



## The Atonement of Our Parent's Sin: Place-Based Narrative of Indonesia' Drowning Muslim Community

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**Abstrak:** This article emphasised the local Muslim community's response to environmental change and explored how religious narratives play a significant role in shaping their action. Place-based narrative is employed as conceptual frame to scrutinise the community's understanding of the drowning condition. As a case study, Pantai Bahagia Village in West Java is selected based on two criteria: (1) deemed as the fastest drowning area in the North Java Coast; and (2) the existing Muslim-based environmental activism initiated by local teachers in responding to environmental change. For method, qualitative case study is applied by conducting interviews, group discussions, and direct observation. Findings show that the local history of Pantai Bahagia interacts with a national political event in the 1960s that eventually triggers massive environmental change in the Beting area. Further analysis of the place-based narrative indicates that familiarity with religious expressions encourages ecological awareness in the local community and provides the basis for environmental activism.

**Keywords:** *Place-based Narrative; Religious Expression; Muslim-based Activism; North Coast of Java*

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### Introduction

Every place has its own story. As a coastal area with a long history of settlements and development, the North Coast of Java undeniably could tell many of them. Recently, however, stories of drowning villages and sinking cities have become common feature in depictions of Java's northern coastal area. One community that is familiar with the experience of drowning due to abrasion and coastal flooding is the Muslim community of Pantai Bahagia in Bekasi, West Java. Living near the Citarum River estuary, the community shared similar stories with others who struggle with drowning conditions along the northern Java coastline. Although for the Pantai Bahagia community, the drowning condition casts too much irony on their narrative; as once famous for its miles of pond, it now struggles to meet daily needs amidst constant abrasion and inundation. Established in 1984 due to increasing population in the Citarum estuary area, Pantai Bahagia acquires its name from Mr. Raamin, the first appointed head of the village. He prayed that "the new established village will be 'Bahagia' (Happy) as the estuary promises abundance catches and with miles of ponds already stretched in Beting Beach" (interview with Adek, pseudonym, 2023). In the 1980s, Beting kampong in particular was known as "Kampung Dollar", a prosperous area as the pond farmers of Beting were known as major distributors for the Cilingcing fish market in Jakarta. However, the pinnacle of prosperity for Pantai Bahagia did not last. In the early 2000s, abrasion destroyed ponds and settlements, and in twenty years, 1,066 hectares of area have been lost (interview with Village Official, 2022). The

once-famous Kampong Dollar, now is known as 'the fastest drowning village on the North Coast of Java'. (Kompas, 2021; BBC Indonesia, 2020; DW Documentary, 2019; Lestari, 2017; Mongabay, 2013).

In line with the experience of the Pantai Bahagia community, studies on community response and adaptation to rapid environmental change on the North Coast of Java have been conducted in different areas of expertise. Previous studies can be summarised in four categories: First, flooding-related conditions occurred in several areas in Indonesia (Middleton et al., 2018); second, humans induce environmental problems (Ervita & Marfai, 2017; Handayani et al., 2017; Herawati et al., 2020); third, community adaptation to environmental change (Handayani & Kumalasari, 2015; Hillmann et al., 2015); and fourth, the social-ecological resilience in response to drowning conditions (Artiningsih et al., 2016). This research, however, aims to further explore community response to environmental change and provide an example of a particular local narrative that is rarely discussed in the study of Indonesia's drowning areas. The importance of discussing local experiences is mentioned by scholars such as Tsing (2005), who noted that the complex interaction of multiple agencies in the local community is driven by social and cultural forms that connect the community with larger discourse. In a similar vein (Northcott 2007), emphasizes the local population as subjects rather than objects, as a community entitled to choose their own position. Further study that focuses on the local community's experiences is conducted by Farbotko and Lazrus (2012), who argue "that local experiences are valuable in understanding the meaning beyond an over-generalization discourse".

Inspired to scrutinize local community narratives and experiences, this research questioned: What narratives are shaped by the local Muslim community's experiences in dealing with environmental change? And how does religious narrative shape community responses to vulnerable conditions? By employing place-based narrative as a conceptual frame, popular narratives and people's experiences are contextualized to extract the particular responses of the local community to the changing environment. In relation to case study selection, the dense political history of Pantai Bahagia and the existing Muslim-based activism provide an example of how local narrative interacts with community response to drowning conditions. Despite the limited scope and focus on the experience of the Pantai Bahagia local community, this article aims to construct an abstraction of how local narratives are shaped and how they shape the community's response to environmental change.

## Literature Review

The application of the place-based narrative concept aims to grasp the local context of community experiences. A classic work from (Cresswell, 1996). offers a contextual reading of place within its relation to social norms and ideology; he perceived that the constant interaction of people and place shaped bodies, behaviour, and interpretation. From the above elaboration, the process of narrating people's perceptions, communities' imaginaries, and popular representation, as well as the history of inhabiting a certain place, is associated with the communities' experiences. While the history and experiences of the local community hold the key to understanding the community's perception and response to a specific event (Cresswell, 1996). While the study conducted by Krauß (2010) provides an entry point for applying place-based narrative in environmental crises, by applying the concept, the voice of local communities is recognized to challenge the global and dominant

discourse. Further, Krauß & Bremer (2020) emphasize the main function of place-based narrative as a key to understanding meaning in community experiences. The concept scrutinises three accounts (Krauß & Bremer, 2020): (1) the people's experiences; (2) the popular representation of a specific landscape; and (3) the historical accounts. They also noted the importance of locating a certain place at a certain time (2020).

In relation to Muslim narrative, which appears as a strong feature in the Pantai Bahagia community, Gade's insight on "place-based" narrative as a standard methodology to contain the localized experiences of Muslim communities (Gade, 2019), provides relevant context to explore the religious narrative of certain Muslim communities. By employing place-based narratives, Muslim is perceived as "community-oriented meaning" in which religious interpretations are always "taking place" within a certain location and certain time (Gade, 2019). In further narrating community experiences, religious beliefs provide persistent signs and symbols that shaped social response which include cultural aspects such as: ideas (for example beliefs in the supernatural realm), language (religious terms), behavior (rites), and material aspect (place of worship) (Ahimsa-Putra, 2014). Further, Tweed (2006) provides a strong basis to explore religious function in the shaping of community narrative, as he argued that the construction of community narrative is embedded in their action of dwelling. He further argued that dwelling.

*"Involves three overlapping process: mapping, building, and inhabiting. It refers to the confluence of organic-cultural flows that allows devotees to map, build, and inhabit worlds. It is homemaking. In other words, as clusters of dwelling practices, religions orient individuals and groups in time and space, transform the natural environment and allow devotees to inhabit the worlds they construct.*

In a similar vein with Tweed, (Desplat, 2012). explores the perception of place in Islam and notes: "That place is not only the site of dwelling or living but also symbolizes struggle and contestation". He also depicts the importance of a place in Muslim society as it constitutes a spatial dimension of a religious, social, political, cultural, and economic network, as well as an intersection of ideas and interests. For many Muslim-affiliated places, such as Fez or Islamabad, places invoking specific histories and identities. Study on "lived place" in Islam, however, is relatively new as it started only in the 1980s; prior to that, study on place in Islam was dominated by sacred places on which mosques, shrines, public places, or landscapes are remembered as being related to important figures or events in Islamic history (Desplat, 2010). Further study on that topic of religion in place-based narrative context is conducted (Silvern & David 2021). They mentioned that a community's moral imagery is constructed based on its social, economic, and environmental experiences that intersect with religious beliefs and practices. also mentioned the importance of positioning environmental discourse in religious narrative; the interaction, according to Silvern & David, can contribute to shaping communities' sustainable action (Silvern & David 2021).

## Methods

Yin (2003) mentioned that a qualitative case study is generally preferred as a methodology when a researcher has little control over the event and focuses on a phenomenon in a real-life context. Drowning conditions due to abrasion and coastal flooding present an exact example of the mentioned phenomenon. For gathering data, interviews, direct observation, and group discussions are conducted during an accumulated 6-month period with multiple

stays (two-week visits at each interval). This multiple stay is applied to synchronize the volunteer activism in Pantai Bahagia and also to get data from the different seasons (dry and wet). Interviews target five (5) individuals (including the first and second generations of Pantai Bahagia settlers, as well as village officials) and five (5) households, while group discussions target Pantai Bahagia's environmental activists (15 members). For individuals, elderly villagers are interviewed to obtain a local history of Pantai Bahagia. Households are selected based on multigenerational characteristics to explore the different experiences faced by each generation. A group discussion is conducted to gather data on the community's activism. Direct observation was also conducted during the stay to obtain information on popular narratives shared by the community. Collected data consists of recorded village history shared by informants, village monographs, documentation of community activism, and recoded stories and experiences shared by villagers. The analytical method follows the processes of transcription, coding, categorization, and analysis. Data are categorized based on a place-based narrative frame that requires information on: (1) the inhabiting history of the village; (2) the popular representation of the community; and (3) the people's experiences. The three required pieces of information are depicted in the result section. Further data analysis with a focus on answering research questions is described in the discussion sections. The discussion consists of the construction of popular and familiar narratives in Pantai Bahagia and how the narratives shaped community responses. Regarding ethical considerations, informants are present under a pseudonym.

## **Result and Discussion**

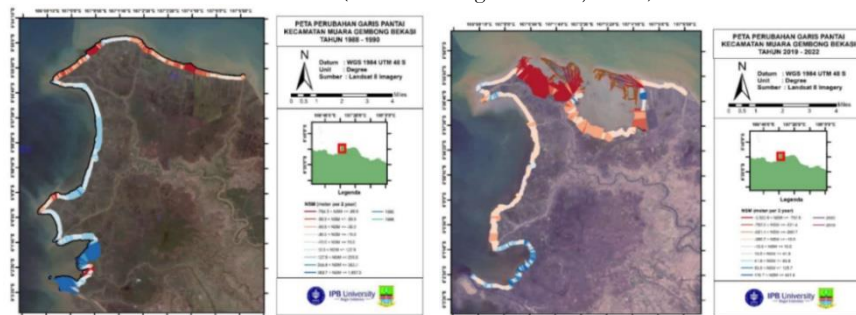
### **Inhabitation History of Pantai Bahagia Village**

Engkong (pseudonym, 77) is unbelievably fit for a man of his age. He mentioned that his only health problem is his degrading sight, which prevents him from going fishing at night. As one of the elders in Pantai Bahagia, Engkong provides the history of his village as he witnesses the early rise of the once-famous Dollar Kampung. Engkong is originally from Karawang. In the early 1970s, he heard about a prospect to acquire land near the estuary of the Citarum River. Driven to gain more income as his wife just delivered their third son, Engkong could not let the opportunity be wasted. With only a small amount of money, he hitchhikes on a fishermen's boat heading to Beting Beach and then reaches the settlement by foot. At that time, Beting Beach now massively eroded stretched 4 kilometers from the kampong. Engkong bears witness to the leniency permit for land conversion in Beting Area. He recalled, "We only need to ask permission from the (Muaragembong) district authority, pay a few rupiahs, and we can build a house and pond, as long as we do it in the Beting area".

Strict conservation policy, however, is given to the estuary area of the Citarum River; as Engkong depicts "no permit was given to the area of the Citarum estuary". Engkong depiction is in line with a study conducted (Suryadi et al. 2021). on the National Strategic River Basins of Citarum. They mentioned that the ownership of the Muaragembong coastal area was taken over by the government in 1948, covering 9311 hectares and designated "Tanah Negara" (state-owned land) by the Minister of Agriculture Decree Number 92/Um/1954 related to the Protected Forest Area of Ujung Krawang (Estuary of Citarum River). The mangrove forest with 10,481.15 hectares of area was also taken over by the government based on "Berita Acara Tata Batas" (BATB) (Boundary Delineation) on

February 2, 1957 (Suryadi, 2021; Palupi, 2019). The district administration of Muaragembong owned the authorization of tributary river areas, such as the Beting River. This condition explains the heavily conversed and exploited Beting Beach. The land conversion from mangrove forest into ponds in Beting provided a high income for the first generation of settlers. For the second generation, however, mangrove depletion brings an environmental crisis as they now face drowning conditions.

Figure 1. Shoreline Changes in Pantai Bahagia; 1989 (Left), 2022 (Right)  
(Pantai Bahagia Profile, 2022)



Further exploration of the village history mentioned the official establishment of Pantai Bahagia Village in 1984 as an expansion of Pantai Bakti Village. The expansion is mainly due to growing population on the banks of the Beting and Citarum River (interview with Village Officials, 2022). Despite the new official establishment, the inhabitation history of Pantai Bahagia can be traced back to the 1960s, when it concentrated in the Beting area. Local history of Beting, however, intersects with national tragedy as Beting's early settlers are *Nahdliyin* (NU supporters) from Banten who fled their home to avoid conflict with Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI/Indonesia Communist Party) that shattered the whole nation in the 1960s. *Nahdatul Ulama* (NU) is one of the largest Muslim organisations in Indonesia and was founded prior to the independence period in 1926. During the PKI upheaval in the 1960s, the role of the NU in actively repressing party action was widely discussed.

One study conducted by Fealy and McGregor (2010) mentioned the involvement of Pemuda Ansor, a youth wing of NU, in guarding Muslims from communist threats. The extent of their involvement, however, is divided. On the one hand, the involvement of Pemuda Ansor was perceived only "as staging an anti-communist parade using a marching band and banner", but on the other hand, they are also identified as participants in the violence. The clash between PKI and Muslims, with NU in particular, occurred at the national and regional levels. Banten is no exception; with a strong Islamic tradition and as one of NU's main supporters in West Java, conflict with PKI is unavoidable. Muslim-PKI conflict in Banten escalated during the 1950s as the communist party gained more popular support, mostly via the Perusahaan Djawatan Kereta Api (Train Company) labour association. Political tension intertwined with conflict over land disputes and accumulated into Tragedi Babakan in 1958. The bloodshed in Pandeglang spread throughout the Banten region as mutual suspicion and tension increased (Hidayati, 2016).

When tensions escalated, one group of young *Nahdliyin* left Banten to escape the conflict. In the early 1960s, they reached Beting Beach. With permission from the district administration, they converted Beting mangrove forest into ponds and a settlement. Teteh (pseudonym, 43), a second-generation, retold her parent's story: "In the 1960s, *Nahdliyin*

(NU supporters) from Banten fled their hometown to avoid conflict with Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI/Indonesian Communist Party) and reached Beting and settled in the area". Adek (40), also a second-generation settler, shares his father's story: " My father and his group arrived in Beting without any belongings. One of his friends asked permission to live and open the area; at that time, permission from the district office is all they need to deplete the mangrove forest." There are two Bantenese traditions that have been brought and transferred to their new settlement. First is the skill of pond farming, which has been passed down for many generations. Banten is famous for its milkfish commodity, and pond farming traditions can be traced back to the early Banten sultanate era in the 16th century. Second, the strong Islamic root is inherited by the second generation. This feature gives Pantai Bahagia a distinctive Muslim characteristic that is culturally affiliated with *Nahdatul Ulama*. Entering the village, one can easily recognise Muslim identity markers such as the sound of *Adzan*, *Iqomat*, and *Shalawat*; the existing mosques and *mushollas*; Islamic clothing identity such as a veil for women and a sarong for men; and the inclination to give Islamic education to the children, both formal (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, *Tsanawiyah*, and *Aliyah*) and informal (*Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an/TPA*). Aki (pseudonym, 69), a mosque guardian who also teaches children to read the Qur'an, mentioned that the NU tradition is still firmly attached and reflected in religious practises such as *tahlilan* (pray for the deceased) and *ziarah kubur* (grave pilgrims) both practises considered distinct NU traditions.

In later development, the traditions of pond farming and strong Islamic features contributed to the Pantai Bahagia community's response to drowning conditions. As second generation of pond farmer, Ahmad (pseudonym, 47) shares the common expression, "we do not go fishing to the open sea", as they simply do not have skill as fishermen. While strong Islamic roots contribute to Muslim-based environmental activism voiced by the second generation of settlers. They engage the community in replanting mangrove to reduce the impact of abrasion and also as retribution for past wrongdoing, "untuk membayar dosa orang tua yang sudah memabat habis hutan bakau" (to atone for our parents sin of depleting the mangrove forest) (interview with Adek, 40; group discussion with Alipbata, 2022). The activism, known as *Alipbata (Aliansi Pemuda Bahagia dan Tangguh)*, indicates a feature of religious narrative in the Pantai Bahagia community, contextualised with the history of massive land conversion during the 1960s.

### Popular Representation of Pantai Bahagia Village

"In 20 years, everything changes," said Ahmad (pseudonym, 47), a second generation of settlers who bear witness for his village massive abrasion. Ahmad recalls his younger days in the 1980s, when Beting was known as Kampung Dollar. Ahmad (47) added, "We can build houses using bricks, which were considered luxury, and we can afford to buy motorbikes, another kind of luxury in the 1980s". But in the early 2000s, abrasion began to erode the outermost ponds in the Beting area. The destroyed ponds directly impact the villagers living conditions, as they lose hundred million of rupiahs in a short period of time. Today, the name Pantai Bahagia (Happy Beach) brings painful memories to the villagers; despite being given as a form of Prayer by the first chief of the village (the late Mr. Raamin), for the villagers, the expression is stretching too far from their current reality.

Another popular representation of Pantai Bahagia is in-migration. In the 1970s, ponds and abundant catches attracted people from Karawang to settle in Beting and in the area near the estuary of the Citarum River. The trend of in-migration, however, still occurs

despite the drowning condition. In 2014, there was a flux of fishermen from Indramayu and Cirebon who moved to Pantai Bahagia and built floating houses near the Citarum estuary (Muara Bendera hamlet) and along the Beting Riverbank. The number of immigrants reached its peak in 2014. The in-migration from Cirebon and Indramayu added another representation of Pantai Bahagia as the highest population density in Muaragembong. They also bring their own tradition of fishing to the open sea, something that Beting settlers never do, and sedekah laut (the ritual to ask for the blessing of the sea), which is unfamiliar to the first and second generations of settlers who have a strict Islamic background (interview with Abang, 41, 2022).

An interview with Raka (pseudonym, 39) presents today's Pantai Bahagia's economic condition. For many second-generation settlers, catching shrimp and crabs using traditional tool, called bubu, provide a way to survive the worsening condition. "We usually catch 3 kilos of shrimp at most; that is when the season is good. The middlemen set a price at Rp. 20.000/kilo (USD 1.35) for small shrimp and Rp. 50.000/kilo (USD 3.37) for tiger prawns". While for fishermen from Cirebon and Indramayu who go to the open sea, a specific work system applies; they highly depend on pengepul ikan (fish collectors or middlemen) to provide solar or other fishing tools. This system of fixed subordination between middlemen and fishermen has become the main representation of the Pantai Bahagia economic system. The low-income feature, in addition to damaged road access, minimum public facility, and constant flood, categorised Pantai Bahagia as underdeveloped village. It took 45 minutes by motorcycle to reach Pantai Bahagia from Muaragembong Central District. The distance is around 10 kilometres, crossing over dirt and damaged roads. In 2022, the road access to the village is repaired, even though in a short time, constant tidal flooding makes the road susceptible to damage (interview with Abang, pseudonym, 41). Another means of transportation is using a boat or eretan (bamboo raft); this access, however, highly depends on the river conditions.



Figure 2. Bamboo Raft (Left), on their way to hospital (right) (Author, 2022)

*Today's village status as low income with vulnerable living condition, has affected the self-representation of people who live in Pantai Bahagia. In the past, the nickname "Kampung Dollar" evoked a sense of pride; nowadays, it is considered shameful. In Ahmad's words (47): "I am embarrassed when someone mentions Kampung Dollar, because now the reality is far from that".*

#### People's Experiences with Environmental Change in Pantai Bahagia Village

When depiction Pantai Bahagia religious profile, Aki (69) depicts “Pantai Bahagia is culturally NU (*Nahdatul Ulama*)”. Aki’s term of cultural affiliation is referring to the daily practise of Pantai Bahagia villagers, which is closely related to *Nahdatul Ulama* traits (interview with Aki, 69, and Abang, 41, 2022). The villager’s perception of cultural affiliation is in line with Fealy’s (2018) conception of “religious-cultural preference”, a strong affiliation without actively engaging in the organisational structure. Faely (2018) also mentioned that *Nahdatul Ulama* has the largest base of cultural affiliation in Indonesia, with Pesantren (an Islamic boarding school) and that the kiai play significant role in shaping the and transmit the NU’s understandings of Islam.

The NU cultural affiliation also reflects in the expressions used by villagers in describing their experiences of drowning. For example, Teteh (43), a second-generation settler, interprets abrasion as ‘Kehendak Allah, or God’s will. Teteh’s father is among the *Nahdliyin* who fled from Banten and became early Beting settlers. It was from her father that Teteh learned the concept of God’s will (*Qodarullah*), and she uses the concept as guidance in responding the rapid change of environment. The NU principle, which is based on *Ahlisunnah wal Jamaah* theology, all things is predetermined by God. Further explanation of the principle can be found in the teaching of Abu Hasan al-Asyari, who mentioned that all phenomena, including natural phenomena, occur according to constant laws. Al-Asy’ari also emphasises the principle of *Al-Kasb*, or the active engagement that brings consequences; therefore, humans are responsible for their actions (Sutiknyo, 2018). The principles resonate in the community expression of Embracing *Qodarullah*, and in their active engagement to improve the current living conditions.

Abang (41), also a second generation, shared a similar interpretation with Teteh. However, Abang offers his own interpretation, “Embracing God's Will means accepting the struggle”. While agrees with the common idea shared by the community, Adek has a personal interpretation of the expression, which is:

“Embracing or accepting God’s Will is not only a matter of accepting His *Qodrat* (decision) but also stopping to blame each other’s. At first, when abrasion and floods got worse, villagers, Village Officials, and even the ministry of forestry blamed each other for who was responsible. Over time, the villagers chose to accept the conditions and make peace with the situation”.

Adek’s argument is in touch with local community narrative. According to Adek, the term “Embracing *Qodarullah*” also works effectively as an arbiter for the conflictual situation as conflicted groups eventually “accept and make peace with the situation”. With their growing membership and activities, Alip Bata continues to spread their ideas—including ideas on stopping blaming each other—and educate the public about coastal protection through activism. Another interpretation related to the term “*Embracing Qodarullah*” is shared by Aki (69), a mosque guardian, and a modin (person who chants adzan) at Jami Darurahman mosque. Aki (69) confirms that the phrase has become the catch-all term of people in Pantai Bahagia in depicting extreme environmental change. “People here use the phrase ‘*Qodarullah*’, even without repetitively sharing in pengajian or *Jum’ah* preaching”, Aki stated. The expression, however, has only become popular recently (Interview with Ahmad, 47; Adek, 40; Aki, 69). In the early phase of abrasion, many villagers are depressed and loss the sense of reality. Rai (pseudonym, 38) depicts that during the 2000s, many villagers were stressed out and some even collapsed due to mental breakdowns as the ponds in Beting eroded. She also added, “Eventually we are used to our lives now, and only then



can we accept the reality". Based on Rai's depiction, the term Embracing *Qodarullah* also reflects the villagers' struggle, both in accepting and surviving the vulnerable condition. The experiences of loss shared by the second generation incite a specific response: "We should not do what our parents did [depleting mangrove]" (interview with Adek, 40; Abang, 41; Raka, 39). The response actualises in community activism by replanting mangrove with the intention "to atone our parent's sin".

### **The Atonement of Our Parent's Sin**

Abang (41) stated that Pantai Bahagia is "seratus persen Muslim" (100 percent Muslim). Abang' depiction provides a backdrop in further scrutinize religious narrative in community's response to drowning condition. One example of the expression is the term "Embracing *Qodarullah*", which emphasis submission to God's Will. In Islam, submission is the foundation of Tawhid, a basic concept of monotheism. Foltz (2006) cited Qur'anic verse (17.44) which states "that all creation praises God, even if this praise is not expressed in human language"; based on this verse, Foltz indicates the central argument in Islam, all of creation, including nature, is submits to the (natural) laws of God. In Pantai Bahagia, the expression of "Embracing *Qodarullah*" is a mixture of meaning, feeling, and experience of the community. It can mean acceptance of the natural phenomenon that is beyond human comprehension, or their attempt to embrace the worsening living condition, or it can also mean reconciliation to improve the situation. Despite different interpretations, the concept of submission—by not questioning God's Will or defying the (natural) laws—presents as a common response of the Pantai Bahagia community in facing the drowning condition.

Further elaboration on community' responses to environmental change is noted by (Silvern & David, 2021), who emphasis that human behaviour is shaped by traditions and continually engaged in the creation of place-making. Faith also play significant role in providing "a system of practises that give meaning to place in accordance with a normative vision of what constitutes the good life and a healthy relationship with the natural world" (p. 5). By pondering Silvern and David's notions, the historical inhabitation of Pantai Bahagia, is place making process contribute to the shaping of the community's relationship with nature. The contrasting actions—the first generation deplete, while the second-generation replant—offer a shifting vision of human-nature relations. According to Aki (69) and Engkong (77), the first generation of settlers perceived the narrow interpretation of "human as a vicegerent on earth". Based on this perception, massive land conversion in Beting is perceived as legal and does not violate their belief system. The second generation, however, perceives the relationship differently as they experience helplessness against natural phenomena. Interviews with Pantai Bahagia's second generation (Abang, 41; Adek, 40; Raka, 39; Rai, 38) indicate a changing relationship between villagers and the natural environment. They now perceive nature as an active subject, as Raka (39) mentioned, "nature is no longer friendly; when we make mistakes, nature will retaliate". This shifting perception leads to the new construction of what Silvern & David (2021) refer to as a "normative vision of place-making". For Pantai Bahagia's second generation, their normative vision is to repair their village's condition by repaying their parents past wrongdoing.

In further exploring the Pantai Bahagia community's response to environmental change, notion of non-monolithic Muslim interpretation (Bagir & Martiam, 2017; Gade,

2019) provides a relevant outlook in explaining the second-generation interpretation of "our parent's sin". In the Pantai Bahagia community, depleting mangrove is considered sin, an act considered a transgression against divine law, which is a basic understanding of wrongdoing in any religion. Their interpretation is accumulated in the statement "atonement of our parent's sin". Adek (40), a *Tsanawiyah* (middle school) teacher who is also co-founder of Alip Bata, shares his thought: "What I am doing now [through activism] is an attempt to pay for the sins of my parents who have cut down the mangrove forest". Adek's concern is shared with other Alip Bata members, who adopt the view as the foundation of their activism. The interpretation, however, is not exclusively linked to religious teaching and symbol but is a result of intersection with scientific and experiential frames. Abang (41) and Adek (40) shared that "it was not until 2014 that we fully grasped the roots of the environmental problem in Pantai Bahagia. At that time, we met a group of young activists called Savemugo from Bekasi who visited the Beting area". From interacting with Savemugo, they learned about the term's "abrasion", and "kerusakan hutan bakau" (mangrove forest depletion) for the first time. In later developments, Savemugo supported the youth community in Pantai Bahagia in further initiating activism in Pantai Bahagia, later known as Alip Bata.

In their action, Alip Bata aims to protect Pantai Bahagia by replanting mangroves and raising environmental awareness among the younger generation of Pantai Bahagia. Adek (40), another goal of their activism, says, "It is for the common good (*kebaikan bersama*), but personally, it is to redeem my father's sin". Adek's reflection captured the basic foundation of Alip Bata's environmental activism. The intersection between religious interpretation and scientific knowledge shared by Alip Bata founders indicates the existence of overlapping structures—between global and local knowledge, as well as between Islamic and non-Islamic paradigms—in shaping local Muslim narratives (Gade, 2019). According to Gade, these multi-structures of knowledge are shaped by the layering interactions of religious material, ethics and symbols with scientific, social and experiential frames. In Pantai Bahagia community' narratives, multilayer intersections of religious material, ethics, and symbols are embedded in the community's interpretation of sin and in their expression of "*Embracing Qodarullah*"; scientific and social frame are obtained through community interaction with Savemugo; while experiential frame is related to the community experience of drowning. The overlapping structures of knowledge reflect the construction of "the atonement of our parent's sin" narrative voiced by the Pantai Bahagia community.

Raising environmental awareness, however, is not an easy task. In their formative years, Alip Bata activism caused political tension as they were accused of organising land grabs. As a result, their activism was banned for about four months in 2015. The action is also challenged by the older generation, who mostly sees the activism as a futile act and states, "Mangrove tetap kalah sama abrasi" (mangroves still lose to abrasion). These challenging views are decreasing as the Alip Bata programme starts to show results. In 2020, Alip Bata managed to reforest more than 100 hectares of the Beting area. The impacts are felt immediately; they not only reduce rip currents and coastal flooding but also bring abundant catches as the mangrove ecosystem thrives. Muslim expressions, such as '*Menanam pohon sebagai sedekah pada bumi*' (Planting trees as charity to nature), are used as activism mottos, inspired by a hadith on the virtue and benefits of planting a tree (Adek, 40). The use of Muslim expression and Islamic teaching of hadith is mainly due to the fact

that all the founders are *Tsanawiyah* teachers (Abang, 41). Abang (41) further added, "We use what we are already familiar with," and he also quotes hadith from Imam Bukhari on planting trees as charity, which provide strong narrative for their activism. In addition to the expression of "an atonement of our parent's sin", activism in Pantai Bahagia perform more than community's response to drowning, but a construction of meaning shaped by village history, community experiences, scientific interaction, and, last but not least, religious interpretation.

## Conclusions

Local narrative is contextual. In the Pantai Bahagia setting, Muslim experience with drowning conditions provides an example of a particular narrative with distinct characters, vital to understanding meaning beyond global narrative. Triggered by a national political event in the 1960s, massive environmental change in Pantai Bahagia was experienced by the second generation of settlers. Religious expressions come into play as the community feels strongly affiliated with Islamic traits. The community employs religious expressions to respond to the shocking experience by using the popular term "*Embracing Qoradullah*". While the narrative of "the Atonement of Our Parent's Sin", inspires the local community to initiate environmental activism. These particular narratives are contextual to Pantai Bahagia and connect to the community's feelings and memories, as they shared the same experience of trauma and loss. With an Islamic background, familiarity with religious expression presents a particular narrative that is strongly influenced by religious teaching. Further, studying the local community also provides in-depth knowledge on the specific environmental problems in a certain location and helps grasp the complex relationship between the community and their living place. In Pantai Bahagia, the shifting relationship between humans and nature with nature perceived as subject and able to perform retaliation to human wrongdoing triggered community action to repair their living conditions and also to repay their parents sin. In practise, place-based narratives not only function for retelling history but also shape communities' normative vision and initiate action.

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