

Culture and Religion in Sasi Tradition

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Abstract

The sasi tradition is one of the local wisdom of the people of Maluku which is related to environmental management and the preservation of natural resources. In the sasi tradition, the prohibition on taking certain natural products for a certain period of time is set. This study aims to describe the cultural and religious context in the sasi tradition. This type of research is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques is a literature study. The results showed that the sasi tradition which was originally purely based on cultural values later experienced a combination of religious values and teachings that were present in the midst of society. Culture and religion can synergize with each other, including in terms of maintaining, managing and preserving the environment as seen in the implementation of sasi traditions, such as sasi adat, church sasi, and mosque sasi.

Keywords church sasi, mosque sasi, culture, religion

Introduction

Since the last few decades, environmental issues have become a hot topic of conversation around the world. On the international scene environmental issues was discussed by the United Nations in its Conference The Environment which was held on June 5, 1972, in Stockholm, which became known as the Stockholm Conference. Even the date was then set as world environmental day (Tego Saputro 2012). At almost the same time, namely on May 15-18, 1972, on a national scale, Indonesia also discussed the same thing in the Seminar on Environmental Management and National Development organized by Padjajaran University in Bandung (Hasibuan, Syah, and Marzuki 2018).

People are increasingly aware of the importance of the environment and its preservation as an inseparable part of the lives of human beings in the world. The variety of environmental damage that occurred made people aware of the environment-friendly natural resource management activities. Community-based environmental conservation is increasingly being promoted (Tradisi Sasi Di Raja Ampat Papua 2016). Traditional knowledge and local wisdom implemented through traditional institutions are one of the efforts to conserve natural resources based on the community. The Indonesian government has even legalized the importance of local wisdom in environmental management. This is evident in Law Number 32 the Year 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, article 1 paragraph 30, which states that local wisdom is the noble values that apply in the life of the community, among others, to protect and manage the environment sustainably.

The management of the environment and natural resources that are environmentally friendly and based on local wisdom has apparently been carried out by many traditional communities in Indonesia or commonly referred to as indigenous peoples. In the western part of Indonesia, for example, there are ngalau agung in Sumatra, which rule about the fish conservation and tuk serco to keep the preservation of water resources (Siswadi, Taruna, and Purnaweni 2012). In central Indonesia, especially Bali, there is a wig-a wig to manage forest conservation (Wood,

E., Tappan, G., Hadj, A., 2004. Understanding the drivers of agricultural land use change in south-central Senegal. *J. Arid Environ.* 59 et al. 2008). In North Kalimantan, Dayak Kenyah tribe used the sacred forest to keep their forest (Anau et al. 2019). Meanwhile, in eastern Indonesia, there is a tradition of *sasi* practised in almost all of Maluku and several regions in Papua (Karepesina and Susilo 2013), (Judge and Nurizka 2008) and also there is *sar* local wisdom, which is the local wisdom owned by Kanum tribe in Merauke, Papua.

Sasi tradition is a natural resource management system in the form of a ban on taking certain natural products at certain times and places. Called as a tradition, because *sasi* is an idea, belief, or behaviour from the past which is symbolically transmitted with a certain meaning to a group or society. *Sasi* as a form of local wisdom and part of the culture of indigenous peoples in Maluku aims to preserve and preserve their natural resources.

The relationship between humans as part of a society with the surrounding environment (biophysical systems) or ecosystems is influenced by the cultural system they have. Culture acts as community control, which is the way used by a community to bring back members of society that deviate to normal behaviour that can be in the form of sanctions. Besides having an important function as a means of social control, culture also functions to protect themselves against nature, regulate relations between humans, and as a container of human feelings. The role and function of culture are also contained in the *sasi* tradition.

Culture and religion are elements that are closely related to human life, because of the nature of humans as servants and as social beings. Religion is a belief held by humans, in it regulates the human relationship with God. Meanwhile, culture is a way of life that is developed and shared by a group of people and is passed down from generation to generation. In general religion and culture are two different things, but are interrelated. The combination of culture and religion also appears in the *sasi* tradition. The practice of *sasi* tradition which was originally purely a cultural heritage of ancestors then began to be coloured with religious values believed by the local community. This study aims to describe the cultural and religious context in the implementation of the *Sasi* tradition.

Koentjaraningrat argues that culture is a whole system of ideas, actions, and results of human work in the context of community life that belongs to human self by learning.. Furthermore, Selo Soemardjan and Soelaeman Soemardi argued that culture is all the work, creativity and taste in society. Community work will produce material and material culture or physical culture (commonly called material culture) that is needed by humans to master the natural surroundings so that strength and results can be enshrined for the needs of the community.

Meanwhile, culture according to Mulyadi is a complex whole, in which there is knowledge, belief, art, law, customs, and also the will and habits acquired by humans as members of society. The culture was also stated by Ariyono Surono, who said that culture is the whole of human power, mind, creation, work, and initiative used to understand the environment and experience so that it becomes a guide for behaviour, in accordance with the universal elements in it. From the two meanings above, it can be seen that culture is the product of human thought used in everyday life. Because it is often used, this has become a habit and some even become guidelines in doing something. In the end, culture can be said as a rule that binds and regulates society which results in cultured behaviour.

Religion is considered as a sacred and important thing for its adherents. Not a few behaviours that appear associated with the existence of religion itself. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, religion is a doctrine or system that regulates the faith (belief) and worship of God Almighty and rules that relate to the association of humans with humans, as well as humans with their environment.

For Durkheim, religion is a social phenomenon inherent in social practice, so it is not only in the form of trust but also functions in increasing social solidarity as well as a source of moral unity. This is supported by Freud, who said that religion influences one's behavior, not only in the realm of rational thought, but also in the realm of one's subconscious.

Religion is simply a belief in the existence of God.. Meanwhile, Loewenthal describes the notion of religion as a system related to attitudes, practices, rituals, ceremonies, and beliefs in which individuals and community groups place themselves in relation to God and the supernatural world.

The presence of religion cannot be separated from the role and function of religious teachings themselves. Religious teachings have power inherent in the subconscious of humans, have legal rules, social rules and rules, and various other teachings. With religion, humans are invited to uphold the norms of truth and justice to achieve success not only in the world but also in the hereafter.

Freud said that religion is a product of culture. This means that religion itself is actually born of culture. Even so, the existence of religion is the main controlling tool for human life. With the existence of this religion, religion tends to influence cultures that already exist in an area.

Culture or culture is the result of creative power, works, and initiatives originating from God, which are applied in everyday human life so that it becomes a habit or procedure for human life itself. While religion is understood as a

guide to human life that comes from God. In practice, religion and culture influence each other. Religion influences the culture that exists in an area, which results in the change of culture itself, although it does not experience a total. The entry of religion in an area is not necessarily easy. Every religion or belief that will enter in an area, must undergo selection that is adjusted to the culture of that region. This process is an attempt to choose a religion that is not much different from the culture in the area. In the end, a religion that succeeds in entering an area is a religion that is packaged in a cultural wrapper where the religion originated.

Sasi tradition is a cultural heritage that exists in Maluku to preserve the natural environment of their homes. This tradition has been passed down by ancestors from generation to generation. This is done so that the younger generation can show good behaviour obtained from the learning process to live to adapt to the environment.

Pattinama and Pattipelony suggest that sasi is a community tradition that has a substantive legal value, namely the prohibition of not taking marine products or forest products until a certain time. Sasi can have legal value because it has norms and rules related to ways, habits, codes of conduct and customs that contain elements of ethics and norms. Substantial legal values in the sasi system as the core of customary law are as follows: (a) the proper use of one's rights according to a specified time; (b) prevent disputes between fellow countries; (c) preservation of nature for the sake of increasing mutual prosperity; (d) the obligation to spoil sea and land products; and (e) reduce the incidence of crime in the form of theft of natural resources. The provisions of customary law regarding sasi contain three things. First, sasi contains an element of the prohibition on utilizing natural resources for a period of time to allow flora and fauna to renew their self, maintain quality and increase the population of these natural resources. Second, the provisions of sasi cover not only the natural environment but also the social environment and man-made environment. Third, the provisions of this sasi are determined by the founding community from below, on the initiative of the community itself.

The main benefits of sasi include the community being able to have income from a variety of forest products and to be harvested in a sustainable, maximum, quality and higher value. Sasi is a system that can reduce the occurrence of theft that is often done against forest products. Sasi can also maintain the preservation of natural resources.

Research Methods

This type of research used in this research is descriptive qualitative research or descriptive qualitative research. Descriptive qualitative research is scientific research that aims to understand a phenomenon in the social context naturally by prioritizing the process of deep communication interaction between researchers and the phenomenon under study (Rahmat 2009). Descriptive qualitative research aims to reveal and provide a more detailed picture of events, facts, or conditions that actually occurred at the time the research took place by presenting what actually happened.

Data in this study were collected by means of literature study. A literature study is a data collection technique by conducting a study of books, literature, notes, and reports that are related to the problem being solved (Nazir 2004).

Result and Discussion

Historically, it is believed that the management of natural resources in the Maluku Islands based on the sasi system began around the 1600s. The ancestors of the Moluccans began implementing a sasi system based on traditional beliefs in conserving natural resources. All prohibitions resulting from traditional religious beliefs become the sasi system regulations. But that regulation only applies to natural resources on land such as forests, trees, fruits, and rivers. The sasi system was adopted to ensure that violations in traditional religion and prohibitions must be shunned, so as to avoid natural resource disasters, famine and illness that are considered as originating from traditional deities as punishment. After the Portuguese and the Dutch began to arrive in Maluku with merchant ships to exploit the spices, the sasi system was later expanded to include sea or water areas. Since then, the sasi system has not only applied to land-based resources but also to coastal marine resources.

Sasi in Maluku is a form of internal regulation in Maluku society. Sasi has functioned as a foothold or guide in behaving and acting, both in interacting in the midst of society and managing the environment and the utilization of natural resources [30]. Sasi tradition is a joint commitment between traditional leaders, community leaders, and also

religious leaders. Sasi is made to prevent natural and environmental damage and is a combination of adat and religion [9].

Types of sasi that apply in Maluku include general sasi, personal sasi, religious sasi, negeri/kampong sasi, and babaliang sasi:

1) General sasi, which is sasi that is applied by all villagers. General sasi is divided into two, namely water sasi and land sasi. Water sasi consists of sea sasi and river sasi. Sea sasi covers the coastal and marine areas which are included in the village ownership and is applied to all marine contents that are considered important by the local community, depending on the economic value of the sea products, such as fish, bialola (a type of shell), seaweed, and pearls. River sasi is a regulation that regulates things that should not be done in a river. For example, when the Lompa fish in Haruku State have entered the river, the public is prohibited from disturbing or catching it. There is also a prohibition for people not to wash kitchen materials in the river, men are prohibited from bathing mixed with women, are prohibited from washing clothes or any laundry materials passing through drinking water containers, motorized boats or types of speed boats that enter the river may not start the engine, wood trees on the banks of the river around the location of sasi should not be cut except for sago trees. Meanwhile, land sasi consists of forest sasi and animal sasi. Forest sasi covers various kinds of objects that are on land. The object which sasi applied is planting, both those planted by people and those that grow themselves. These plants are plantation crops to meet daily needs, such as coconuts, nutmeg, fruits, rattan, resin and cloves. Animal sasi are applied to certain animals whose forest location is protected and their catch is arranged according to the needs of the local community. For example, sasi to protect cuscus, the animals that can be found in the country (village) of Titawai. These animals have started to become rare due to deforestation to make gardens or logging for various development needs.

2) Personal Sasi is sasi that is applied by someone to something that already belongs to them and is reported to the village government. This personal sasi only applies to forests sasi.

3) Religion sasi is sasi determined by religious leaders. This sasi is also called spiritual sasi or belief sasi because it is based on trust. This relates to native beliefs or religions that lived in society when they did not yet follow official religions such as Moslem and Christianity. Belief sasi is closely related to people's belief in the strength of ancestral spirits, and the power of the universe in the past.

4) Negeri / Kampong sasi is a prohibition that regulates social life among people in the village. These rules include a ban on making noise on Saturday nights and if you want to make an event at night in the form of a party and others must get permission from saniri country. On Sundays, people are prohibited from going to the sea or into the forest unless there is an important need but must get permission from the Kewang. People are not allowed to dry the roof or burn grass, shells, etc. on the street and hang clothes on the fence. Women are forbidden to climb trees in inappropriate clothes, and when they return from the river, it is forbidden to wear cloth at the level of their breasts. Men are prohibited from wearing sarong during the day and may not wear underpants or a towel and walk on the highway.

5) Meanwhile, Babaliang Sasi is a form of negeri sasi for the sake of improving the welfare of the country's children. This type of sasi only exists on Ambon Island and is carried out in countries on the island in different ways.

The implementation of as is led by the kewang institute, which is a customary institution consisting of representatives of each soa. The customary institution is led by a kewang chief who is appointed according to inheritance from the progenitor based on heredity. The implementation of sasi begins with a meeting of kewang to determine the natural resources to be sasi. Through kewang meetings, resources or areas that are closed to exploitation activities are determined, this is referred to as the close sasi. During the closing of the sasi, no one is allowed to take or damage the resource habitat, until the time that is then allowed to return (sasi open period). The results of the kewang meeting are then passed on to all residents of the country, complete with regulations and sanctions for violators. This is always done to keep reminding the public about sasi culture and after that, a sign of sasi is posted. All of kewang are obliged to secure the rules of sasi, hold sasi meetings and impose sanctions on people who violate the rules of sasi.

Sasi is marked by a series of closed sasi ceremonies namely a statement that the prohibition came into force by giving sasi marks. Generally, the sign is in the form of a leaf, which is installed according to the type of resources that are sated or in the form of wood bound with young coconut shoots and plants at the boundary of the prohibited area. Furthermore, at the opening ceremony, the mark will be lifted through a series of traditional ceremonies as a sign that the ban is no longer valid. After the opening ceremony is over, then the owner can take the cooked results.

As with other forms of tradition or custom, if there is a violation of the sasi tradition, sanctions will be imposed by the country's authorities and ancestral spirits. The heaviest and most feared sanctions in the past were sanctions given by ancestral spirits. Therefore people are very afraid of breaking sasi. If there are people who violate sasi, which is taking plants or marine products during the period of Sasi's closure, the punishment given by the government of the country, namely the king and the apparatus of the offender, is to be arrested, demonstrated before

the general public and receive other physical punishment such as: flogging, be fined, forced labor and ostracized from the midst of community life. The punishment is not too severe as the punishment that will be given by spirits or spirits of ancestors, among others: children who are sick continuously and eventually die so that the family does not have any descendants. The local term is close to mataruma [9].

In the perspective of cultural ecology, culture is a collection of experiences and knowledge of community adaptation strategies to always be able to survive in their ecosystem. The basic understanding of the cultural ecology approach is that humans are part of living things which must always maintain an adaptive relationship with the ecosystem where they exist. Humans must be able to adapt to their environment through cultural media, in order to survive. As a result of the adaptive process of humans to the environment in which they live, a construct of cultural values that they consider to be good and can be useful for the continuity of the process of human life. Cultural values are sets of rules that determine good and bad. These cultural values are also often mentioned as customary behaviours that function to regulate, control, and give direction to human behaviour and actions in society.

The culture of the Maluku people determines their value orientation when interacting with the Creator, nature, and fellow humans. The *sasi* tradition is the cultural value of the Maluku people to maintain human adaptive relations with the surrounding environment. Cultural values in the *sasi* tradition contain customary rules of conduct that regulate and control the actions of individuals in society not to take certain natural products within a specified time limit. *Sasi* as a cultural value has ethical values including restraint, respect for other living creatures, and also a positive attitude towards future generations. Through the implementation of the tradition of *sasi*, cultural values are internalized in the life of the Maluku people and become a guideline in daily behaviour.

At the beginning of its implementation, the tradition of pure *sasi* was influenced by customs and culture. For example, when someone falls from a tree in a forest and causes that person to die, *sasi* will be performed on the tree and the forest where the tree is located. This was done because the community believed in the spirits of the ancestors who were looking for a place to live. Therefore, the place must apply customary *sasi* with the aim of not taking more victims. Likewise with the *sasi* conducted on natural resources, both on land and at sea. Giving *sasi* to a potential natural resource is intended so that the potential of natural resources is not exhausted. When *sasi* was conducted, the community believed that the natural resources were guarded by their ancestral spirits. Customary *sasi* is carried out by traditional leaders, where they make contact and interaction with ancestral spirits using local languages accompanied by recitation of spells. During the traditional *sasi* ceremony cigarettes, betel, areca nut and lime are provided, which are believed to be offerings to the ancestors. In practice, the customary *sasi* is overseen by the king, head of *soa*, *saniri*, *kewang* and *marinyo*, who are elements of the customary institution. Violations on customary *sasi* will receive sanctions, fines or penalties from customary institutions and ancestral spirits. The punishment of ancestral spirits is the most feared punishment. This punishment is usually in the form of a *mataruma close*, which means that a family cannot have children. Even if they have children, the child will experience illness until death.

Over time, as well as the presence of religion in society, the values and teachings of the religion adopted by the local community also mingle with the cultural values in the *sasi* tradition. This is evident in the application of church *sasi* and mosque *sasi*. Church *sasi* is enforced in areas where the majority of the population adheres to Christianity, for example in the Land of Haruku, the State of Liliboi (Abubakar 2019) and in the Village of Eti (Judge and Nurizka 2008).

The form of church *sasi* implementation is families who want to do *sasi* convey their intentions to the congregation and on Sundays when worship is held. The congregation will then make an announcement, then all the equipment that will be used in the procession must be prayed specifically by the pastor at Sunday services in the church. This marks the process of closing the church *sasi*. Since then the family-owned garden will be enforced by the church. Plants or trees that are *sasi* are marked with *sasi* like a crossed, barred wood. *Sasi* church is usually done by several families together. Just as the process of closing the church *sasi* is based on a prayer by the pastor, so even when the church *sasi* is opened, it is based on prayer during the church service. The first yield at harvest is given to the church and also the priest. If someone commits an offence while the church *sasi* is in progress, then the community believes that the person concerned will receive punishment from God for violating God's commands.

Meanwhile, mosque *sasi* was carried out in areas where the majority of the population was Moslem. The mosque became an institution that holds the authority to regulate environmental management. Based on the agreement between the mosque's pilgrims, the timing of harvesting, maintenance, and relations between humans and the environment is centralized in communication facilitated by the mosque's imam. The opening and closing of *sasi* were carried out in a ceremony held at the mosque (Rahim et al. 2014). The application of the mosque *sasi* can be found in the Misool area, Raja Ampat Regency, Papua (Zuhdi 2017)

Before the entry of the Mosque, *sasi* was carried out in honour of the leaders (deities) who then also asked permission from the occupants or supernatural beings in the area. This ritual is led by the head of *adat* and all

aspects of the community involved in it. They believe that when they ask for permission, it will be protected from danger during fishing.

After Moslem entered Papua around the 15th century, sasi then changed in its designation, process and function. If before the tradition of sasi was shown to the deity, then after the entry of Moslem, sasi was then addressed to the Almighty, Allah SWT. In addition, there was also a change in the process, where the sasi ritual was once equipped with offerings for offerings to the gods. After the Islamic religion was present and merged with the local culture, sasi rituals were then performed without offering offerings, enough with joint prayers to make it easier for fortune and be given salvation. The sasi ritual is held on Friday, which begins with a prayer on Thursday night. After the Maghrib prayer on Thursday night, the tradition tool called as Tifa will be beaten repeatedly as a sign to the community if a joint prayer will be held. Each family will bring a food tray to the mosque or village hall, then joint prayer will be held, led by the village priest. After that, the whole community will eat together at the mosque.

The values of the teachings of Moslem straighten or change the mindset of the people so they can accept the presence of sasi without containing the polytheistic elements. The change in mindset was caused by the level of understanding and knowledge of the people who began to be open to differences and tolerance. Thus, Moslem enters and instills Islamic values, such as salawat to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), prayer facilitates fortune, and prayer of salvation. The change that occurred in the ritual of Sasi was acculturation between the Misool community culture and Moslem religion. Islamic religion enters and changes the mindset of the community, eliminating things that can cause shirk, but does not eliminate the characteristics and the main part of the ritual sasi.

Conclusion

The sasi tradition is the cultural heritage and values of the people of Maluku, which were passed down from the ancestors with the aim of preserving nature and also the potential of natural resources, which is still being carried out today by the people of Maluku and also some regions in Papua. The Sasi tradition, which was originally based on cultural values, was then mixed with religious values after religion was present in the midst of society. The power of religion can be the basis in governing society and at the same time can be merged with ideas, activities, and cultural values that have developed in society. Culture and religion can work together, including in terms of maintaining, managing and preserving the environment as seen in the implementation of the Sasi tradition.

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