

The Ceremony Buka Luwur

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THE CEREMONY *BUKA LUWUR* SUNAN KUDUS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDY OF ISLAMIC CULTURE

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Abstract: The teachings of Islam come from a single source, God the Almighty. However, the application of Islam in people's lives has become very diverse because of the interaction between these teachings with the local culture and traditions of the adherents. The differences and diversity that arise in the practices of Islamic teachings, if not treated properly, can lead to blaming other people's practices of Islamic teachings. *Buka Luwur* Ceremony is a culture in the Kudus area, Central Java, which has interacted with Islamic values. *Buka Luwur* Ceremony aims to pray for the spirit of Sunan Kudus, and at the same time to commemorate his services for successfully spreading Islam in Kudus area. In addition, it is also intended to model the success of Sunan Kudus in laying the foundation in preaching. In Islamic teaching perspective, *Buka Luwur* ceremony is full of Islamic and cultural values relevant to be applied in the midst of radicalism. *Buka Luwur* ceremony is able to unite two different principles between Islam and the culture/traditions of society.

Keywords: *Buka Luwur*, Sunan Kudus, Islamic culture

Abstrak: Islam adalah sebuah ajaran yang berasal dari Sang Maha Tunggal, Tuhan yang Mahaesa. Namun demikian, penerapam Islam di tengah kehidupan masyarakat menjadi sangat beragam sebagai akibat adanya interaksi ajaran tersebut dengan budaya dan tradisi lokal para pemeluknya. Perbedaan dan keragaman yang muncul dalam penerapan ajaran Islam, jika tidak dipahami dengan baik, berpotensi menimbulkan sikap saling menyalahkan. Upacara *Buka Luwur* adalah salah satu wujud budaya di daerah Kudus, Jawa Tengah, yang berinteraksi dengan nilai-nilai Islam. Upacara *Buka Luwur* bertujuan untuk mendoakan arwah Sunan Kudus sekaligus mengenang jasanya yang telah berhasil menyiarkan Islam di

daerah Kudus. Selain itu, untuk meneladani peran beliau yang sudah berhasil meletakkan fondasi toleransi dalam berdakwah. Ditinjau dari ajaran Islam, upacara *Buka Luwur* sarat dengan nilai-nilai Islam dan budaya yang relevan untuk diaplikasikan di tengah arus radikalisme. Upacara *Buka Luwur* mampu mempersatukan dua prinsip yang berbeda antara Islam dengan budaya/tradisi masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: *Buka Luwur, Sunan Kudus, Budaya, Islam.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Sunan Kudus (Syekh Ja'far Shodiq) is a member of Walisongo (the term *Walisongo* refers to the nine main figures who spread Islam on the island of Java). Sunan Kudus was so central in the life of Kudus community because he succeeded in laying the foundation of tolerance in religious and cultural teachings. The form of tolerance can be seen in the eight showers called *padasan*, which are still functioned as ablution water containers. Each shower is decorated with a relief statue as an aesthetic enhancement ornament. The number *eight* in the showers was adopted from the teachings of Buddha called *Asta Sanghika Marga* or the Eight Main Paths, which became the guide of lives for the society at that time. This is evidence that the teachings of tolerance of Sunan Kudus are increasingly relevant in the midst of current radicalism and religious fundamentalism.

Islam and culture are two things that influence each other. In Kudus, the *Buka Luwur* ceremony is a form of connection between Islam and local traditions. This ritual is carried out to replace the cloth covering the tomb of Sunan Kudus and to carry out general Islamic preach, recitation of the *tahlil* prayer, and the installation of the new ones (Syam, 2005: 17). This ceremony is intended to honor Sunan Kudus by replacing the covering clothes of his tomb with the new ones. In addition, this is also intended to emulate the struggle of Sunan Kudus, a figure who was very influential in the formation of the city of Kudus, in spreading Islam. Some people argue that the purpose of *Buka Luwur* ceremony is to remember God the Almighty, as a reminder that nothing is eternal in the world.

It is a fact that there have been a lot of researches on *Buka Luwur* ceremony, which means that this is an interesting topic to be revealed more deeply, especially about its relation with Islamic teaching in the perspective

of Islamic culture studies. This study has an important meaning in order to enrich the historical treasures of Indonesia. Thus, the results of this study can contribute to a general understanding of the relationship between *Buka Luwur* tradition in the perspective of Islamic cultural studies on religious social life in the city of Kudus.

B. ISLAM AS A VALUE SYSTEM AND CULTURAL SYSTEM

1. Islam as a Value System

Value, based on Steeman's view in Adisusilo (2013: 56), is something that gives meaning in life, provides a reference, a point of departure and a purpose in life. Values are upheld and can animate one's actions. A value is more than just a belief; it is always about thought patterns and actions, so there is a close relationship between values and ethics.

The source of the principles that determine the value system in the view of Islam is Allah's revelation, which is recorded in the Qur'an, and as-Sunnah. This means that the Islamic value system formed by the guidance of this revelation is not subjective and abstract. On the contrary, this value is clear in the Qur'an and as-Sunnah. Traditions, habits, practices, and culture that the teachings of revelation consider good remain good to the society. On the other hand, what is considered bad or evil by revelation is bad and evil for society. In fact, after research, we often find religious behavior motivated by things that are contrary to religious values, such as motives for position, wealth, power, and others (Nurcholis Madjid, 2000: 6).

Therefore, the value in Islam is a view whether a certain case is good or bad, useful or futile, based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, not only depending on either collective or individual human thinking .

As a value, Islam can be seen from two main visions, namely: Islam as a religious institution, and Islam as a point of view. In the perspective of Islam as a religious institution, the object of Islamic studies is focused on the meaning of Islam, the characteristics of Islam, the qualifications of its adherents and the sources of Islamic law. Meanwhile, Islam as a point of view is interpreted as a distinctive inter-connective perspective on the dimensions of human life. Islamic values are used as a way of looking at the practical life of mankind in all its dimensions, including social, political, economic, educational and cultural dimensions.

2. Islam as a Cultural System

Religion consists of various socio-cultural symbols providing a conception of reality and interpret plans for it, which is the central hypothesis of this study. For example in the case of natural symbols, these symbols correspond to reality but do not correspond to it. As defined by Geertz in this sense, religion is understood as a “cultural system” (Tibi, 1999: 13).

When a religion is viewed from a cultural perspective, it is treated as culture, namely as a guideline for community life whose truth is believed to be. Meanwhile, if religion is seen and treated as knowledge and belief by a society, a belief will emerge that religion is something that includes only holy and sacred things, which can be distinguished from sacred and profane knowledge and beliefs that characterize culture. (Koentjaraningrat, 1988: 73).

According to Amer al-Roubai, Islam is not a product of culture. However, Islam actually builds a culture, a civilization. This civilization is based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet and is called Islamic civilization. With the above understanding, we can start to place Islam in our daily lives. We can also build Islamic culture on the basis of concepts that come from Islam as well (Fitriyani, 2012: 133). This opinion is supported by Geertz, who states in the book Religion as a Cultural System He believes that religion is a cultural system that can shape the character of society (Geertz, 1966: 235).

From this explanation, it can be seen that Islam has two aspects, namely a religious aspect and a cultural aspect. Thus, there is Islam and there is Islamic culture. In the scientific view, the two can be distinguished, but in the view of Islam, they cannot be separated. The second and the first form a strong integration which is often difficult to differentiate whether it is a case of religion or culture. For example, marriage, divorce, reconciliation, and inheritance. From a cultural perspective, these matters are cultural matters. However, the provisions of these cases come from God. In human relations with God, humans obey His commands and prohibitions, while in human-human relations, these matters are included in the cultural category (Gazalba, 1989: 110).

The first record of the appearance of Islam in Javanese society dated in 14th century, and Islam continued to spread until it spread all over the archipelago at the end of the 15th or 16th century. According to van Leur, as quoted by al Qurtuby (2003: 107), the main factors of the spread were economic and

political factors. The history of Islamic civilization in the archipelago is not far from the influence of Hinduism and Buddhism. The development in the early days of Islam in the archipelago, especially in Java, began with a *Walisongo da'wah* strategy which was able to cultivate Islam to the local. In addition to fostering public interest, this also makes the culture carried out continuously from generation to generation until now. This da'wah strategy was carried out by Sunan Kalijaga using *wayang* and singing media. Similarly, Sunan Bonang also used music as a means of preaching. In addition, the influence of Islam in the form of buildings or architecture can be seen in the architecture of the Mosque of Kudus. You can see the patterns that still use the characteristics of Hinduism.

C. THE PROCESS OF BUKA LUWUR CEREMONY

Buka Luwur is a series of ceremonies held in Kauman Village, Kudus Regency, applying certain procedures and traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. *Buka Luwur* is the term used for the ceremony to replace the covering cloth of Sunan Kudus's tomb. *Buka* means opening or removing, while *luwur* refers to a kind of cloth (named *mori*) which is used to cover gravestones, cupola, and buildings in the area of the tomb of Sunan Kudus. Once a year a cloth replacement is held at the tomb of Sunan Kudus. Hence, the replacement is known as *Buka Luwur*. On the 1st of Muharram, the *luwur* started to be released.

Based on the above explanation, *Buka Luwur* ceremony can be understood as a process or ceremony of replacing the *mori* cloth used as a cover for Sunan Kudus's tomb to be replaced with a new covering cloth.

In detail, the implementation of the *Buka Luwur* ceremony consists of a series of activities as follows:

1. *Penjamasan Pusaka* (15 Dzulhijjah 1439 H)

A series of events accompanying the procession of *Buka Luwur* begins with *penjamasan*, i.e. cleansing the heirlooms of Sunan Kudus, named *Cintahaka* or *Ciptaka*. The time for cleansing is usually held on Monday or Thursday after *Tasyrik* day. It starts at 7 o'clock in the morning. Before *penjamasan* is carried out, people start with a pilgrimage to the Sunan Kudus's tomb, in which there is a short ceremony beginning with *iftitah*, followed by reciting *tahlil*, and ends with prayer. The short opening ceremony is then followed by

cleansing the heirlooms, led Mr. H. Faqihuddin. After the cleansing process is finished, again *tahlil* is recited accompanying the process of storing the heirlooms in its special storage place, called *tajug*. This activity was ended in hospitality among the participants of the ceremony while they enjoy a special dish called *opor ayam* (chicken braised in coconut milk), a traditional meal of Kudus and special snacks called *jajanan pasar* (snacks usually sold in traditional market in Kudus). These kind of snacks is chosen because it symbolizes hospitality and prosperity. Market is associated with a place for various goods, such as market snacks, fruit, cakes, flowers, and so on (Sholikhin, 2020: 37).

2. The Preaching on the New Year 1440 H. (Night of 1 Muharram)

The general preaching of 1 Muharram is a series in Buka Luwur ceremony, which is held on the Islamic New Year (1 Muharram). This preaching was attended by Muslims from various regions in Kudus and its surroundings. The place for this event is in the *alAqsa* Mosque, located in Menara, Kauman, Kudus Regency. The preacher of the general preaching on 1 Muharram 1440 was Mr. H. M. Saefuddin Luthfi.

The tradition of this New Year's recitation is carried out by Muslims as a moment to welcome the arrival of the new year, as well as a gratitude to God for giving people's long lives until the new year.

3. Taking off *Mori Luwur* (1 Muharram)

The covering cloth, called *luwur*, of Sunan Kudus's tomb and other tombs in the surroundings, is put off on 1 Muharram at 6 AM. This ceremony begins with *tahlil* and other prayers recitation. Taking off the covering cloth of Sunan Kudus's tomb is performed symbolically in the area of Sunan Kudus's tomb, and then followed with taking of the covering clothes of other tombs in the area done by certain pointed figures.

The used *luwur* (the cloth used to cover Sunan Kudus's tomb) was then kept by the committee to be cut into pieces to be distributed to the local community on the 10th of Muharram. Some people believe that the *luwur* contains blessings because for full 24 hours people continued to read the al-Qur'an and prayers around the tomb of Sunan Kudus. After the *luwur* was removed, on the 10th of Muharram the tomb's cover was replaced with a new *luwur*. The taking off the *luwur* and making a new *luwur* as well as putting it on are the responsibility of *luwur* committee. The new one was made on the 6th to 9th of Muharram.

Luwur has some types, one of the which is called *wiru*. *Wiru* is made by folding the cloth horizontally and neatly into some layers. This type is pinned on the wall of the building as well as inside placed outside the tomb of Sunan Kudus (Budiyanto, 2012: 28-29).

4. Munadharah Masail Diniyyah (06 Muharram)

Munadharah is a routine participated by *ulama* and common people in the society. The series of *munadharah* activities was held on 6 Muharram 1440 H/16 September, 2018. In this activity, Islamic scholars gathered to discuss the problems of *ummat*/Moslem society. The topics discussed in this forum were people's frequently asked questions which were viewed from various perspectives.

5. Doa rasul and Terbang Papat (malam 09 Muharram)

Doa rasul (the recitation of prayers to express compliments to Prophet Muhammad) and *terbang papat* (traditional musical performance of Kudus) was held at the night of 8 Muharram, started from 8 P.M. The location of this performance was in the front yard of Menara Kudus. This event was performed by a local music group called *qasidah*. This music group is especially sings religious songs with specific style. The name *terbang papat* refers to the name of a musical instrument (*terbang*) and the duration of performance, i.e. 4 kinds of instruments and 4-hour duration of performance (*papat*, a Javanese word, meaning four). In addition, the name *terbang papat* also refers to the number of the musical instruments used, which consists of 4 *terbang/rebana*, and 1 *jidur*, which were played for four hours continuously. The four *terbang/rebana* consists of *kemplong*, and *telon* as the lead rhyme, *salahan* and *lajer* as the ornamental of the rhyme sound variation. The position of *terbang papat* players are as follows: the right side of the spectators are *kemplong* players, the left side of the spectators are *terbang lajer* players, and between them were the players of *telon* and *salahan* (Budiyanto, 2012: 12).

6. Khatmil Qur'an bil Ghaib (09 Muharram)

Khatmil Qur'an bil Ghaib is a ceremony for finishing reading the Holy Qur'an. This ceremony was held in the morning starting at 04.30 by Quran memorizers (*hafidz*). This ceremony (named *khataman*) is opened by a short preaching from religious leaders. *Khataman* is done 9 times.

7. Donation for orphans (09 Muharram)

Located at the YM3SK building, the donation starts at 08.00. This donation is given to orphans. Before the the donation is distributed, an opening ceremony is done by reading *tahlil* and prayer.

8. Distribution of Asyura Porridge(09 Muharram)

The distribution of Asyura porridge is associated with the story of Prophet Noah and his followers who could survive from the hostile flood. It was told that being on the boat during the flood, Prophet Noah and his followers were lack of food; very little food were remained to support their life. At that time, the porridge were made of red and white wheat, and many kinds of nuts. In the present time, *Asyura* porridge is made of rice with a kind of topping made of shrimps, salted fish, tofu, *tempe* (fermented soybean), *penthul* (a kind of food made from grated coconut and given special spices like curry), sliced fried-egg, sliced red chilly, raw sprout, and balinese orange. After it is ready, the porridge is put into a container made of round-shaped banana leaf, called *samir* or *uter* and *takir* (bowl-shaped banana leaf). The porridge then was distributed to the inhabitants of Kauman and the people in the surroundings as well as the readers of *al barjanji*. In the year 2018, the number of portions of Asyura porridge was 873 *samir* and 326 *takir*.

9. The Recitation of Qosidah al Barjanji (malam10 Muharram)

The recitation of the Qosidah al barjanji was carried out by a male and female group separately. The recitation begins after the evening prayer around 19.30 PM. The male group took place in the Tajug pavilion south of the tomb of Sunan Kudus, while the women's group took place at Pawestren (a place for women's prayer) at the al-Aqsa mosque arena, Menara Kudus.

10. General Preaching (at night before 10 Muharram)

The preacher of the general preaching on 10 Muharram, 1440 H was K. H. Habib Umar al Muthahar from Semarang, the Capital of Central Java Province. It started at 8 P.M. in al Aqsha Mosque, Menara Kudus. The audience came from many areas in Kudus, even from out of the town.

11. The Distribution of Brekat Salinan and Brekat Kartu (10 Muharram)

Brekat is a kind of charity, usually in the form of some kinds of foods,

such as rice etc., given to people as the way for expecting God's blessing. The distribution of *brekat* started at 01.30 A.M. *Brekat salinan* is distributed to people who have submitted some raw food and in return they get *brekat salinan*. Meanwhile, *brekat kartu* is given to people who submitted some amount of money. In return, they get a card which can be used to get the *berkat*.

12. The Distribution of General *Brekat* (on 10 Muharram)

The distribution of general *brekat* is done on 10 Muharram, started at 6 A.M. However, many people are ready to queue for getting the *berkat* very early in the morning. In order to avoid uncontrolled crowd in the process of dividing the *brekat*, the committee separates men and women queues.

13. Luwur Installation Ceremony (10 Muharram)

The peak of *Buka Luwur* Ceremony is the installation of the new *luwur*, which is held on 10 Muharram at 7 in the morning. Unlike the previous series of events that could be attended by the general public, this event was only attended by special invited guests consisting of religious / community leaders, as well as Kauman village elders, such as K. H. Sya'roni Ahmadi. New *luwur* installation is carried out by people who are considered to have certain authorities. The series of events included: (a) opening with the reading of al-Fatihah by Mr. K.H.M. Arifin Fanani, (b) recitation of the holy verses of al-Qur'an, by Mr. H. Hilal Haidar, (c) *dhikr* in congregation, reciting *hasbunallah* 70 times, and closing the recitation of the *asyura* prayer led by Mr. K.H.Sya'roni Ahmadi.

D. *BUKA LUWUR* IN ISLAMIC CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Islam and culture originate from different things. Islam as a doctrine refers to the teachings of the revelation of the Qur'an brought by the Prophet. Meanwhile, culture refers to the results of human thought related to creativity, initiative, and human work (Koentjaraningrat, 1959: 76). Islam as a religion with a set of values has influenced the cultural patterns and traditions of its adherents. This influence does not necessarily eliminate the socio-cultural aspects of the local community. In subsequent developments, popular culture absorbed many Islamic concepts and symbols so that it seemed that Islam emerged as an important source of culture. Likewise in certain ceremonies, Islamic nuances are clearly visible, including in Sunan Kudus *Buka Luwur* ceremony.

1. Pilgrimage

All ceremonies carried out by a certain community, including *Buka Luwur*, of course have specific purposes. The desired goal in the *Buka Luwur* ceremony becomes more concrete to realize the desires of the community. What is desired by the community is concluded in the elements of the ceremony carried out.



Various types of *luwur* or *mori* in the area of Sunan Kudus's tomb
Source: researchers' private document

From several researches and interviews with pilgrims, the purpose of the community to attend the *Buka Luwur* ceremony is because of blessings. It seems that the term blessing has become an important icon in the series of *Buka Luwur* and the pilgrimage to the tomb of Sunan Kudus.

According to Victor Turner's theory in Koentjaraningrat (1985: 56) the purpose of the ceremony can be viewed from the elements of *what is done*, *what is said*, and *what is shown*. The element that is carried out is that people flock to come and follow the ceremony to pray and get blessings. The elements spoken are stories or descriptions of the history and struggle of the spreaders of Islam and the history of Sunan Kudus in people's lives. Meanwhile, the elements provided are *uyah asem* rice, cricket rice, *asyura* porridge, and *luwur*.

Based on the elements carried out in the *Buka Luwur* ceremony, the performers of the ceremony ask God for forgiveness and increased blessing for Sunan Kudus. Meanwhile, the elements spoken aim to make the public know

the story of the struggle of Sunan Kudus and imitate him, and the means of the ceremony provided are intended to increase community's blessings.

This pilgrimage tradition contains at least two meanings for the perpetrators, namely commemorating the services of spreading Islam and asking for blessings. In the first aspect, the purpose of the pilgrimage is not different from ceremonies such as the Prophet's birthday, which aims to remember and implement the teachings of the Prophet. *Buka Luwur* ceremony belongs to the community and their culture, but the series of ceremonies are full of Islamic values, such as *khataman* (reading the Qur'an to completion), 1 Muharram/ New Year preaching and general preaching, and *tahlil* recitation.

From the cultural aspect, this pilgrimage strengthens the tradition of praying for blessings, *tawasul*, and praying for people who have died. Thus, the pilgrimage strengthens the religiosity of some Indonesian Muslim community. Meanwhile, the blessing aspect in the *Buka Luwur* and *brekat* tradition is based on the view that Sunan Kudus is one of God's chosen guardians who has *karamah*, i.e. privileges given to him by God. Thus, *Buka Luwur* ceremony carries a message to respect and remember the services of its predecessors, to practice the values of Islamic teachings (in this case embodied in the *Khatmil* Qur'an, recitation, and *shadaqah*, and care for orphans). *Buka Luwur* Ceremony is a preservation of the diversity of the community in ritual aspects, such as pilgrimage, reading *tahlil*, *tawassul*, sending prayers and distributing *asyura* porridge, also a means of socializing the culture of the Kudus community to the millennial generation which is expected to strengthen the sense of tolerance of the people amid the swift currents of radicalism.

From a normative perspective, Islam is one, originating from the One God, but when Islam lands in the midst of people's lives, it interacts with culture and social traditions. The appearance of Islam can vary; of course there are differences. Likewise, the appearance of Islam in Indonesia has many differences from the appearance of Islam in Saudi Arabia.

Buka Luwur Ceremony has special value from the point of view of Islamic teachings and cultural history as well. To develop Islamic civilization, through the understanding of *Buka Luwur* Sunan Kudus ceremony, we can imitate the attitude of Sunan Kudus in spreading Islam with the following attitudes: *tawassut* (moderate), *tawazun* (balanced), and *tasamuh* (tolerant). These three attitudes are in line with the teachings of the Qur'an about the

middle way of the *ummatan wasathan* (moderate people). Based on the theological arguments above and epistemological considerations, *Buka Luwur* has become an Islamic cultural strategy in strengthening the national position of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and in line with the state principles, Pancasila. *Buka Luwur* Ceremony shows how the successors of Sunan Kudus emulate and preserve cultural *da'wah*, namely by cleansing heirlooms and replacing the mosquito nets of Sunan Kudus' tomb. This strategy is proof of what is known as local knowledge which is epistemologically sourced from local wisdom, namely a strategy of preaching that is full of wisdom by promoting Islamic values in dialogue with local culture.

Apart from the attitude of some people who are too excessive in consoling blessings, which can result in reducing their *tauhid* beliefs, preserving *Buka Luwur* tradition is a necessity. *Buka Luwur* Ceremony is a tradition representing an assimilation between Islamic and Javanese cultures. For that reason, it is natural that from the context of Islamic theology, there is a controversy.

Buka Luwur Sunan Kudus Ceremony is a culture and tradition that has been rooted and accepted massively by the Muslim community of Kudus and its surroundings. Such a condition can be used as a kind of reinforcement in the formulation of *fiqh* law. *Fiqh* is the result of *ijtihad*, a product of human thought, which is dynamic in line with the dynamics of society. Therefore, a *fiqh* framework cannot be imposed on society as a whole from different eras and places, except from its universal values. The mixing of Islam with local culture (*Buka Luwur* tradition) is recognized by the *ushul fiqh*. In *ushul fiqh*, there is a term ⁶الْعَادَةُ كَمِثَّةٍ. The point is that customs can be used as a legal basis. This means that the customs and traditions of a community can be used as a source of law in Islam, of course the customs in question are customs or habits that are carried out by the community repeatedly and do not violate the normative teachings of Islam. The spirit of the universality of *Buka Luwur* can be seen from the aspects of recitation, *uswah hasanah*, prayer together as previously explained.

Islam is present in the community to bring grace to the universe. Islamic teachings apply universally. The universality of Islamic teachings allows acculturation with the particular tradition and culture based on the location where Islam exists.

2. *Sedekah* (Almsgiving) Distribution

Almsgiving can be interpreted as sharing or lightening the burdens of fellow human beings. Therefore, giving alms is recommended in Islamic teachings. It improves social relations and also keeps us from being arrogant. One of the verses in the Qur'an that commands in terms of alms is Q. S. al Munafiqun verse 10:

وَأَنْفِقُوا مِنْ مَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ فَأَصَّدَّقْتُ وَأَكُن مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ⁴

Meaning:

“And spend some of what We have given you before death comes to one of you; then he said: “O my Rabb, why do you not delay (death) me until the near future, which causes me to give alms and I am among the pious?”

Some of the various forms of alms that exist in *Buka Luwur* ceremony are reflected in the following activities:

a. Donations for orphans

One of *Buka Luwur* series is donation for orphans. Supporting and cherishing orphans is one of the religious orders that is highly recommended, even allowing orphans to be one of the signs of people who deny religion. As stated in Q.S. al Ma'un verses 1-7 which means: 1. Do you know (people) who deny religion? *Salat*, 5. (namely) those who are negligent towards their prayers, 6. Those who show off, 7. And are reluctant (to provide assistance). Thus the provision of donations for orphans is in line with Islamic teachings. Indeed, the name of helping orphans is not only limited to the month of Muharram, whenever and wherever it is good to do.

b. *Asyura* Porridge Distribution

Another element of *Buka Luwur* is the distribution of the *asyura* porridge. *Asyura* porridge is very well known among the Javanese Muslim community. In this context, there are at least two types of *asyura* porridge which are used as a tradition. The first type is red-white porridge, which is associated with the story of the death of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Imam Husain bin Ali, who died on the 10th of Muharram in the Karbala field. Imam Husain died because of political problems with the Muawiyah family of Caliph Yazid. To commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Husain, a red-and-

white porridge was served as a symbol of Imam Husain's courage in defending the truth. There are also those who interpret the two colors as a symbol of the two favorite grandchildren of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. namely Hasan and Husain.



Distribution of *Bubur Assyura*

Source: researchers' private document

The second type of *asyura* porridge relates to the story of Noah and his people who survived the flood and got out of the ship after being played by ocean waves and storms for about 41 days. When the food supplies on the ship ran low, Prophet Noah ordered to collect the remaining food scraps. The left-over food is a kind of wheat, beans and kidney beans, all cooked and eaten together. With the blessings that Allah bestowed upon the Prophet Noah, this food was sufficient. That was the first meal together after the storm and flood that occurred on the 10th of Muharram (Sholikhin, 2010: 81).

Compared to the types of *asyura* porridge, the porridge served and distributed in the series of *Buka Luwur* ceremony is similar to the second type, associated with the flood of Noah. This can be traced from the sprouts as a symbol of human seeds and fetuses that will always grow like sprouts. Eggs is a symbol of seeds of human occurrence, red chilies symbolizes courage, as a determination to fight for God's truth, and tofu and tempe, all of which are originated from grains (soybeans).

3. *Nasi jangkrik* and *nasi uyah asem*

Brekat consists of *nasi jangkrik* and *uyah asem*. It is named *brekat* because it contain these ideas: 1. Before *brekat* is distributed, previously were recited

tahlil and prayers, in the hope that the blessing of Allah would be poured into the people who participated in the recitation as well as those who get the *brekat*. 2. *Brekat* is derived from the word *barokah*, which means *increasing*. This is in line with the revelation which says: *lain syakartum* meaning: that whoever is grateful will have more enjoyment. Accordingly, the distribution of is a way of giving thanks to God, so that there is hope that God will increase goodness and prosperity.



Many helpers are wrapping *nasi jangkrik-uyah asem*
Source: researchers' private document

All series of *Buka Luwur* events, such as giving compensation to orphans, sharing *brekat* and so on represent the essence of exemplary, namely *shodaqoh* with various advantages.

With such a meaning, the essence of porridge and *brekat* is the manifestation of gratitude to God by saying prayers to Him and giving something to fellow human beings. Giving something to others is a command that is emphasized in Islamic teachings.

From the above explanation, it can be said that *Buka Luwur* ceremony and the series of activities that accompany it cannot be simply eliminated. This is because the *Buka Luwur* ceremony is a culture that shows a social dialectical process and natural creativity, which is seen as an element that can be adopted selectively. Thus it can be seen that Islam teaches its adherents to be selective and give appreciation of a local tradition. in this context is the *Buka Luwur* ceremony, in which Muslim community participates positively and wisely.

E. CONCLUSION

From an Islamic perspective, *Buka Luwur* Sunan Kudus ceremony is full of Islamic values. Several activities of *Buka Luwur* are in line with Islam which emphasizes exemplary for the struggle of Sunan Kudus, respect for teachers (guardians) by sending prayers, expressions of gratitude to God, gifts to other parties (donations to orphans, distribution of *Asyura* porridge and sharing of *brekat*).

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Wawancara dengan bapak H. M. Fatchan (One of YM3SK Committee, also the Chief Committee of *Buka Luwur* Sunan Kudus 1440 H) on 3 November, 2018.

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