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## ***Kabata Banda & the significance of Islamic eco-theology education***

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### **ABSTRACT**

The environmental crisis is a real threat to human survival. Climate change, natural disasters, and food crises are some of the devastating impacts that can have a major impact on the human population. The Banda Islands have a wide water zone with diverse marine biota but face the threat of natural disasters from active volcanoes and human behaviour that is not environmentally friendly. Historically, Banda has a tradition that is very close to coastal nature. *This is* revealed in their traditional song known as *Kabata Belang*, often sung while rowing a traditional boat (*Belang*) in various community cultural stages. By adopting phenomenology perspectives, this research is focused on reviewing the narration of the Fiat' *Kabata belang* sacrament songs to seek out the implied values of environmental ethics and its urgency in handling coastal environmental problems in Banda Naira today. The results show that *Kabata Belang* contains both theological and ecological values (eco-theology) apart from being an instrument of traditional rituals. There are 13 stanzas in Fiat village *Kabata Belang* that are oriented towards maintaining *several* coastal natural objects, such as mountains, coasts, birds, and fish. The singing of the *Kabata Belang* as a *traditional wisdom functions* as an "advisor" for the people of Banda today *to* preserve the marine and coastal environment. This research recommends the importance of writing down the *Kabata* text, complete with pictures and articulations that are more accessible to the public as a guidebook, especially for the younger generation to understand better and participate in creative efforts to preserve the coastal and marine environment in their everyday lives.

**Keywords:** Kabata, Islamic eco-theology, Banda Island

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The environmental crisis is basically the crisis of humanity itself. It impacts the heavy current of globalization and modernization, which have gradually and consistently corroded societies' cultural values. Besides that, there is quite a fundamental problem in coastal areas, particularly the scarcity of natural resources due to excessive exploitation, causing the shortage of natural resources and heavily damaging the coastal environment. The dilemmatic situation corners people living creatures on earth; progressing toward modernity is an absolute fact, yet on the other hand, threatening the cultural values impacted the extinction of people's life relevance among societies. Whereas essentially, people's basic function is on their nobility., It manifests in his own intelligence, sociologically as well as ecologically. This last term is a terminology Jung (2010) defines as a critique of whatever happens around him caused by his own self (Jung, 2010).

Experts have countlessly discussed the academic disputes on environmental ethics since late 1960. The trigger was White, who wrote an article titled *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, concluded that environmental crisis is caused by religious books that stated nature was created for human beings. Seyeed Hossein Nasr (2000) is one scientist who responded critically, saying that the global environmental crisis happening throughout the earth is caused by a spiritual crisis. The crisis led people to a "materialistic" life pattern, significantly impacting

developmental patterns focused on pursuing targeted economic growth and disorienting human life.

In fact, the Western world responded quite differently to the damage of the global environment: First, the act of returning to religious spiritualism - this act created scientific traditions: *spiritual ecology*, *green spirituality*, or *green hermeticism*. Second, the act of environmental caring is coordinated by the church. The act is in the form of critical writings as done by *Green Sisters* and *Greening Religion* (Suwito, 2017).

This Spiritual Ecology, also termed Ecotheology, combines two disciplines: theology and ecology. Theology is generally understood as knowledge or discourse about divinity alone. In Greek, *theos* means 'God', and *logos* means 'discourse' or 'reasoning'. Theology is then simply understood as a methodical, systematic and coherent set of supernatural knowledge about God's revelation, or everything related to that revelation (Gaduh & Harsananda, 2021).

However, according to Syed Hossein Nasr, spirituality in theology contains important messages that describe social life and injustice to the environment practised by humans (Dylan & Coates, 2012). In the teachings of Islamic ecosophy, Nasr (1996) introduces the study of a specific relationship between God, humans, and nature, the connection of which is described by the imagination of human harmony with nature. Through the imagination of human spirituality to the reality of the environmental crisis, a spiritual crisis and human religiosity towards what Nasr calls a result of neglecting *perennial truths* (Nasr, 2000; Asmanto et al., 2016).

The concept of eco-theology thus always presents God in every element of nature and all its activities. The natural elements in question are biotic (living things) and abiotic (non-living things) elements. The activity leads to the actions of good organisms, individually or in groups, in interacting with the natural environment and society. Ecotheological teachings emphasize efforts to achieve God's consciousness through living in harmony with nature. Building human harmony with nature in activities on land and at sea. Humans are seen as an integral part of forest, marine and coastal ecosystems.

The ecotheological approach has a similar orientation to social ecology in the context of education, which, according to Albar (2017), essentially focuses on the importance of human and natural life experiences. The concept of social ecology also encapsulates existential qualities in human life, such as spatial quality (life space), bodily quality (physical life), the relationality of living with others, and the temporal quality of life. This is because all knowledge about human phenomena is an attempt to explore the structure of the human world (*Lebenswelt*). The world of life experience is an everyday situation experienced by humans and their relationships, where the structure of the world of human life is a combination of experience and a very complex structure of life values (van Manen, 2016)

Thus, humanity's role in developing sustainable environmental life requires self-understanding of environmental philosophy based on environmental ethics to shape manners and behaviours in carrying out tasks as "God's representatives" on earth. This article's fundamental issue is to lay down the root of the problem in understanding the natural environment living philosophy to preserve nature and live harmoniously with natural surroundings.

Banda Naira, which has wide seascapes and a rich variety of marine and terrestrial biota, presupposes life principles oriented towards harmonious relationality. Historically, these principles have been preserved in various traditional rituals that are "still alive" today. One of them is the traditional boat singing ritual, or in the local language, it is called *kabata belang*. Unfortunately, this ritual is only practised for the purposes of traditional ceremonies in Banda and has not yet become a practice of daily life. In fact, in the *Kabata Belang* ritual, some beautiful verses are sung enthusiastically and have strong spiritual-social-ecological messages.

*Kabata* is categorised as oral literature, verbal narration, including poems, prose, songs, and oral drama. Oral literature is part of oral tradition or usually developed within oral culture through messages, stories, or testimonies passed down from generation to generation (Vansina, 1985). Folklore is part of the culture spread from mouth to mouth by local people. However, some people also called folklore an oral tradition. This folklore may have broadened its scope if combined with oral tradition. According to Danandjaja (2002), oral tradition merely existed in the forms of folktales, traditional songs, puzzles, and proverbs, while folklore has wider scopes,

including traditional dance and architecture. This could be quite distinct between oral tradition and folklore.

Oral literature is creativity in the form of prose or poems expressed orally by people in the verbal language (Endaswara, 2018). According to Robson, this issue on oral literature is vital to be reviewed since it is the medium of preserving stories and opinions passed down from ancestors that might be useful for today's people's mindset. However, what people have done nowadays tends to be heavily influenced by the present era. Many people forget about their cultural legacy. This is in line with Sudjiman (Endaswara, 2018) that oral literature is a story told by an anonymous person that is compiled irregularly in time sequences and spread to local society.

This article will review the *Belang Kabata* as an oral tradition of the Bandanese who reveal their identity. *Kabata* seems to be a treasure that has been neglected so far, and it is only used ceremoniously. In contrast, it can be a guide and "advisor" for the life of the Bandanese to preserve the natural surroundings, especially the environment of the coast, sea, mountains, flora and fauna in Banda Naira.

## **METHOD**

This writing is based on research findings using the qualitative method with a phenomenology perspective. The subjects are the *Belang* rowers in *Fiat Adat* village of Banda Naira subdistrict. The phenomenological analysis focuses on daily life phenomena (Farid, 2018), including the knowledge of the rower about the adat ritual and the relationship among different religions and ethnic communities in Banda Naira. The heuristic stage is the clue for the writer to find the source and obtain data related to the objects and artefacts that have been researched. Furthermore, the data are verified through expert critics to verify the source persons' information from one to the other. Then, the data are interpreted using phenomenology to discover meanings implied within *Belang* rowers' daily lives.

In phenomenology, a complete and authentic understanding of an experience of daily life can be discovered. The philosophy of phenomenology is indeed aimed at studying people's phenomena without questioning the cause (Overgaard & Zahavi, 1996), where "the living world is a basic meaning forgotten by science" (Wilson, 2002). The phenomenologist stated that *zuruck zu de sachen selbst* atau *to the things themselves*, a calling to rediscover the authentic living world (Overgaard & Zahavi, 1996).

This review adopted the key concepts from Alfred Shutz, such as meaning, the living world, *knowledge stocks*, and others, as the outline of the study. Besides using the data source of the ancient script of *Hikayat Banda* and other references, this writing also took data from interviews with subjects who experienced real stories and the daily writings of people in Banda. The analysis is focused on the phenomenon of their daily life experience in Banda, including relations, friendship, and brotherhoods among themselves.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

#### ***The existence of adat in Banda Island***

This Banda Island is the historical island as the center of nutmeg and mace. This island's typical commodity has been a major attraction to nations worldwide for centuries. According to Des (2006), big ethnic nations like China discovered Banda in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, while the Arabs were in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The later visitor, Europe, experienced the victory of this nutmeg spice from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Alwi, 2006).

Banda Naira people are a mix of various ethnicities and religions. According to several sources, Islam came from Persia, Saudi Arabia, and Indian traders. The encounter of Islamic teachings with local culture established the acculturation of culture, resulting in a new culture known as Banda culture. One of the forms of Banda culture is the adat ritual of *Belang Kora-Kora* (Farid, 2021; Joella & Farid, 2022).

According to Farid (2020), the Banda Islands is a territory mentioned as one of the world heritage nominations by UNESCO. It has been registered as a National Strategic Territory in

RTRWN PP. Number 13/2017, among several potential tourism territories in Indonesia. In Banda Naira, we can see many historical and cultural legacies, such as colonial buildings, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese temple, an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Holland church, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century-old mosque, and several old houses of Malay-Arabic culture. Factually, preserving and conserving the legacy of Banda history for the past 10 years could not be maximally managed (Farid, 2020).

The ritual adat has been one of the elements of society's cultural system within certain communities, and it is part of the cultural treasure in the form of intangible cultural heritage. (Matondang & Setiawan, 2012). This ritual is closely related to the habits and attitudes of people's daily lives. This adat ritual conveys symbolic and philosophic meaning in people's lives, specifically Banda people today.

*Belang Kora-Kora* Banda ritual, in real practice, is carried out and performed by adat villages, like adat villages *Namasawar, Lonthoir, Salamon, Sairun, Fiat, Ratou, and Waer* (Joella & Farid, 2022; Farid, 2021). Each of these adat villages has its own ceremony and adat ritual that is still continuously preserved; the procession is suited to the time availability decided by adat elders in the form of a Banda Culture festival (Darman, 2017).

The performing of the adat ritual is an actualization of the tradition inherited by ancestors and as the media in delivering moral messages. In Banda Naira, the adat ritual is integrated historically and culturally within the congregation with *Orsia* and *Orlima* (Alwi, 2006). *Orsia* is "group nine," and *Orlima* is "group five". The system has been generally embraced and implemented by the people of Maluku dan Seram. According to Frank L. Cooley, these two big groups are known by different names: Ulisiwa and Ulilima in North Maluku, Patasiwa and Patalima in Central Maluku, and Ursiw and Urlim in Southern Maluku (Cooley, 1987).

According to Valentijn, these two big groups of Orsia and Orlima originated from two big kingdoms in North Maluku, Ternate and Tidore, expanding their territories (Valentijn, 1724-1726). However, there is an oral tradition that tells the story differently. Separation was caused by three brothers living in Mt. Nunusaku (Seram), who were separated after a heavy flood. The three brothers then occupied three territories; the oldest brother went to West Seram, and the offspring became Group Sembilan. The second brother went to North Seram and became Group Lima, and the youngest brother went to small islands in the southern part of Seram and then became *Uliate* or Group *Uliasa* (Alwi, 2006).

### ***Oral history of Fiat village***

The oral history of Banda mentions that the first established village in Banda Neira was the Lewetaka adat territory on Banda Island in 1462. Lewetaka was a kingdom led by a person named Mboisili Lewetaka, who believed in Islam. King Mboisili Lewetaka also took on the role of Qadhi, or religious figure, in determining legal cases in Banda Naira. Then, Fiat adat village was established. The term "Fiat" means "new". Therefore, it is proper that nowadays, Fiat Adat village is called with the name of "kampung baru". The main objective of establishing Fiat Adat Village was to enhance the teachings of the Islamic religion.



**Figure 1. Keramat of Wartaka, Makawi Island  
(The Island in Mythology of Banda)**

Fiat Adat village was established by a well-known figure named *Nira Bati Watro*. His 3 brothers and 40 followers came from Lonthoir to Neira Island with one ultimate goal: to spread

Islam. This happened in the year 1512, which coincided with the coming of the first European colony, which was Portuguese. Before arriving on Neira island, these 3 brothers had discussed earlier in one of the hamlets called “*wartaka*”, which, according to several sources, is located on the left-top side of Lonthoir adat village. Lonthoir district's historical name is “*Makawi Island*” (Figure 1).

The objective of the discussion was to make sure that each could take a significant role as a leader or religious figure in the effort to spread Islam on Naira island. The discussion then concluded several specific roles they are; the eldest brother, *Nira Bati Kumbang Nama*, served in Lonthoir to lead the people as well as supervise the *kele liang well* (an ancient and sacred well that served as Lonthoir peoples' water source) (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. The Pusaka Well in Lonthoir Village**

*Nira Bati Majela*, the second brother, and his followers agreed to visit *Nusa Ina Island* (Seram Island). The youngest brother, *Nira Bati Watro*, along with his 40 followers, among *Nira Achmad*, *Nira Mahmud*, *Boe Bakkah*, *Boe Nella* and *Pati Kiat*, as the navigator, decided to visit Neira Island. On this journey, *Nira Bati Watro* took along with him a Spanish flag, an ancient handwritten Al Quran, a tifa (drum), a pedasang (wudhu container) and a podium. After the discussion, they did some prayers together. The place where the discussion was held is now called *Kota Marak* on *Makawi Island* (Figure 3).



**Figure 3. The Gate to Makawi Island**

The mission to spread Islam religion in the Banda Islands was aimed at preventing the strong influence of the Portuguese that had occupied Banda at that time. For that noble mission, *Nirabati Kumbang Nama* had willingly let his brother *Nira Bati Watro* go and visit *Lewetaka Island* (Naira Island) using *Belang Kora-Kora* as the symbol of blessing and affection from the eldest brother to the younger one. Those Islam spreaders (syn) from *Wartaka* then arrive at a beach called “*Namanggoro*”, located in the Southern part of Naira (Figure 4). On letting his brother go, *Nira Bati Kumbang Nama* told *Pati Kiat* to “stay humble” since the aim of their visit to Naira was to comprehend people of Naira about the righteousness of the religion (Liebner, 2005).

After arriving in Naira, those religious propagators had some discussions again at the hills of *Ulu Pitu* (Mount Seven lower ground) with the local people of *Lewetaka*; they were *Mboilis Lewetaka*, *Boe Haeran* and *Boe Syamsuddin*.



. The Ancient Coast of Namanggoro

In that discussion, they agreed to build a mosque and assign Nira Bati Watro as the imam (priest/religious leader) in the mosque, assisted by two khatibs (preachers), Nora Achmad and Nira Mahmud. The function of the mosque was not only as a place and medium for people to pray but also as a medium for people to have discussions and to supervise young generations. The mosque was called “Lewetaka Mosque”. The name “Lewetaka Mosque” has undergone several changes and many physical restorations (Figure 5). During the Dutch East Indies colony, a man named Syekh Said Abdullah Badillah, tasked as the *Qadhi* (religion legal advisor), decided the change the mosque’s name to Masjid Jami’ (Public Mosque) and imam masjid entitled *Magistraat* (sole legal priest) and allowed to be present in every trial held by the colonial government.



Figure 5. Accuracy Across each Category

Naira Island, which used to be an area within the powerful Lewetaka kingdom, gradually experienced significant changes due to the presence of VOC colonialists. Naira island was then divided into 3 villages, Namasawar, Ratou, and Fiat Adat Villages. Therefore, *Fiat Adat* village was one of the adat villages on Naira Island. After the independence of the Indonesia Republic, new villages emerged in Naira Island, causing the new division of villages into 5, they are Namasawar (now Nusantara), Ratou (now Dwiwarna), Fiat (now Kampung Baru), and other two villages that are not included as adat village, they are Merdeka and Tanarata villages.

#### ***Fiat Belang boat (Kora-kora)***

Belang is the name of a traditional Banda boat. But, in Maluku, it is generally known as *Kora-Kora*. Traditional Maluku boats had some characteristics of a short and wide body, a low hull, high and decorated edges, one pole and one sail (Sulistiyono, 2004). This type of boat is *kora-kora*, and *cadik karere*. Banda *Belang* boat had a body of 10 meters long with a narrow width, was shaped openly, very low, and weighed 4 tons. This *Belang* boat had a bamboo *cadik* of five feet long (1,5 m) on each side, supporting the bamboo platform extended throughout the boat’s length. The boat’s capacity was 20 people (a total of 40 people). The boat’s centre was covered by a grass roof, which could hold up some stuff and even passengers. The deck was not more than 1 foot in height (30 cm) above the water due to the heavy weight of the top and the side part. This boat was usually used for trading and wars. The shape of this *kora-kora* was like a Chinese dragon boat (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Painting of the *Belang Mananoesi* boat in *Hikajat Banda*

Joella and Farid (2022) stated that this Belang boat had also been mentioned in *Hikayat Banda*, written by OK. Neirabatij in 1922. In that manuscript are some illustrations of this ancient Banda boat, including its decoration details. For example, it was stated that they saw a little bird called Susi while making the boat and decided to use it as decoration at its prow (Neirabatij 1922; Joella & Farid, 2022).

According to Thalib & La Raman (2015), since pre-colonial times, the Banda people have owned their trading fleet, transporting agricultural products from other islands to Banda (Thalib & La Raman, 2015). This historical information reveals that Banda has been quite progressive in sea transportation and can connect islands. Then, Thalib explained that the Banda people knew only two kinds of sea transportation. They were “Belang” and “Korakora,” used during wars and served as media of transportation for the kings (Thalib, 2016). However, until the decade of 1970s, Banda had several models of sea transportation; they were *rumbai*, *kolekole*, *tambangan*, *jungku*, *belang* and *rurehe* (Thalib, 2016; Wakim et al., 2015). Those kinds of sea transportation had different functions. Some functioned as fishing media at the coastline, some functioned as the media to connect islands, and some even managed to sail further, reaching Malaysia and Singapore.

Right now, the past profile of Belang can still be seen through a tradition called “manggurebe Belang”, a sort of competition of adat boats. According to Joella & Farid (2022), Banda Naira now owns two kinds of Belang, Belang Nasional (National Belang) and Belang Tradisional (Traditional/Adat Belang). Almost all villages have National Belang, but only Adat village could have Adat Belang. Well-known figures in Banda construct national Belang to host tourism events. While Adat Belang is purely constructed to preserve the culture and adat in Banda Naira (Joella & Farid, 2022).

Each adat village has its own distinctive Belang boat, which is distinguished by the colours and symbols attached to it. Fiat Adat village, for example, has some combinations of several colours, such as yellow, blue, red, black, and white. Meanwhile, the Belang boat of Wayer Adat village has a combination of yellow, red, white, blue, black, and green colours. The Belang boat of Namasawar village age combines green, red, yellow, and white colours (Joella & Farid, 2022).

The belang of Banda also has some unique symbols such as the head of the horse and fish for Fiat adat boat, birds for Waer adat boat, dragon head for Namasawar adat boat, dragon snake for the Ratou adat boat, Joko or “guarding dog” for Salamon adat boat, a flag for Sairun adat boat, and pomegranate fruit for Lonthoir adat boat. Interestingly, these symbols do not only own mystical interpretation but also historical interpretation. This means that the symbols on the belang are partly derived from the ancient narration and oral tradition of local adat people but also, at the same time, from its historical explanation (Wangania, 1981).

For example, the fish symbol on the Fiat Belang boat is associated with the “navigator” or “saviour”. This is correlated with the narration in ancient storytelling, in which the little fish is the navigator who shows the route to home (Sukendar, H. (2002). Some other stories were told about “saved by EO fish (sharks)”, etc. Factually, the fish itself has its own historical explanation, where Banda waters are the habitat, and Banda people made the fish their major consumption. The symbol of the bird in Waer adat belang can also be found in the narration of *Hikayat*, as the first man sent by God to tell the prophet about the Andare land (Banda). However, at the same

time, the bird is historically an endemic creature of Banda Island. Even the Islands have two uninhabited islands, "Manukang" Island and "Manuk" Island. In Javanese, the term "manuk" means bird.

Whereas the symbol of "dragon head" in Namasawar adat and the symbol of the dragon snake in Ratou belang boat are viewed and identified as family relations between the two. As it was uttered in oral tradition, namasawar and ratou were brothers descended from King Lebetacca (Lewetaka). The popular interpretation of the "dragon" is closer to the historical interpretation, which resulted from ethnic acculturation between Malays and Chinese at that time. Still, it is presumably that there might be another meaning for the dragon as the symbol of "women", as mentioned in the adat of Banjar. This is because, historically, it has been known that Ratou village has been considered, since the very beginning, the sovereign land of women during the earlier reign of Banda kings.

Another symbol is the "Delima" (pomegranate) fruit on Lonthoir belang. "Delima" is a mystical figure narrated differently into *hikayat* (stories). In *hikayat*, "delima" is told to be a fruit granted by God for Siti Galsoem to eat, resulting in the offspring of Banda. Another version of Hikayat states that "Delima" is not merely a fruit but a human person who is the wife of Andan, the landlord of Banda. Then, Delima gave birth to 5 children who were believed to be the first descendants of Banda.

Another interesting symbol is the flag tongue on the Sairun belang boat. Even though it is not mentioned within the *hikayat*, the story about this "tongue" existed and is preserved within the oral tradition of the Banda people from generation to generation. The "tongue" was associated with "the victory of war", not against the colonialists, but the victory of other adat groups in Banda. The tongue meant was the actual tongue of the King of Lonthoir, successfully cut by the Captain of Sairun during a war. This narration has been developed among the adat elders of Ay until today, even though there is still a strong bias toward colonialism.

The symbols on the belang boat have strongly confirmed the closeness of the Banda people with their natural surroundings. Nature has been the inspiration for people to live harmonious lives together. Harmony has been eternal in various traditional stories and oral traditions for generations. Confirming the relationship between the two, "people and nature" within mutual relations respect, caring, and conserving one another. This is one of the pieces of evidence of the ecological intelligence of Banda's ancestors.

## **Discussion**

Kabata, or the so-called Kapata (Ambon), is an adat song that uses the Tana language (native language) and is still preserved today (Latupapua & Tutuarima, 2008; Latupapua, 2012; 2013). Tamaela (Latuperissa, 2011) defined Kapata as praising past events by partly singing and speaking. The verses were made using the local language, expressing the histories, beliefs, and ways of social interactions among ancestors in the past. Mailoa (2006) also defined Kapata as a song of the local language uttered in local ceremonies (Mailoa, 2006). Lelapary (2010) stated that Kapata is a form of language used specifically by people in adat ceremonies using certain tones arranged in lines and expressed in the form of dialogue and monologue (Lelapary, 2010).

Some characteristics of Kabata are as follows: (1) Have elements of oral traditions; (2) limited in the number of speakers; (3) use local language (tana language); (4) unbound to text; (5) performed by people using pure memories (6) independent as local literature; (7) bound to traditional art; (8) have a high and formal art value; (9) oriented on local culture; (10) reflect ideology; (11) have a huge symbolic message; (12) the varieties depended on the context of ritual communication of adat ceremony: bound to sacred element; (13) various themes dependent on communication context; (14) the mastery and legacy is not systematically programmed (Lelapary, 2010; Letlora, 2016).

In Banda Naira, Kabata is owned by all villages, including Fiat Adat village on Naira island. There are several kinds of kabata, they are kabata cakalele, kabata buka kampong, and kabata belang (kora-kora). The last kind of kabata is Kabata sung during the adat ceremony of belang boat competition (kora-kora). It is necessary to mention that the number of rowers on the Fiat Adat Belang boat is 37 people (Lapian, 1997). Not all personnel are tasked as rowers; other roles



include Kapitan Laut, the war captain, who also functioned as the captain and navigator to navigate the destination. Imam is the religious leader who serves to pray for protection, victory, and safety. Tua Adat is an Adat representative who connects the rower with the spirits aiming for safety and victory. Orang Kamudi is the driver who follows the captain's navigation and direction. Natu is the tifa (drum) beater, and the kabata singer in the amount of two people served to encourage and arouse the fighting spirits of the rower. Orang Panggayong, the rower of 30 people, served as the army/troop. Akibalu/Timbaruang are the people who are served to take out the water from the boat and sometimes also pour water towards the rower to maintain their power and spirits in rowing. Akibalu, in the amount of two people, one is positioned between the front flag pole and the middle flag pole, and the other one is positioned between the middle flag pole and the back flag pole (Joella & Farid, 2022).

To understand the meaning of Kabata is not necessarily easy. The verses use Basatana, or the native language of the Banda people (Lapian, 1992). Ironically, Banda Naira people today are no longer using Pasadena, aside from using it merely for adat rituals. Therefore, only certain people (adat people) can interpret it. Basatana itself is not merely identified as the local language geographically but also the life language of the Banda people. Basatana actually encompasses complete and thorough knowledge of Banda people about their ancestors, explicitly shown in the verses, and live within their daily life essence (Letlora, 2018). This research found some verses of Fiat adat "Kabata Belang" as follows.

*Bismillah Kau Bilang Fiat E, Jadi Barakat E Nirabati Watro*  
*Bismillah, you say Fiat is a blessing for Nirabati Watro*

This verse was a "command to Fiat to always say *bismillah* before starting to row to gain blessing, as exemplified by ancestors, Nirabati Watro". This Nirabati figure represented a spiritual leader, religious representatives, and God's representative (Sulistiyo, 2004). This verse also illustrates the deepest spiritual side of the Banda people, that every activity must be started with "bismillah", an Arabic term meaning "in the name of Allah". This verse text also has a context of Nirabati's travel, which was solely for the sake of his religion. As has been said earlier, this is based on the oral history of the Banda people. However, this text can also be understood within the context of Banda people's daily life in carrying out their activities, including fishing. Therefore, the connection between the sea, fish, and God is so strong within the mind of Banda that it is impossible to gain marine products without involving God. There is also a verse in Fiat Kabata Belang illustrating the aspects of fauna and the coastal environment (Kaartinen, 2012).

*Kakatua e manung kaka e. Kasaturi e manung leko ran e*  
*Kakatua oh Kakatua bird. Kasturi, oh, the bird approaching Mount Lewerani*

This verse is uttered when Belang and the troop approach Mount Lewerani. This verse describes the Kakatua bird flying above Belang as a good sign. The bird's existence gets special attention in Banda mythology and its cultural accessories. If derived from the *Hikajat* script, there was an explanation about the situation after prophet Noah's heavy flood, when Allah granted new lands. Prophet Noah then commanded a bird to go to those new lands and bring good news that Andare Land (Banda Naira) was the first land created. Adding to that, in the ornament of the Fiat Adat boat, there is also an engraving of the Kasturi bird. Besides birds, there is also Kabata text that talks about fish (Fofid, 2014).

*Sarui e ssarui manu ikang essarui. Sarui geteng-geteng manu ikang essarui.*  
*Sarui ooh Sarui, a school of fish oh sarui fish. Sarui fish float in groups, happily*  
*hopping oh Sarui fish.*

"Sarui fish" is a long-sized fish generally found in Banda waters. This fish is a legend since it is also mentioned in the *Hikayat* as a "human saviour", like the story of Prophet Yunus in the Qur'an, who was saved in the stomach of a fish. However, in *Hikayat*, Sarui fish functioned as

the “navigator” for the pilgrims heading toward Banda Island. There is also a Kabata verse which tells about a mountain, as follows:

*Rani gunung lewerani. Man soro soro tanda gunung apie gunung lewerani  
Rani Mount Lewerani. Walking through the current, passing the sign of volcano  
Lewerani*

This verse talks about the ancestors' journey following the current below a volcano named Mount Lewerani (Brunvand, 2001). The term journey has multiple definitions. First, it means travelling towards the motherland, as the story told in *Hikajat*, where ancestors (pilgrims) return from the holy city Makkah and then stop by *sembahjang* beach in Gunung Api island (Lewier, 2017). However, it can also mean the “life journey” of the Banda people, which is complex, difficult, and twisted (following the current, climbing a mountain symbolises life complexity). Both meanings seemed to cover the whole life story of the Banda people from early creation to the coming of Europeans and their sufferings upon the tragedy and genocide.

Kabata Belang is a model of environmental spirituality passed down by the Banda ancestors to show that the spiritual relationship between humans and the environment is based on intuitive awareness of all aspects of life with relational views of everything that exists on earth (van Donkersgoed & Farid, 2022). This awareness of the ancestors emerged along with the environmental crisis and natural degradation due to economic and technological domination during the VOC colonial era in the past (Ronkel, 1945). Colonialism is a concrete manifestation of the practice of politicizing nature, which must be fought with awareness to reconstruct a reality that respects and re-imagines nature for the benefit of human life. In this situation, the role and contribution of religious values that respect nature (veneration of nature) are important.

Kabata Belang, in the present context, can be an alternative spiritual vision by constructing a new environmental ethic, which Rockefeller (1992) describes as a “new ethic” that transforms the greedy and egocentric attitude of modern humans to a society that is more loving and more environmentally friendly. As a form of concern for environmental problems, eco-theology comes with a set of intelligent attitudes, behaviours and culture that Taylor (2002) calls a “spiritual response” to the problems of the environmental crisis. This ecological crisis aims to find the meaning and values of life regarding the sacredness of all things. God's creation is related to ecology or environmentalism (Taylor, 2022). This spiritual intelligence response will address the environmental problems by incorporating spiritual awareness at the practical level.

In the context of education, the building of ecological awareness is part of the attitude and behaviour of an educated person, who acknowledges evidence and signs of Allah's power in the universe and utilizes scientific and technological advances as a foundation for building an Islamic scientific paradigm that synthesizes science and religion in an ecological spiritual frame as a new hope in dealing with various humanitarian and natural crises due to today's advances in science and technology (Kholis & Karimah, 2017).

Kabata, therefore, is the authentic evidence of local Banda knowledge about the strong bond between the ancestors, spiritual nature, and natural surroundings. This describes the harmony between the worldly life and the afterlife (Farid, 2019). The harmony of religion, nature, and people is obviously seen within the Kabata Belang, which led the author to properly refer to it as not only an old classic song but also as an ethical message to preserve human life and natural surroundings (Endraswara, 2018).

## **CONCLUSION**

This Kabata is the masterpiece of Banda ancestors. It was told in solemnity as well as serenity and also in tears. *Kabata Belang* is evidence of how strong and intimate the Banda people were with God, their ancestors, and, at the same time, their natural surroundings. Creating harmony between the life of Banda people in the world and the afterlife. The harmony between God and nature, the creation of Allah. Several parts of Kabata show strong spirituality. Some also say that social harmony is strongly bonded and related to the natural surroundings. We can see

how forests, fruits, fish, birds, and mountains complete the narration of the Banda people's past life and daily presence. Kabata Banda is again authentic evidence of the local intelligence of Banda ancestors. It is a treasure possessed with spiritual nobility and social and ethical ecology in relation to the natural surroundings.

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