

An examination of Talal Asad's anthropological thought on the Islamic community of Sasak Lombok

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Abstract

Talal Asad's Islamic anthropological discourse on the Sasak Islamic Community of Lombok is the focus of this research. Asad examines how people's understanding of religion is constructed through discourses of power. Asad's discursive concept refers to the ways in which ideology and power are expressed and fought for through language, narratives and social practices. It refers to an analytical approach that observes how religion and power are reproduced, contested, and questioned through discursive practices in various cultural and historical contexts. Talal Asad's discursive tradition is then contextualized in the tradition of the Sasak Islamic Community on Lombok Island. The Sasak Islamic community, as the indigenous population of Lombok Island, has a distinctive religious tradition, which is closely related to Islam. To analyze this, a qualitative method is used with an anthropological approach by Talal Asad. This study explains the discursive practices of the Sasak Islamic Community tradition, which is influenced by the history of Islam and the history of the Sasak tribe on the island of Lombok. This study also shows that the identity, subjectivity, and social practices of Sasak Islamic individuals and communities on Lombok Island are influenced by the community's social construction of religion and power. The result of this construction gave birth to typical religious traditions, which are closely related to Islam, such as: *mulud*, *topat lebaran*, *perang topat*, and *rudat* dance.

Wacana antropologi Islam Talal Asad terhadap Masyarakat Islam Sasak Lombok menjadi fokus penelitian ini. Asad mengkaji pemahaman masyarakat tentang agama dikonstruksi melalui diskursus kekuasaan. Konsep diskursif Asad mengacu pada cara-cara dimana ideologi dan kekuasaan diekspresikan dan diperjuangkan melalui bahasa, narasi dan praktik sosial. Konsep ini mengacu pada pendekatan analitis yang mengamati bagaimana agama dan kekuasaan direproduksi, diperjuangkan, dan dipertanyakan melalui praktik-praktik diskursif dalam berbagai konteks budaya dan sejarah. Tradisi diskursif Talal Asad kemudian dikontekstualisasikannya pada tradisi Masyarakat Islam Suku Sasak di Pulau Lombok. Masyarakat Islam Suku Sasak sebagai penduduk asli pulau Lombok memiliki tradisi keagamaan khas, yang erat kaitannya dengan agama Islam. Untuk menganalisa hal tersebut, digunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan antropologi karya Talal Asad. Kajian ini menjelaskan tentang praktik-praktik diskursif tradisi Masyarakat Islam Suku Sasak yang dipengaruhi oleh sejarah Islam dan Sejarah suku Sasak di Pulau Lombok. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa identitas, subjektivitas, dan praktik sosial individu dan

masyarakat Islam Suku Sasak di Pulau Lombok dipengaruhi oleh konstruksi sosial masyarakat tentang agama dan kekuasaan. Hasil konstruksi tersebut melahirkan tradisi keagamaan khas, yang erat kaitannya dengan agama Islam, seperti: *mulud*, *topat* lebaran, perang *topat*, serta tari *rudat*.

Key words: *Talal Asad; Anthropology; Tradition; Society; Sasak Tribe*

Introduction

Religious traditions in the Lombok Community, especially the Sasak tribe, emphasize more on external traditions or rituals, namely traditions that can be witnessed by others using symbols, gestures, and even actions that can be observed by others as part of worship or devotion.¹ Asad has a critical view of the concept of society and religion by stating that religion is a complex social phenomenon, inseparable from the political, economic and cultural context in which it develops. Asad highlights that the Islamic religion practiced by the Sasak tribe is not just a religious practice, but also a social and political identity of the Sasak people. More than that, Asad sees that Islam is used to build and strengthen social hierarchies and is reconstructed in the local context.²

Besides Geertz, James Fox has a different view of religion and culture in the context of Sasak Islamic Society. Fox emphasizes the importance of the interaction between Islam and Sasak customary traditions in shaping identity. The beliefs of the Sasak people before embracing Islam were Hindu, it can be seen in the practice of customs that still retain some elements of Hinduism even after the entry of Islam. The process of acculturation and transformation of religious values reflects the belief system in Sasak society interacting and influencing each other. This is

¹H. Lalu Lukman, *Pulau Lombok Dalam Sejarah Ditinjau Dari Aspek Budaya*, 5th ed. Mataram: Sain Loco, 2008.

²Talal Asad, "Thinking About Tradition, Religion, and Politics in Egypt Today," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 42, no. 1 (2015): 166-214, <https://doi.org/10.1086/683002>.

realized and seen critically by Asad's stating that religion is not a single and isolated ethnicity, but formed power, history, and even interpretation.³

Robert Hefner is an American anthropologist, who has conducted research on Islam in Indonesia for more than 30 years. He stated that Sasak Islam can be an example of moderate and inclusive Islam in Indonesia. Hefner emphasized the importance of understanding the history and development of Islam in Indonesia, as well as appreciating the diversity of religious practices in the Sasak community. Hefner has a discussion related to context in this study. Robert W. Hefner is a prominent anthropologist whose research focuses on the complex relationship between Islam, politics and society, particularly in the context of Indonesia. His approach illustrates how religion can be a social force with significant influence on political life and social structures. There is a close relationship between his theory and the topic of this research.⁴

Hefner's anthropological theory focuses on political anthropology with a particular emphasis on the complex relationship between Islam, politics, and social dynamics. Hefner defines religion as a social force that has a major impact in organizing political life and the social structure of society. One important aspect of his theory is his in-depth research on democratization in Muslim-majority countries. Hefner looks at how Islamic values can coexist with the principles of democracy and civil society development. The relevance of Hefner's theory to anthropological studies of Sasak Islamic society in Lombok is clear. His approach will help researchers understand how Islam interacts with politics and influences social structures in this community. By delving deeper into the important

³Oman Fathurahman, *Shattaariyah Silsilah in Aceh, Java, and the Lanao Area of Mindanao* Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2016.

⁴Robert W. Hefner, "Islamizing Java? Religion and Politics in Rural East Java", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, no. 3 (1987), 533-54.

role of Islamic values and practices in local political life, this research can reveal the rich and complex nuances of the relationship between religion and politics in the Sasak community of Lombok.⁵

Hefner's work on democratization in Muslim-majority countries can provide important insights into the religious identity of the Sasak people of Lombok. How Islam interacts with democratic principles in this social context is an interesting aspect to study. Hefner also emphasizes the importance of open dialogue between religion and politics. In Sasak society in Lombok, where Islam plays an important role, researchers can explore how this dialog occurs and how it affects local religious and political dynamics. By adopting this approach, an anthropological study of Sasak Muslim society in Lombok will yield a better understanding of the complex relationship between religion, politics and society in the region. This will pave the way for analyzing how Islam and politics mutually influence and shape the identity and social life of the Sasak people of Lombok.⁶

In considering the relevance of Clifford Geertz and Robert W. Hefner's anthropological theories to Sasak Islamic traditions, we can consider some important aspects of each tradition.⁷ The commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday as a prime example is an important moment in the life of the Sasak people. For Geertz, this celebration is a symbolic expression of Islam recognized in their culture. Geertz will focus on the interpretation and meaning the community gives to the celebration and how it is reflected in daily life. *Topat* as the next tradition is also interesting to study from Geertz's perspective. In his symbolic approach, Geertz will look at the symbolic meaning of this celebration and how it is reflected

⁵Robert W. Hefner, "Whatever Happened to Civil Islam? Islam and Democratization in Indonesia, 20 Years On", *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 43, no. 3 (2019), 375-96.

⁶Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

⁷Amanah Nurish, *Agama Jawa: Setengah Abad Pasca-Clifford Geertz*, Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2019.

in the daily lives of the Sasak people.⁸

The views of these anthropologists suggest that the study of Sasak Islamic Society can provide valuable insights into cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia, as well as the importance of valuing indigenous traditions and interfaith tolerance in Sasak society. Such views can make an important contribution to efforts to understand and promote cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia. This paper discusses Sasak Islamic society when viewed based on Talal Asad's anthropological theory.

Talal Asad's Islamic anthropological theory

Talal Asad's ideas on Islamic anthropology contribute to understanding the relationship between Islam, culture and power. His ideas on Islamic anthropology contradict the traditional view of the interaction between religion and culture. The key concepts of Talal Asad's thoughts on Islamic anthropology,⁹ are: first, the social construction of Islam. Talal Asad highlights that Islam as a religion continues to be understood, interpreted and reconstructed in various cultural, historical and political contexts.¹⁰ Second, power and knowledge.¹¹ He highlights how political, economic and social interests influence knowledge about Islam.¹² And also how to maintain existing power structures by expanding knowledge about Islam that has been influenced by political,¹³ economic and social interests.¹⁴

⁸Hildred Geertz, "Antropologi Agama dan Sihir, I", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1975), 71-89.

⁹Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam", *Qui Parle*, Vol 17, no. 2 (2009), 1-30, <https://doi.org/10.5250/quiparle.17.2.1>.

¹⁰Talal Asad, "Thinking About Tradition..."

¹¹Talal Asad, "Anthropology and the Analysis of Ideology," *Man*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1979), 607, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2802150>.

¹²Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam..."

¹³Talal Asad, ed., "Thinking about the Secular Body, Pain, and Liberal Politics", in *Living and Dying in the Contemporary World*, California: University of California Press, 2019, 337-53, <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520961067-020>.

¹⁴Talal Asad, "Ethnography, Literature, and Politics: Some Readings and Uses of Salman

Third, the critique of universalism.¹⁵ He opposes the idea that a single model of Islam can be applied to all Muslim societies.¹⁶ According to him, this idea ignores cultural diversity and historical context.¹⁷

Talal Asad's three ideas about anthropology suggest that his thought about Islamic anthropology challenges simplistic or essentialist ideas about Islam. He highlights the complexity and dynamics of the relationship between Islam, culture, and power. References to explore Talal Asad's thoughts and understand his perspective and critical contributions to the study of Islam and power, namely: The book "Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity" (2003). This work explores the construction of ideas of secularism and modernity in the context of Islam.¹⁸ This article discusses Talal Asad's thoughts on religion, power and identity in the Islamic context. 4). A critical review of Talal Asad's contributions to Islamic anthropology and religious studies.¹⁹ The concept of Talal Asad's thought was used as an analytical knife to explain the social construction of the Sasak people on Lombok Island towards Islam, which gave birth to a unique Islam on this island. The uniqueness of Islam here is inseparable from the historical context, and the culture that exists and is passed down from generation to generation. The following sub-discussion will describe the History of Islam on Lombok Island.

Rushdie's The Satanic Verses", *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (1990), 239-69.

¹⁵Talal Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz", *Man*, Vol. 18, no. 2 (1983), 237, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2801433>.

¹⁶Talal Asad, "Equality and Inequality in Islam", *Man*, VI. 8, no. 2 (1973), 305-6.

¹⁷Talal Asad, "Reading a Modern Classic: W. C. Smith's 'The Meaning and End of Religion'", *History of Religions*, Vol. 40, no. 3 (2001), 205-22, <https://doi.org/10.1086/463633>.

¹⁸Ali Zaidi, *Islam, Modernity, and the Human Sciences*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015..

¹⁹David Scott and Charles Hirschkind, "Introductions: The Anthropological Skepticism of Talal Asad," in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*, Cultural Memory in the Present, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, 1-11.

History of the entry of Islam in Lombok

Islam entered Lombok Island in the 16th century AD.²⁰ The spread of Islam on Lombok Island is inseparable from the role of Sunan Prapen, better known as Sunan Ratu Gede. He was a descendant of Sunan Ampel from Java.²¹ The history of Lombok Island is written in the *Negarakertagama* book,²² which describes the rule of the Majapahit kingdom. Lombok is a strategic area; it is located on the trade route between the Eastern and Western regions of the archipelago.

Lombok Island was influenced by trade, marriage, and cultural ties with Arab, Persian, and Indian traders. Also, the people of this island interacted with the people on the island of Bali. These interactions influenced the style of Islam adopted by the Sasak people. The Sasak tribe is the original tribe that settled on Lombok Island. Before Islam entered the island, the people of Lombok adhered to Javanese Hindu beliefs. This is due to the influence of Javanese and Balinese Hindus who entered Lombok around the 13th-14th centuries AD during the Majapahit kingdom. In the 17th century AD, the Gelgel Kingdom from Bali and the Sultanate of Gowa from Sulawesi tried to expand their influence on Lombok Island, but the efforts of the two Kingdoms to spread Islam on the island failed, due to conflicts with local politics on Lombok Island, namely the Lombok Hindu Kingdom.²³

Islam was then able to enter and be accepted on the island of Lombok, due to the assimilation of local traditions by means of *da'wah* that was

²⁰Hasan Asy'ari Najmuddin and Mohd Arif Nazri, "Sejarah Kedatangan Islam Dan Tradisi Posan (Pesaji) di Pulau Lombok", *AlTurath Journal of alQuran and AlSunnah*, Vol. 4, no. 2 (2019), 50-58.

²¹Lalu Lukman, *Pulau Lombok Dalam Sejarah : Ditinjau Dari Aspek Budaya*, ed. Erman Rajagukguk, Mataram: Sain Loco, 2008.

²²H. Sudirman and Bahri Bahri, *Studi Sejarah Dan Budaya Lombok*, Selong: PUSAKANDA, 2014.

²³I Wayan Wirata, "A Study of Wetu Telu Syncretism in Lombok: Socio-Religious Approach", *Soshum : Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2018), 1, <https://doi.org/10.31940/soshum.v8i1.774>.

tolerant of these local traditions. This is what Talal Asad calls Islam as a religion, which continues to be understood, interpreted and reconstructed in various cultural, historical and political contexts.²⁴ The spread of Islam on Lombok Island was carried out in various ways, including by using puppetry. Puppet art containing Islamic teachings was delivered to the Sasak people of Lombok. In addition, the strategy of spreading Islam on Lombok Island was through trade, marriage, and even the establishment of Islamic educational institutions. In the end, Islam gradually became the dominant religion on Lombok Island, but there are still many other religions and beliefs among the population. Most of the population on Lombok Island now adheres to Sunni Islam, but a small number of people still adhere to Hinduism and animism.²⁵

Interpretation of the Lombok Sasak community towards Islamic teachings

The discussion of the interpretation of the Sasak people is related to the history of Islam and the history of the Sasak tribe on Lombok Island. The Islamic community on this island still adheres to the customs of the Sasak tribe. It formed an acculturation of local culture with the interpretation of the Islamic community on Lombok Island, which gave birth to the typical Islam of the Sasak tribe on Lombok Island.²⁶ One of the typical religious traditions, which is closely related to Islam, such as: *mulud*, *Lebaran topat*, *perang topat*, *merarik*, and *rudat* dance. In Talal Asad's view, the process of acculturation of Islamic religious values with local traditions reflects the belief system of the Sasak people on Lombok Island. This is in accordance with Talal Asad's thinking that religion is not a single and isolated ethnicity,

²⁴Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam", *Qui Parle*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (2009), 1-30, <https://doi.org/10.5250/quiparle.17.2.1>.

²⁵Sudirman and Bahri, *Studi Sejarah Dan Budaya Lombok...*

²⁶Erni Budiwanti, *Islam Sasak: Wetu Telu versus Waktu Lima*, Yogyakarta: LKiS Yogyakarta dan Yayasan Adikarya IKAPI dan Ford Foundation, 2000.

but is formed from power, history, and even the interpretation of the society in which it is located.

The Sasak people have a distinctive concept of Islam, namely *Watu Telu* Islam and the concept of *Watu Lima* Islam.²⁷ *Watu Telu* Islam is the result of the interpretation of the Lombok people who assimilate the traditions inherited from their ancestors with the teachings of Islam. They claim to be Muslim, but still practice local traditions. *Watu Telu* Islam is also interpreted as a synthetic form of the previous local beliefs of the Sasak people on Lombok Island (Hindu-Buddhist-Boda) with the Islamic belief of *Watu Lima*.²⁸ While *Watu Lima* Islam is the concept of Islam of the Sasak Lombok Tribe who adhere to Islam with the guidance of the sharia in the Quran and Hadith.²⁹

Talal Asad's perspective on the social construction of Islam can be used to explain that *Watu Telu* Islam is a construction of the Sasak people towards their understanding of Islam. This understanding then gave birth to interpretations and constructions in the cultural context of the Sasak Tribal Community. The form is the existence of a unique Islamic religion (Islam *Watu Telu*). This is in line with the thoughts of Talal Asad, who highlighted that Islam as a religion, continues to be understood, interpreted, and reconstructed in various cultural, historical and political contexts.

During the Dutch colonial period, the *Watu Telu* and *Watu Lima* Islamic communities often experienced conflicts that intersected. However, in the period after the G 30 S PKI tragedy, the *Watu Telu* Islamic community began to be banned by the government. However, various hidden areas on the island

²⁷Budiwanti, "Islam Sasak: Wetu Telu..."

²⁸Retno Sirnopati, "Agama Lokal Pribumi Sasak (Menelusuri Jejak 'Islam Wetu Telu' Di Lombok)," *Tsaqofah* 19, no. 02 (December 2021): 103, <https://doi.org/10.32678/tsaqofah.v19i02.3656>.

²⁹Ratna Sari, "Sistem Kepercayaan Suku Sasak," *ACADEMIA*, 2020. In Erni Budiwanti, *Islam Sasak; Wetu Telu versus Waktu Lima*, Yogyakarta; LKiS, 2000.

of Lombok still carry out the practice. During the Dutch colonization, the *Watu Telu* and *Watu Lima* Islamic communities often experienced conflict. After the G 30 S PKI tragedy, the government of the Republic of Indonesia began to ban the *Watu Telu* Islamic Community. However, this practice is still practiced in some hidden places on the island of Lombok.

The majority of the Islamic community in Lombok worship in accordance with the Syafi'i school of thought. The fact that Nahdlatul Wathan (NW), the largest organization on Lombok Island, explicitly adheres to the Syafi'i school of thought in the rules of worship, as stated in the organization's bylaws. In addition, religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) have emerged on Lombok Island. This organization, especially the Sasak Lombok Community, is more likely to adhere to the Syafi'i Mazhab even though there are four madhhabs.³⁰

One of the things that is synonymous with the Islamic community of the Sasak Lombok Tribe is the presence of "Tuan Guru" in the midst of society. Tuan Guru itself is a typical nickname for the kyai in the Sasak Lombok Tribal Community. Tuan Guru is a term for religious experts who master most religious fields. Tuan Guru itself has an important role in *da'wah* on Lombok Island. because most of these Tuan Guru teach Islamic sciences in assemblies or pesantren to this day.³¹

The social construction of Sasak on religion and power

Religious traditions in the Sasak Tribe on Lombok Island are an acculturation of Islam to the culture and customs that exist in the Sasak Tribe Community on Lombok Island. This is what gives color to the

³⁰Jun Mawalidin, "Peranan Tuan Guru, Ormas Islam Nahdlatul Wathan di Lombok Sebagai Wadah Ajaran Keagamaan dan Sosial", *IJTIMAIYA: Jurnal Pengajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2021), 107, <https://doi.org/10.21043/ji.v5i1.10960>.

³¹M. Ahyar Fadly, *Islam Lokal: Akulturasi Islam Di Bumi Sasak*, Pringgarata, Lombok Tengah: STAIQ Press, 2008.

Islamic Religion of the Sasak Lombok Community. When analyzed based on Talal Asad's anthropological theory,³² the identity, subjectivity, and social practices of Sasak Islamic individuals and communities on Lombok Island are influenced by the community's social construction of religion and power. The results of this construction gave birth to typical religious traditions, which are closely related to Islam, such as: *mulud*, *Lebaran topat*, *perang topat*, *merakik*, and *rudat* dance.

The history of the Sasak Tribe originated from Bali, then they migrated to Lombok. On the way, the Sasak tribe, which was originally Hindu, interacted with the Wali Songo's men, who spread Islam. Islam was then accepted by the Sasak people. Over time, they carried out the teachings of Islam while still adhering to the traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation.³³ The following is an explanation of the religious traditions of the Sasak Tribe on Lombok Island, namely: *mulud*, *topat lebaran*, *perang topat*, *merakik*, and *rudat* dance.

Mulud

Mulud,³⁴ This tradition is usually carried out when entering the month of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. That is the month of Rabi'ul Awal. What is unique is that in this month the Sasak people celebrate it with the *Maulid* tradition alternately every day in the month of Rabi'ul Awal. In the month of *Maulid* people invite relatives, relatives and friends to eat together. The food served was quite typical, ranging from traditional snacks to dishes that are often found in the month.

The history of the formation of the *maulid* tradition in Lombok itself began in the 16th century AD, namely since the first time Wali Songo

³²Talal Asad, "Thinking About Tradition..."

³³Sudirman and Bahri, "Studi Sejarah Dan Budaya Lombok"...

³⁴Suliadi dan Mahyuni, *Mulud Adat: Ekspresi Spiritual Masyarakat Sasak Bayan*, Bali: Nilacakra, 2022).

spread Islam in Gumi Sasak. This is evidenced by the establishment of the ancient bayan mosque in the Bayan area of North Lombok Regency.³⁵ A new social construction eventually formed new social dynamics due to the spread of Islam on the island of Lombok, so many traditions there were finally acculturated into Islamic traditions. That is why the prophet's *maulid* tradition in Lombok still uses traditional rituals in the process.³⁶

Lebaran Topat

Lebaran ketupat is a religious tradition of the Sasak Islamic community of Lombok Island, which is usually held in the month of Shawwal, precisely on the seventh day of the month of Shawwal or a week after Eid al-Fitr. On that day, impromptu *ketupat* vendors were found along the roads in some areas of Lombok Island. This tradition is usually carried out in conjunction with recitation activities and so on. Activities that are often found in this tradition are the people of Lombok flocking to tourist attractions around them with their families for a vacation and interspersed with eating *ketupat*.³⁷

This has been going on for years. Almost every year the coastal roads in Lombok are always filled with domestic tourists vacationing with their families. Moreover, in recent years Lombok Island has been named as one of the Islands with Halal Tourism Destinations achieved during the reign of T.G.H. Zainul Majdi as Governor of West Nusa Tenggara. From this statement, many tourist destinations on Lombok Island provide facilities

³⁵Muhibin Muhibin, "Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam Dalam Pendekatan Budaya: Analisis Pesan Dakwah Dalam Tradisi Maulid Adat Di Masyarakat Desa Sesait Kecamatan Kayangan Kabupaten Lombok Utara", *Fikroh: Jurnal Studi Islam*, Vol. 7, no. 2 (2022).

³⁶Dina Aulia et al., "Tradisi Maulid Nabi Masyarakat Suku Sasak: (Studi Di Dusun Gubuk Barat Desa Mamben Daya Kabupaten Lombok Timur)", *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, Vol. 8, no. 1b (2023), 589-601, <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v8i1b.1230>.

³⁷Ulfatun Hasanah, "Identifikasi Produk Atraksi Dan Segmentasi Pasar", *Jurnal Tata Sejuta STIA Mataram*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2019).

that can support the *Lebaran topat* tradition activities.

Lebaran ketupat was first implemented by one of the walisongo, Sunan Kalijaga. The tradition was then carried to the land of Lombok and then mixed with the customs in Lombok, leading to the birth of the tradition of *Lebaran topat*, which is known by the community to this day.³⁸ This proves that the Islamic religion spread by the walisongo was able to create a new social construction by adding Islamic nuances to the tradition of *Lebaran topat*. *Lebaran ketupat* begins with the term Roah. Roah is a series of activities reading *dhikr* while chanting *takbiran* in the mosque. After that, the community began to flock to the nearest tourist attractions to just eat *ketupat* with family and relatives.

Perang Topat

This tradition is held on the 15th of the seventh month according to the Islamic calendar and the 15th of the sixth month according to the Hindu calendar or more precisely on the full moon.³⁹ This tradition is carried out as an expression of gratitude for the abundant rice harvest. This tradition has a quite different history between the Hindu and Islamic versions, but the similarity of the story is in the context of the discovery of springs in the area.⁴⁰

This tradition has four stages in its implementation, the first of which is the first preparation by holding a meeting between the two communities. In the second stage, both religious communities perform the *penaek gawe*

³⁸M. Ma'ruf Misbah, "The Ketupat Eating Tradition on Lebaran Ketupat Day in Java," in *Proceedings of the 2nd Internasional Conference on Culture and Language in Southeast Asia (ICCLAS 2018)*, Tangerang Selatan: Atlantis Press, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2991/icclas-18.2019.3>.

³⁹I Wayan Suadnya dan Eka Putri Paramita, "Ritual Perang *Topat* Sebagai Strategi Komunikasi dalam Menjaga Kebhinekaan: Lessons Learned dari Tradisi Suku Sasak dan Bali di Pulau Lombok", *JCommSci: Journal of Media and Communication Science*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.29303/jcommsci.v1i1.6>.

⁴⁰Suparman Jayadi, "Rasionalisasi Tindakan Sosial Masyarakat Suku Sasak Terhadap Tradisi Perang *Topat*", *Sosiologi Agama: Jurnal Ilmiah Sosiologi Agama dan Perubahan Sosial*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2017).

ritual, which in general is parading the sacrificial animals that have been agreed upon around the temple as a form of gratitude to God Almighty. Then in the third stage is the core ceremony, namely the *perang topat*. The war here is a war between Muslims and Hindus using *ketupat* as a weapon. Then the last event is *Betete* or *Sarasuta*.⁴¹

Socially, there are several values that can be taken from this tradition. One of them is the value of brotherhood and tolerance between religious communities. Because as has been taught by all religions that tolerance brings happiness and peace.⁴² This is proven by the harmony that has been formed by the two communities who have coexisted in one area for many years. In religion, tolerance is a proof of the construction of religion which is then acculturated with traditions and customs in the Sasak tribe of Lombok so that these positive things continue to be preserved for generations to this day.

Tari Rudat

The Sasak tribe has a variety of diverse artistic traditions, one of which is dance. The dance art that is familiar to the people of Lombok is *Rudat* dance. This dance combines several diverse concepts, namely the Warrior Concept in the costumes, then the Sasak Silat Concept in the movements, as well as Islam and Sasak Language in the accompanying music. Some of the values that can be taken in this art, the first is *Tindih* is the basic value system of the personality of Sasak people who have commitment, consistency, and sincerity to defend the truth, goodness, beauty, and nobility of character originating from faith. The second is *Maliq* as a

⁴¹Ika Nurmiyati Ningsih dan Rosalia Indriyati Saptatiningsih, "Implementasi Multikulturalisme antara Masyarakat Hindu dengan Masyarakat Islam dalam Tradisi Perang *Topat*", *Jurnal Kewarganegaraan*, Volume 4, Number 2 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.31316/jk.v4i2.11724>

⁴²Jeko Spastyono et al., "Tradisi Kemaliq dan Perang *Topat* sebagai Strategi Membangun Perdamaian Yang Tangguh dan Replikatif di Indonesia", *Al-Adabiya: Jurnal Kebudayaan dan Keagamaan*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2023), 177-92, <https://doi.org/10.37680/adabiya.v18i2.3067>.

buffer value system, which means that Sasak people never do things that are inappropriate and useless. The third is *Merang*, which means that Sasak people must have a high value of social solidarity, which in turn includes the value of tolerance, concern for others, and the like. Then, the fourth, *Tatas*, means understanding and mastering the ins and outs of life with all its aspects to build prosperity and carry out duties as a caliph on earth. Fifth, *Tuhu*, means being serious, correct, and diligent in carrying out the tasks and work that he has undertaken according to his role and function in society.

Sixth is *Trasne*, which means developing love and compassion in building social interactions in the community. The value of *Trasne* is reflected in the song lyrics in the welcome dance. Then the seventh, *Reme*, can be interpreted as an attitude that expresses cooperation in work. All forms of work are done together without envy, not seeing each other (not helping), helping each other, loving each other, and taking care of each other (reminding, loving, and guiding). Then the eighth, namely *Paut*/right is a value system applied by the Sasak tribe in the form of a realistic attitude, acceptable to all circles, does not conflict with norms and rules, and does not offend others which in essence is exemplary. Then the tenth, namely *Patuh*, has the meaning of being in harmony, in line in the struggle, in agreement, and does not like to disagree and disagree. And the last one, *Pacu-pasu*, is an attitude that reflects seriousness, perseverance, patience, and fortitude in working. In other words, not lazy, easy to command, and work selflessly.⁴³

The values above are a result of the construction of religion, which is where a dance art that is part of tradition and custom then creates a thick

⁴³Muhammad Okta Dwi Sastra F. M. Marjo, "Pribadi Orang Sasak Dalam Teater Tradisional Kemidi Rudat Lombok", *Jurnal Elementary: Kajian Teori Dan Hasil Penelitian Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2019), 34-38, <https://doi.org/10.31764/elementary.v2i2.1298>.

Islamic nuance with the accompaniment music that includes *shalawat* and praise in the sasak language of Lombok.⁴⁴ In addition to having the values mentioned above, *rudat* dance also has meaning in each of its movements. One example is *silat* movements, movements asking for blessings to perform dance to movements apologizing if there are mistakes in the dance performance. Some of these points then make *rudat* dance a traditional dance art typical of the Lombok Sasak tribe and continue to be preserved from generation to generation.⁴⁵

Talal Asad's anthropological theory offers an in-depth perspective in understanding traditions in Lombok's Sasak Islamic community. In his framework, Asad emphasizes the importance of understanding the historical, political and social context in reading religious practices. For the Sasak, Islam is not an isolated entity, but closely intertwined with aspects of their local culture. Asad's approach allows for a broader understanding of how Islam is aligned with local traditions and beliefs, and how power and identity dynamics interact within the community. Through this lens, the complexity and dynamics of change in the religious and cultural life of the Sasak people of Lombok can be better understood. For example, the *Mulud* tradition in Sasak Lombok reflects the social construction of Islam in a distinctive local context. The Sasak people have a unique way of celebrating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad which reflects their cultural identity and traditions. The rituals and events of *Mulud* celebrations combine elements of Islam, such as dhikr and recitation of Quranic verses, with elements of local culture such as traditional music and

⁴⁴Muhammad Zaki Athhar, "Pendidikan Berbasis Keunggulan Lokal pada Madrasah Tsanawiyah di Kota Mataram," *Jurnal Schemata*, Volume 8, Number 2 (2019), 131-146, <https://doi.org/10.20414/schemata.v8i2.1351>.

⁴⁵Mohzana, Hary Murcahyanto, and Ainul Faizin, "Tari *Rudat* Anak Lembah Gunung Rinjani," *Jurnal Ilmiah Rinjani: Media Informasi Ilmiah Universitas Gunung Rinjani*, Vol. 10, no. 2 (2022), 17-26, <https://doi.org/10.53952/jir.v10i2.417>.

Sasak food. Likewise, the *Lebaran topat* tradition is a Sasak tradition that illustrates the merging of Islam and local culture in the social construction of Islam. *Topat*, a type of *ketupat* made from glutinous rice wrapped in coconut leaves, is served as a typical dish during the *Eid al-Fitr* celebration. This practice reflects the way Sasak people celebrate religious moments in a way that is integrated with their traditional customs.

In the tradition of *Perang Topat*, it is a unique tradition where the Sasak people engage in playful combat using *ketupat*. Despite the name “war,” it is actually more of a game and symbolism than an actual physical conflict. This tradition highlights the social construction of Islam in which the values of brotherhood, togetherness, and joy are celebrated in the context of local culture. The Dance Arts tradition in the form of traditional dances is a social construction that reflects the identity and values of the Sasak people. The dances contain elements that refer to the teachings of Islam or stories from the life of the Prophet Muhammad, but in a unique format and expression in accordance with Sasak culture

Interpretation on the Islamic society of Sasak

According to Asad, Islam can regulate various aspects of community life. For example, in the *Watu Lima* area there is a religious practice that applies Islamic law in everyday life in the Sasak tribe called *Watu Kapur*. *Watu Kapur* means that various Islamic teachings and values derived from the source of Islamic teachings, namely the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet, must be translated into everyday life as an individual and even as a social member. The social life that exists in the *Watu Lima* Community reflects Islamic values such as promoting and practicing the values of togetherness, equality, and justice. In addition, there is the practice of *Watu Telu* practiced in the Islamic Society of Sasak that emerged in the 16th century, which is

also known as *Old Lombok Islam* or *Bayan Lombok*.⁴⁶ *Watu Telu* comes from the Sasak language, *Watu* meaning stone, and *Telu* meaning three. The name refers to the three religious elements at the core of *Watu Telu* Islam, namely Islam, animism and Sufism. The animism element comes from the original beliefs of the Sasak people before the entry of Islam, while the Sufism element comes from the influence of Sufism teachings in Islam.

Watu Telu believers use the Sasak language during prayers, poems, and chants. They also use holy water from springs or holy wells as part of religious practices. In addition, in practice, *Watu Telu* Islam rejects practices that are considered contrary to Islamic teachings, such as the prohibition of eating pork, drinking alcohol, and holding traditional ceremonies that are contrary to Islam. Nonetheless, *Watu Telu* Islam is often criticized by Sunni Muslims because it is considered to contain elements that contradict Islamic teachings. Nevertheless, this movement still exists and has loyal followers on Lombok Island and its surroundings to this day

In Asad's terminology, the religious practices of *Watu Kapur* and *Watu Telu* reflect that Islam as a religion is not a monolithic entity, but Islam as a complex system that allows it to be influenced by various factors. Culture, knowledge, and even power can shape the understanding of Islam and its practices⁴⁷. Asad's critical thinking leads us to the finding that the social construction of Islam practiced by the Islamic Community of Lombok must involve not only the understanding of Islamic values and religion alone, but by involving the cultural, historical, and even political context of the *Watu Lima* region and Lombok Island. Asad sees that often the

⁴⁶Riya Chhikara, "Celebrating Clifford Geertz' Contributions to Anthropology: A Tribute on His 15th Death Anniversary", *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences & Humanities*, Vol. 12, no. 02 (2022), 366-72, <https://doi.org/10.37648/ijrssh.v12i03.022>.

⁴⁷Tjaturrini, D., Ariesanty, C., Asiati, T., Prasetyowati, H., Isro, Z. Calengsai: Intimating the communications among religious believers. *Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity*. Vol. 1, No. 2, (2022), 215-240.

authority of power controls and expands knowledge about Islam which is reflected in religious practice.

Asad argues that Islam cannot be used as a theoretical object; for example, in looking at the practice of *Maulid Nabi* in the Sasak Lombok Community, it must involve the historical and cultural context of the Sasak Lombok Community in order to avoid simplistic or essentialist about Islam by taking into account the nature of the Islamic Community, which has various Sasak cultural values such as kinship, togetherness, and friendliness, which are reflected in the various daily lives of the Sasak Community.

In this context, the study of Asad's thinking in seeing Islam is diverse, as is the concept of Islam *Watu Telu* and Islam *Watu Lima* in the Sasak tribal community which has differences in religious practice, but that does not mean it is not Islam. In Lombok itself, we not only have Islam *Watu Telu* or Islam *Watu Lima*, but many other religions that prove that Islam itself is heterogeneous. However, all of that, if examined based on Asad's theory, make the variety of Islam on the island of Lombok the true Islam because each has arguments and guidelines that underlie its religious behavior and practices. In essence, all of these things do not conflict with the Islamic law that has been written in the Quran and Hadith.

In the context of a study of Sasak Islamic tradition, Asad's analysis of the concepts of tradition, authority and their relationship to religion, ethics and politics provides important insights. First of all, Asad discusses that tradition is not simply a set of rules and doctrines, but rather involves embodied practices, learning, and relearning how to use language and behave in a particular context. This is particularly relevant to the Sasak context, where religious practices such as the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, *Lebaran topat*, and the *Perang topat* ritual, are manifestations of Islamic traditions recognized in their

culture. Furthermore, Asad emphasizes that tradition also includes the matter of manifestation, beginning, growth, and various other aspects related to the experience of different time trajectories. This can be seen in the religious practices of the Sasak people, where the way they celebrate religious events has meanings and symbols related to their history and experience as an Islamic community.⁴⁸ Islamic culture is reflected in local arts and culture such as music, calligraphy dance, and the architecture of traditional Lombok mosques that have characteristics that reflect Islamic architectural styles.

It is important to note that Asad considers the conflict between tradition and modernity, and how tradition is often perceived as a threat to individual freedom and political stability. This can be reflected in the complex relationship between traditional Sasak religious practices and modern values such as individual autonomy, rationality and progress. Some may see religious tradition as a barrier to progress and acceptance of modern values, while others may see it as a source of identity and moral guidance. In addition, Asad also discusses the role of religion, ethics and political authority in shaping society. This is relevant to the Sasak context where religious practices are not only a manifestation of beliefs, but also shape social norms, identity, and power relations within the community. Asad's analysis of the concepts of tradition, authority and their relationship to religion, ethics and politics is thus highly relevant to the study of Sasak Islamic tradition. How religious practices and Islamic values shape identity and social dynamics in these communities, as well as the challenges faced in the face of modern values and global demands.

The views of Clifford Geertz and Robert W. Hefner also have significant

⁴⁸Talal Asad dan Bruno Reinhardt, "Introdução a 'Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter', Talal Asad", *Ilha Revista de Antropologia*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2018), 313-27, <https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2017v19n2p313>.

relevance to the study of Sasak Islamic tradition, especially in the context of the analysis conducted by Talal Asad. Geertz, with his highly interpretative approach to understanding culture and religion, provides a view that is in line with the concept of tradition described by Asad. Geertz views culture as a system of symbols that contain meaning. In the context of the Sasak tribe, Geertz will see religious practices as a manifestation of the symbolic system of Islam in society. Geertz's approach will help to understand the meaning and symbols of Islam lived by the local community.⁴⁹ On the other hand, Robert W. Hefner, who focuses on political anthropology and the relationship between Islam, politics, and society, also has relevance to the concept of political authority and religion discussed by Asad. Hefner would be interested in how religious practices and Islamic traditions in the Sasak affect political dynamics and social structures. He will look at how political authorities can utilize religious traditions to legitimize their power. In conclusion, the views of Geertz and Hefner have relevance to Talal Asad's analysis of the concepts of tradition, authority, religion and politics in the context of the study of Islamic traditions in Sasak. Geertz will help in understanding religious meanings and symbols, while Hefner will focus on how political authority is related to religious practices. All these views together provide a deep insight into the complexity of the relationship between religion, tradition and politics in Sasak society in Lombok.⁵⁰

Conclusion

Talal Asad's thoughts on Islamic anthropology go against the traditional view of the interaction between religion and culture. The key concepts of his thought are social construction of Islam, power and knowledge, and criticism of universalism. This research shows that in the Islamic

⁴⁹Talal Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion" ...

⁵⁰Talal Asad, "Thinking About Tradition..."

Society of Sasak Lombok there are various traditions and concepts related to the concept of Islam, namely the Islamic concepts of *Watu Telu* and *Watu Lima*. This is in line with Asad's discursive concept. According to him, ideology and power are expressed and fought for by society through language, narratives and social practices, which give birth to a new culture. This new culture or religion emerged as a result of the social construction of Lombok's Sasak Islamic Society. Talal Asad argues that Islam is not a theoretical object, therefore it requires many views and certain concepts to study Islam more deeply. Like this context, Islam requires a social concept in exploring the anthropology of Islam itself in the Islamic Society of the Sasak Lombok Tribe. and the last is Islam is something that is diverse as is the concept of Islam *Watu Telu* and Islam *Watu Lima* which are different, but still claim to be adherents of Islam. Islam *Watu Telu*, in Asad's view, can be explained that Islam *Watu Telu* is a construction of the Sasak people towards their understanding of Islam.

This understanding then gave birth to interpretations and constructions in the cultural context of the Sasak Tribal Community. The form is the existence of a unique Islamic religion, namely Islam *Watu Telu*. Islam *Watu Telu* as a religion, continues to be understood, interpreted, and reconstructed in various cultural, historical and political contexts in Lombok. The Islamic tradition of the Sasak Lombok Community exists because of the acculturation of Islam to the culture and customs of the Sasak Lombok Tribe. Based on Talal Asad's concept, the identity, subjectivity and social practices of Sasak Islamic individuals and communities on Lombok Island are influenced by the community's social construction of religion and power. The results of this construction gave birth to typical religious traditions, which are closely related to Islam, such as: *mulud*, *lebaran topat*, *perang topat*, and *rudat* dance.

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