

The Indigenous Muslim Minority Group In Ma'undai (Keo) of Central Flores: Between the House of Islam and the House of Culture

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Introduction

There is a great compilation of written materials about Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) province by Dutch writers. Most of the material is devoted extensively to various local cultures and Christian missionaries activities; very little deals with Islam. The written sources about Islam we have at hand were collected mostly by missionaries, travellers, colonial reporters, and by untrained and non-anthropologically oriented individuals. Most of them were largely unaware of the richness of the cultural characteristic that exist among the indigenous¹ Muslims of Flores. Their ethnographic information is rather fragmented. It is also characterised by evaluative and judgemental statements about the quality of the local Muslims, on the basis of Christian missionary values and a theoretical dichotomy between central and peripheral notions of Islam, as recently being questioned by Abu Lughod (Abu-Lughod, 1989; cf. Appadurai, 1986).

However, the previous studies, except for those recent studies by Fox (1984), Gomang (1993), and Barnes (1995/1996), have no great anthropological value. This paper will illustrate the struggle of the indigenous Muslims in Keo

of Central Flores (NTT) to answer the quest of how to maintain their multiple self-identity both as Muslims and as indigenous people who are committed to a particular local culture. Their notion of Dar al-Islam (House of Islam) as a part of their Muslim way of life and their appreciation of the local culture expressed through the notion of a house (House of Culture), as represented by Muslim community of Ma'undai in Keo, will be the main focus of my study, with particular reference to the concept of 'house-based society' as expressed through their cult-houses or ritual houses and social organisation.

Theoretical Contributions

This ethnographic data about Muslim minority group in Ma'undai of Central Flores (Keo) might provide interesting material from which to develop a comparative understanding of various Indonesian Muslim communities. At the same time, it can contribute to current anthropological analysis of issues relating to the search for the anthropology of Islam, as pioneered by Evans-pritchard (1949), Geertz (1960, 1968), Eickelman (1976), and others. The examples from Geertz's and Eickelman's studies are worthy of consideration. For Geertz (1968), different societies such as Marocco and Indonesia transform Islam to fit their own

¹ What I mean with the indigenous here is the local Muslims whose ancestors are the local people. They are Muslims by marriage or by birth. The indigenous are different from the migrants.

Maumbawa in the West to Nangaroro in the East. However, there are very few who still maintain the local belief. Catholicism⁵ was introduced to Keo in the 1920s, when Fr.Y.Ettel, SVD started to visit several government schools and baptise a few students in Tonggo, Wajo up-North of Maunori and Sawu (Muskens, 1974b: 1171). Most of the Catholic Keonese are subsistence farmers and stock raisers, while the majority of Muslims live as fishermen and traders along the south coast of central-Flores. The Muslims of Keo community are a very small group. They are about 3,626 in number, which makes up only 20% of the total Muslims in Ngada⁶ (12.625 in 1997) or 2.44% of total Muslims in NTT Province (251 469 in 1996/1997).

The Muslim community of Ma'undai, however, is part of the desa (administrative village) of 'Udi Worowatu in the kecamatan (sub-district) of Mauponggo in the south-coast of kabupaten Ngada (district of Ngada). 'Udi Worowatu⁷, since its foundation in 1959 as an administrative village (desa gaya baru) consists of six traditional hamlets (nua) occupied by two clans and one sub-clan. However, when Worowatu was still under the Kepala Mere its territory included the hamlets of Witu and Ma'udara, which to some extent is known as a confederacy of Bedo - Dokarea. In 1997 the total number of Muslims in Maundai was 164 (38 families) out of a total population of 707, who occupies 147 hectares of land. These Muslim group, like their Catholic relatives, are primarily dry-land farmers who produce maize, yams, cassava, fruits and vegetables. Some of them are the traditional fishermen.

Since the average the rainfalls in rainy season is 1700mm (in November - April) and 280mm in the dry season, their land is only suitable for coconut trees. Small part of their lands is suitable for coffee, cloves and vanilla. The majority of the Muslim women are actively partici-

pating in three 'traditional hand-weaving groups' Sama Rasa, Ma'e E Noa and Rahmat, which are regarded as among the best tenon ikat producers in the whole district. The variety of these economic and agricultural activities contribute to the income per capita of the people which is calculated at Rp.397.307 per year (1996).

Although this Muslim group lives around a religious centre, the Mosque Nur Ilahi, without any other cultural monuments at the centre of their nua, (hamlet), they still strongly appreciate a certain incorporation into the nua 'oda (village life) and the Sa'o Mere (large house) or S'ao Peru (the source house) of the traditional * (nua) of Worowatu, Udi and Kodinggi.

The Islamisation of Ma'undai (Kei)

An indication of contact with Islam or quasi-Islam⁸ by the people of Keo can possibly be traced back to a local ruler of Tonggo by the name of Amaqira in 1601-1603. It is said that during the struggle for power between the Portuguese and Islam, and in the hope of becoming chief of the whole island of Flores, Amaqira allied himself with the King of Tallo from Macassar in fighting against the Portuguese in Solor and Ende islands. The troop of Macassar sailed to Solor with 40 ships and 3,000 men, but failed to occupy the Portuguese fort. They then sailed west to Sikka and Paga in the Sikka district, then to Tonggo to meet Amaqira and to prepare a new attack on Ende island. However, they failed in this expedition (Suchtelen, 1921:9; Rouffaer, 1923/1924:209; Visser, 1925: 299-301; Muskens, 1974a: 379).

The existence and role of the ruler Amaqira in Tonggo as the pioneer of contact with Islam is still in dispute, although various writers have mentioned him in their reports. His name has been recorded only in historical documents, but there is no oral tradition concerning his silsilah or genealogy. Several references

(mushola) Nur Ilahi in Ma'undai in 1825 after he returned from the pilgrimage. The second indigenous man from Mauara, who adopted Islam was Haji Ibrahim Embu Sawo'6 (d.1979). He established a Madrasah School in Ma'uara in 1959, where Muslim boys and girls were trained in Quranic readings and chanting. Although the Madrasah did not survive long, some students were well prepared before joining the Pendidikan Guru Agama Islam (School for training the Muslim teachers) in Ende.

Soon after Matundai came into contact with Islarn, another Muslims from Ende by name Jawa Nori (or Badhuru) and an Arab by name Habib Idrus Al-hadat"

15). Long before the Islamic Renewal Movement initiated by K.H.Ahmad Dahlan (1912), Haji Abdul Semad had performed his pilgrimage. He still appreciated his incorporation into his source house (sa'o pu'u) in Worowatu and still contributed his part of cooked rice and corn to various traditional rites.

Some of his descendants explained that since he adopted Islam when he was thirty of age, Haji Abdul Semad even paid the trip for his Hajj with the money he collected and saved from raising pigs.

16). Haji Ibrahim was also well-accepted as a leader among the Muslims and the non-Muslims in the confederacy of Bedo (=Kodinggi) and Doka Rea (=Mauara). It is interesting to note that during his life time, one of his daughters by name Ida, converted to Catholicism and married a son of Nggua Ndana, a mosadaki from Worowatu. Later after his death, his two sons performed the pilgrimage to Mecca (Haji Juma Ibrahim and Haji Muhammad Ibrahim). While two other children, a son and a daughter converted to

Catholicism.

17). My informants in Maunori (Alwi bin Ja'far Al-Hadat, an Imam and Hasan Algadry, one of the relatives and Chatib of the mosque Bait al-Rahman, Maunori) mentioned that Sayid Habib Idrus AlHadat was born in Kupang in 1880s. His father, Habib Umar Al-Hadat was born in Tarim (Hadramaut) and migrated to Kupang in 1850s. He was a close relative of Syeikh Syarif Abu Bakar bin Abdulrahman bin Abu Bakar Al-Gadrie from Pontianak, who was known as a horse trader in Ende. Al-Gadrie was funded by the Dutch and transferred to Sumba and then to Kupang until he died (1897) in desa Air Mata (See Fox, 1977: 163). The second Imam from the mosque Bait al-Rahman, Matunori (Habib Muhammad Idrus Al-Hadat, son of Habib Idrus Al-Hadat) also died in Kupang in 1994 and was buried at the left side of Syeikh Syarif's tomb. One of the reasons that that Arab family migrated to Maunori, was that Habib Idrus Al-Hadat had married Ipa Saqina (alias Ipa Ende) a granddaughter of Susu Ele Terpase. In the early years, Susu Ele Terpase, one of the famous figures in Mbonga Wani/Ende had assisted Embu Kunda Ema from Matunori in a tribal war against the people of Ndai. As the reward, Susu Ele Terpase had been given a piece of land in Ma'unori tau koe nua kadi oda (to be settled). The result to this day is that the Arabic families have to participate in various rites and activities dealing with the cult-house of Embu Mite Pale (Kunda Ema's descendant) in Nuamuri. Such a form of land-gift is based on the adat contract that states the tii mona wiki pati mona dai (never taking back a gift for ever).

settled in Matunori in 1914 and built the mosque Bait al-Rahman. The Arab family in Ma'unori, that is the descendant of Sayid

change in ethnic status (Douglas, M., 1976:93; Syamsudin, 1991: 7). A similar style of expression was used in Europe before the nineteenth century. The Europeans who adopted Islam was said to have turned Turk, since Turkey was the only source of information about Islam at the time (Lewis, B., 1973: 20).

19). Nadjran is a district (Wadi) in northern Yaman. In tradition, there was a merchant of Nardjan who first spread Christianity there after he had been converted in al-Hira. This Christianity got a further impetus in the time of Justinianus from monophysite Christians, who expelled from Byzantine territory, came to Nadjran via Hira. A later persecution of Christians in South Arabia connected to a Jewish King by name Dhu Nuwas who died in 525. The Arabic literature, especially the commentator of the Holy Quran 85,4 mentions about Dhu Nuwas persecution (cfr. Yusuf Ali's Glorious Quran, pag. 1714). The Prophet Muhammad was said to have received an embassy from the Christian Nadjrans and concluded a treaty with them which guaranteed the possession of their property and the free exercise of their religion in return for a fixed contribution on their part such as kharaj (land tax) or jizyah (head tax).

proof of the permissibility of truces concluded with the sovereigns of neighbouring

territories, who preserve their internal autonomy in exchange for tribute which constitute an external and formal recognition of the Muslim sovereign's authority (Abel, 1965: 127). In other words to say that the ummat Islam also guarantees the faith, the persons, possessions and religious

organisation, albeit on a lower level, of dhimmis, those are Christians, Jew and Zoroastrians. Even further, an Ummat (Islam) can build up a treaty with the neighbored for a peaceful interaction which is known as

Dar al-Sulh (the house of treaty).

The readers might be confused with Kartosoewirjo's Dar al-Islam²¹ (1948/1962), a Muslim Organisation in West Java (Indonesia) that pursued armed struggle against the Dutch colonial forces. During this period the Dar al-Islam engaged in guerrilla activity against the Dutch army and the Dutch-sponsored state of Pasundan (Jackson, 1980: 11).

Apart from such an ambiguous and a misleading notion of Dar al-Islam, I am in line with most of the Muslims who still appreciate its fundamental notion as a

20). Nubia is an old name of a territory and people to the South of Egypt. When the Arabs conquered Egypt, they found the Nubians on the southern frontier were Jacobite Christians. Yakut quotes two hadiths in which Nubians are praised by Muhammad as faithful friends and useful slaves (Brill, E.J., FEI, vol. VI, p.944). However, a more acceptable information on the contact between the Arabs and the Nubians, should be during the two invasions (A.D. 641-642 and 651-652). The result of this two raids was the relations between Muslims and the Nubians were regulated by a treaty which ordained a system of mutual tolerance and non-interference; the tribute of slaves from which the Nubians undertook to pay annually was not so much a sign of submission as the basis for an exchange of commodities. 21), At a glance, Kartosuwirjo's Dar al-Islam might be seen as a symbolism of Islamic fanaticism and

performing their individual and communal prayer. For the Muslims of Maundai, conversion to Islam is a step to place themselves in a territory of cleanliness, which to some extent distinguishing them from the unclean non-Muslims.

There are two local terminologies which can be used to trace the notion of cleanness and uncleanness among the Muslims of Maundai. The first expression is *tati pedu* (drying feces). It is an expression to describe an activity of going to toilet without using water to clean, but using other things such as stone, leaves, and papers. Such a practice has been very common among the villagers before the introduction of healthy toilet. The second expression is *ttai jamba* (watering feces). It is an expression to describe an activity of going to toilet and using water to wash oneself. For the Muslims, *tati jamba* is part of the Muslim way of life which is easier to do it along the coast, with the seawater. Although the modernisation and the introduction of hygienic projects to the villages is very rapid nowadays, such a practice of *tati pedu* is still common among people of *desa Udi Worowatu*. Apart from the hygienic awareness, the Islamic notion of *ta'i jamba* to some extent is reminiscent to a Hadith (an oral tradition of the Prophet Muhammad SAW) saying: 'cleanliness is a part of the belief (Islam)'.

MUSLIMS IN MAUNDAI (KEO) AND ADAT: THE QUEST OF IDENTITY

The quest of identity has been a main issue to be coped with by the Muslims in Maundai (Keo). How can they live up to their multiple self-identity as Muslim, as Keo people and the Indonesian as well. In answering such a question, this part tries to illustrate the inter-relationship between the local Muslims, the local Catholics and the migrant Muslims. How

do the Muslims adapt to *adat* and to Shari'ah as well?

To understand the interrelationship between Islam and *adat istiadat* (the local

culture) in Maundai community, it would be helpful if we consider the types of Muslims in the light of the description suggested by Van Suchtelen (1921) and Buis (1925/1926). Van Suchtelen's description of 'an indigenous Muslim in Flores as still holding a dual belief: a belief in Islam and traditional belief in bad spirits, taboos, *adat* (local customs) and myths of origin' would in fact describe common Islamic practices in a particular context of time and space (Suchtelen, 1921: 169-170).

Although van Suchtelen tends to categorise the indigenous Muslims as 'having a dual belief' and Buis²² labels them as 'nominal', this generalisation is not absolutely true for the Muslims in Maundai (Keo) nowadays. Almost seventy years after the generalised classification of van Suchtelen and Buis, most of the Keo Muslims have

benefitted from a marked improvement in religious education. In relation to their religious practices, the Muslims in Keo, as represented by Muslim community of Maundai, still hold that the Quran is their Holy Book, the centre of faith, and that it teaches the five pillars of Islam, which all Muslims must try to observe. Yet, because

22). In his article 'Het Mohammedanisme op Flores' (1925/1926), Simon Buis, SVD has ethnographically classified the Muslims in Flores into three types: the indigenous are nomi-

The muslim community of Matundai vil- lage, 70 percent indigenous, still appreciate their common derivation as being traced back either to a sato ptuu (source

house) located in the villages of Worowatu, Udi and Bedo, or to the same quasimythical grand-ancestors such as Tonga Mbu'e Sota²⁴ (from Sota) and Embu Nitu²⁵ (from Paulundu). In relation to the notion of sato (house), the indigenous Muslims of Maundai are incorpo- rated into their sato mere (large house) or sato putu (source house) in Udi, Worowatu and Bedo/Kodinggi. For the people of Udi Worowatu, the

24). Tonga Mbu'e So'a is a mythical in- fant-girl, found by Embu Nderu in So'a from a liana tree (tadi kada). She was brought up by Embu Nderu. Later, Embu Nderu and Tonga Mbue Soa moved down to South Coast of Flores through Maumbawa to Maundai and married a local man Taku Nuru from

Worowatu. Erom that marriage, Tonga Mbue Soa gave birth to Waja Ake, Waja Dee and Waja Sebho, who were the grand ances- tors of the people in Worowatu and Maundai.

25). According to Worowatu version that Mbue Nitu is also a puteri dewata (mythical girl), received by Embu Ndonga Wea (Paulundu) as an exchange from a Heavenly Old Man whom he caught, while he was stealing his palm-wine. However, the Paulundu version tells that Mbue Nitu was caught by

Embu Ndonga Wea when she was stealing his palm wine. Embu Ndonga Wea and Mbue Nitu married and gave birth to seven children. One of them was Embu Lengga Seko, who mar- ried a man from

Ngera. Then their daughter named Ndilu married Daba Nggo from Worowatu and be- came the

ancestors of the majority of the popula-

tion in Worowatu and Maundai.

notion of sato (house) can be classified into three levels of social unit. The smallest and the lowest one is their sato nditi (a resi- dential or a dwelling house). Several sa'o nditi form a sato mere (a large house). Several sato mere, which usually function as sato putu (source house), are united or incorporated by a sa'o nggua (ritual or cult house) such as sato enda or sato jara (the house of ritual horse- statue), sa'o wondi, sa'o tudu²⁶ and sa'o bhangga with their respective sacrificial posts such as peo and madhu.

Another core point to be taken into con- sideration in relation to sato (house) is the sig- nificance of the deke (the house-post). The deke (the house-posts) of the ritual houses al- ways refer to the role and the embodiment of the house-members. The structure of the ritual house of kampung 'Udi might give us an illu- stration. In kampung 'Udi there are four deke for the sato enda or sato jara (ritual houses). How- ever, each two house-posts of the ritual houses constitute a large house. The two deke nia (front house-posts) constitute the existence of sato mere (a large house) Doka Ora. These deke are held by the descendants of Embu Mame (the Wife-Giving Group). The deke nia dera singga (front-eastern house-post) is re- served for the descendants of the first wife. In this case is Hamid Abu Bakar, the acting Imam of the mosque Maundai. While the deke nia dera mese (front-western house-post) is for the descendants of the second wife. They are Nuga and Jata. On the other hand, the two deke dudu (back house-posts) constitute the existence of the sato mere 'Udu Wawo, as the descendants of the Ana Weta (the Wife-Taking Group). The deke dudu mena (eastern-back deke) is ob- served by the descendants of the older brother: Niga and Reja. While the

houses and large-house can not be separated from the concept of harmony in both the micro-cosmos and the macrocosmos. All the members of a nua 'oda (village) aim to live in peace, to maintain and enhance harmony, as they settle and cultivate a particular piece of hereditary land from their common ancestors. All of them are united in a system of native land tenure, in which ku tana (hereditary land) is handed on from generation to generation. There is a traditional adage saying: 'ine kita tana, 'ame kita watu [lit. our mother is land, our father is stone]. The adage, which is also a honourable title for a Land-Lord, implies a fundamental philosophy of their communion with their land. It also means that 'no one owns the land, however the land owns the people'. If one of the landholders (either Muslim or non-Muslim) breaks customary law, for instance by not taking part in traditional ritual, the mosadaki (the ritual leader) can decide to excommunicate those persons, who then forfeit right to their land for themselves and their heirs. Sometimes, someone can be donggo nua (excommunicated) by the mosadaki from all communal rights and responsibilities. It is clear that the notion of dar al-thaqaafa (the house of the culture) as represented by the ritual houses and the ancestral houses, seems to be recognised by those indigenous Muslims together with the notion of Dar al-Islam ('house of Islam).

In relation to the local Catholics who are the main adherent of the adat, the indigenous Muslims of Maundai (Keo) still appreciate the importance of good relationship. They still invite and visit each other during the time of death, birth, marriage, and circumcision. They sometimes share the financial budget for any religious celebra-

tions such as Catholic priest ordination and departure for Islamic

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 pllgrimage.

In March 1997, I was involved in a ka mea (a communal meal before departure) for my cousin Abdul Hamid bin Nura, who would perform his pilgrimage to Mecca. Hamid's position is significant and central in the ritual house of Bedo/Kodinggi. He is responsible for taking care of a deke from the sao nggua (ritual house) together with Archilaus Sabu and Michael Ora. As part of this ka mea, the active participation of the Catholic relatives was significant before undertaking a Mawlid Daiba'29 (an Islamic prayer). A ritual leader brought an offering of raw rice and live-chicken for the ancestral spirits in the sao puu, accompanied by an adat prayer. Then, the participants of that ka mea, both Muslim or non-Muslim relatives, shared the same food.

A part of the adat prayer runs as follows:

Eee 'embu kajo 'iro 'aro, You,
 our Grand Ancestors
 ta mata mudu rete do'e Who have gone to
 your rest of death
 mbeto doa ghewo doa Some of you we still
 remember, others are forgotten

'Ana 'embu miu Abdul Ifamid ta tau gati ngai
 Your beloved successor Abdul Hamid
 Mo'o mbana ta 'ena rada rita, ta dora 'ena
 nete noa is travelling a good path and an
 easy way

dheko 'odafonga k'oo bheda rada
 'agama. Following the religious teachings

Kami 'oa 'ena Ngg'ae rade n'ee

observation to two subjects of Islamic Law. The first one is the law of inheritance. The second is the haram and halal meat offered by non-Muslim. The Shari'ah has clearly set out the law of mirath (succession), declaring that there are three impediments to succession: homicide, difference of religion, and slavery (Abdur Rahman, 1992: 288-289). A hadith (the oral tradition from the Prophet Muhammad)

Susu ele negha demba mogha dika dapu todo sega begha Susu Ele arrived, the fire-place was torn to pieces 31). Based on my personal experience with the Saiyid's family in Maunori, I can say that although some might be conservative, the Hadramis are not fanatics. They tend to meet their non-Muslim friends. They are aware of the cultural adaptation. What ever changes the future may bring, I have no doubt that they will continue an influential element in Muslim society in Maunori and in Ende as well. This is really a challenge to what Soekarno has written in his Islamic Letters from Ende (1934/1935) saying that there was one learned Sayid in Ende. He could not fulfill Soekarno's hope for his knowledge was just based on Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), dependant, restricted and taqlid (uncritical attitude). The knowledge of the Quran and the fire of Islam seemed to have died, since the Fiqh was their only life-guidance, not the Word of God (Soekarno, 1964: 328). says that a Muslim can not inherit from an unbeliever and an unbeliever will not inherit from a believer³². Yet it seems that such a hadith and Shari'ah are not observed rigorously by the indigenous Muslims in Keo, since they still inherit and cultivate the hereditary land of their non-Muslim ancestors.

Moreover, the meat provided by their non-Muslim relatives is not rigorously considered haram or unlawful. During their visit to their non-Muslim relatives, they used to be asked to slaughter a chicken or goat in an Islamic way in order to provide halaP3 food. However in an unexpected visit, most of the local Muslims have no problem to take any halal meat prepared by their non-Muslim relatives. Afatwa by an Egyptian scholar, Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), seems to be unconsciously operating here also: 'The halal meat prepared by the ahl al-Kitab (people of the Book) is halal for Muslims'. Such afatwa seems to contradict the belief and practices of a majority of the Muslims, but it is acceptable in the light of the Holy Quran Chapter 5, verse 6 which reads: "This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Tule, ed., 1994: 171).

CONCLUSION

32). This hadith is taken from Riwayal Muttafaq 'Alaih. A majority of Indonesian Ulama adopts such a view to a point where they have added another hadith and a Quranic verse to support it. Another supporting hadith says: It is impossible to inherit reciprocally between two different believers (Riwayat Ashab al-Sunan). Q.4,141 is also used to strengthen their argument saying: 'And never will God grant to the Unbelievers a way (to triumph) over the believers' (see Rofiq, 1993: 144-145). 33). Halal, literarily means lawful. Halal meat means 'not pork and other lawful animals for Muslims' slaughtered by the People of the Book.

The historical evidence shows that Islamic dakwah started in Keo of Central Flores at the beginning of the seventeenth century, around

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