

## ARTICULATION OF INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS IN TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF *KENDURI SKO* IN KERINCI, JAMBI


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### Abstract

This study examines the practice of *Kenduri Sko*, one of the local traditions of the Kerinci people that has been rarely practiced. Since 2017, the government of Sungai Penuh City took over the management of the practice turning it into an annual tourist attraction called as the *Festival of Kenduri Sko*. This paper argues that the articulation of this indigenous tradition, and its combination with religion and tourism has stimulated the attempt to preserve indigenous practices through a strategic relationship between government officials and local actors. To show how this the case, we discuss the theory of indigenous religions and the theory of articulation. We use qualitative methods and conducted field studies on the Kerinci People who live in Sungai Penuh City. The article concludes that this kind of articulation has succeeded in placing indigenous peoples as the main actors of the initiative, where the government plays a supporting role in preserving the traditions. This article also recommends a synergistic relationship between the local government and the community to maintain the tradition through various events such as festivals, art performances, and other such projects.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Religion; Local Tradition; *Kenduri Sko*; Tourism; Jambi.

### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini mengkaji praktek Kenduri Sko sebagai salah satu tradisi lokal masyarakat Kerinci yang sudah jarang dilakukan. Sejak tahun 2017, Pemerintah Kota Sungai Penuh mengambil alih praktik tersebut sebagai ikon pariwisata yang disebut dengan Festival Kenduri Sko yang diadakan setiap tahun. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa artikulasi adat istiadat, agama, dan pariwisata telah mendorong upaya pelestarian praktik adat melalui hubungan strategis antara pejabat pemerintah dan aktor lokal. Untuk membangun argumen ini, artikel ini mengelaborasi teori agama leluhur dan teori artikulasi. Artikel ini menggunakan metode kualitatif serta melakukan studi lapangan terhadap Masyarakat Kerinci yang berdomisili di Kota Sungai Penuh. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa artikulasi semacam itu telah berhasil menempatkan masyarakat adat sebagai aktor utama dimana peran pemerintah sebagai aktor pendukung dalam pelestarian tradisi. Artikel ini juga merekomendasikan adanya hubungan yang sinergis antara pemerintah lokal dan masyarakat untuk mempertahankan tradisi leluhur melalui berbagai macam acara seperti festival, pertunjukan seni dan sebagainya.*

**Kata Kunci :** Agama Leluhur, Tradisi Lokal, *Kenduri Sko*, Pariwisata, Jambi

### Background

In the agenda for the advancement of culture according to National Law number 5 of 2017 it is stated that there is a need for efforts to maintain objects of cultural advancement. Among the objects of cultural advancement include oral traditions, manuscripts, customs, rites, traditional knowledge, traditional technology, art, language, community games, and traditional sports. In UNESCO's terminology, there are two types of cultural

heritage, namely Tangible Cultural Heritage (TCH) which includes visible cultural remains such as monuments, memorials and museums, and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), which includes behaviors, ceremonies, rituals and lifestyles (UNESCO, 2017). As a cultural advancement project, the municipal government of Sungai Penuh, Jambi, in 2017 held a cultural festival called the Sungai Penuh Festival. This type of festival departs from the

intangible heritage tradition of the local community, namely the *Kenduri Sko* tradition. The *Kenduri Sko* tradition itself is deeply rooted and is still being practiced by the community.

Studies conducted on the relationship between tradition and tourism mostly revolve around how local traditions are integrated into tourism plans. In this case, there are two ways of viewing this relationship between tradition and tourism. The first is to see the presence of local traditions in tourism as a form of regression. Mahdi Zandieh and Zenab Seifpour (2020) view that the preservation of historical values in a tradition is not determined by the extent to which advancement efforts are made by external factors, such as revitalization, tourism advertisements and so on. Rather, tradition can be maintained in their daily life. Efforts to communicate culture are also often seen as a threat to the authenticity of cultural heritage itself.<sup>1</sup> Kim, Whitford, and Arcodia (2019) argue that in order to achieve a positive symbiotic relationship, it is important to increase local awareness of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), to empower ICH practitioners, and establish parallel developments between tourism development and transmission of ICH.<sup>2</sup>

The second view holds that at the presence of local traditions in tourism is a positive combination that can bring economic benefits to the community and advance public interest. Ringkar Situmorang, Teddy Trilaksono, and Arnold Japutra (2019) argue that local tourism can stimulate significant economic growth,

especially for local communities. At the same time, the development of local tourism does not only depend on tourism and local people but also on the involvement of policy-makers in providing support and establishing regulations for the development of village tourism areas.<sup>3</sup>

However, the encounter between tradition, religion, and tourism is rarely seen as an important combination that must be seriously considered. This research will offer a model to be used when the three elements meet in one form of articulation, namely tradition, religion, and tourism. For this research, we will elaborate on the theory of indigenous religions and the theory of articulation. Based on the concept of indigenous religion, we argue that religion is not separated from culture. Discursively, religion is the everyday practice through which people relate to their surroundings. It encompasses elements of all parts of everyday life including politics, economics, agriculture, rituals, and so forth.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, we also use the theory of the articulation in discussing the encounter between religion, local traditions, and tourism.<sup>5</sup>

Considering the many studies that have discussed the concept of articulation, we will focus on the articulation of local traditions in the case of the festival of *Kenduri Sko* that is now facilitated by the local government of Sungai Penuh City. For the present study, we used qualitative methods. We conducted field research on the Kerinci people who live the administrative area of Sungai Penuh City, Jambi Province.<sup>6</sup> The field study was carried out three

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<sup>1</sup>Mahdi Zandieh and Zeinab Seifpour, 'Preserving Traditional Marketplaces as Places of Intangible Heritage for Tourism', *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 15.1 (2020), 111–21

<sup>2</sup>Soojung Kim, Michelle Whitford, and Charles Arcodia, 'Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage as a Sustainable Tourism Resource: The Intangible Cultural Heritage Practitioners' Perspectives', *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 14.5–6 (2019), 422–35 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2018.1561703>>.

<sup>3</sup>Ringkar Situmorang, Teddy Trilaksono, and Arnold Japutra, 'Friend or Foe? The Complex

Relationship between Indigenous People and Policymakers Regarding Rural Tourism in Indonesia', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 39 (2019), 20–29 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2019.02.001>>.

<sup>4</sup>Samsul Maarif, 'Dimensions of Religious Practice: The Ammatoans of Sulawesi, Indonesia' (Arizona State University, 2012); James L. Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>5</sup>The theory will elaborate further in the discussion of this article.

<sup>6</sup>Since 2008, Kerinci has been administratively separated into two districts which are District of Kerinci led

times in accordance with the schedule of the festival, that is, on November 6, 2017, November 7, 2018 and November 7-11, 2019. In addition, this study has also interviewed several figures such as cultural practitioners, government officers, traditional leaders, local actors, and community members in general.

This research aims to extend the form of religious activities in the practice of local traditions on tourism. This research does not intend to find an effective method in order for a tradition to maintain its authenticity. Therefore, before outlining the articulation of religion, the local tradition of *Kenduri Sko*, and tourism, we will explain briefly the *Kenduri Sko* tradition of the Kerinci people.

### ***Kenduri Sko* in the Kerinci Tradition Local Tradition in Kerinci**

Kerinci is located in highlands of Jambi. The Kerinci People is one of the oldest tribes that has been inhabiting the highest mountain in Sumatra, the Kerinci Mountain, for thousands of years.

Some archeological and anthropological accounts contend that most of the Kerinci people before the arrival of Islam embraced an indigenous religion.<sup>7</sup> Indigenous religion here is understood as a belief in the interrelatedness of nature and cosmology. Various literatures mention that the pre-Islamic tribes had a concept of belief in sacred objects, immaterial spirits; they also believed in the interconnectedness of nature and people.

Voorhoeve (1970), an early anthropologist who studied the culture of the people of Sumatra, mentions that the people of Kerinci were once known as a society that had pride in the heirlooms of their ancestors.<sup>8</sup> The

heirlooms are made up of various kinds such as ceremonial knives or *keris*, spears, manuscripts, swords, precious or *mustika* stones, and all kinds of objects. In addition to public confidence in the heritage objects, the Kerinci people also have an interesting view of nature. Given that most of the Kerinci people work as farmers in the paddy fields or *sawah*, they believe that rice has soul and spirit. Thus, in the past, farming activities in the paddy fields are always accompanied by various rituals such as ritual dancing.

In addition, according to Yunus (1986) as quoted by Hafiful Hadi Sunliyensar, the Kerinci tribe used to believe in three supernatural rulers. There are the *Dewo*, which inhabit the forests and mountains that are considered sacred; the elves, or also known as *Mendari* or *Bidodari*, who inhabit the skies; and the *Mambang*, which are believed to control the seas and rivers. These elements of traditional beliefs underlie the tradition of *Kenduri Sko*.<sup>9</sup> If we look at the Kerinci people today, we find that almost 100% of them claim that they embraced Islam as their religion. In fact, they hold to both Islam practices and their own indigenous traditions. This combination is clearly seen in the philosophical outlook underlying their local tradition (*adat*), which is commonly stated as *adat basendi syara, syara basendi Kitabullah*. This statement implies that local traditions should be based on Islamic values. At the same time, the community's guardians of *adat* have the responsibility of reserving their inherited traditions. These guardians consist of local scholars, Muslim clerics, young people, as well as local government officials. The characteristic

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by a regent and Sungai Penuh city led by a major. On this article, we confine our research on the Kerinci People who inhabit Sungai Penuh City. Indeed, the characteristics of local tradition of both is so identical.

<sup>7</sup>Nurhadi Rangkuti, 'Prolog', in *Kerincimu Kerinciku: Dataran Tinggi Jambi Dalam Perspektif Arkeologi*, ed. by Nurhadi Rangkuti (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak, 2016).

<sup>8</sup>P. Voorhoeve, 'Kerintji Documents', *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities*

*and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 126.4 (1970), 369–99 <<https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90002797>>.

<sup>9</sup>Hafiful Hadi Sunliyensar, 'Ritual Asyeik Sebagai Akulturasi Antara Kebudayaan Islam Dengan Kebudayaan Pra-Islam Suku Kerinci', *Siddhayatra: Jurnal Arkeologi*, 21.2 (2016), 107–28 <<https://doi.org/10.24832/siddhayatra.v21i2.23>>.

harmony between Islam and indigenous traditions is the way the Kerinci people conduct their daily lives. The guardian of *adat* is the highest unofficial ruler in their society. This has been the case for a very long time. Even the selection of a religious leader in every community has to be based on *adat* ceremonies. However, people also accept the presence of government officials in their society.

### ***Kenduri Sko* as an Indigenous Practice**

The Kerinci people articulate their religious and indigenous practices through the annual ritual of *Kenduri Sko*. Generally speaking, *Kenduri Sko* is in fact a common type of practice among Indonesians in general. *Kenduri* is almost synonymous with the *Slametan* tradition in Java. Nevertheless, *Kenduri Sko* can be considered as a unique form of practice for the Kerinci people. Throughout the literature that this author reviewed, *Kenduri Sko*'s practice differs from other festivities in Indonesia. The terms used to designate the tradition is quite diverse.<sup>10</sup> Some call it *Kendubai Sko*, others call it *Kenubi Seko*, and *Kenubai Sko*. However, in general people call it by the term *Kenduri Sko*.

This term is also commonly referred to as *Kenduri Pusako* (*Pusaka* or heirloom). The terms *Sko* and *Pusaka* basically have the same meaning and are closely related to each other. This is because both events are held simultaneously in the ritual of *Kenduri Sko* or *Pusako*. The word *sko* also refers to the maternal line of descent. For man who inherit *Sko*, he deserve an indigenous title given as mother's son or the brother of the mother in question.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Kerinci community known as a society that has a dialect that varies. Thus, it is understandable that one term can be mentioned with more than ten kinds of dialects.

<sup>11</sup>As traditional ceremony carried out by the community after harvest, *Kenduri Sko* at the same time includes the appointment of the *sko tigo takab* or hierarchical concept of leadership in Kerinci. The *sko tiga takab* system consists of *depati* or the same level as *depati*,

Meanwhile, the word *Pusako* or heirloom means anything received in the form of inheritance from ancestors, which in the past are known as *pedadan*. Typically, these objects include *keris* (ceremonial knife), *gong* (bell), sword, spear, ancient manuscripts, stamped letters, *celak* (cosmetic used to blacken the eyelids), charters, and other objects. These objects are kept in *rumah anak batino* or *rumah gedang* (the house of the traditional community).<sup>12</sup>

From the definitions above, *Kenduri Sko* can be said to be a manifestation of the inherited and preserved traditions of Kerinci people. It functions as an inauguration ceremony for the conferring of indigenous titles (*depati*, *rio*, *mangku*, *datuk*, etc.) from one titleholder to another in accordance with the provisions of each *luhah* in the indigenous community. The ceremony is also held to issue, reduce, and purify heirlooms.

The *Kenduri Sko* event is a series of activities that have specific objectives. Basically, there are two main purposes of organizing the *Kenduri Sko* ceremony. The first is to perform the ritual of inheritance and cleansing of heirlooms; the second is the investiture of a title to a new person in the community who will carry the traditional title.

Other objectives of the ceremony include: (1) Giving thanks to God for abundant blessing. This is performed because the *Kenduri* ceremony is carried out after harvesting. People ask for facility and sustained fortunes, because after the ceremony they will return to the rice fields to work. (2) Giving thanks to ancestors, because they are responsible for establishing the

permenti or Ninik Mamak and tengganai or son. For *depati* and Ninik Mamak candidates must go through the election at the level of *kalbu* and *luhah* and carry out the procession of affirmation or coronation. Whereas for a potential *tengganai*, this is not the case, because the eldest brother of mother absolutely becomes *tengganai*.

<sup>12</sup>Deki Syaputra ZE, 'Rumah Gdang Dan Penyimpanan Artefak Budaya Di Kerinci', *Siddhayatra: Jurnal Arkeologi*, 25.1 (2020), 59-75 <<https://doi.org/10.24832/siddhayatra.v25i1.188>>.

life and sustenance of the present generation, by opening the land, establishing settlements, and imparting *skeo* and *pusako*. The local community maintain a strong relationship with their ancestors. They believe that their ancestors are always in communion with the present generation. Some people believe that the ancestors could still affect them in intimate ways, such as being angry at the community (when something wrong is committed) and can impact the results of the community's works and rituals, such as affecting crop failures and other such events. (3) Inspecting heirloom or inherited lands to make sure that land rights are not violated. 4) Gathering together all scattered relatives in the family home and heirloom house. (5) Strengthening the bonds of brotherhood and strengthen communal spirit with fellow kin members and the wider community in their respective territories. (6) organizing informal communal forums to provide and offer mutual assistance and strengthen the spirit of mutual cooperation.

The time of carrying out the *Kenduri Skeo* ceremony is different for each indigenous alliance. Some groups hold it once a year; others, once in three years, once in five, and some groups even hold it once in ten years. Some indigenous alliances would even hold the *Kenduri Skeo* once in 25 years. This difference occurs because the frequency is based on previously held agreements. For those who carry it out once a year, it is usually held after the rice harvest is over.

The *Kenduri Skeo* procession generally requires about three to four days; some would require even up to seven days, before reaching the peak event. As for the preparation, people begin planning one to three months before the date. The implementation of the *Kenduri Skeo* procession is held in the region of the indigenous population, whether this is at the scale of the indigenous alliance in question or at

the more local level of the *lubab*. The rituals of decreasing and cleansing the heirlooms are carried out in the *pesusun* house and *gedang* house (i.e., traditional reception halls). Likewise, the investiture of the guardian of local traditions or the *pemangku adat*, such as the positions of *depati* (honorific title for someone important to guard the *adat*) and *ninik mamak* (elders of the community) are also held in these traditional houses. However, there are also areas that carry out the procession of investiture on *mendapo* land, which is an open yard outside the *gedang* (custom hall), or an open field in the middle of a four-angle moat.

In general, the practice of *Kenduri Skeo* is carried out as an expression of gratitude to God for the blessings of the harvest and to request bounty in the next harvest. Furthermore, the *Kenduri Skeo* ceremony serves as a tribute to the spirits of the ancestors who struggled for the establishment and prosperity of the village. This is performed in order to prevent disasters and calamities from occurring to the village.<sup>13</sup>

The *Kenduri Skeo* tradition of the Kerinci indigenous people is not a tradition undertaken by society in general. Instead, each village authority, which is commonly known as *kemendapoan*, carries out similar rituals. Each *kemendapoan* of the Kerinci people performs different versions of this tradition. The *Kenduri Skeo* ceremony is not done under the authority of the village, subdistrict, and regency levels of government. This is because the practice of *Kenduri Skeo* goes back to before the birth of the Kerinci Regency. This practice later continued to be performed by villages in their own way. Thus, the practice of *Kenduri Skeo* tradition expanded became ingrained in every village of the Kerinci people.

The event of *Kenduri Skeo* usually begins with *Ngejon Arab*, is a formal deliberation to form a committee or to choose the conveners

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<sup>13</sup>Septa Dinata, (Traditional Leader of Desa Koto Baru Rawang) *Interview* {10 May 2018}.

of the ceremony. The conveners are those entrusted with the running of the *Kenduri Sko* rituals. They will appoint a chairperson and a secretary elected from the *Depati* (adat chief). The conveners would comprise of an old *Belian* (male or female parent), who is considered to have the authority in the community. The *Tengganai*, on the other hand, consists of people who are younger than the *Depati*, but are married; whereas the *Kayo* is the youth of the village who are considered to have the ability to lead. The convener authorized by the *Depati* usually consists of eight to ten men, usually divided into five elders and five youths.

Despite the fact that each village practices *Kenduri Sko* in different ways, this ritual can generally be divided into three main activities: purification of heritage objects, feasts, and the investiture of customary titles. According to the chief of *adat* in village of Koto Majidin:

*“When explored further, Kenduri Sko has various purposes, namely: (1) as a means of investiture of the people of the indigenous group called Depati and Rio (2) as an expression of gratitude for the harvest that they obtained (3) as a means of handing down of legacy heirlooms that have long been kept in larik umoh Gdeang (large adat house).*

The first activity is the purification of the heirloom (*pusaka*), which is done by a certain person. In practice, the purification is done by traditional leaders in the community. This activity is done by preparing various forms of offerings. The heirlooms (*pusaka*) are usually placed on the veranda of the house or the highest place in the house for storage. According to one of the indigenous conveners who are in charge of cleaning the *pusaka*, the cleansing of the heirlooms is done as a form of respect for the heirlooms. They believe that every object has certain strengths that can affect their daily activities.<sup>14</sup>

*“Once when there was a drought and pests that hit the rice fields of the community, causing crop failure. This is understood as the result of failure to clean the heirloom at the right time, being late by a year. In the following year, the community performed Kenduri Sko as usual”*

The next ritual takes the form of displaying various products of society, whether material or immaterial. The material product is usually followed by a large *Kenduri* event. This massive slaughter is done by slaughtering at least seven to ten buffalos. Typically, this is used to cook a variety of typical cuisine such as *lemang*, *gulai rebung*, *rendang*, and other dishes. This harvest is then eaten together, which is the climax of the event. This feast is a form of gratitude of the people for the abundance of blessings given to them by God. According to an attendee, Mr. Suharmi: *“for four years we receive and make use of nature; we should be grateful in celebrating this great feast. People do it voluntarily and think of it as a charity of nature. These alms are also given to the deceased ancestors. The purpose is to prevent the disasters”*<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the *Kenduri* ritual is also filled with typical local dance performances. Among the main dances performed is the *tari asyeik*. People believes deeply that when performing *tari asyeik*, the ancestors are present with the people who participate in the *Kenduri*. The success of the *Kenduri* is indicated by the existence of a society that hold to the belief of *kerasukan roh* or possession by ancestral spirits. According to Mak Sahi, *“if in tari asyeik, the dancers have been possessed by the ancestors who are present in the Kenduri event, this indicating that they are happy with this Kenduri”*.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, the climax of the ritual is investiture of the *ske* (local heirloom) for indigenous leaders. This event can be considered as the climax of the *Kenduri Sko* celebrations. During this stage of the ritual, the *adat* leaders, *anak jantan*, *anak batino*, *teganai*,

<sup>14</sup>Dailami, (gelar Depati Rajo Mudo) *Interview* {21 May 2018}.

<sup>15</sup>Suharmi, *Interview* {20 May 2018}.

<sup>16</sup>Mak Sahi, *Interview* {20 May 2018}.

youth, and children are gathered in large spaces to follow the procession of the traditional titles. The awarding and investiture of the *adat* title is done to maintain and inherit the noble duties of indigenous and cultural guardians in society in order to preserve it for future generations. According to Mr. Haryadi, “*at this moment of giving the adat title, people will be reminded of their origins. They will be returned to their respective tribes and will take to heart the responsibility they bear in living in this community. People cannot live alone, but must be part of the tribe or “kalbu” respectively.*”<sup>17</sup>

The investiture process of these traditional figures is also called the event of *tugeh manugeh*, referring specifically to the investiture of the *Depati*. The person who will be invested with the title is doused with coconut milk. The peak of the event occurs during the evening, involving all layers of people. This event is intended to sharpen the contact with the spirits of the ancestors. They do this by dancing with the ancestral spirits. Music is played, incense is burned, and they dance until they are possessed. The offerings used in the traditional ceremony *Kenduri Sko* are always related to the nature of supernatural powers. Proximity with the ancestral spirits will always be in those who have a *bajat* (spiritual yearning). However, if you make a mistake in the ritual—or do not perform it at all—then the community must be ready to receive a catastrophe.

## **Tourism and Indigenous Practice: An Articulation of Islam, *Adat*, and Tourism**

### **Articulation of *Kenduri Sko***

Some scholars often challenge traditional practices because they are considered to be contrary to religion. Some argue that traditional rituals are irrelevant in modern

society. They assume that traditional practices such as *Kenduri Sko* are contrary to pure religion. However, the consequences of this view is that people will eventually lose their identity.

Religion and culture have long been a contested term in scholarly discourse especially in religious studies.<sup>18</sup> Religion is often accepted as it is without criticism. Religion is always associated with the teachings and values that are standardized. Generally, religion is thought to originate from an absolute source of authority. Unlike religion, culture is often understood as the opposite of religion. Everything that is outside of religion is then categorized as culture. If religion is considerably theological then the culture is formulated as a result of human creative activities that takes the form of diverse beliefs and practices.

Inspired by the polemic between religion and culture, scholars propose that the term “world religions” is reductionistic. Initially, the study of world religions must be read in the wider dynamic between religion as construction and religion before it is constructed. Religion as a construction is understood as the result of the reification in the medieval Christian tradition. Such an institutionalized religion has been widely accepted in both popular and academic communities. By contrast, since the mid-20th century, scholars like Wilfred Cantwell Smith<sup>19</sup> and Talal Asad<sup>20</sup> challenged the institutionalized conception of religion. Scholars like James Cox<sup>21</sup> offer the idea of indigenous religion.

Discussions about indigenous religion have not ended as well. The powerful hegemony of “world religion” continues to

<sup>17</sup>Haryadi (Religious Actor) *Interview* {21 May 2018}.

<sup>18</sup>Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>19</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and the End of the Religion* (London: Mentor Books, 1962).

<sup>20</sup>Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Pr, 1993).

<sup>21</sup>James L. Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007).

influence the position of local religions in the history of world religions. The polemic of world religions continues to color scholarly debates. Local traditions, cultures, religions and matrilineal are being seriously studied in the search for an ideal form. Various scholars try to put forward various views and theories underlying religion and culture.

Among these theories is the theory of syncretism. This theory observes that there exists “the combination of elements from two or more different religious traditions within a specified frame.”<sup>22</sup> In the negative sense, syncretism has been used by Christian theologians as a normative category to describe religious phenomena that is somehow deviating from the essence of Christianity.<sup>23</sup> This theory is used by many scholars who study the encounter between Islam and Javanese culture and local traditions. Some scholars like Geertz (1971 and 1976) and Woodward (1989) use this category of syncretism when explaining the influence of a “world religion” on Javanese culture. They argue that underlying the practice of religion and culture in Javanese society is a form of syncretism between Islam as a new religion and Javanese culture.<sup>24</sup> Geertz in *Islam Observed and Javanese Islam*, through his theory of the *abangan*, *santri* and *priyai* archetypes attempts to establish the ideal types of religious adherence within Javanese society.<sup>25</sup>

The above explanation shows that the polemic between religion and culture has been contested among scholars, especially in the study of religion. The debates that takes place

revolve around the question of to what extent can religion and culture survive when they encounter each other. The debate about religion and culture is always interesting to study. However, some scholars often reproduce this polemic without giving a fresh look at the discussion.

Considering the various theories advanced by these experts, I intend to discuss some theories that are considered popular. Among these theories is the concept of acculturation. According to Redfield et al, “acculturation was first defined as a process that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact with another culture, causing change in cultural patterns of either or both group.”<sup>26</sup> Berry added that during acculturation, groups of people and their individual members engage in intercultural contact, producing a potential for conflict, and the need for negotiation in order to achieve outcomes that are adaptive for both parties.<sup>27</sup>

This contestation would result in the transformation many entities with respect to each increasingly showing dominance and hegemony over others. If such a model is developed, then what happens is a cross-dispute between the various traditions. In many cases, an assumption that imposes one traditional practice over another will have the effect of reducing the influence of the other. From my observation in the event of *Ruwat Rawat Borobudur* some time ago in Yogyakarta, different representations are produced when the local government tends to distinguish between a practice is considered as “traditional”

<sup>22</sup>Charles Steward, ‘Syncretism and Its Synonyms: Reflections on Cultural Mixture’, *Diacritics*, 29.3 (1999), 40–62.

<sup>23</sup>Ulrich Berner, ‘The Notion of Syncretism in Historical And/or Empirical Research’, *Historical Reflections*, 27.3 (2001), 499–509.

<sup>24</sup>Mark R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989).

<sup>25</sup>Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of

Chicago Press, 1971); Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976).

<sup>26</sup>Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton, and Melville J. Herskovits, ‘Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation’, *American Anthropologist*, 38.1 (1936), 149–52.

<sup>27</sup>John W. Berry, ‘Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures’, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29.6 (2005), 697–712 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.07.013>>.



and another that is considered “modern.” Consequently, the traditional practice is unable to compete with the modern one, which continues to grow.

It seems to me that rather than using the term “tradition,” a better approach would be to call a particular practice as “local” or “indigenous” practice. However, this view is not necessarily attached to all categories as mentioned above. Therefore, it is important to present one important theory, which is known as the theory of articulation. The articulation theory assumes to different elements of a way of understanding to transcend the boundary of each elements. For hall, each elements of social practice have no fixed relationship. However, under certain conditions, meaning will cohere together within a discourse. Articulation is the connection that can unite two different elements at specific conjunctures or certain political subjects (Hall 1996).<sup>28</sup> Hall discusses the form of the connection that—under certain conditions—can make a unity out of two different elements. This is a connection that is not necessarily determined, absolute, and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made? Articulation offers a non reductive way to think about cultural transformation and the apparent coming and going of “traditional” forms.<sup>29</sup>

Having advanced theories about the encounter between world religions and indigenous religions, we use the articulation theory in discussing contemporary phenomena that stand at the intersection of local culture in the current context. Considering the theory of articulation discussed above, I am interested to consider the local tradition of *Kenduri Sko* as a kind of articulation process of encounter between local tradition and contemporary

challenges, and the need for the former to adjust according in order to remain relevant and meaningful in society. Therefore, before outlining the articulation of local traditions of *Kenduri Sko* in tourism, I will first briefly explain the articulation of *Kenduri Sko* among the Kerinci people.

As explained above, articulation is a way to look at the two ideological elements as dialectical and discursive practices. Based on the previous description of *Kenduri Adat* or *Kenduri Sko*, it can be concluded that *Kenduri Sko* is a form of articulation process of Islamic values and local values of the local community in relation to nature and the social environment.

### **Kenduri Sko in Tourism: Islam, Indigenous and National Ideologies.**

The Kerinci indigenous people hold fast to local traditions that has been inherited from generation and generation within the community. On the other hand, they have embraced Islam as their religion. They also had their indigenous traditions like traditional dances, rituals, systems of knowledge, and so forth. These elements agglomerate in the daily lives of the community. The manifestation of religious life and traditional life shows that religion and local practices are two fundamental and dynamic components of the Kerinci indigenous traditions that has informed their daily living practices.

In the context of *Kenduri Sko* in Kerinci, Jambi, it may seem that this is the kind of ritual that exemplifies syncretistic practice. This view is based on the assumption that there has been a mixture of Islamic and local cultural values. This is based on the narrative of one of the people who have practiced this tradition for a long time. One example that is cited is the process of slaughtering sacrificial animals. According to the residents, animal slaughter is

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<sup>28</sup>Stuart Hall, ‘Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance’, in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. by Houston A. Baker Jr, Manthia Diawara,

and Ruth H. Lindborg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>29</sup>James Clifford, ‘Indigenous Articulation’, *The Contemporary Pacific*, 13.2 (2001), 468–90.

something that is legislated in Islam. They would recite Islamic prayers upon the slaughtered animals. This is because in Islam, animal slaughter is offered only to God, not to ancestors.

Such a view causes the reduction of ritual meaning into something that is no longer original and pure. Such a view will always lead to a dichotomous categorization between culture and religion. This is explained by one of the religious leaders who expressed that “*the practice of Kenduri Sko that is performed by slaughtering a buffalo is a form of polytheistic practice. Because it offers animals to the ancestors and ancestral spirits.*” Others, however, claim that the community considers this as a form of meeting ground between two traditions, namely the Islamic and the local. This former oppositionary view is mainly advocated by some religious leaders who were interviewed. They argue that since the ritual of *Tari Asyeik* deals with the spirits of the ancestors, it cannot be justified. One of them said that “*this process of cultural encounter was initially still heavily influenced by local traditions that are still loaded with magical and irrational elements. Now, however, the people are conscious, and they are gradually abandoning the opposition to religion and carrying out rituals consistent with the teachings of Islam.*”

However, we argue that in fact the practice of this tradition has not been lost, nor is it declining. In some areas such as Siulak, Lempur, and Kumun, this ritual is still practiced by the community. This proves that people still continue to practice the main element of the *Kenduri Sko* ritual. One of the indigenous figures said that the ritual would be “*illegitimate if there is no Tari Asyeik ritual in Kenduri Sko. The Tari Asyeik ritual is done merely to establish communication with the parents who have died. It becomes an expression of gratitude for those who have*

*built the village so that it can be enjoyed by generations of their offspring.*”<sup>30</sup>

The results of the above field studies show that while there are different views in the community about the meaning and legitimacy of certain rituals, they continue to agree that existing traditions must be affirmed. The Kerinci indigenous people is famous for its strong consistency in holding to indigenous law. They called it as *Ajun Arab* (the Code of Law). This legislation contains a hereditary agreement that has been passed down by the ancestors containing various indigenous laws and rules. These include the various indigenous rituals and processions that must be preserved. *Ajun Arab* is almost certainly owned by every indigenous stewardship in the village in Kerinci.

The success of articulation of *Kenduri Sko* can be seen in 2017 when the municipal government of Sungai Penuh held a cultural harmony weekend event. This tourism event was the first time that the local tradition *Kenduri Sko* was exhibited in such a public fashion. The *enduri Sko* ritual held in this event was not the same as the *Kenduri Sko* procession generally held by indigenous peoples. During the Sungai Penuh Culture Week, what was shown was only the ritual of purifying heirlooms. As explained earlier, the usual process of *Kenduri Sko* consists of three kinds of activities: cleansing of heirlooms, traditional customs, and investiture of traditional titles.

According to one of the organizers: “*The implementation of the Harmony Culture Week is a form of performance art for the benefit of tourism. The government distinguishes between the performance arts of Kenduri Sko as a local practice with that represented in this tourism. The number involved consisted of eight adat institutions located in Sungai Penuh. The purpose of the festival is to encourage indigenous peoples to re-launch Kenduri Sko.*”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Afrizal, (Gelar Depati Sko Bajo Hitam) *Interview* {22 Mei 2018}.

<sup>31</sup>Zulwachdi, (Government Employee of Dinas Pariwisata dan expert on Kerinci Culture) *Interview* {1 Mei 2018}.

In line with that, the Head of Tourism and Culture of the city of Sungai Penuh told us in an interview that “*Dispuibar (Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata) organizes this event as an annual ritual. This year [we organized] a cleansing event; next year, the investiture of adat titles; the third year will be return to their respective kemendapooan something. This has been the grand design of the event since 2018. The government believes that this activity will not interfere with cultural and religious activities in the community.*”

This statement shows that the government is aware that the interests of tourism are different from the true implementation of local traditions. This awareness indicates that the government through the tourism office wanted to hold the event as a form of local art, as a small representation of the main activities of the *Kenduri Sko* ritual.

Nevertheless, *Kenduri Sko* as an event of tourism did not neglect the principle rules of the *adat* actors. In the event, the ritual processes were conducted by the indigenous people. In Come members of the indigenous community were invited by officials to perform the ritual. The officials did not try to imitate the rituals. They let each community perform by themselves. Likewise, the officials only facilitated the performances. We could see that the ritual elements were conducted by indigenous people without leaving behind the essence of the rituals.

This tourism event initiated by the local government showed the *Kenduri Sko* as an articulation of indigenous and religious practices. When Islamic elements—which is the religiously dominant symbol of the community—are combined with indigenous practices that are still preserved by them, these can still be accepted and offer a contemporary articulation of the national spirit embedded in the local culture. The articulation of *Kenduri Sko* in tourism is not merely a way to substitute the indigenous local practice as a tourism

event. Rather, it was a ceremonial event that was held in the context of a national program of advancing culture. For some elite locals, such an event could be a way of preserving the local cultural memory of the community. In the future, the preserved tradition of *Kenduri Sko* still held in every community.

The performance of such a ritual in a cultural event also showed that the flexibility of indigenous and religious elements in the practice of articulation. This is shown in h the indigenous people have accepted the local official’s approach in facilitating this event. They can move together in bringing about a new value of articulation that is not only a meeting point between Islam and indigenous traditions but also a manifestation of national ideology.

### **Conclusion**

In the history of local community involvement in tourism, indigenous cultures have often become subject to challenges and threatened with dilution. Thus, the idea of “authentic” cultural practices is considered as a key factor that must be maintained continuously. Many tourism events tend to try to replace local traditions by using actors outside the community in order to gain the public attention. Tourism events also tends to present indigenous practices as mere performance art without maintaining its sacred character. This has an impact on the decline of local traditions. Furthermore, it is common that local traditions are challenged when encountering dominant religious practices and laws.

We have attempted to show that the problem of the intersection of religion and culture is the root cause of the decline in local traditional practices. So far, the government has played the dominant role in preservation, while the local community has been less involved. Furthermore, our research on the festival of *Kenduri Sko* as a indigenous local tradition of the

Kerinci People held in the city of Sungai Penuh show that the articulation process of local traditions, religion, and tourism has stimulated the preservation of this local tradition. Practically speaking, what is important to consider is not only the meaning, practitioners, tradition, and identity, but also how the people do their daily practice as way of life. Through the idea of indigenous religion, *Kenduri Sko* could be seen as a dynamic process of encounter between the Kerinci people's indigenous practice and Islam as their religion. When they ensure that what they did is also part of their religious belief, they articulate *Kenduri Sko* in the context of tourism. In doing so, they manifest this harmonizing cultural logic into the new context to which the tourist agents must adhere. Tourism has the capacity to shape and transform the culture of indigenous communities by influencing the way individuals in the community see themselves and how they perceive their identity and culture. Culture can be used by indigenous communities as a platform to revitalize, define, shape and transform their culture in the contemporary context. Doing this allows them to preserve and further transmit their culture, values, beliefs, and their way life with the visitors. The government plays a role in providing space for the community to play a direct role in the performance of *Kenduri Sko*. This kind of articulation process has succeeded in putting indigenous people as the main actors, whereas the government plays a supporting role in the preservation of the local tradition. At the same time, a synergistic relationship between the local government and the local actor is necessarily maintained through various events, such as festivals and art performances.

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