have been appointed as the region of *waliullah* city and this appoint has put aside the myth of *imbu*. In other words, the myth of *imbu* has been reconstructed into the myth of holy society or *waliullah*. Therefore, destroying the environment here will mean destroying the settlement of the holy society. The same paradigm also applies to WaBue-Bue Forest and Bungi Forest, which have also been considered as the city of holy society or *waliullah*. The traditional society there believe that they should not disturb other living creatures and this belief also includes the doctrine of defecation in *thaharah* manner from Islamic concept within Wakatobi society; this doctrine has been effective in protecting their environment [14].

In the context of Tindoi Forest, for instance, there is a myth says that society should not pick leaves and crack twigs. The reason is that Wakatobi traditional society believes that Tindoi has been the core area in the conservation of consumption water within Wangi-Wangi Island. Such myth, along with the other typical myths in this area, has been the representation of *kangkilo*. This traditional society will not pick the leaves or crack the twigs because they understand highly the doctrine *kangkilo*. The myth that has been developing among Tindoi society (WutaMohute and Ta'IBhete) shows that Tindoi region is a region of *karomah*. They believe that the spirits of their elders who dwell in Tindoi are society who has high religious knowledge. WaYai said that their elders who dwell in the region live straight. They maintain their holiness; as a consequence, the traditional society there is not allowed to pick leaves, crack twigs, and event cut trees. They believe that if they leave this belief, then they will suffer from the curse of *karomah* in Tindoi because they have been considered destroying the holiness that becomes the elders' way of life.

It is this doctrine that has been maintaining the Tindoi sustainability up to date. Despite the fact, Wakatobi has changed into a tourism destination and the lack of society understanding due to the shift in their awareness, the transition from the myth to the rationality-based science has caused many guests litter around the environment. These guests have lost the cultural values that frame Tindoi Forest as a bio-sphere heritage and the center of consumption water conservation in the same time, especially *uwedhi* Posalu or Posalu water. NurArafah [1] stated that the transition of traditional society institution in Wanci and Mandati has rendered a strong pressure to the environment within Wanse and Mandati traditional area [1]. Thereby, there has been a change of traditional society orientation in which *kadhia* institution has turned into a village, and this turning is heavily affecting the value sets in Wakatobi traditional society.



### 3.2 The Form of Local Conservation a Model of Acculturation between the Local Culture and Islam in Wakatobi

Among Wakatobi traditional society, there have been many models of acculturation between the local culture and Islam; these models are apparent in any form of conservation, both in the land one and in the sea one. Almost all of these acculturation models are framed in the concept of Islamic-style mythology because every conservation area is associated with *waliullah* or holy society. Such mythology displays that there has been an acculturation between the local culture (Hinduism, Buddhism, animism, and dynamism) and the Islam-based holy values.

The presence of *kangkilo* doctrine has changed the fundamental values of each local conservation area in Wakatobi. *Kangkilo* values, both in the initial holiness and the final holiness, provide an important meaning for the environmental conservation in Wakatobi. Multiples norms that have been developed by Wakatobi traditional society, for example, urge the society not to say inappropriate words or to do inappropriate actions in a conservation area; this is an effort of maintaining the holiness. The society is not allowed to say inappropriate words, to have an inappropriate mind, and to have negative feelings toward other society, the environment, and Lord. In several cases, the traditional society believes that they should have a *wudhu* before entering the area of *karomah* or otherwise they will be damned. Another example is that fishermen should not say swearing words whenever they enter Pasi Koko or they will not have huge catch. However, they should also be careful when they have huge catch. This is related to the values or the principles of *kangkilo* doctrine. The main point is that society should submit them to Allah when they do have bad fortune, and they should not be arrogant when they have good fortune. It is in this situation that the Islamic values become the fundamental values within the continuous fishery development in Wakatobi.

By understanding these Islamic values, a collective awareness among the traditional society might be born in order to maintain the environmental sustainability in Wakatobi. By doing so, it is expected that this society will not bomb the coral, which is destructive and even will not say swearing words in this conservation area. They should not need to be guarded by the forest rangers or the coast guards as well. These Islamic values should be internalized in their mind and soul so that this traditional society will always be guided by those values in their daily life as farmers or fishermen.

### 3.3 The Fading *Kangkilo* and the Threat of Environmental Damages in Wakatobi

The fading *kangkilo* values as the Islamic values within Wakatobi society leads to the increasing number of environmental damage in Wakatobi traditional area. La Rumadi said that the amount of environmental damage in Wakatobi has been caused by the decreasing number of the people who practice *kangkilo*. According to La Rumadi, it has almost ten years in Bau-Bau civil society that *kangkilo* has been practiced by two societies as a peculiar characteristic of Buton society. The implication is that nowadays there have been many societies who do not care anymore about Buton peculiar characteristics. These societies tend to do anything, and that includes destroying the environment. In other words, *kangkilo* doctrine has started to fade from Buton society.

There are several cases of environmental damage in Wakatobi. The perpetrators do not feel guilty when they destroy the environment. The reason is that they do not hold onto *kangkilo* doctrine anymore. They are willing to destroy the environment because they do not hold onto the Islamic values anymore. Many other acts of crime have been caused by the perpetrators' indifference toward the deity teachings, and they are even willing to hurt other society. They have abandoned their humanity. They have crossed the limit or *sabharagau* or the moral limits that have been set the by the traditional society.

In addition, the shift of social and political system has caused the fading Islamic values among Wakatobi traditional society, and this affects their context of environmental management. Wakatobi traditional society seems to be helpless in dealing with the social change both politically and culturally. The birth of young generation who are not familiar with *kangkilo* doctrine has affected the environmental sustainability in Wakatobi. The government's efforts in maintaining the environmental

sustainability, including the implementation of multiple programs with NGOs, have not been able to give birth to successful environmental conservation like what have been done by Wakatobi traditional society in their life. The reason is that the culture of establishing values has been internalized in these society's awareness. This condition enables every person to have some software that controls his or her mind regarding the environmental damage. *Kangkilo* doctrine will lead to the awareness that taking away what does not belong to an individual will ruin the individual himself, his relationship to the deity, and his relationship to the surrounding environment. La Nia said that that the society of kadhia Wanse has been very afraid of exploiting the forest heavily in the past especially around the part of Tindoi forest [14].

On the other hand, the conservation programs that the government has been pursuing are always based on the threat of positive and negative law. In the case of 2008 around Tindoi forest, one person was almost put into a traditional trial by the local society [14]. The reason is that Tindoi society had been aware that cracking a small twig might lead to the death of one person in that region while cracking a big twig might lead to the death of the prominent local figure. This understanding triggered Posalusociety in Tindoi area to almost kill the perpetrator. Fortunately, the security officers directly evacuated the perpetrator to the nearby police office. Meanwhile, there have been cases in which the local society have exploited the forest and have turned the forest in dry farming areas; such cases can be found in Bungi Longa forest, WaBue-Bue forest, and KaindeaTeo forest. In the case of Longa Patuno forest, KaideaTeo, for example, the local society do not understand their *kangkilo*. They deface their physics, mind, and soul by destroying the forest, whereas the elders of this society in the past would not do that. As long as the software (namely, the Islamic values) still occupies these society's supra-structure, their awareness will lead them to establish *khilafah* on the earth.

Wakatobi traditional society in Buton who live the *kangkilo* doctrine will always hold onto their principles firmly as the *khalifah* on the earth. Under this principle, they will carry out their action as the form of *rahmatanlilalamin*. They will not destroy the environment, the relation among fellow human beings, and their relationship to the deity. It is here that Islamic values play their role in establishing the conservation area within Wakatobi. Thereby, the fading *kangkilo* doctrine within Wakatobi traditional society can be a serious threat to the environmental damage in Wakatobi. Moreover, in the social life, the fading *kangkilo* doctrine might lead to the birth of opportunistic society which prioritizes their own needs above the needs of other society.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Islamic values in *kangkilo* have become the fundamental values that construct the paradigm of Wakatobi traditional society in performing the environmental conservation around Wakatobi. They who hold onto the *kangkilo* doctrine will always identify themselves with the maintenance of their holiness, which includes the dimension of physics, mind, and sense. Through the *kangkiloawalu* doctrine, Wakatobi traditional society will never eat something that might deface their physics, mind, and sense. While through the *kangkiloakhiri* doctrine they will always maintain what they do to the environment in order not to deface the physics, the mind, and the sense of both the human beings and the other creatures. Thereby, Wakatobi traditional society will always strive to maintain himself, the environment, and the deity. Through the concept of *kangkilo*, which has been the fundamental Islamic values, Wakatobi traditional society has been able to maintain the sustainability of earth bio-sphere heritage since from hundred years ago. For the society who lives with the *kangkilo* concept in their life, they will affect their life by not defacing their physic, mind, and humanity. By doing so, *kangkilo* can be a space of mental revolution within the environmental management among traditional society throughout the world.

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