

CHAPTER 3

GENERAL VIEWS OF *KHURĀFĀT* AND *KHURĀFĀT* IN THE MALAY WORLD

3.1 Introduction

Khurafat is a phenomenon of false belief and practice followed by people of ignorant who lack religious knowledge. Generally, *khurafat* is associated with *ghaibiyyāt*, irrationalities, myths, customs, traditions, or cultures inherited from generation to generation. According to Muslim scholars, the elements of *khurāfāt* are contradictory to Islamic teachings. Due to its negative effects on the Muslim faith, this study needs to explain what the *khurāfāt* is to get a clear picture of this phenomenon. In short, this chapter focuses more on the general view of *khurāfāt* and *khurāfāt* in the Malay world.

3.2 General Views of *Khurāfāt*

3.2.1 Definitions of *Khurāfāt*

Khurāfāt is an Arabic term derived from the root word خرف, which means ‘the broken mind’ because it is old. Another meaning of it is stories filled with lies. A story about *khurāfāt* described by ibn al-Kalby that *khurāfāt* is the name of a young man of Bany ‘Udzrah from the Juhainah; the jinn kidnapped him and then returned to his village. After that, he talked about various strange experiences that he had seen, so many people were amazed. They called it stories of *khurāfāt* until they didn’t believe it and thought the young man was lying.¹³⁰ This term implies a sense of disbelief and scepticism towards narratives that deviate from reality or logic.

¹³⁰ Al-Anṣārī, Muhammad ibn Mukarram ibn Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Manẓūr. 1119. *Lisan al-'Arab*. Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif. p. 1138.

Another synonym term of *khurāfāt* is ‘*takhayyul*’ which means the imagination that exists in the mind. From an Islamic perspective, believing in *takhayyul* is contradictory to the Islamic belief, forbidden by Allah. Examples of this belief refer to people who have supernatural powers to stop the rain, revive dead people, believe that crows can bring bad luck, and so on. In Islam, such abilities only exist with Allah’s permission.¹³¹ *Takhayul*, like *khurāfāt*, involves the tendency to imaginary or superstitious beliefs that come from the human imagination. Both terms mean beliefs and practices that are not grounded in reality or rational thought, often leading to misunderstandings of reality.

In lexicology, myth or superstition is commonly used to explain the meaning of *khurāfāt* in the English dictionary. Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines myth as an ancient story or set of stories, especially the early history of a group of people about natural events and facts.¹³² The meaning of the term superstition in the Cambridge dictionary is a belief that is not based on human reason or scientific knowledge but relates to old ideas about magic.¹³³ We find the meaning of myth and superstition closer to *takhayyul* because both have illogical information criteria, as explained by Ṣalība.

Another term is *uṣṭūrah* أسطورة or *asāfir* أساطير mentioned in the Qur’an, has similarities with the term *khurāfāt*. *Uṣṭūrah* means stories whose origins are unknown, and they have a connection with tradition, religion, or historical events. The similarities between *khurāfāt* and *uṣṭūrah* are namely the imaginary stories of the ancients. However, in certain conditions, *uṣṭūrah* differs from *khurāfāt* because it explains morals

¹³¹ Ṣalībā. *Al-Mu’jam al-Falsafī*. 1982. Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnany. p. 262.

¹³² McIntosh, Colin. 2013. *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*. Fourth ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 1016.

¹³³ *ibid.* p. 1579.

in the form of stories to teach wisdom and guide individuals and society as in the stories of *kalilah* and *dimnah* as written by ibn Muqaffa'.¹³⁴

Şawdury & Amīn suggested that *khurāfāt* (superstitions) is not grounded in scientific or logical reasoning but rather is based on imagination or fantasy. These beliefs are often tied to a culture's folklore or mythological traditions and are passed down through the generations. In other words, *khurāfāt* are irrational practices or beliefs that are not considered acceptable or credible by the majority of society.¹³⁵

Finally, Muhammadiyah is an Islamic reform movement in Indonesia that aimed to combat TBC: *takhayyul*, *bid'ah*, and *churāfāt*. Where HAMKA's ideology aligned with this movement, as they shared the goal of fighting against these false beliefs. According to Syifa' as published in Pimpinan Wilayah Muhammadiyah website, *khurāfāt* is the belief in false stories, legends, and fairy tales that contradict sound reasoning and logic and can mislead one's faith. While *takhayyul* means attributing an odd situation to something that has no evidence, either in the Qur'an or Hadīth.¹³⁶

From the information above, we can get several characteristics and definitions of *khurāfāt*, including fictional stories that contain lies, strange stories, nonsense stories, imagination, illogical information, and contrary to common sense. In addition, other characters of superstition include stories whose origins are unknown relating to tradition, religion, history, magic, predictions, and supernatural stories that have no basis in the Qur'an and Hadīth. Based on the characteristics that have been mentioned,

¹³⁴ Al-Ĥārithy, Ĥamūd. 2017. *Naqd al-Bida' wa al-khurāfāt*. Mecca: Jāmi'ah Ummil Qurā. p. 148-149.

¹³⁵ Mişbāh al-Ĥaqq Şawdury & Muhammad Zuhdi Amīn. 2022. *Al-Sunnah wa al-Bid'ah wa al-khurāfāt*. Nilai: Markaz 'Ulūm al-Ĥadīth. p. 92.

¹³⁶ Lailatus Syifa'. 6 June 2020. "Muhammadiyah: Islam Tanpa TBC". PWMU. <https://pwmu.co>.

khurāfāt is stories, beliefs, and practices that don't make sense and are contrary to the Qur'an and Sunnah.

3.2.2 Dimensions of *Khurāfāt*

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “dimension” means measurement.¹³⁷ The dimensions of *khurāfāt* refer to the criteria used to evaluate whether a practice is considered *khurāfāt*. To address this, JAKIM has published a guideline book on *khurāfāt*. According to JAKIM, there are several dimensions to determine if a belief or practice can be classified as *khurāfāt*, including:¹³⁸

1. *Khurāfāt* is stories that contradict the teachings of the Qur'an or hadīth.
2. It is made up of illogical stories.
3. It comes from the old beliefs or traditions that contradict Islam.
4. It takes the form of worship or supplication to supernatural creatures to harm and deviate from Islamic beliefs.
5. It involves certain objects such as tombs, wood, and others.
6. It has negative elements to Islamic 'Aqīdah.

3.2.3 Causes of *Khurāfāt*

It is important to eradicate the spreading of the *khurāfāt* beliefs and practices among the society. Adam identified several causes of *khurāfāt*, including:¹³⁹

1. Lack of religious education is the leading cause of the spread of superstitious practices.

¹³⁷ Hawker, Sara. 2007. *Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 157.

¹³⁸ JAKIM. 2008. *Khurafat & Azimat: Garis Panduan*. Kuala Lumpur: JAKIM. p. 4.

¹³⁹ Adam et al. 2014. “Al-Bid'ah al-I'tiqādiyyah: faktor Kemunculannya dalam Masyarakat Melayu dan Ruang Dakwa yang Masih Terbuka”. *Seminar Antarabangsa Dakwah & Etnik 2014*. Bangi: Pusat Kajian Dakwah Orang Asli dan Pribumi, UKM. p. 2.

2. Being easily impressed and amazed is another factor that causes *khurāfāt*. This behaviour leads society to follow certain beliefs ignorantly.
3. The influence of shamanic beliefs also contributes to the emergence of *khurāfāt* within the society.
4. Unislamic belief in the mystical and supernatural (*ghaybiyyāt*).

3.2.4 *Khurāfāt* in the Qur'an and Sunnah

According to Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, the core of *khurāfāt* is *shirk*. Because *khurāfāt* refers to believing that something other than Allah might bring bad or good luck. Such as believing in jinn, horoscopes, ghosts, spirits, etc.¹⁴⁰

The Prophet Muhammad also firmly rejected practices of superstition and warned his followers to stay away from them and prohibited such practices. For instance, seeking good fortune from specific objects. As he said:

هل تدرون ماذا قال ربكم ؟ قالوا : الله ورسوله أعلم ، قال : أَصْبَحَ مِنْ عِبَادِي مُؤْمِنٌ بِي
وَكَاذِبٌ فَأَمَّا مَنْ قَالَ مُطِرْنَا بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَتِهِ . فَذَلِكَ مُؤْمِنٌ بِي وَكَافِرٌ بِالْكَوْكَبِ وَأَمَّا مَنْ
قَالَ مُطِرْنَا بِنُوءٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا . فَذَلِكَ كَاذِبٌ بِي مُؤْمِنٌ بِالْكَوْكَبِ

Do you know what your Lord said? They said: 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' He said: 'He said, "This morning some of My slaves believe in Me, and some disbelieve. As for the one who said: 'We got rain by the bounty and mercy of Allah,' he is a believer in Me and a disbeliever in the stars. But as for the one who said, 'We got rain by virtue of such and such a star,' he is a disbeliever in Me and a believer in the stars.'¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Al-Qaraḍāwī, Yūsuf. 2003. *Halal Haram dalam Islam*. (trans.) Wahid Ahmadi et al. Solo: Intermedia p. 333.

¹⁴¹ Al-Naysābūrī, Abū al-Husain Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj ibn Muslim al-Qushairī. 1955. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-‘Āraby. Kitāb al-Īmān. Bāb Bayān Kufr Man Qāl Muṭḥirna bi al-Nau’. Juz’. 1: p. 83. #71.

Prophet explained that the term *khurāfāt* refers to the name of a young man of the 'Udhrah tribe; the genie kidnapped him and then returned to his village. After that, he talked about his various experiences, so many people were amazed. Until they don't believe what he said and think the young man is lying.

حَدَّثَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نِسَاءَهُ ذَاتَ لَيْلَةٍ حَدِيثًا، فَقَالَتْ امْرَأَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، كَانَ الْحَدِيثُ حَدِيثَ خُرَافَةٍ؟ فَقَالَ: “أَتَذَرِينَ مَا خُرَافَةُ؟ إِنَّ خُرَافَةَ كَانَ رَجُلًا مِنْ عُذْرَةٍ، أَمَرَتْهُ الْجِنَّ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ، فَمَكَتَ فِيهِمْ دَهْرًا طَوِيلًا، ثُمَّ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الْإِنْسِ، فَكَانَ يُحَدِّثُ النَّاسَ بِمَا رَأَى فِيهِمْ مِنَ الْأَعَاجِبِ، فَقَالَ النَّاسُ: حَدِيثُ خُرَافَةٍ¹⁴²

Che Zarina Sha'ari in Chek & daud stated that no specific verse explicitly mentions the word “*khurāfāt*”.¹⁴³ While there are various verses in the Qur'an that explain its perspectives of *khurāfāt*. One example of such a Quranic verse is the reminder for believers to have faith in Allah alone as the One who bestows blessings or afflictions upon humankind. Allah said:

﴿قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

Say, “Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us; He is our protector.” And upon Allah let the believers rely.¹⁴⁴

The Quranic verse cited emphasizes the concept of reliance on Allah alone for protection and sustenance, underscoring the concept of *tawakkul* (reliance) in Islam. This verse reminds believers that nothing befalls them except what Allah has ordained;

¹⁴² Al-Shaybānī, Abū ‘Abdullah Ahmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanbal. 1995. *Musnad Imām Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal*. n.pl: Muassaaḥ Risālah. Musnad An-Nisā’. Juz’. 42: p. 141. #25244.

¹⁴³ Rogayah & Zainora Daud. 2016. "Doktrin Khurafat: Pemahaman Menurut Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadith". *Seminar Antarabangsa Akidah, Dakwah Dan Syariah 2016*. Shah Alam: UKM. p. 949.

¹⁴⁴ Al-Qur'an. At-Tawbah 9:51.

thereby, it is necessary to reject superstitious beliefs in spells, talismans, taboos, or other forms of protection outside of Allah's will.

There are several issues of *khurāfāt* mentioned in the Qur'an. Some of these include:

1. *Khurāfāt* in Omen: this kind of *khurāfāt* might refer to the belief that certain natural phenomena or occurrences are signs of future events or outcomes.

﴿قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ ۖ لَئِن لَّمْ تَنْتَهُوا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾

They said, "Indeed, we consider you a bad omen. If you do not desist, we will surely stone you, and there will surely touch you, from us, a painful punishment."¹⁴⁵

2. *Khurāfāt* in Future-seeing: this kind of *khurāfāt* refers to the belief that certain individuals possess the power to foresee the future.

﴿قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ لَاسْتَكْنَرْتُ مِنْ

الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ ۚ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

Say, "I hold not for myself [the power of] benefit or harm, except what Allah has willed. And if I knew the unseen, I could have acquired much wealth, and no harm would have touched me. I am not except a warner and a bringer of good tidings to a people who believe."¹⁴⁶

3. *Khurāfāt* in astronomical object: This kind of *khurāfāt* refers to the belief that astronomical objects possess power.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Qur'an. Yasin 36:18.

¹⁴⁶ Al-Qur'an. al-A'raf 7:188.

﴿وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ ۚ لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ

الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ﴾

And of His signs are the night and day and the sun and moon. Do not prostrate to the sun or to the moon, but prostrate to Allah, who created them, if it should be Him that you worship.¹⁴⁷

There are several examples of *khurāfāt* mentioned in the Ḥadīth. Some of these include:

1. *Khurāfāt* in omen (*ṭiyyarah*): this kind of *khurāfāt* might refer to the belief that certain natural phenomena or occurrences are signs of future events or outcomes.

لَا عَدْوَى وَلَا طَبِيرَةَ وَلَا غُولَ

There is no 'Adwā, no Tiyyarah and no Ghoul.¹⁴⁸

مَنْ قَالَ مُطْرِنَا بِمُضَلِّ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَتِهِ . فَذَلِكَ مُؤْمِنٌ بِي وَكَافِرٌ بِالْكَوْكَبِ وَأَمَّا مَنْ قَالَ مُطْرِنَا

بِنُوءٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا . فَذَلِكَ كَافِرٌ بِي مُؤْمِنٌ بِالْكَوْكَبِ

Do you know what your Lord said?' They said: 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' He said: 'He said, "This morning some of My slaves believe in Me and some disbelieve. As for the one who said: 'We got rain by the bounty and mercy of Allah,' he is a believer in Me and a disbeliever in the

¹⁴⁷ Al-Qur'an. Fussilat 41:37

¹⁴⁸ Al-Naysābūrī, Abū al-Husain Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj ibn Muslim al-Qushairī. 1955. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī. Kitāb al-Salām. Bāb Lā 'adwā wa La ṭiyyarah wa La Ḥamah. Juz'. 4: p. 1744. #2222. .

stars. But as for the one who said, 'We got rain by virtue of such and such a star,' he is a disbeliever in Me and a believer in the stars.¹⁴⁹

2. *Khurāfāt* in amulet (*tamīmah*): this kind of *khurāfāt* refers to the belief that a certain object has supernatural power.

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ . رَأَى رَجُلًا فِي يَدِهِ حَلَقَةً مِنْ صُفْرِ فَقَالَ ” مَا هَذِهِ الْحَلَقَةُ ”
” . قَالَ هَذِهِ مِنَ الْوَاهِنَةِ . قَالَ ” انْزِعْهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَزِيدُكَ إِلَّا وَهْنًا ”

Prophet (ﷺ) saw a man with a brass ring on his hand. He said: “What is this ring?” He said: “It is for Wāhinah.” He said: “Take it off, for it will only increase you in weakness.”¹⁵⁰

3.3 *Khurāfāt* in the Malay World

Before embracing Islam, the Malay community embraced animism and dynamism. The compatibility between Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and the old beliefs of the Malays facilitated their acceptance of these new religious ideas. The Malay community perceived similarities between spirits or supernatural beings and Hindu deities, as both entities were seen as invisible, possessing magical powers, and capable of manifesting in objects such as trees, stones, hills, beaches, and rivers.¹⁵¹

The arrival of Islam led to changes in beliefs about supernatural beings. The Malays began to believe in the existence of benevolent supernatural beings, such as angels and Islamic genies, as well as malevolent ones, like infidel genies and devils. This shift occurred because Islam teaches that no power exists besides Allah and

¹⁴⁹ Al-Naysābūrī, Abū al-Husain Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj ibn Muslim al-Qushairī. 1955. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Araby. Kitāb al-Imān. Bāb Bayān Kufr Man Qāl Muṭḥirnā bi al-Nau’. Juz’. 1: p. 83. #71.

¹⁵⁰ Al-Qazwīnī, Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Mājah. 2009. *Sunan Ibn Mājah*. Damascus: Dār al-Risālah al-‘Ālamiyyah. Abwāb al-Ṭibb. Bāb Ta’liq al-Tamāim. Juz’. 4: p. 556. #3531.

¹⁵¹ Tamdjis, Naim. 2020. *Mistik Alam Melayu*. Kuala Lumpur: Patrior Publication. p. 11.

prohibits His servants from seeking help from supernatural beings like genies and devils, such as by worshipping guardian spirits.¹⁵²

Although Islam has transformed the religion of the Malay community, elements of their previous beliefs still exist. This is because Muslims in the Malay Archipelago respect traditional values and incorporate them into their religious practices. Consequently, the expression of Islam varies among different community groups, influenced by their unique traditions. Moreover, myth, religion, and tradition complement each other, encompassing invisible elements.¹⁵³ Or, in another scenario that most people accept, the mystical and superstitious elements in the customs, traditions, or cultures are replaced with Islamic values. Thus, customs, traditions, or cultures are merely *'urf* that are acceptable from an Islamic perspective.

But, inevitably, the element of dynamism-animism is still a part of customs, traditions, and cultures. This belief system has played a role in shaping the cultures and traditions of the people of this archipelago. This belief system is characterized by worshipping ancestral spirits and believing everything has a spirit or soul. For example, it holds that every object in the ocean and every plant possesses *mambang* or *semangat* (spirit). The existence of these spirits or souls leads Malays to believe that these objects have powers and energies capable of controlling their lives. Spirits are believed to possess human-like qualities such as hunger, the need to eat, anger, goodness, thirst, and malevolence. They are thought to have traits like kindness, sulkiness, and a

¹⁵² *ibid.* p. 11.

¹⁵³ Sardjuningsih. 2015. "Islam Mitos Indonesia (Kajian Antropologi-Sosiologi)". Kodifikasia. Vol. 9. No. 1. p. 61.

preference for being appeased. Consequently, specific rituals are performed based on these beliefs.¹⁵⁴

For example, rice is believed to have spirit, which must be honoured. Consequently, most paddy planting activities in ancient Malay society were always associated with spirits, genies, and devils. Therefore, the association of paddy planting with genies started from cleaning the jungle to making it into a new planting area to the last day of reaping the paddy.¹⁵⁵

The Malay community believes each object has a spirit. This has led to the development of taboos and beliefs in supernatural powers, as well as practices of magic and the worship of these powers and spirits. Additionally, knowledge has emerged on how to seek help from supernatural beings, particularly spirits and genies, to treat illnesses.

Examples of taboos in Malay society include the prohibition against leaving the house at dusk due to the fear of being kidnapped by spirits and the prohibition against commenting on anything unusual in the forest to avoid being possessed by spirits. Out of fear of spirits and ghosts, people of that time showed respect by worshipping and offering food to these beings. Typically, yellow rice would be offered to these spirits to appease them.¹⁵⁶

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presents general views of *khurāfāt* and *khurāfāt* in the Malay world. Preserving *Tawhīd* should be the main goal for Muslims because

¹⁵⁴ Tamdjis, Naim. 2020. *Mistik Alam Melayu*. p. 8.

¹⁵⁵ Suriyati. 2007. *Some Selected Malay Forms of Mythologies: An Islamic Perspective*. (Master Thesis). International Islamic University Malaysia. p. 73.

¹⁵⁶ Tamdjis, Naim. 2020. *Mistik Alam Melayu*. p. 11.

Tawhīd is constant, originating from divine revelation, whereas customs, traditions, and cultures are relative, originating from human experience and thought. Undeniably, the Malay is an aged civilization that had developed several customs, culture, and traditions years before the advent of Islam and became the majority. Typically, Customs, traditions, and cultures have elements that contradict *Tawhīd*, and they differ from one place to another.

