

opción

Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,
Lingüística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 35, 2019, Especial N°

21

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1587/ ISSNe: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



Universidad del Zulia
Facultad Experimental de Ciencias
Departamento de Ciencias Humanas
Maracaibo - Venezuela

The tradition of pig hunting in the Minangkabau community

Zainuddin Zainuddin¹

¹Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Batusangkar, Sumatera Barat,
Indonesia

zainuddin@iainbatusangkar.ac.id

Zulkifli²

²Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Batusangkar, Sumatera Barat,
Indonesia

zulkifli@iainbatusangkar.ac.id

Muhammad Kristiawan^{3*}

³Universitas Bengkulu, Indonesia

drmuhammadkristiawan@univpgr-palembang.ac.id

Abstract

This study investigated the tradition of hunting pigs in Minangkabau, Indonesia. The data were collected through interviews with pig hunting participants and through observation at several hunting locations. It was found that the Minangkabau community, especially pig hunters, did not feel the tradition of hunting pigs was in conflict with the religious Shari'a that they believed. In conclusion, in today's world, interpretations of religions are no longer isolated, local, and more or less single; rather, many angles of interpretation exist side by side and are accessible to all.

Keywords: Tradition, Hunting, Pig, Society, Minangkabau.

La tradición de la caza de cerdos en la comunidad de Minangkabau

Resumen

Este estudio investigó la tradición de la caza de cerdos en Minangkabau, Indonesia. Los datos se recopilaron a través de

entrevistas con participantes de la caza de cerdos y mediante observación en varios lugares de caza. Se descubrió que la comunidad de Minangkabau, especialmente los cazadores de cerdos, no creía que la tradición de cazar cerdos estuviera en conflicto con la religiosa sharia que ellos creían. En conclusión, en el mundo de hoy, las interpretaciones de las religiones ya no son aisladas, locales, y más o menos únicas; más bien, muchos ángulos de interpretación existen uno al lado del otro y son accesibles para todos.

Palabras clave: Tradición, Caza, Cerdo, Sociedad, Minangkabau.

1. INTRODUCTION

Negative attitudes toward dogs are common in Muslim societies, and many Muslims consider the dog to be an unclean animal. It is said, for example, that the prayers of Muslims will be invalidated if a dog wanders by a praying person; and the Swedish media has occasionally run stories about Muslim taxi drivers who refused to transport dogs in their vehicles. In 2002 Iran imposed a ban on public dog walking (Foltz, 2006); and, according to the major Islamic schools of law, when a dog has eaten from a bowl it must be washed at least seven times to be fit for human usage (Bakhtiar, 1996). To explain such unfavorable reactions, it is often said that because dogs were largely responsible for the spread of rabies in the Middle East, they have been long held in low esteem as a species to be abhorred, avoided, and ignored (Elfadl, 2004).

This low status not only concerns Islam and Muslims, but it is also reflected in the Biblical Rabbinical tradition. Another explanation

that is sometimes given for the dog's low status in Muslim societies concerns the fact that when Islam was established in the 7th century, and then spread to present-day Iran, there was a need for it to distinguish itself from the dominant Zoroastrian tradition, which held a more positive view of this species (Moazami, 2006).

The fact that the dog is considered a basically unclean species has had a major impact on the animal's role as a domestic companion animal, although the same cannot be said of the dog's place in guarding, hunting, and animal husbandry (Elfadl, 2004). In the Arab world, for example, the antelope-hunting Saluki has been long praised in poetry and song for both the creature's skills and beauty. Perhaps the most famous breed in the Middle East, the history of this greyhound-like canine goes back 5,000 years according to some and 8,000 years according to others. In pre-modern Bedouin communities, the Saluki enjoyed a status similar to the treasured Arabian horse. It has been said that in olden times the Saluki could not be purchased for money, but only obtained in exchange for horses and/or camels; indeed, the Saluki was even valued as a princely gift (Duggan, 2009).

Moreover, within the mystical Sufi traditions there are various references to dogs that are quite positive, especially when it comes to the dog's ideal exemplification of qualities like faithfulness and fidelity.

Thus, in studying both past and present Muslim writings on dogs, a contradictory picture appears to emerge, indicating that Muslim

attitudes toward dogs have had their ambiguities. Often the dog has been presented as the lowest of creatures, but at times the creature has been used as a role model, exemplifying qualities that humans should strive for, which are generally held in high regard within Islam. The purpose of this article is to explore and better understand the nature of this ambiguity.

1.1. Dogs in Islamic texts

To begin with, there is only one place in the Quran where the word dog is mentioned: Surah 18, the content of which casts the dog not in a negative light, but rather in a somewhat positive light. Known as Al-Kahf (The Cave), this Surah contains the tale of a group of young men who were so devoted to God that they fled their city and hid in a cave to avoid the forced worship of idols. After entering the cave, they (along with their dog) are said to have fallen into a 309-year sleep, during which period all of them (including the dog) were sustained and preserved by God's angels. This is described in verse 18; the first passage that directly mentions the presence of a dog: And thou wouldst have deemed them waking though they were asleep, and we caused them to turn over to the right and the left, and their dog [my italics] stretching out his paws on the threshold. If thou hadst observed them closely thou hadst assuredly turned away from them in flight, and hadst been filled with awe of them.

When they were finally awakened, the young men, thinking they had been asleep for only a day, chose one among themselves to cautiously reenter the city for the purchase of food. There he found to his astonishment that all the townspeople had become exclusive worshipers of God (i.e., monotheists). In time, these townsfolk came to know of the miracle of the young men, their dog, and the cave and decided to build a place of worship over them. And, as Verse 22 makes clear, the dog was counted as one among the members of this apparently blessed group: (Some) will say: They were three, their dog the fourth, and (some) say: Five, their dog the sixth, guessing at random; and (some) say: Seven, and their dog the eighth. Say (O Muhammad): My Lord is Best Aware of their number. None knoweth them save a few. So contend not concerning them except with an outward contending, and ask not any of them to pronounce concerning them.

In terms of Muhammad's more derogatory remarks, there is a hadith in which he is said to have noted that those who maintain dogs within their houses will suffer reduced earnings, and the angels will not enter their homes (Fudge, 2001); there are also ahadith in which Muhammad is seen calling for the killing of certain dogs. Apart from containing the statements of Muhammad and his companions, each hadith provides the names of those who are said to have successively conveyed this information to new generations from the time of Muhammad to the time that the hadith was factually penned. If this succession contains missing links, or if one or more of the individuals in the chain is considered unreliable, then the content of that particular

hadith may be called into question and declared to be weak or uncertain (Waines, 2003). An example of this can be found in the hadith where Muhammad is represented as saying that black dogs are demons in dogs' bodies a hadith that scholars such as Khalid Abu Elfadl, for example, consider being problematic (Elfadl, 2004).

1.2. Desirable virtues

While living in the vicinity of Baghdad in the 9th century, the Islamic legal scholar Ibn Almarzuban (1978) compiled various statements and stories about dogs into a curiously titled book called *The Superiority of Dogs over Many of Those Who Wear Clothes*. The work appears to have served two purposes: to defend the status of the dog on the one hand, and to point out the decadence of most human beings on the other. Toward these ends, Almarzuban (1978) argues against those that proclaim the dog unclean by referring to the rather favorable portrayal of the dog found in *Al-Kahf* (mentioned above) and various ahadith. One such hadith, for example, indicates that the Prophet's wives brought a dog on pilgrimage to guard their luggage.

In general, however, Marzuban's book is considered to be more about the character of man than it is about the status of dog, as is confirmed by the following passage: "Hold on to your dog if you can get one, because most people have become swine" (Almarzuban, 1978: 12). Here Almarzuban means to indicate that rather than living according to the commandments of God and the ideals of Islam, most

people are driven by self-love. This undesirable characteristic is then contrasted with the dog's instinctive sense of loyalty and duty, which he depicts as ideals to be striven for by man. And since these virtues are naturally occurring features of the dog's personality, but not of man's, Almarzuban concludes that dogs are superior to people.

1.3. God's faithful servant

Sufism is often described as Islam's mystical tradition the branch that emphasizes its spiritual values. Many Muslims also claim that Sufism constitutes Islam's traditional form. Within Sufism, there is a diversity of traditions and numerous brotherhoods that have formed around different Sufi masters, yet all commonly stress the importance of Islam's inner dimensions, which are described as being centered upon the soul and the heart. For every Sufi master there appears to be at least one narrative in which the dog is used as an exemplar (Foltz, 2006). For example, work by one of the most celebrated Sufi masters of all time, the Persian poet Jalal al-Din Rumi, whose writings have reached far beyond the Muslim world and also given rise to several Sufi orders, which have attempted to follow his example in various ways.

According to Foltz (2006), a contemporary Sufi master from Iran, this statement can be understood to indicate that knowledge and discipline are so important that even a domesticated dog can be considered a role model (p. xii). Another possibility is that Ali intends

to highlight the need for spiritual guidance, without which a person's good qualities may not become manifest a fairly standard point of view in Sufism. Although it can be said that Ali's statement is more about people than it is about dogs, and that the dog plays a more or less symbolic role in his statement, his point would have little analogical weight if the ten mentioned characteristics could not be factually discerned in the conduct, personality, and habits of the dog.

Thus, even though the dog may play only a pedagogical and rhetorical role in Ali's statement, the characteristics spoken of must be noticeably present in order for the dog to have symbolic value. Ultimately, as is often the case in Sufism, the aim is to highlight virtues such as humility, simplicity, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and gratitude virtues that leave room for the positive use of the dog in numerous Sufi accounts and tales (Can, 2004).

1.4. In love poetry

The dog is also praised in Muslim literature that is not explicitly religious in intention, content, and design. For example, the tale of the young Qay Guinhut (1998) and his unrequited love for the beautiful Layla. One of the most renowned love stories in the history of Muslim literature, it is believed to date back to the 7th century and to have been the inspiration for both Gottfried Strafiburg's *Tristan and Isolde* and William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. In the tale, Majnun is driven by his unhappiness into the desert, where he spends his time in the

company of wild animals. Alone, depressed, and almost mad with longing, he appears to develop some sort of identification with the dog, and extols the dog's virtues in a manner that is uncommon in comparison to most of the accounts and stories coming from Muslim cultures.

The dog is treated not as a mere symbol, but rather as a species to be valued and admired for the animal's genuine intrinsic worth. Upon encountering a dog wandering alone like himself, Majnun exclaims: you, with the collar of faithfulness, before whom the lion has bowed down. You are better than a man in terms of fidelity and more intimate with the Path than most. If you eat once from someone's hand then one hundred stones cannot cause you to turn your back at that person. Your work is to guard at night and herd the sheep at day. You make the thief lose interest in his profession and captivate the wolf with your lion-like claws. Your bite/bark scares off nightwalkers while guardians are paralyzed by fear.

On the battlefield of righteousness, one of your hairs is worth as much as those of a thousand armed men. In terms of the discussion at hand, however, which specifically concerns the ambiguity of Muslim attitudes toward the dog, the probative value of this glorification is mitigated by the fact that Muslim cultures typically regard Majnun as someone who has lost his mind that is, a madman. This implies that his admiration for the dog is nothing more than another symptom of his insanity.

1.5. Signs of change

As it has been indicated several times above, when the dog serves particular purposes (basically guarding and/or hunting), the creature has been generally accorded a high value in Muslim societies or at least has been considered acceptable. This view has been confirmed by a recent fatwa regarding the use of guide dogs that were issued by the Muslim Council of Britain. In general, the fatwa declares that it is permissible for guide dogs to accompany their blind owners to the mosque so long as they are kept fastened outside the prayer hall during prayers. The reasoning is that the guide dog, like the hunting dog, serves a vital practical function, and thus the dog's more intimate involvement in human affairs is permissible.

On the other hand, the idea of maintaining a dog as a mere household companion animal has long been considered an oddity in many Muslim-majority countries. Nevertheless, there are signs that attitudes toward dogs are beginning to change in some Muslim societies. One such sign concerns the fact that an increasing number of people in Muslim countries are beginning to keep dogs as companions a trend that is often viewed as a symptom of Western influence. In a recent study from Kuwait, for example, the increased tendency of Kuwaitians to accept dogs as companions has been attributed to the powerful international reach of such Western-dominated media as film, satellite television, and the Internet, all of which tend to present the dog in a favored light (Alfayez et al., 2003).

One person who evidently did not appreciate the Dalmatian was the heir's sister Tengku Maharani, who objected on the grounds of the dog's uncleanness. In response, Ibrahim consulted a religious scholar (alim), asking him whether dogs could be held as companions. The answer was positive as far as Ibrahim and the Dalmatian were concerned. Unsatisfied, Ibrahim's sister turned to other religious scholars, and they came to the opposite conclusion, while also protesting against the answer that had been given by the alim that Ibrahim had consulted. The disagreement led to a public debate between the defenders and the opponents of companion dogs. With over 2,000 people in attendance, each side presented its point of view, backed by arguments and texts from the Quran, the hadith, and previous religious scholars. When neither side evinced a willingness to yield to the other, the debate ended in a stalemate and the question was referred to the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. (Roff, 1983).

More recently, Khaled Abou Elfadl (2004), professor of Islamic Law at the University of California, made use of the Malikiean School to argue on behalf of the companion dog. He further asserted that the ahadith used to support antipathy toward dogs are highly questionable, insisting that many Muslim scholars throughout history have declared that only rabies-infected dogs are unclean, and not dogs in general. These conclusions have elicited a strong reaction from militant Islamic groups that disapprove of his scholarship, and that has even gone so far as to threaten Elfadl (2004) with some sort of harm or retribution (Tolson, 2008). This is an indication of how impassioned and inflamed the controversy over the dog's place in Islam can become a tendency

that can also be seen by studying the manner in which the dog has been a provocative element in certain political situations.

1.6. The dog in world politics

In the mid-1970s, when it became internationally known that the Swedish king kept a Labrador named Ali (the name of the Prophet's cousin/son-in-law), there was a strong reaction from Pakistan, among other countries. In response, the king, who had not intended to offend anyone, simply changed the dog's name from Ali to Charlie, thus bringing the protests to an end (Martenson, 2000). And when the Swedish artist Lars Vilks depicted Muhammad as a roundabout dog, the reactions were similarly heated. However, the difference is that this was a deliberate provocation (Loov, 2009).

These political provocations point not only to the dog's ambivalent place but also to some of the tensions and changes that exist in Muslim majority societies concerning how to relate to the Western world. Dogs have been used, for example, as a provocation against extreme Islamist groups in Pakistan. Islamism, in a somewhat simplified sense, is an umbrella term used for interpretations of Islam that want to see Islam as an all-encompassing system that controls not only the individual's relationship to God but also social functions and political life. The goal of many Islamists is the establishment of a state-controlled in accordance with Islamic law, Sharia. In Pakistan, for

example, the extreme Islamist groups have made themselves famous for using violence to achieve their ends.

The next example is the Islamist organization Hamas, which commonly uses images of animals to promote its message of struggle for a Palestinian state and the need for the Islamization of society. Several of the organization's Internet sites and posters display pictures of animals such as lions, horses, and falcons. These are animals associated with strength, courage, and beauty, and are therefore used to highlight what the organization believes is a noble fight. Dogs, however, are not found in the organization's images. On the contrary, images of dogs have been used to reproach Hamas. This was produced by the secular Fatah movement. Hamas leaders appear along with dog heads and slippers and are being affronted in two senses since it is considered grossly offensive in Muslim societies to throw a slipper or shoe at someone as well as to associate a man with a dog.

1.7. Various levels of ambiguity

The ambiguity that emerges concerning dogs can be understood on several levels relative to the teachings of Islam. First, it can be understood in terms of the difference between maintaining a dog for a utilitarian purpose and keeping a dog as a companion. The dogs accepted a functional role in Muslim societies where dogs have long acted as hunting companions, livestock guardians, and general protectors may be regarded as a historically self-evident fact. The

picture is not as clear, however, when it comes to the dog's role as a household companion animal something that has been called into question by dog's capacity to spread rabies, general uncleanliness, and somewhat negative treatment in certain ahadith.

The varied, non-uniform opinions about whether it is permissible to maintain dogs as domestic companions demonstrate that there are tensions in the Muslim world relative to the West. The fact that more families in certain Muslim countries are beginning to embrace the dog as man's best friend and allow dogs to live under their roofs indicates that a gradual change of attitude is taking place.

This detectable shift appears to be significantly related to the reach of such modern media like the Internet, television, and film, which largely tend to promote a more positive image of the dog, but also provide interpretations that legitimize the notion of the dog as a companion. In today's world, interpretations of religions are no longer isolated, local, and more or less single; rather, many angles of interpretation exist side by side and are accessible to all. As such, individuals are afforded greater opportunities to choose from the plethora of religious interpretations, including those that highlight the more positive aspects of the species known as dog. These options may be the result of the increased influence of the West or the natural progression of the ongoing discussion about how the religious sources should be interpreted. When deciding how to interpret texts and who has the authority to interpret them, we may find that the dog's place in

Islam does not lend itself to a simple explanation, but it is surrounded by ambiguity.

2. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to express our special thanks and gratitude to rector IAIN Batusangkar and Universitas Bengkulu who gave us the golden opportunity to do this wonderful project. Secondly, we would also like to thank our friends (Syukri Iska) who helped us a lot in finalizing this project within the limited time frame.

REFERENCES

- ALFAYEZ, G., AWADALLA, A., TEMPLER, D., & ARIKAWA, H. 2003. **Companion animal attitude and its family pattern in Kuwait**. Society & Animals. N^o 1, pp. 17-28. USA.
- ALMARZUBAN, I. 1978. **The superiority of dogs over many of those who wear clothes**. Warminster. United Kingdom: Aris & Phillips Ltd. UK.
- BAKHTIAR, L. 1996. **Encyclopedia of Islamic law: A compendium of the views of the major schools**. Chicago, IL: ABC International Group. USA.
- CAN, S. 2004. **Fundamentals of Rumi's thought; A Mevlevi Sufi perspective**. Clifton, Nj: The Light Inc. Australia.
- DUGGAN, B. 2009. **Saluki: The desert hound and the English travelers who brought into the West**. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co Inc. USA.
- ELFADL, K. 2004. **Dogs in the Islamic tradition**. In B. Taylor (Ed.), the encyclopedia of religion and nature. New York: Continuum. USA.

- FOLTZ, R. 2006. **Animals in Islamic traditions and Muslim cultures**. London, United Kingdom: One world. UK.
- FUDGE, B. 2001. **Dog**. In **J. Dammen McAuliffe (Eds.), Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an**. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers. Netherlands.
- GUINHUT, J. 1998. **The man who loved too much: The legend of Leyli and Majnun**. Azerbaijan International. Vol. 6, pp. 33-38. Azerbaijan.
- LOOV, P. 2009. **From dog walk to round dog: A persistent polemical tradition**. In J. Berglund & I. Svanberg (Eds.), the dog in cult and religion, on the border between holy and profant (The dog in cult and religion). pp. 151-162. Gothenburg, Sweden.
- MARTENSON, J. 2000. **To kiss a tree**. Stockholm: Wahlstrom & Widstrand. Sweden.
- MOAZAMI, M. 2006. **The dog in Zoroastrian religion**. Indo-Iranian Journal. Nurbakhsh, J. Dogs from a Sufi point of view. Khaniqahi - Nimatullahi Publication. Vol. 47, pp. 127-149. London. UK.
- ROFF, W. 1983. **Whence cometh the law? Dog saliva in Kelantan**. Comparative Studies in Society and History. Vol. 25, N° 2: 323-338. UK.
- TOLSON, J. 2008. **In the war over words: A scholar tests the spirit against the letter of Islamic law**. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/news/religion/articles/2008/04/07/in-the-war-over-words>. USA.
- WAINES, D. 2003. **An introduction to Islam**. Cambridge University Press. United Kingdom



**UNIVERSIDAD
DEL ZULIA**

opción

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales
Año 35, Especial N° 21, (2019)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.
Maracaibo - Venezuela

www.luz.edu.ve

www.serbi.luz.edu.ve

produccioncientifica.luz.edu.ve