



Symbolic Meaning in Tradition The *Malem Selikuran* of Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat, Indonesia

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Abstrak

Budaya di Indonesia sangat beragam, tak terkecuali budaya Masyarakat Jawa. Budaya tersebut berkembang dengan adanya proses akulturasi yang terjadi pada Masyarakat Jawa. Setiap budaya tersebut mempunyai makna atau simbolisasi tersendiri yang biasanya dihubungkan antara manusia dengan Tuhan. Tradisi Malem Selikuran mempunyai makna yang cukup luas. Tradisi ini tidak hanya sebuah perayaan, melainkan terdapat makna yang terkandung di dalamnya, contohnya sarana untuk memperteguh keimanan seorang muslim, mempererat tali persaudaraan, dan melestarikan budaya. Pada kehidupan sekarang pentingnya dalam menjaga persatuan, menghormati keberagaman yang ada, serta adanya sifat untuk selalu bersyukur atas nikmat yang telah diberikan oleh Tuhan. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnografi. Pendekatan ini digunakan karena pendekatan etnografi berfokus pada makna sosiologi melalui observasi lapang dari fenomena sosiokultural, sehingga data yang didapatkan cukup jelas. Hasil dari penelitian ini berupa makna simbolis yang terkandung dalam kegiatan tradisi Malem Selikuran Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat.

Kata kunci: *makna simbolis; malem selikuran; Keraton Surakarta; budaya Jawa; masyarakat Jawa*

Abstract

Culture in Indonesia is very diverse, including Javanese culture. This culture developed through the acculturation process that occurred in Javanese society. Each culture has its own meaning or symbolism which is usually connected between humans and God. The *Malem Selikuran* di Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat tradition has quite a broad meaning. This tradition is not only a celebration, but also has meaning contained in it, for example a means to strengthen a Muslim's faith, strengthen ties of brotherhood, and preserve culture. In today's life, it is important to maintain unity, respect existing diversity, and to always be grateful for the blessings that God has given. This research is qualitative research with an ethnographic approach. This approach is used because the ethnographic approach focuses on sociological meaning through field observations of sociocultural phenomena, so that the data obtained is quite clear. The results of this research are in the form of symbolic

meaning contained in the traditional activities of the *Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat.

Keywords: *symbolic meaning; Malem Selikuran; Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat; Javanese culture; Javanese society*

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INTRODUCTION

Culture is a recognition, information, emotions, judgments, opinions and actions that regulate all systems that exist in a social group. The elements of culture are design and other elements contained in that culture, which can become interactions in society (Onursoy, 2015). Culture has various meanings for society and the individuals within it, because culture provides teaching for humans to live in harmony with nature, and provides guidance for humans to interact with each other (Sirait & Hidayat, 2015). Culture cannot be separated from life which is influenced by aspects of habits, gender, race, ethnicity and country of origin (Adi, Hardiyati, & Ailiyah, 2019). It can be synthesized that culture is an activity in society that is influenced by various factors.

Indonesia has a very diverse culture. Education and culture become national identities, making them the characteristics of a nation which aims to instill character values and respect for society in the culture and ethnic races that exist in Indonesia (Wardhana, Agung, Susanto, 2020). Javanese culture occurred due to a fairly long historical process starting from Clasic Java, Islamic Java, until now. The process of acculturation of Javanese and Islamic culture continued continuously until Javanese Islamic culture emerged. The process of

interaction between Islam and local Javanese culture continues without stopping, sometimes through a process of integration, sometimes conflict, and an inevitable path is the delivery of Islamic messages culturally, where the preaching delivered is in the form of cool and peaceful preaching, not hard and hot military structural road. So that Islam can be accepted by the Indonesian people, especially Java, peacefully without any significant conflict (Prasetya, 2016).

One of the intangible cultural heritages owned by the Javanese people is tradition The *Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat which is usually carried out during the fasting month of Ramadhan. This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation and is held every year. The *Malem Selikuran* which was held at the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat was a form of acculturation of Islamic teachings and Javanese culture. This tradition is a forum for Muslims in Java to deepen spirituality in order to get closer to God Almighty. Through this tradition, the hope is to obtain blessings and forgiveness from God.

This tradition is carried out every night of Lailatul Qodar. For Muslims themselves, the night of Lailatul Qadar is a long-awaited night. This is because every Muslim believes that on that night there is blessing from God. The

community's enthusiasm for increasing worship during the month of Ramadhan has made people's interest and enthusiasm in carrying out the traditional activity of pursuing Lailatul Qadar night continue to increase among various age groups (Putri & Busro, 2022). Apart from that, there is history that there are important events in Islamic history. Lailatul Qadar has been revealed since the beginning of Ramadhan, there are also those who state that Lailatul Qadar is in the last ten days of Ramadhan and some even argue that Lailatul Qadar was revealed on the odd days in the last ten days of Ramadhan (Effendi & Hafiyusholeh, 2021).

The *Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat tradition in Javanese cultural view has quite deep symbols and meanings. A series of ceremonies that have been carried out have a philosophical meaning contained in them. This is what makes the Javanese people always hold fast in living life. The symbols found in it are the key to understanding the values, beliefs, and way of looking at life in Javanese society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods with an ethnographic approach. Qualitative research is research that is useful for exploring and describing phenomena from various points of view (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Qualitative research is concerned with exploring a phenomenon and trying to understand it (Tracy, 2019). One approach related to anthropology is ethnography. This approach can be used as a set of methods, research strategies, paradigms, and even frameworks (Zainal & Rahma, 2019). Through an ethnographic approach, with in-depth interviews, it is hoped that

maximum data will be obtained. The existence of observations in the field makes this research quite relevant to carry out. In this research, the ethnographic approach is intended to realize the philosophy or meaning of the tradition *The Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat. with culture and local wisdom.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tradition *The Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat has deep roots in Javanese society. This tradition has meanings contained in it. Through these traditional symbols and rituals, there are noble values that have been passed down by the ancestors. From the explanation that has been presented below is the symbolic meaning of the activity *The Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat.

a. *Sewu Tumpeng* (A Thousand of Tumpeng)

Tumpeng is one of the ceremonial accessories that is always present in every ceremony and ritual (Nurazizah, 2022). At events *The Malem Selikuran* which was carried out by the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat, has become a tradition of *sewu tumpeng* or a thousand *tumpeng*. According to Gardjto & Erwin (2010) *tumpeng* is cone-shaped rice and generally the height of the cone is greater than the diameter of the base circle of the cone. Meanwhile, Krisnadi (2015) states that *tumpeng* is a conical rice dish with various side dishes placed in a *tampah* (a large, round tray, made of woven bamboo).

The thousand *tumpeng* have the meaning of being a form of gratitude with all the abundance of grace and blessings from God Almighty. It is also believed that this night is the descent of Lailatul Qodar which is full of blessings. In this tradition, 1,000 *tumpeng* are made, this number is a symbol of the reward equivalent to a thousand months.

Krisnadi (2015) stated that *tumpeng* has a relationship with religious symbols in Indonesia and is served at sacred events. This cone-shaped *tumpeng* has a symbol, namely the existence of the Oneness of God Almighty. The tradition of using *tumpeng* began to be adopted with Javanese philosophical meaning as a form of prayer from the ancestors to God Almighty (Ridzki & Achmadi, 2023). Apart from that, it has the meaning of a sense of unity and unity of Javanese society under the leadership of the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat. The composition or filling of *tumpeng* itself has meaning in the form of the cultural diversity and traditions of Javanese society.

b. *Kirab Lampu Ting dan Lampion* (Carnival of Ting Lights and Lanterns)

These cultural carnival activities contain values such as mutual cooperation, togetherness, uniting in a compact manner regardless of ethnicity, religion and race and also creativity, which are the values studied in character education (Sodiq & Suyahmo, 2022). Cultural carnivals are a form of building and preserving, upholding the arts and culture of the archipelago (Kustiwi,

Yuliatin, & Istiqomah, 2023). Activity the *Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat also has a lantern carnival. These lanterns are made from paper that has been shaped into stars, moons, and so on. This shape is made in accordance with the activities defined by the theme of the month of Ramadan. Inside the lantern there is a candle which is useful as a lamp.

The lanterns that have been made are paraded in the activity The *Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat. The meaning of the lantern itself is that it is a bright light so that the heart and soul are always illuminated by light on a blessed night. Lantern light also has a symbol as a form of hope and prayer for a brighter future. The hope is that you will always be given goodness and luck.

The ting lamps and lanterns were paraded to accompany the *tumpeng* which had been brought by the *Abdi Dalem* (people who serve themselves in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat) of the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat. This meaning is that the ting lamp or lantern was the torch that the companions carried when they picked up the Prophet Muhammad. had received revelation from Jabal Nur.

c. *Doa Bersama* (Praying Together)

Collective prayer is prayer done together at an event (Bimasakti, 2019). Prayer is a shield for believers, prayer is also a pillar of religion, prayer is also the light of heaven and earth, if the people always pray then heaven and earth will emit bright

divine light (Hakim, 2017). It can be synthesized that joint prayer is a ritual or activity carried out together in an activity.

On activities the *Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat held a joint prayer. The joint prayer offered is a prayer to ask for forgiveness for sins or mistakes that have been committed. Then the prayer is a form of asking for blessings and mercy from God Almighty, especially during the month of Ramdhan. Prayer has an important position in a religion, because prayer is a form of worship, in fact prayer is the essence of worship (Kuswandi, 2018). This joint prayer also has meaning as a form of strengthening the sense of brotherhood and solidarity between Muslims in Surakarta.

d. *Prosesi Adat* (Traditional Procession)

The Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat has customs that have been passed down from generation to generation. For example, traditional processions that are carried out include accompanying music, traditional Javanese clothing during implementation and so on. The purpose of the traditional procession at the *Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat is a form of preserving ancestral culture and making Javanese culture exist. This tradition is an important tradition for the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat, which reflects the noble values and philosophy that have been passed down from our ancestors.

e. *Hidangan Tradisional* (Traditional Dishes)

On tradition the *Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat has a tradition of serving food. This food has a meaning in the form of a symbol of togetherness and strengthening brotherhood between the people of the Keraton (Palace) and the Javanese people in Surakarta. This food also has symbols of spiritual values such as mutual cooperation, generosity, gratitude, and so on. This dish consists of savory rice in the form of a small tumpeng, then complemented with black soybeans, rambak, cucumber and green chilies. After being given prayers, a thousand (1,000) tumpeng were distributed to the community.

Tradition the *Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat is related to the advice written by Pakubuwana IV in one of his works, namely *Serat Wulangreh* (a name of tradisional song). The letter has a deep meaning in the form of implicit teaching and command to show the depth of the meaning of the revelation of the Al-Qur'an. The advice is written in a *tembang macapat* (traditional song) *dandanggula*. The existence of the *tembang macapat* is a form based on the ecology of Javanese society due to changes in attitudes, culture and educational patterns in society (Zuhri, Saddono, Sumarwati, 2020). This acculturation created Islamic Javanese culture. The following is a dhandanggula song:

*Jroning Qur'an nggoning rasa jati
Nanging pilih wong kang uninga
Anjaba lawan tuduhe
Nora kena binawar*

*Ing satemah nora pinanggih
Mundhak katalanjukan
Temah sasar susur
Yen sirdayun waskitha
Kasampurnaning badanira puniki
Sira anggegurua*

Translate

Al-Qur'an is the place of true taste
But not everyone knows it
Except for those who are diligent and obedient
Because if so
he will not find the true teachings
Don't be careless
Can result in getting lost
If you are alert
Will get perfection
Therefore you must learn

The meaning contained in the song is important in understanding the Al-Quran along with selected people who have understood the Al-Quran. This provides insight into the Javanese community in understanding the meaning contained in the Al-Quran. As well as the belief in the revelation of the Qur'an on the night of Lailatul Qodar. The *tembang macapat* were used as a medium for da'wah in the spread of Islam which provided space for Javanese society (Zuhri, Saddono, Sumarwati, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The *Malem Selikuran* in the Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat is a Javanese tradition. This culture has symbols that have philosophical meaning in them. Each symbol is related between humans and God Almighty. This tradition has the function of strengthening faith, strengthening ties of brotherhood, and preserving Javanese

culture. In today's life, this activity is quite important in maintaining unity, respecting existing diversity, and having the characteristic of always being grateful for the blessings that have been given by God Almighty.

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