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# The Integration of Islam and Local Culture in Okol Tradition in Madura

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#### **Abstract:**

The presence of Islam in the Nusantara contributes to the diversity of cultures in the Nusantara, which then forms Islamic traditions in various regions. One of them is the Okol tradition in Madura, East Java. This study aims to examine the integration of Islamic values and local culture in the Okol tradition, especially in Madura. There are three discussions, namely the explanation of the relationship between Islam and local culture, the history and development of the Okol tradition in general and specifically in Madura, and the last is analysis of the integration of Islamic values and local culture in the Okol tradition. This research uses qualitative methods with data collection techniques through interviews, observation, and documentation to get accurate and in-depth results. Researchers also relied on articles and news to support the research. This research produces several important points, namely that religion and culture have a close relationship. Islam without culture has no form. Then, the Okol tradition is a tradition carried out from generation to generation by the Madurese community to wait for the rain to come. The analysis of the Okol tradition confirmed that the mixing of Islamic values with local culture is real, which can be observed from the Okol events series such as the Okol orchestra, the reading of Du'a, and the wrestling match. This study is expected to provide a clearer description of Islamic values and local culture in the Okol tradition in Madura.

Keywords: Islam, Local Culture, Okol Tradition

#### Abstrak:

Kehadiran Islam di Nusantara memberikan sumbangsih terhadap keanekaragaman kebudayaan di Nusantara, yang kemudian membentuk tradisi-tradisi bernuansa Islam di berbagai daerah. Salah satunya ialah tradisi Okol di Madura, Jawa Timur. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dan budaya lokal yang ada pada tradisi Okol, khususnya di Madura. Terdapat tiga pembahasan yang didiskusikan, yaitu pemaparan hubungan agama Islam dan budaya lokal, sejarah dan perkembangan tradisi Okol secara umum dan secara khusus di Madura, terakhir analisis mengenai integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dan budaya lokal dalam tradisi Okol. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi untuk mendapatkan hasil yang tepat dan mendalam. Peneliti juga mengandalkan artikel dan berita untuk menunjang penelitian. Penelitian ini menghasilkan beberapa poin pentingnya yaitu bahwasanya antara agama dan budaya memiliki keterkaitan yang erat. Agama Islam tanpa budaya tidak memiliki bentuk. Lalu, tradisi Okol merupakan tradisi yang dilakukan secara turun temurun oleh masyarakat Madura

dalam rangka menunggu datangnya hujan. Penelaahan pada tradisi Okol ini memberikan penegasan bahwa integrasi nilai Islam dengan budaya lokal nyata adanya, yang dapat dilihat dalam rangkaian acara Okol yaitu permainan orkes Okol, pembacaan do'a-do'a kemudian pertandingan pergulatan. Hal ini terlihat Kajian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan penjabaran lebih jelas terkait nilai-nilai Islam dan budaya lokal dalam tradisi Okol di Madura

Kata kunci: Islam, Budaya Lokal, Tradisi Okol

#### **PENDAHULUAN**

Humans as social creatures cannot be separated from cultural values and religious teachings, so humans cannot avoid the intersection between culture and religion. Religion comes from God and is absolute, while culture is a relative human product (Izza, 2018). Islam itself is present in a cultured nation. Before the arrival of Islam, the people of the archipelago had been attached to various kinds of customs or traditions. The entry of Islam in the archipelago contributed to the diversity of the archipelago's culture. Islam enriches and adds Islamic colors to local traditions that have existed before, such as traditions from Java, Aceh, Madura, and others.

The culture of a particular community contains life policies and socio-cultural values that must be preserved, which then characterize the locality of the area. It should be noted that the adjustment of Islam to local wisdom does not eliminate the importance of the culture, although it can subsequently change practice (Ferdiansyah, 2019). Therefore, it is important to examine local Islamic traditions from different perspectives, because each tradition has its meaning and purpose. The Okol tradition in Madura is interesting to study as an object of research.

The Okol tradition is a tradition carried out to wait for the arrival of rain. According to several sources, the Okol tradition was originally carried out in various regions in East Java and Madura. However, only a few still maintain the existence of this tradition, such as in Pamekasan district, Madura. Some villages continue to maintain and preserve the Okol tradition, such as Badung and Akkor Ban villages in Palenggaan sub-district, and Plakpak village in Pengantenan sub-district. Likewise, several villages in the Sumenep area. The Okol tradition itself is carried out during the long dry season, with the hope that it can provide peace while waiting for rain. The Okol tradition consists of Islamic values and local culture, which is what moves researchers to clearly describe Islamic values and local culture in the Okol tradition.

Studies on the integration of Islam and local culture have previously been conducted (Ferdiansyah, 2019) in the Merariq tradition of the Sasak tribe, (Nurdin, 2016) in the Maulod tradition in the Acehnese community, (Maryamah and Ratnawati, 2018) in the Bongkar Bumi tradition in Cupang Village, Gempol District, Cirebon Regency. All three examined acculturation or integration of religion and culture but in different traditional objects. Similarly, the study under study is a study of the integration of Islam and local culture in the Okol tradition in one of the areas on the island of Madura.

The previous Okol tradition has also been studied by (Wahid et al, 2022), but the study is still descriptive and only focuses on Akkor village. (Hasan and Susanto, 2021) also discussed the Okol tradition briefly and descriptively in one of the chapters of his book entitled Religious Relations and Local Traditions (Phenomenological Study of the Dhammong Tradition in Madura). The research on the Okol tradition this time will go deeper in describing the values of Islam and culture in the Okol tradition in Madura, especially in Pamekasan and Sumenep.

Departing from the explanation above, there are three discussions that researchers study, namely how the relationship between Islam and local culture. Then how the history of the development of the Okol tradition in general and especially in Madura. Finally, researchers describe the integration of Islamic values and local culture in the Okol tradition.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative method. This qualitative research is intended to explore the natural conditions of the object of research, where the researcher acts as the main instrument. Data collection is done through triangulation techniques, namely combining various data sources. Data analysis is inductive/qualitative, with an emphasis on understanding the meaning of making generalizations (Sugiono, 2013).

Data collection techniques in this study used observation, documentation, and direct interviews with relevant figures. Researchers conducted observations and documentation on Okol tradition activities in Plakpak village, Pamekasan on October 13, 2023. The researcher also interviewed an Okol activist in Pamekasan, namely Mr. Zainal Abidin on the same day. By making observations, the researcher participates in ritual activities so that he can feel the closeness and see the Okol tradition taking place.

In addition, the author also relies on several articles and news about the implementation of the Okol tradition in Madura to add to the research sources. The results of the source data are then described and analyzed by the researchers of Islamic values and local culture in the Okol tradition in Madura.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### **Islam and Local Culture**

Indonesia is known as a multicultural nation. With the existence of many tribes in Indonesia, local traditions and cultures are very diverse. The presence of Islam in the archipelago then brings together local cultures with Islam and forms new cultures that contain Islamic values. This is the result of integration between Islam and local culture in various forms, both assimilation and cultural acculturation.

Local culture itself is a term that has a blurred meaning, between regional culture or tribal culture. In everyday language, local culture is often synonymous with regional culture. However, according to Sidi Gazalba in Khadziq, the term is inaccurate because the boundaries of a region are determined by a law in which there is not necessarily cultural similarity. Therefore, Sidi Gazalba defines local culture as tribal culture (Khadziq, 2009).

Culture in a society is a value system that guides the life of the local community and the basis for behavior. Culture is always attached to humans, which coexists with religion. Religious practices will always interact with culture because the formation of religious practices of a person or society is influenced by culture. This interaction between religion and culture can even give birth to a new culture (Khadzid, 2009).

The relationship between religion and culture does not mean that religion must adjust to the reality that exists in society, but religion is expected to direct the community to leave everything that contradicts religious rules (Wahyuni, 2018). In this case, religion selects cultures in society and determines whether these cultures are continued, accommodated, or abandoned.

Religion as a value system has certainly experienced a process of acculturation and collaboration with cultural pluralism, especially in the archipelago as a result of human actions or those that are still in the thoughts or attitudes of humans themselves. Islam in this case was revealed in the Arab nation, so its culture and understanding were constructed in accordance with the Arab nation (Roibin, 2009). However, with its adaptive nature, Islam can blend with local culture in various places where Islam is spread. Thus, it can be

understood that Islam without cultural influence cannot develop and spread to people around the world.

After experiencing a long process, Islam can be accepted by the inhabitants of the world including Indonesia. However, Muhaimin AG in Muti'ah et al. observed that after Islam was adopted and accommodated with local culture, the face of Islam that appeared in the frame of local culture was often not recognized or even misunderstood by many people, especially observers from outside. This can be understood if the socio-religious discourse of the community, for example, the Javanese community in the 1960s and decades thereafter, tends to see the thick influence of animism, Buddhism, and Hinduism that developed pre-Islam and the thin influence of Islam (Muti'ah et al., 2009).

Islam was able to influence local culture by providing a foundation of values and moral principles for society. Islam also teaches individuals to live their lives based on religious principles, such as practicing justice, not hating each other, and maintaining honor. On the other hand, local cultures are able to absorb Islamic values and adapt to Islamic teachings (Hadinata, 2023).

Islamic tradition itself is everything that comes from or is associated with or gives birth to the soul of Islam. The existence of Islamic traditions in Indonesia can be seen from traditions that are based on Iman (believing), Islam (surrendering), and Ihsan (doing good) (Muti'ah et al., 2009). Islamic traditions are based on trust and belief in Allah, with the aim of surrendering, and there are no bad elements in it. We find many local traditions with Islamic nuances in every corner of Indonesia in various forms.

## **Okol Tradition Existence**

The tradition of begging for rain is widely practiced in various regions in Indonesia, such as the Armarohimin Tradition in Minangkabau, the Ujungan Tradition in Banyumas, the Ojhung Tradition, and Okol in Madura. Okol is a traditional wrestling sport that at first glance is similar to the Sumo martial arts from Japan. This Okol tradition is often held in Madura, Surabaya in Sambikerep District, and Gresik in Setro Village, Menganti District. Of the three regions, Madura, especially Pamekasan and Sumenep, most often carry it out (Utomo, 2022).

Okol in Sambikerep, Surabaya is held at every Earth Alms celebration which aims to be grateful for the crops obtained by farmers. Wrestlers are required to wear udeng or headbands and scarves on the body to knock down opponents in Okol. While Okol in Gresik is held in the dry season by farmers after the harvest which is also enlivened by Earth Alms and Remo Kaulan. Each wrestler is given two rounds and each winner will be pitted against another winner. Okol in Gresik is divided into several categories, namely children, teenagers, adult men, and women. The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud) designated Okol in Gresik as an Indonesian Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2017 (Utomo, 2022).

The implementation of traditions generally binds to a certain time or moment (Tsauri et al., 2023). The Okol tradition in Madura is carried out to accompany several events such as pigeon races, celebrating the anniversary of the discovery of springs, or asking for rain. Based on various sources, the Okol tradition, especially in Madura, is often carried out during the long dry season to beg for rain. However, according to Zainal Abidin, rather than calling Okol a tradition to bring rain, Okol is more accurately referred to as a tradition to wait for the rain to fall (Abidin, 2023).

There are different opinions about when the Okol tradition in Madura was carried out. One source states that this tradition has been carried out since the time of their ancestors in Madura hundreds of years ago (Wahid et al., 2022), while another source states that this tradition began at the time of Indonesian independence (Abidin, 2023).

H. Fadil, an elder in Nyalabu Daja Village in the Indonesian Times said that the Okol tradition was born from a quarrel between residents who fought over water during the long dry season. This quarrel always occurs every time the dry season so the Madurese people agree to carry out the tradition of competing every year during the dry season (Ramhana, 2015). If traced, the origin of the Okol Tradition itself is still uncertain. Residents today only understand that the Okol they always organize has been a tradition for a long time, without knowing when exactly. They believe that this tradition must be preserved.

Among the many areas in Pamekasan and Sumenep districts, only a few still preserve and routinely organize the Okol tradition every year. In Pamekasan itself, only the sub-districts of Proppo, Palengaan, Pengantenan, Larangan, and Pamekasan City (Ramhana, 2015). Then, only a few villages still regularly hold Okol, such as Nyalabuh Laok, Plakpak, and Akkor villages. The Okol tradition in Sumenep is still held in the Batu Putih and Batang-Batang sub-districts (Hasan and Susanto, 2021). Okol is usually held in the final months of the dry season. Okol continues to be held almost every week in various areas until the rains come.

Zainal Abidin, an Okol activist in Pamekasan, said that in Okol activities a committee was also formed to condition the event. The committee of this event is determined by the organizer of Okol. The Okol tradition can be organized by anyone as long as they can become organizers who are fully responsible for the event, both the place and time of implementation, and the prizes prepared for the winners. The time of implementation is Friday, Tuesday, or Wednesday in the afternoon around 14.00 WIB until before Maghrib, although some regions start the ritual in the afternoon (Abidin, 2023).

As a tradition believed to bring down rain, the Okol tradition in Madura can take many forms. In the Sumenep area, especially Batu Putih and Batang-Batang, the tradition of asking for rain is accompanied by the playing of traditional musical instruments, called the Okol orchestra in the middle of the field and the midst of hundreds of people gathered. The musical instruments are as follows:

- a) Three or two kentongan with white, red, and black motifs made of tarebung with slits on both edges. These kentongan are placed on the ground on their backs with rubber on the bottom wadding.
- b) A xylophone or ghambhang also called dhuk-dhuk is played by two musicians facing each other.
- c) A pair of small cymbals made of iron called kerca, which are connected with one thread.
- d) Then a bamboo flute (perreng) or soleng (Bouvier, 2002).

Okol tradition in Pamekasan usually starts without traditional music. Okol in Pamekasan starts directly with a prayer together, which is then continued with the struggle or Okol. The series of events continued with the reading of prayers led by a kiai in the middle of the field. The recitation of prayers is then also followed by the local community who also gathered in the field with khusyu'. The prayers that are recited vary, they can be the recitation of the verse of the chair, wirid prayers (Hasan and Susanto, 2021), istighasah or tahlil, as well as prayers for rain and prayers for God's protection during Okol (Ferdian, 2019).

Okol also known as Keket is competed in the competition ring that had been prepared by the committee. A total of 17 pieces of bamboo are stuck in the field or rice field and tied with raffia ropes around them (Danafia, 2023). Matches can be participated in by all people

who are male, children against children, teenagers against teenagers, adults against adults. Matches are made as fair as possible, even by pairing opponents based on body shape.

There are several requirements before competing, such as participants are required to take off their top clothes, participants are prohibited from extending their nails to avoid cunning tactics, participants and supporters are prohibited from gambling, and most importantly, losing participants and their supporters are not allowed to hold grudges against winning participants because Okol is a sport that highly upholds sportsmanship and brotherhood (Abidin, 2023).

In Okol matches, several committees guard each corner of the match ring, and one senior committee who is an observer as well as enlivening the match with loudspeakers. The match between two opponents begins when the referee sounds the whistle. The agility contest is carried out for about 5 minutes depending on how long the participants can survive without falling to the ground (Hasan and Susanto, 2021). When one of the participants can knock out the opponent, then he becomes the winner.

Both winners and non-winners get a prize, the difference is that the winner gets a bigger prize. The prizes prepared by Okol organizers also vary. Okol organizers in Plakpak provide a sarong for each winner and a pack of cigarettes for the loser, while Okol in other areas provides 5 kg of rice for the winner and a pack of cigarettes for the loser.

The Okol tradition, if observed, is a local tradition that is as it is, seemingly very simple but also very lively. In addition to being an annual ritual to wait for the rain to fall in Madura, the Okol tradition has developed into an activity to strengthen the bonds of Madurese people between villages and even sub-districts. No doubt that this tradition has become one of the local traditions that are still being preserved by the local community.

# Islamic Values and Local Culture in Okol Tradition

The integration between Islamic values and local culture can be found in the majority of Islamic traditions in the archipelago. This integration is an effort made by the community to maintain their local culture while strengthening their faith and piety in Islam. The integration of Islam and local culture can also be observed in the Okol tradition in Madura, where there are performances that are local Madurese culture and rituals of reading prayers that are prayed to Allah SWT.

The Okol tradition, as previously described, is organized in a series of events. The tradition of asking for rain in Sumenep, especially in the Batang-Batang and Batu Putih

areas, begins with traditional music. Helene mentioned that the Sumenep district is a productive area in the field of performing arts and temporal arts, as well as coherent in the social and cultural fields (Bouvier, 2002). Not surprisingly, the tradition of asking for rain that is still held in the Sumenep area begins with traditional music.

The music that accompanies this tradition is called orkes Okol, which actually accompanies other routine events such as pigeon races, fights (keket or Okol), and even rituals to ask for rain. The number of Okol orchestra players varies, usually consisting of one xylophone player, two or three kentongan players, two players for a pair of small metal cymbals and a bamboo flute, as well as singing in the Sapo' Alam group from Batang-Batang (Bouvier, 2002). This traditional Madurese music was originally created and intended to accompany other traditional events, especially in the accompaniment of rituals asking for rain (Bouvier, 2002).

The next series of Okol rituals is the reading of prayers by a kiai or cleric sitting cross-legged in the middle of the field where Okol is held. As a tradition of asking for rain, prayers must be part of it because only to Him are all requests and requests granted. There are no specific prayers offered by the Kiai in the Okol tradition. A source said the prayers could be prayers for rain in times of drought, for protection and safety for the community, especially the participants who will compete in the Okol tussle afterward, and other prayers.

As a region that is almost 100% Muslim, Madurese people are very enthusiastic about organizing these kinds of traditions. Therefore, in certain areas that still preserve Okol, the local community also follows the reading of tahlil or istighasah together on the field led by a kiai or ustadz before starting the Okol match. It can be understood that Islamic values in the Okol tradition are still emphasized in addition to local culture. The last and also the core part of the Okol tradition is the wrestling match. In the previous discussion, it has been explained about the provisions and how Madurese-style wrestling is held. According to Zainal Abidin, this wrestling is another form of the famous Carok tradition in Madura (Abidin, 2023).

Carok itself in Madurese means fighting or fighting for honor (Handayani and Misbah, 2019). Carok can be said to be an effort to defend and maintain a man's self-esteem with physical violence. Carok cases in Madura always stem from feelings of humiliation because their self-esteem is harassed. The settlement or more precisely the revenge taken is by Carok

(Mawaidi and Zuchdi, 2021). Seeing this, the Carok culture in Madura certainly has no use value and mudharat, so maintaining it is wrong.

The existence of the Okol tradition in Madura seeks to reduce Carok in Madura. The fight that originally originated from the lust for revenge was modified into entertainment wrapped in a wrestling match. Therefore, in the provisions of Okol, wrestling participants must have a clean heart without any urge to take revenge against the opponent. The wrestling match is purely an event of agility. Both winners and losers get prizes as an appreciation for participating and enlivening the Okol tradition. This can also minimize jealousy between wrestling participants which might cause personal or even group quarrels after the wrestling event takes place.

The Okol tradition is one of the many traditions in Indonesia that integrates Islamic values with local culture. In this case, the Okol tradition preserves local culture in Madura in the form of the Okol orchestra game and the Okol wrestling that accompanies the ritual of waiting for the rain to fall. By reciting prayers led by a kiai or ustadz, it is hoped that they can ask Allah to send rain immediately to their land which has experienced a long drought

# **CONCLUSION**

This research on the Okol Tradition was conducted to reveal and explore Islamic local cultures in Indonesia that have not been reached or known to many in general. Researchers found conclusions that the Okol tradition, which is a tradition of waiting for rain in Madura, is the result of integration between Islamic values and local culture in Madura which is still being preserved. The Okol tradition in Madura is held in a few villages in several subdistricts in Pamekasan and two areas in Sumenep. There are several series of activities in the Okol tradition that contain local Madurese culture, namely the Okol orchestra game in Sumenep and the Okol struggle which is a modification of the Carok culture. In addition, it also contains activities of Islamic value, namely the reading of prayers by a kiai and then reading istighasah and tahlil by the local community. The organization of the Okol tradition in Madura is something that must be preserved as an Islamic local culture. There are many Islamic traditions of this kind in various other regions in Indonesia that may still not be reached by researchers. Thus, researchers must trace other traditions and describe whether there is integration between Islam and local culture in them or not.

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