

Exploring Islamic Spiritual Insights in the Media and Traditional Medicine Methods of the Sasak Community

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Abstract. The richness of Sasak culture seems to be endlessly studied and presented to the reading public in writings in various media, especially in the context of its contact with Islamic spiritual values. One is the media and methods for healing diseases of the traditional Sasak community, which is still ongoing today. This article analyses various media and methods the traditional Sasak community uses to deal with disease outbreaks. This research was carried out through field studies and data collection through interviews, observation, and literature study. The research results show that the media and treatment methods used are natural ingredients almost untouched by technology and mixed with spiritual power to touch the physical parts affected by a disease. Illnesses usually heal within an average time, including patients with mental disorders. The media and treatment methods implemented are dominated by spiritual power in the form of the beliefs of those who treat and those who are treated. Apart from that, treatment methods and media do not conflict with Islamic spiritual values, even though, outwardly, some view it as a contradictory practice.

Keywords: traditional; Islamic spiritual; healing; methods.

INTRODUCTION

The Sasak people on Lombok Island have rich cultural diversity, including traditional healing systems [1]. Conventional medicine often includes spiritual aspects and local beliefs in supernatural powers. Therefore, it is essential to understand Islamic spiritual insight's role in this cultural diversity.

The Sasak people are an ethnic group that inhabits Lombok Island, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia [2]. Lombok Island has a rich history and was once part of the maritime kingdoms in Indonesia. Its long history and geographical position as a meeting centre for various cultural influences influence the cultural diversity of the Sasak people [3].

Before Islam arrived on Lombok Island in the 16th century, the Hindu-Buddhist religion influenced the Sasak people's cultural diversity. Remnants of this influence can still be found in daily life, art, and culture.

In the 16th century, Lombok Island experienced significant Islamization [4]. Even though Islam is dominant, the Sasak people can combine local values with Islamic teachings. This cultural diversity is reflected in the Sasak community's traditions, arts, traditional procedures and social norms.

The Sasak people have rich local arts and traditions, such as dance, music, traditional carvings and healing arts [5]. This diversity is reflected in the variety of art from various ethnic groups and communities on Lombok Island.

Health is a precious gift for living creatures, especially humans. With good health, daily activities can run generally as expected. To maintain health, humans make various efforts by mobilising all their resources. This has been a routine part of human life since prehistoric times until modern times. So, media and methods of healing diseases have developed from classical to contemporary times. Health infrastructure and various facilities are undergoing renewal. Various

health research is carried out with large budgets provided by the state and private sector.

Before modern health infrastructure and facilities were discovered, people had used traditional media and methods of healing diseases that had lasted for thousands of years. The result cannot be denied that humans who lived in the past with all their conditions have been able to give birth to a new generation through a very traditional process. However, history records that the world has never been free from pandemics, which continue to claim human lives until the discovery of modern technology in the health sector.

The Sasak community is an example of a community that has been a user of traditional medicine for a long time, and even today, it is still widely maintained despite the advancement of health technology. This condition raises the question: 1) How did the Sasak people overcome their health problems in the past and escape various pandemic outbreaks that have hit the world for a long time? 2) What methods and media have been passed down from generation to generation to heal the diseases of the Sasak people to this day? 3) Why are these methods and media still maintained?

To answer these questions, the author interviewed several rural community members who still intensively use traditional methods and media to heal diseases. Some of these informants survived various diseases safely during the pandemic that hit the Sasak community, especially village residents and the people of East Lombok, which was the research location.

METHOD

The research method employed in this study is qualitative, and the goal is to gain a profound understanding of the Sasak community's Media and Traditional Medicine methods. This research was carried out through field studies and data collection through interviews, observation, and literature study [6].

The data collection techniques used included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis from the data collection results in the field [7]. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain answers regarding Islamic spirituality in the media and traditional healing methods of the Sasak people [8]. Participatory observation involves researchers in research ac-

tivities [9]. Document analysis was carried out on teaching materials, library sources, historical records, and the results of other activities related to the methods and implementation of traditional medicine in the Sasak community.

Research procedures include initial introduction and preparation, interviews guided by structured questions, participant observation in treatment activities, and systematic document analysis [7]. The collected data was then analysed using a thematic analysis approach, with coding to identify patterns, relationships and emerging meanings. Data triangulation was carried out to ensure the authenticity and reliability of findings from various sources [7].

Research evaluation and validity are maintained through researcher reflection on subjectivity and external validation approaches by confirming research findings with participants. Research ethics were maintained by obtaining informed consent and ethical approval from participants, maintaining confidentiality of information, and using codes to protect participants' identities [10].

The research results will be presented through analysis of facts in the field, accompanied by interview quotes and observation findings [11]. The findings will be linked to relevant literature to provide a broader context regarding Islamic Spirituality in the Media and Traditional Medicine Methods of the Sasak Community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Outbreak among the Sasak Community. For at least 70 years, the Sasak community has been hit by various disease outbreaks, including caloran (famine), smallpox, plague, malaria, cholera, dengue fever, and COVID-19 [12]. During that time, many residents became victims because the numbers were too large, and there were limited skilled workers (shamans) as special officers who handled healing diseases. At that time, only 4 or 5 people bought. Meanwhile, residents affected by the epidemic exceed the purchasers' capacity every day and even come from outside the village¹.

¹ The story of Inaq Khalidi (70 years old) in an interview on 28 July 2023 at 15.30.

These "beans"² [13] had not rested enough for months because every day and night, they continued to visit every house of residents affected by the plague. With faith and a spirit of mutual help, they never gave up until the epidemic ended. In traditional community beliefs, the cause of the plague is spirits who are angry with humans because they feel they are not appreciated – for example, the Great Spirit of Mount Rinjani and Dewi Anjani, the ruler of smallpox. The spirit of Gunung and Dewi Anjani is always asked to be entertained by the residents of the island of Lombok so as not to spread the plague among the community [14].

The cholera epidemic that claimed the lives of many people in Lombok between 1970 and 1980 was considered a curse on human attitudes and behaviour that did not want to obey natural and customary rules. When this epidemic struck, the Belians, as the most common figures, agreed to carry out quarantine, especially for residents who were struck by the outbreak outside the village, not to be brought into the village. The patient must be treated outside the town until he recovers or dies.

The analysis's results reflect that the Sasak community's cultural factors and local beliefs influence the community's response to outbreaks and emerging diseases. Thus, the Sasak people firmly believe that traditional healing practices and spiritual beliefs are the solution.

Outbreaks are generally related to infectious diseases like viruses, bacteria, or parasites [15]. Diseases that can cause an epidemic include influenza, cholera, or highly contagious viral infections. One of the main characteristics of an epidemic is its rapid spread among individuals in a community. Direct contact, airborne droplets, or environmental contamination can be effective transmission routes.

It is usually characterised by a significant increase in disease cases beyond expected or normal levels in a given population, which can include sharp spikes over some time.

Methods and Media for Healing Traditional Diseases of the Sasak Community. The methods and media for the treatment or cure of diseases that are still dominantly used by the Sasak people include:

² Belian knows traditional medicine and can treat various diseases that arose among the Sasak people at that time.

Popot [16] is a method of massaging the head for all types of illnesses because it is believed that all diseases originate from inner pressure called tinjot or shock (trauma). People who are shocked always feel dizzy and have difficulty sleeping. Their minds become restless, their whole body becomes sweaty, and it can spread to the soles of their feet. The medium used in this method is water, which is the mandatory medium, plus galangal, jeringo, or other spices.

Sémbéq [16] smeared the patient's forehead with chewed betel mixed with lime and areca nuts. Usually, if the chewing colour is red, it is a sign that the disease is still mild and can be overcome, whereas if it is black, it is pretty severe and requires much effort to cure it. If the colour remains green, the disease was not successfully cured by the purchaser he was visiting but may be cured by another.

Paot [16] massaging the abdomen by a specialist in their field, namely a gynaecologist or, usually, a Nanak purchase, namely someone who usually helps with the birthing process, is generally performed on patients who have lost their appetite or feel an abnormality in the stomach. The medium used is coconut or special oil added with certain spices, and mantras are recited.

Sembar or pemeru involves spraying water onto the patient's body. Usually, fever, smallpox, and heartburn are treated this way using water, kencur, and/or jeringo. Aiq Seruwang involves water on which the belian recites certain spells and vows. If good changes occur in the patient, especially if the disease is cured, then the patient will pay the vows made by the purchaser.

Aiq Seruwang can be continued with aiq singing, where this method and media are considered more sacred because many rules must not be violated during this process, especially in the home of a sick person. Pilgrimage to sacred graves, namely visiting the grave of a holy person to take a bath (wash your face) while reading prayers. The media used are water, Rampe flowers, and, wherever possible, bringing dishes and inviting several people to do dhikr.

Occasionally, they take a bath, that is, bathing a patient who has recovered from an illness in the hope that they will be protected from the arrival of the disease. Usually, this is given to people believed to be affected by séhér or witchcraft and black magic. It can also be undertaken by people who are healthy and want to undertake a par-

ticular journey or other purposes. However, this does not include patients who have suffered from an illness. It also aimed at becoming a bestseller. *Betulak/besentulak/mentulak* is a ceremony led by traditional elders (*belian*) to ward off disease outbreaks for humans, animals, and plants. This is also known as *pushback*. In this case, *almsgiving* also occurs, throwing away certain food items prepared as offerings.

Bebubus [17], *babus media* treatment, is a rice concoction mixed with certain spices formed into tablets. In the *Jerowaru* people's tradition, many types of *bubus* still exist today, including *Bubus Mangkung* [18], *Bubus Tiwang*, *Bubus Tuju*, *Bubus Teris Nganak*, *Bubus Painq*, and so on, which have the property of treating certain diseases.

Pertus/pertuq, is a method of treating *ketemuq*³ disease with various symptoms, such as stomach aches and dizziness. The medium used is the hair on the head of the person who suffers from it, or other people's hair can be used. One small clump of hair is wrapped around it and pulled until it makes a sound. If it sounds like a disease, it will disappear instantly. This method can also be done with someone who usually does it.

Betenung/tetirok is an attempt to ask an expert about medicine or support for a chronic disease that a person suffers from. The *media* magicians use can be a plain white container filled with water or other *media* on which prayers are read. Also, by opening the classic book of *Abu Ma'syar al-Falaki*, they can calculate the value of the letters in the name of a sick person to find out about that person's life journey, the type of illness they suffer from, and how to deal with it.

Islamic Spiritual Insights into the Media and Traditional Medicine Methods of the Sasak Community. Islamic insight related to spiritual insight and traditional medicine in Sasak society can be re-

³ The term *ketemuq* is still a topic of discussion among Sasak linguists. Some believe it is a word from "*ketemu*" (Indonesian) between the spirit of the dead and the living. The spirit greets the living person. In the author's opinion, this word comes from the root word "*smug*" from the affix *te + emuq*, which then becomes *ketemuq* as Sasak people usually add the prefix *key* to refer to conditions, such as *female*, *kennels*, *Kelantan*, *Kalimantan*, and so on. In this terminology, *ketemuq* means a condition where the spirit of the deceased family feels disappointed with the living family because they think that they have never been prayed for or donated. And because memory is an act of the brain, *pertus/pertuq* is done on the hair on the crown of the head. *Ketemuq* can also be performed by spirits inhabiting a place being visited for the first time.

flected through the principles of Islamic teachings and local values that underlie Sasak culture. The following points illustrate how Islam influences spiritual insight into traditional medicine in the Sasak community.

1. Islam in the context of Sasak society can be integrated with local values and traditions rooted in ancestors. Traditional medicine includes methods passed down from generation to generation and considered adequate by the community. Knowledge about conventional medicine is often passed down from generation to generation through oral stories, traditional songs, and religious rites. Apart from that, most Sasak people live as farmers or carry out activities in the agricultural sector. Visible local values can reflect balance with natural cycles, planting seasons and harvests. Thus, traditional healing practices can also be linked to agricultural cycles and daily needs.

2. In the context of local mythology and belief systems, traditional medicine plays a vital role in the societal values of the Sasak community. Some traditional healing practices are associated with spiritual beliefs or local mythology. Oral *media*, such as fairy tales and folk tales, can be used to explain the origins of traditional medicine and provide legitimacy to local wisdom. This aligns with local values in Sasak society, which are intertwined with social norms and Islamic religious teachings. Therefore, treatment practices are carried out according to applicable ethics and social norms.

Sasak people also tend to have strong values of togetherness and solidarity. In traditional medicine, this can be reflected in collaboration between individuals, families and communities in caring and healing. Thus, knowledge about traditional medicine is considered a shared treasure that must be maintained and shared. Sasak people generally respect traditional authorities, such as "*belian*" or traditional figures. Traditional healing practices involve these figures as knowledge keepers and implementers of treatment procedures. So, it can transmit knowledge and experience from generation to generation. Apart from that, traditional ceremonies and rituals play an essential role in the lives of the Sasak people. Traditional medicine may involve special rites that have spiritual and social significance. Oral *media* can be a tool to convey information related to these rituals and ceremonies.

Understanding these local values and traditional wisdom shows how traditional media and medicine in Sasak society reflect practical aspects and depict a close relationship with nature, culture and spirituality.

CONCLUSIONS

The healing methods and media that have persisted throughout the ages in the traditions of the Sasak people are a legacy that contains solid Islamic spiritual values and are not a deviation, as some groups think. The practices that appear on

the surface only manifest differences in understanding and appreciation of implementing beliefs. In religious faith, there is still a total submission to Allah Swt as Causa Prima in healing various types of diseases that are treated traditionally and modernly. Sasak traditional medicine has more Islamic spirit values than modern medicine, which relies more on diagnosis and medicinal prescriptions. In terms of the approach used, conventional medicine uses an appreciation (spirituality) approach, while modern medicine uses a rationality analysis approach.

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