



The Syncretism Of The Bissu Customs Of Pangkep, South Sulawesi With Islamic Law

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the phenomenon of syncretism between Bissu customs in Pangkep Regency, South Sulawesi, and the principles of Islamic law. Bissu, as customary leaders, have spiritual, social, and cultural functions that have been passed down through generations. Their identity, which straddles both male and female (calabai), and their particular ritual practices often spark debate from an Islamic perspective. They are often marginalized or ostracized by society because they are considered to reject the inherent nature of men, even though they are actually men, but within their bodies, they possess the souls and feelings of women. This study uses a normative-empirical approach based on interviews with traditional, religious, and community leaders, as well as a literature review referring to the Quran, Hadith, and the opinions of Islamic scholars. The results of the analysis show that Bissu customs can be accepted as long as they are within the corridor of monotheism and do not contain polytheistic practices, while rituals with metaphysical spiritual nuances need to be reinterpreted according to maqāṣid al-syarī'ah in order to maintain public welfare.

Keywords: Appalili; Bissu, Islamic Law, Syncretism, Bugis-Makassar Culture

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji fenomena singkretisme antara adat Bissu di Kabupaten Pangkep Sulawesi Selatan dengan prinsip-prinsip Hukum Islam. Bissu sebagai pemangku adat memiliki fungsi spiritual, sosial, dan budaya yang telah diwariskan secara turun-temurun. Identitas mereka yang berada di antara laki-laki dan perempuan (calabai) serta praktik ritual tertentu seringkali menimbulkan perdebatan dalam perspektif keislaman. Mereka biasa dimarginalkan atau dikucilkan diantara masyarakat karena dianggap tidak menerima sebagai kodrat laki-laki, padahal mereka sesungguhnya laki-laki, akan tetapi dalam tubuh laki-laki memiliki jiwa dan perasaan sebagai perempuan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan normatif-empiris berdasarkan hasil wawancara tokoh adat, tokoh agama, dan tokoh masyarakat, serta kajian literatur yang merujuk pada Al-Qur'an, hadis, dan pendapat ulama. Hasil analisis memperlihatkan bahwa adat Bissu dapat diterima selama berada dalam koridor tauhid dan tidak mengandung praktik kesyirikan, sedangkan ritual yang bernuansa spiritual metafisik perlu dimaknai ulang sesuai maqāṣid al-syarī'ah demi menjaga kemaslahatan.

Kata Kunci: Appalili, Bissu, Hukum Islam, Singkretisme, Budaya Bugis-Makassar

INTRODUCTION

Pangkep, a regency in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, boasts a unique cultural richness. Bissu are one of the oldest traditional figures in the Bugis-Makassar cultural heritage. They serve as ritual leaders, guardians of customary sanctity, and performers of important ceremonies such as Appalili.

Bissu are an indigenous belief group that has existed since pre-Islamic times. Bissu adheres to a belief system that worships ancestral spirits and plays a vital role in community life. However, with the arrival of Islam in South Sulawesi in the 15th century, a process of syncretism occurred between Bissu beliefs and Islamic teachings.

The syncretism of Bissu and Islamic law in Pangkep is an interesting phenomenon to study. In Pangkep, the Bissu still exist and receive support from social, government, and some religious leaders. However, their gender identity and certain spiritual practices are often questioned as to their relevance to Islamic teachings. However, according to internal Bissu, "They remain men, but have the souls and feelings of women." The process of Bissu syncretism and Islamic law in Pangkep is also influenced by social and political influences. During the Dutch colonial era, they attempted to eradicate Bissu beliefs and replace them with Christianity, but the Pangkep community maintained their beliefs by adopting Islam as its official religion. After independence, the Indonesian government also attempted to promote Islam as the primary religion, but Bissu remain an important part of Pangkep's cultural identity. Therefore, this study critically examines how the syncretism between Bissu customs and Islamic law was formed, the limits of tolerance, and how the two can coexist harmoniously within a Muslim society.

Theoretical Study

1. The Concept of Syncretism

Syncretism is the process of blending two belief systems or cultures. In the context of South Sulawesi, syncretism is evident in the integration of pre-Islamic Bugis customs with Islamic teachings since the 16th century. Historically, Bissu possess five main characteristics that make them sacred: they are neither male nor female, they do not marry, they do not menstruate, and they have a spiritual role. They are believed to be able to act as intermediaries between the human and spiritual worlds and maintain the balance between humans and nature.

2. Islamic Law and Accommodation of Customs

Islam respects customs through the fiqh principle of 'al-'ādah muḥakkamah' (custom can be the basis for law), as long as it does not conflict with the Qur'an and Hadith. Thus, customs can be maintained as long as they do not violate the principles of monotheism and morality.

References from the Qur'an and Hadith, namely QS. Al-Hujurat: 13, emphasize that ethnic and cultural diversity is part of Allah's will; QS. Al-Maidah: 2 encourages cooperation in goodness and piety; The hadith narrated by Ibn Abbas

regarding the prohibition of imitating the opposite sex is used by some scholars in discussing the identity of the Bissu.

METHODS

The research method used in this study is a qualitative one with a normative-empirical approach, integrating Islamic legal analysis with the socio-cultural realities of the community. The normative approach is conducted through a review of Islamic legal sources, including the Qur'an, hadith, and the opinions of scholars relevant to the issue of customary and religious syncretism, particularly regarding the concepts of tawhid and maqāsid al-syarī'ah. Meanwhile, the empirical approach was conducted through field data collection in Pangkep Regency, South Sulawesi, using in-depth interviews with Bissu traditional leaders, religious leaders, and local community leaders to gain a comprehensive understanding of the practices, roles, and social perceptions of the Bissu. The data obtained were then analyzed descriptively and analytically, linking Islamic legal norms with evolving cultural practices to identify common ground and potential tensions between the two. Furthermore, this study also utilized literature as supporting data to strengthen the conceptual and theoretical analysis, resulting in comprehensive conclusions regarding the position of Bissu customs from an Islamic legal perspective and their implications for the public good.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Field Findings

Interviews with traditional leaders indicate that the Bissu continue to perform ritual functions such as Appalili and various other traditional events without claiming them as part of religious teachings. They understand the boundaries between custom and religion. Religious leaders in Pangkep stated that Bissu are not required to attend weddings or other Islamic rituals, thus preventing a mixture of worship. Their presence is accepted as long as it does not conflict with Islamic law.

2. Sharia Dimension

From an Islamic legal perspective, Bissu customs, which are socio-cultural in nature, do not conflict with Islamic law. However, certain spiritual practices, such as communicating with ancestral spirits, require reconsideration because they may conflict with the principle of monotheism. Modern interpretations tend to view these practices symbolically, rather than theologically.

3. Scholarly Perspective

Contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Wahbah Zuhayli explain that Islam is flexible in dealing with local cultures as long as they do not undermine the basic principles of religion. Maqāsid al-Shari'ah is an important instrument for assessing whether a custom brings benefits (maslahah mursalah) or harm.

4. Harmonization of Sharia and Custom

In Pangkep Regency, this harmonization is clearly visible: customs are preserved as cultural identity, while religious aspects continue to adhere to Islamic law. The government, religious leaders, and the community view Bissu as cultural symbols, not religious figures. Thus, the syncretism that occurs is not a blending of beliefs, but rather the coexistence of cultural values within Muslim society.

"It's okay for bissu to exist as part of a tradition and culture, as long as it's within reasonable limits, as long as it doesn't conflict with Islamic teachings. Bissu don't interfere with their traditions during weddings and marriages, as they simply participate as ordinary guests." The Bissu traditional community is not closed to outsiders, especially the government, religious leaders, and community leaders. Every Bissu traditional activity always involves the government, religious leaders, and community leaders in Pangkep Regency, particularly in Sigeri District. "They collaborate, including in religious guidance. They are always present at every invitation from the Sigeri District Religious Affairs Office in Pangkep Regency, including government invitations."

5. Balance between humans and their environment

The presence of Bissu is believed to maintain balance with nature and the environment, especially during traditional ceremonies, such as the appalili ceremony, and other activities. At that time, there was a war between two great kingdoms, the Bone and Gowa kingdoms, but the rice farmers in Pangkep did not want to be involved in the fighting. "Bissu maintain harmony and balance between humans and their environment." In Bissu tradition, the most famous event is the appalili event in the first rice field ceremony where the Bissu carry out the ceremony according to their customs and do not mix religion.

6. Islamic Law Perspective

In the Koran Surah Al-Hujurat: 13

God bless you *وَقَبَائِلَ شُعُوبًا* وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ وَأَنْثَىٰ O mankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.

This verse contains several fundamental principles:

a. Diversity is part of God's will.

God created humans in various ethnicities, cultures, traditions, and social identities. Differences are not to be argued about, but to be accepted and managed wisely.

b. The purpose of diversity is "lita'arufū" (getting to know each other).

This encompasses several things, including: mutual understanding; mutual respect; and cooperation for the greater good.

c. The primary benchmark in Islam is piety, not cultural identity.

Culture, customs, ethnicity, and social attributes do not determine nobility; what determines is adherence to the values of monotheism and morality. Although this verse does not address the Bissu specifically, its principles are highly relevant in understanding the relationship between Bissu customs and Islamic law.

d. Islam Recognizes the Existence of Customs and Cultural Diversity

Bissu are part of the Bugis cultural identity, existing before Islam spread in South Sulawesi. This verse emphasizes that differences in traditions are part of God's creation. Therefore, it is understandable that: the existence of local cultures such as Bissu does not automatically conflict with Islam, and Islam does not erase culture, but rather filters, rectifies, and directs it.

The principle of "lita'arafū" encourages dialogue between Custom and Sharia. This verse encourages openness and mutual understanding between Bissu and religious leaders, fostering social harmony.

Interview data also shows that: Religious leaders accept Bissu as long as they do not conflict with Sharia; the government and community sit together at traditional events such as Appalili and other events; and there is a space for healthy dialogue between custom and Islam. This aligns with the spirit of the above verse to build peaceful social relations.

e. Islam Values Custom Based on Benefit and Monotheism

This verse emphasizes that dignity is determined by piety, not cultural form.

In the Bissu context:

Acceptable as social values, as cultural symbols, as traditional functions in agricultural ceremonies (Appalili), their role as preservers of tradition, as expressions of art and cultural heritage.

What is being reviewed are spiritual beliefs that resemble metaphysical intermediaries, ronggeng-ronggeng rituals, prayers, and practices that could potentially lead to polytheism. This is how Islam maintains what is good and corrects what is wrong. Surah Al-Maidah, verse 2, provides a normative framework for the relationship between custom and sharia through the principle of ta'āwun 'ala al-birr wa al-taqwā, namely the obligation to cooperate in goodness and piety and the prohibition of cooperation in sin and hostility. In the context of Bissu customs in Pangkep, this verse provides the basis for justifying socio-cultural cooperation between religious leaders, the government, and traditional leaders as long as the customary practices are within the realm of social good and do not conflict with the principle of monotheism. Therefore, cultural rituals such as Appalili are acceptable as a form of preserving tradition, while certain spiritual elements involving metaphysical communication with ancestral spirits are not included in the scope of cooperation permitted by sharia. Thus, QS. Al-Māidah: 2 serves as a conceptual boundary that distinguishes cultural aspects that can be accommodated from ritual practices that need to be rectified according to Islamic law.

Ibn Kathir's interpretation explains that the command "ta'āwanu 'ala al-birr wa al-taqwā" encompasses cooperation in all forms of obedience and public welfare, while the prohibition "wala ta'āwanu 'ala al-ithm wa al-'udwān" emphasizes the prohibition of supporting activities that are sinful or polytheistic. Al-Qurtubi added that customs that do not conflict with Sharia may be maintained, but practices containing non-Islamic spiritual elements may not be supported. Al-Tabari also interprets this verse as a boundary between cooperation that is approved by Allah and cooperation that violates Sharia. These three interpretations confirm that Bissu customs can be accommodated within the cultural sphere, but their metaphysical ritual elements do not constitute cooperation permitted by Sharia.

CONCLUSION

A study of the Bissu community in Pangkep shows that the relationship between custom and Islamic law operates harmoniously without any clash of principles. Field findings indicate that the Bissu community performs cultural functions such as the Appalili and agricultural rituals without claiming them as religious teachings. Religious leaders and the local government also interpret the Bissu as a cultural element, not part of Islamic religious practice, thus preventing syncretism of beliefs. From a sharia perspective, Bissu socio-cultural customs fall into the category of 'urf', which is acceptable as long as they do not violate the principle of monotheism. Cultural elements that bring social benefits, such as preserving traditions, maintaining social relations, and maintaining balance with the environment, can be accommodated within the framework of Maqāṣid al-Syarī'ah. However, spiritual practices that lead to metaphysical communication with ancestral spirits require refinement because they potentially conflict with the principle of monotheism.

Contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Wahbah az-Zuhayli emphasize that Islam is accommodating to local cultures as long as they do not touch on areas prohibited by sharia. This aligns with the message of Surah al-Hujurāt, verse 13, regarding the recognition of diversity and the importance of building social relationships based on mutual understanding (lita'ārufū), as well as Surah al-Māidah, verse 2, which limits cooperation to the realm of goodness and piety. Therefore, it can be concluded that the existence of Bissu in Pangkep does not conflict with Islamic law as long as they function as cultural preservers, not as religious authorities. Harmony between custom and sharia in this region is maintained through dialogue, guidance, and clear boundaries between cultural rituals and Islamic teachings, allowing both value systems to coexist in society without causing religious or social conflict.

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