

ARAT SABULUNGAN AS A RELIGIOUS IDENTITY OF MENTAWAI COMMUNITY

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ABSTRAK

Sebagai negara majemuk, Indonesia dihuni oleh berbagai suku bangsa yang mempunyai adat istiadat, budaya, tradisi dan kepercayaan masing-masing. Salah satu suku bangsa yang menghuni nusantara adalah suku Mentawai yang bermukim di Kepulauan Mentawai, Provinsi Sumatera Barat. Masyarakat Mentawai masih mempercayai Arat Sabulungan sebagai sistem keagamaan mereka. Artikel ini ingin mengkaji eksistensi masyarakat Mentawai dalam menjaga dan melestarikan kepercayaan Arat Sabulungan. Kajian ini penting untuk menjaga keharmonisan hidup dalam keberagaman yang ada di negara multikultural. Metode yang digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data adalah metode Library Research, dimana peneliti memperoleh data dari berbagai macam literatur yang berhubungan dengan kepercayaan Arat Sabulungan, seperti buku, jurnal, dan lain sebagainya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemajuan dari waktu ke waktu belum mampu meruntuhkan kepercayaan tersebut dan hingga saat ini masih ada masyarakat Mentawai yang melakukan berbagai ritual terkait Arat Sabulungan.

Kata kunci:

Arat Sabulungan,
Identitas Keagamaan,
Mentawai.

ABSTRACT

As a plural country, Indonesia is inhabited by various ethnic groups who have their own customs, culture, traditions and beliefs. One of the ethnic groups that inhabit the archipelago is the Mentawai tribe who live in the Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra Province. The Mentawai people still believe in Arat Sabulungan as their religious system. This article wants to examine the existence of the Mentawai people in maintaining and preserving the Arat Sabulungan belief. This study is important to maintain harmony in living in the diversity that exists in a multicultural country. The method used to collect data is the Library Research method, where researchers obtain data from various kinds of literature related to Arat Sabulungan beliefs, such as books, journals, and so on. The results of the study show that progress over time has not been able to destroy this belief and to this day there are still Mentawai people who perform various rituals related to Arat Sabulungan.

Keywords:

Arat Sabulungan,
Religious Identity,
Mentawai

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural country, in the sense that Indonesia has diversity in terms of customs, culture, and belief systems, from one region to another. This diversity becomes the wealth of the nation's cultural treasures if it can be addressed properly. On the other, it will be prone to conflict if it is treated negatively. This cultural diversity is spread across thousands of islands in Indonesia, including in the Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra.

Until today, the Mentawai people still strongly believe in the existence of supernatural powers that surround them. Including if a family member is sick, they are more likely to treat it through Sikerei than going to the hospital or other health centers that are also available there, including in Muara Siberut District. Even in Muara Siberut, a health center and polyclinic have been established which are managed by the ALI (Assistenti Laiche Internazionali) nurse. However, the existence of the hospital and the Polyclinic seemed to be ignored by the local community.

The involvement of sikerei in medicine cannot be separated from the Arat Sabulungan tradition which believes that the emergence of disease comes from the influence of supernatural powers. Although many of the Mentawai people in Siberut have adhered to one of the official religions there, such as Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam, in their daily lives they still adhere to rituals based on the Arat Sabulungan tradition (Juniator, 2012). However, not a few Mentawai people no longer recognize Arat Sabulungan as something related to their cultural identity.

When viewed from a historical perspective, during the early days of independence, Arat Sabulungan's beliefs were banned by the government of President Soekarno. The flow of modernization that has led to lifestyle changes and increased regional development in Mentawai has caused the young Mentawai generation to be uprooted from their own religiosity roots. However, until today the Arat Sabulungan tradition still exists and has never disappeared with the times, even though it has to deal with the domination of the State, preaching religion, to the influx of modern culture.

It would be interesting to study how the Mentawai people ensure that the Arat Sabulungan belief continues to exist and that they continue to carry out various rituals related to this belief in the midst of globalization? Thus, this paper wants to examine in more depth the existence of Arat Sabulungan as a religious system amidst the progress of the times in the Mentawai Islands Regency. This study is important to carry out so that the nation's cultural treasures are maintained and can be preserved. Apart from that, by knowing about the Arat Sabulungan belief which still exists in the Mentawais, all Indonesian people can view this as differences that do not cause conflict through developing an attitude of tolerance. On the other hand, it is hoped that this study can be used as a reference for policy makers so they can create policies that support the belief systems of indigenous peoples in Indonesia.

Method

This research is a type of library research. What is called library research or often also called literature study, is a series of activities related to methods of collecting library data, reading and recording and processing research materials (Zed, 2008). Meanwhile, according to Mahmud in his book *Educational Research Methods* explains that library research is a type of research conducted by reading books or magazines and other data sources to collect data from various literature, both libraries and other places (Mahmud, 2011).

From the explanation above, it can be understood that library research is not only the activity of reading and recording the data that has been collected. But more than that, researchers must be able to process the data that has been collected through the stages of library research. In this research, the author applies library research methods because there are at least several underlying reasons. First, the data source does not have to be obtained from the field. Sometimes data sources can only be obtained from libraries or other documents in written form, whether from journals, books or other literature related to the Arat Sabulungan belief system. Second, literature study is needed as a way to understand the views of the Mentawai people towards the Arat Sabulungan belief so that this belief

continues to exist today. Third, library data remains reliable for answering questions related to Arat Sabulungan's belief system.

Thus, information or empirical data that has been collected by other people, whether in the form of books, scientific reports or reports of research results in accordance with Arat Sabulungan's beliefs, can still be used by researchers.

The stages that researchers carried out in this library research were as follows:

1. Collect research materials related to the Arat Sabulungan belief system. This research is library research, so the material collected is in the form of information or empirical data sourced from books, journals, results of official and scientific research reports and other literature related to the Arat Sabulungan belief system.
2. Reading library material. Here, researchers carry out a 'hunt' that requires active and critical involvement in order to obtain maximum results. In reading research materials, researchers dig deeply into reading materials that allow them to discover new ideas related to the Arat Sabulungan belief system.
3. Make research notes. The various data that researchers have found are first written down into notes called research notes. Once these notes are complete, they are included in a more complete research report.

Process research notes. All material that has been read is then processed or analyzed to obtain a conclusion which is prepared in the form of a research report.

Result and Discussions

Location and Geographical Location of Mentawai Islands

The Mentawai Archipelago is one of the areas in the West Sumatera and is a group of islands that stretch from north to southeast to the west of the mainland island of Sumatra. Between the mainland in most of West Sumatra and the Mentawai Islands, they are separated by the Mentawai Strait, which also serves as a water transportation route that connects the two. The Mentawai Islands are aligned with several important areas in West Sumatra and Bengkulu, such as Siberut Island with the City of Padang, Sipora Island with Indrapura, Pesisir Selatan, Pagai Island and South Pagai with the Province of Bengkulu. Meanwhile, the islands in the Mentawai Islands are separated by 3 straits each; Bunga Laut Strait between Siberut Island and Sipora Island, Sipora Strait between Sipora Island and North Pagai Island, Sikakap Strait between North Pagai Island and South Pagai Island (Mentawai Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Of the four major islands in the Mentawai Islands, Siberut Island is the largest island with a total land area of 4,097 km². Then successively followed by Sipora Island with an area of 916 Km², North Pagai and South Pagai Islands with an area of 1,733 Km². Siberut Island was allegedly the first place of development for the Mentawai tribe (Mentawai Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Arat Sabulungan Rituals and Ceremonies

There are several rituals that are usually carried out by the Mentawai people who adhere to the Arat Sabulungan belief. For example, there is a period of silence when people temporarily stop their regular activities. There are two types of quiet periods, namely Lia and Punen. Lia is stopping activities because of important life events such as birth, death, or a sick family member. Boat building activities also include periods that need to be accompanied by Lia.

Meanwhile, punen is "nyepi" (quiet) that is performed by the community as a whole where its implementation involves the construction of Uma, accidents, outbreaks of disease or killings. During the implementation of lia and punen, people are not allowed to work. While eating and drinking

activities are still permitted to be carried out. Lia is classified as a small ceremony in which the celebration is not accompanied by events such as hunting animals or performing dances. There are also various kinds of lia and punen, for example lia sago and lia sweepo, then for punen there are punen matutu, punen, lalai angalou, punen pangambok, and punen abinen.

For the Mentawai people who adhere to Arat Sabulungan, rituals in their life cycle have been carried out since a new person was born into the world. Pangabela is the first ritual performed by someone shortly after being born as a baby. The goal is to introduce the baby to nature and the spirits in it. With pangabela, a baby is expected to avoid illness and its existence does not cause disturbance to the spirits. Pangabela is carried out three days after birth by giving the baby food and bathing it in the river until its skin turns pale from the cold. After that, a fire was brought in as a torch and certain types of plants to be planted. The baby's mother then brought her child home while pouring river water along the way. Not to forget, the fire that was brought with the torch was also brought along. To give a name to a baby, a special ritual called pangambok is required. This ritual, which is accompanied by the slaughter of a sacrificial animal in the form of a chicken or babu, will give the baby a Mentawai name.

Over time, as the Mentawai people get older, rituals will be held again to make someone who is growing up have the ability to win animals, be it through hunting in the forest or catching fish in the river. For boys, this ceremony is called eneget while for girls it is sogunei.

If Mentawai people marry, a special ritual is held again called pangurei, which is a joint meal between the bride and groom. Offerings were also made in the form of a chicken and eggs and pigs. The implementation of this pangurei underwent changes after the adoption of religions from outside. Pangurei today is accompanied by prayers from the religion adhered to and is sometimes held after the wedding is held, even when the bride and groom have children.

In death as the last stage of the human life cycle in the world, the Arat Sabulungan belief has a ritual to cleanse the house from the influence of the spirit of the deceased. The ritual is in the form of sprinkling the house of the deceased with water. In addition, the belongings of the deceased are also removed from the house in the hope that the spirit of the deceased will not come again to collect them. Like various other Arat Sabulungan rituals, this death ritual has also been influenced by religious influences that come from outside. Sprinkling water, for example, uses holy water that has been blessed by the priest. The prayers that are read are also Catholic prayers.

The Existence of Arat Sabulungan as a Religious System in Mentawai

The belief or religious system adopted by the Mentawai people is Arat Sabulungan, which is a variation of the belief about various supernatural powers possessed by ancestral spirits or ketsat. In the concept of their beliefs, they are known by several names related to the occult, such as Simagre, namely the spirit that causes people to live; Sabulungan, namely the spirit that comes out of the body is sometimes considered to leave for a while (for example when you are shocked). But there are also spirits that do not go far from human habitation such as on earth, in water, in the air of large trees, in mountains, in forests and so on. Even in the uma (traditional Mentawai house) there is a guardian spirit called quinine (Delfi, 2012).

In addition, people also believe that evil spirits whose work is to spread disease and disturb humans, these spirits are called sanitu. Sanitu comes from the spirit of a human who has died unnaturally (Javanese; haunts) such as suicide, being killed, having an accident (for example falling from a tree) and dying from an illness that never heals.

Although the XX century began to arrive missionaries who spread Protestant Christianity which began there in 1901 and for the next 18 years this mission did not produce anything. Later,

after 1920, this mission found people from the native Mentawai population in Siberut and in 1950 the first Protestant Church was founded (Rudito, 2003).

Furthermore, in 1935 the Roman Catholic religion also spread its mission and immediately got people. While Islam later spread in 1959. Muslims had existed in the Mentawai islands presumably before the VOC (XVII century) existed in Indonesia, namely traders in "Tanah Tepi" (the name for the West coast of Sumatra Island) for the purpose of bartering goods, such as palm leaves, rattan, and manau.

It seems that the arrival of Christianity and Islam did not immediately change their habits of dealing with these supernatural spirits. Moreover, there is a fact that in traditional ceremonies, inevitably the belief of these spirits cannot be changed because it is stipulated by their customs, for example in traditional ceremonies related to uma, opening new fields, felling large trees, hunting or treating sick people by sikerei. So that at least until now arat sabulungan is still being implemented although not as lively and effectively as before the attempt to abolish this tradition in 1954.

Now, many Mentawai people have embraced religions that come from "outside". Religion is also formally listed on the community's Identity Card. However, the customs and traditions of Arat Sabulungan still exist with various changes as a local wisdom. People know God in accordance with the teachings of their religion, but on the other hand the belief in spirits as in the past is still held.

Conclusion

The Arat Sabulungan tradition has been embraced by the Mentawai people long before the arrival of Christianity and Islam entered the region. This tradition is a hereditary heritage from the ancestors of the Mentawai people and has survived to this day. Even though the Arat Sabulungan tradition was banned by the government in 1954, not all Mentawai people immediately eliminated this tradition from their lives, especially the people on Siberut Island. Along with the times, moreover through tourism potential that emphasizes the original traditions of each region in the archipelago, Arat Sabulungan can return to exist and maintain its existence to this day.

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