



**THE SYNERGY OF RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL POLICY PARADIGMS
IN THE PRESERVATION OF DEATH CEREMONIES
IN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES**

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the synergy of religious and government leaders in Muslim communities in preserving the tradition of death ceremonies in Menco Berahan Village, Demak Regency, Central Java Province. The research method used is explorative descriptive qualitative. To find data collection using interviews and observations. While the data analysis techniques used in this study are data collection, data reduction, data display and verification. The results of this study indicate that the efforts of religious and government leaders in preserving the tradition of death ceremonies in Menco hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village are to provide support in the form of assistance and facilities. They agree that the death ceremony is one of the good deeds and is one of the obligations carried out by the family. The obligation to pray for the deceased family is realized by carrying out the death ceremony regardless of the economic condition of the family or community. Therefore, the role of religious leaders and government leaders is responsible for finding solutions to the problems faced by the community in the hamlet so that the tradition of the death ceremony is still carried out. This research emphasizes the importance of synergizing the role of religious leaders with government leaders in policies to preserve religious traditions.

Keyword: Governmental Leadership, Religious Leadership, Death Ceremonies, Menco Berahan Village



A. Introduction

The tradition of Selamatan is one of a series of religious services that is still carried out by Javanese people, especially people in rural areas. Worship is actualized through salvation activities in villages in different ways, this is motivated by tradition, social life and the economy of the community. The tradition of salvation has been embedded in Javanese society since ancient times until now. Selamatan is a Javanese culture that aims to commemorate and be grateful for human life from the stages of birth to death. Salvation activities are carried out by Javanese people to celebrate almost all events they experience, such as congratulations on births, marriage deaths, and moving houses (Jerry Hendrajaya and Amru Almu'tasim, 2020).

Javanese people think that death is not just a transition to a new status for the person who dies, but rather a journey with a noble image of life. Therefore, every death is almost accompanied by certain ritual events. The tradition of saving death from the first day to the seventh day, the fortieth day, and the thousandth day is a form of ritual that is still carried out by Javanese people. As the research results of brothers Amru Almu'tasim and Jerry Hendrajaya show, the nyatus nyewu death salvation tradition can influence the religious behavior of the Javanese people, because the values in the death salvation tradition include aqidah values, sharia values, and moral values (Jerry Hendrajaya and Amru Almu'tasim, 2020).

The law on carrying out salvation or tahlilan among ulama' is still a matter of debate. Each uses propositions and takes advantage of what they believe. Past ulama' have demonstrated their intelligence and wisdom in dialogue with local traditions without having to create conflict between Islam and local culture. In this way, the concept of charity and salvation, which in essence comes from Allah SWT, is conveyed to society without any intention or purpose to burden them (M. Adib Misbachul Islam et.al., 2022).

This condition is different from the ulama' who are in Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village. The ulama' agree that celebrating death is a good deed and it is an obligation for the family of the deceased to pray for the family of the deceased. Therefore, the tradition of celebrating death in Menco Hamlet is still preserved, both for rich and poor people.

The people of Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village work as pond farmers, fishermen, daily laborers and livestock breeders. Berahan Wetan Village is one of the villages in Wedung District which is included in the category of extreme poor villages in Demak Regency. Natural resources in Menco Hamlet used to be abundant, but are currently experiencing a drastic decline, both in pond farming, rice fields and the sea. Therefore, many people in Dukuh Menco are still poor.

From the background and problems mentioned above. Researchers want to know the leadership of ulama' and umaro' in preserving the tradition of saving death and to find out the tradition of saving death in Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village. The method used in this research is exploratory descriptive qualitative research. The location of this research is Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village, Wedung District, Demak Regency. The data sources for this research consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include religious leaders (ulama') and Village Government (umaro'), village officials, RT, and the community. Secondary sources include data obtained indirectly related to the tradition of saving death. The data collection technique used in this research is the documentation triangulation technique; interview; observation. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman technique (1984), namely data collection, data reduction, data modeling (data display) and drawing or verifying conclusions (Sugiyono, 2018: 12-14).

B. Ulama' and Umaro' Leadership

The definition of leadership according to experts is as follows: a. According to Wijono which quote by Wilmi Halim, leadership is defined as a person's ability to influence other people in such a way that the other person is willing to carry out the leader's wishes; b. According to Hersey which quote by Wilmi Halim leadership is the process of influencing the activities of a person or group to achieve goals in certain situations; c. Leadership is defined as the inherent ability of a leader which depends on various factors, namely internal and external factors; d. Leadership is defined as a leader's efforts to realize individual or organizational goals (Wimmy Halim, 2020:91-104).

Religious figures in the Islamic tradition are called ulama'. Ulama' is a Muslim, knowledgeable in religion, has spirituality which is manifested in the form of obedience (fear) to Allah SWT. The title of 'ulama' is held by a Muslim as a manifestation of integrity, quality, knowledge, credibility, piety and social responsibility in social life. Ulama' are not only people who understand religious knowledge, but also other knowledge that originates from the results of spiritual experiences or investigations of the universe. Ulama' have a role or function as heirs of the Prophets (Al-Qur'an and Sunnah). The role of ulama is not only to master the treasures of Islamic thought (Akidah and shari'ah), but ulama' also play a role together with the people to implement, spread and fight for the commands of Allah SWT. (Ali Huzen: 22-23).

The word umaro' (leader) that the researcher refers to in this article is the village head (Village Government). The definition of Village Head according to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages is explained as follows:

Village government is the administration of government affairs and the interests of local communities in the government system of the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia. The village government is the village head or what is called by another name, assisted by village officials as an element of government administration (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 6 Tahun 2014 tentang Desa).

Umaro' (Leader) is someone who has full responsibility in developing a company, country, party and organization. Being a leader is one of the functions of human existence on this earth. Umaro' (Leader) has an important role in decision making in an organization, such as moving, influencing and empowering subordinates to achieve goals. The role of a leader is categorized into three forms, namely: first, an interpersonal leader (a manager interacts with people, not only with his subordinates, but also with various interested parties); second, informational in nature (information flow traffic monitor, information sharer or distributor, organizational spokesperson); third, leaders in the decision-making function. The duties of the umaro' (Village Head) according to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2014, are as follows:

The Village Head is tasked with organizing village government, carrying out village development, developing village society, and empowering village communities (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 6 Tahun 2014 tentang Desa).

Umaro' (leader) is expected to be able to create a vision, to become an imaginary leader with a transformational style, so that criticism and suggestions from the community or subordinates will be heard directly by the leader. The duties and obligations of umaro' (Leader) according to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2014, are as follows:

In carrying out the duties as intended in paragraph (1) of article 26, the village head is obliged to: a. Upholding and practicing Pancasila, implementing the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as maintaining and maintaining the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*; b. Improving the welfare of village communities; c. Maintain peace and order in village communities; d. Comply with and enforce statutory regulations; e. Implementing democratic life with gender equality; and f. Implementing the principles of village governance that is accountable, transparent, professional, effective and efficient, clean, and free from collusion, corruption and nepotism; g. establishing cooperation and coordination with all stakeholders in the village; h. Carrying out good village government administration; i. Village finances and assets; j. managing the implementation of government affairs which are the authority of the village; k. Resolving community disputes in the village; l. Developing the economy of village communities; m. Fostering and preserving the socio-cultural values of village communities; n. empowering communities and

community institutions in villages; o. Developing natural resource potential and preserving the environment; and p. Providing information to village communities (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 6 Tahun 2014 Tentang Desa).

C. Death Celebration Tradition

Tradition comes from the word *traditium* which means everything inherited from the past. According to the term, tradition or habit is defined as something that has been done for a long time and is part of the life of a community group. The traditions that exist in society aim to make human life rich in culture and historical values. Tradition according to the rules of *ushul fiqh* is categorized under the term *urf*. *Urf* is any custom carried out by many people in an area and does not conflict with Islamic law. The *ulama'* agree that authentic *urf* can be used as a basis for law (Firman Arifandi, 2018:28).

The term *salvation* or *tahlilan* that has developed in society has the same meaning, namely carrying out a series of worship rituals which include reading the Koran, *dhikr*, prayers and so on. The essence of *salvation* or *tahlilan* is praying, praying for goodness by Allah SWT. The tradition of celebrating death thrives among the community because of the acculturation between local community values and Islamic values (Moh Asrofi et al.: 29).

Selamatan is an activity of a group of people in which *thoyyibah* sentences or *tahlil* sentences are read. *Salvation* is carried out every time there is a death. The leader of the *salvation* activity is someone who has religious knowledge and moral piety who is appointed by the heir's family. Ibn Qayyim al-Zaujiyyah (W.751), believes that reciting verses from the Koran whose reward is sent to the deceased is not an act of heresy (Hanif Luthfi, 2020:36).

Selamatan traditions in each region are different. *Salvation* is created by a group of people from their ancestors from generation to generation. The difference between *salvation* in ancient times and now can be seen in the prayer procedures and intentions which are adapted to Islamic teachings. Some community groups believe that death safety activities are considered a waste of money. While the family of the deceased at that time was experiencing a disaster, they should be helped, not given the burden of holding a death celebration event (Aptiani Nur Jannah, et.al.: 201). To address these differences, it is necessary for someone to understand the concept of religious moderation. The basic principle of religious moderation is fairness and balance in religious understanding, attitudes and behavior. This means a balance between reason and revelation, between physical and spiritual, between rights and obligations, between individual interests and the general benefit, between text and context (A Ilyas Ismail, et.al., 2021: 270).

Javanese people still carry out this tradition because they still believe that this tradition is a legacy of previous *ulama'* and is not an obligation to carry out. *Thayyibah* sentences (good and great sentences), such as *hamdalah*, *sholawat*,

tasbih, several verses of the holy Qur'an, and so on are said together during the salvation process. Reading the holy verses of the Koran, sodaqoh, and other acts of worship are good deeds and have been agreed upon by waljamaah sunnah scholars. Congratulations for death are carried out from the first day to the seventh day, the fortieth day, the hundredth day, and the thousandth day. After that, death celebrations are held every year on the day of death or haul (Arwani: 12).

D. Efforts of Ulama' and Umara' in Assisting in Dealing with Death

The efforts of ulama' and umara' to maintain the tradition of celebrating death by creating a sense of community togetherness in honoring the dead are manifested in several activities, namely: a. Pray for the deceased (dead person) in every prayer room and mosque in Menco hamlet; b. Death fundraising; c. Facilitate the deceased and the community in general. This is in line with the opinion that one of the roles of ulama' is to play a role with the people in implementing, spreading and fighting for the commands of Allah SWT. Likewise, the responsibility of the umara' (Village Head) is stated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2014, in paragraph (1) Article 26, namely: fostering and preserving the socio-cultural values of the village community. Based on these two concepts, it is very relevant that the ulama' and umara' have a shared role and responsibility to maintain the tradition of celebrating death that has existed for a long time, even though the situation and conditions of society are less able to do so.

According to the information the researchers received, the people of Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village, are people who have a low educational background, many of whom work as fishermen, daily laborers and pond farmers. Therefore, Berahan Wetan Village is one of the villages that has the status of an extreme poor village in Wedung District, Demak Regency.

1. Praying for the Dead in the Prayer Room and Mosque in Menco Hamlet

One of the agreements made by the ulama' and umara' in honoring the dead in Menco Hamlet was to announce to all the imams of the ratib prayer rooms and mosques to pray (Tahlil) in each prayer room and mosque. The reason prayers for the dead are announced in prayer rooms and mosques is to maintain community harmony in the hamlet.

The announcement is made after the evening call to prayer, while prayer or tahlil is done after the evening prayer, both in the prayer room and at the mosque simultaneously and is done only once after the announcement of a death. Meanwhile, on the second to seventh days, people are invited to pray at the house of the deceased's family. Ulama', umara', and local people obeyed the announcement because they have a sense of togetherness and still believe that praying for the dead is a good deed and will certainly reach the deceased. This is in

line with the opinion of Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah (W.751), who explains that reciting verses from the Koran whose reward is sent to the deceased.

2. Death Fundraising

The people of Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village, still carry out the tradition of celebrating death even though their economic situation is still worrying. On the one hand, salvation is an obligation for the family of the deceased to pray for the deceased, on the other hand, economic conditions do not support this. Therefore, ulama' and umaro' have ideas for dealing with this problem, namely raising funds or contributions every time there is a death (Interview with the Village Head (Muarifin), on August 5, 2024).

When the people of Menco Hamlet die, they will receive assistance from the community amounting to approximately Rp. 1000,000. The money is the result of withdrawals from people in the RW 5, RW 6, RW 7, RW 8 and RW 9 areas. The amount of money withdrawn is Rp. 2000 per house, while the officer or person of interest is the head of the RT in each area (Interview with the Head of RT: 1 RW: 6 (Afif), Dukuh Menco on August 4, 2024).

The assistance mentioned above is given to the family of the deceased if information about the death is announced in Menco Hamlet and if the information about the death is not announced then the family of the deceased will not receive assistance. This death contribution is an obligation for the community. If there are residents or the community who do not want to give, then one day when they die they will not receive assistance (Interview with the Head of RT: 2 RW: 7 (Ahmad Muhlish), Dukuh Menco on August 4, 2024).

The efforts of the ulama' and umaro' in creating a death fundraising program for the community really helped the family of the deceased. The joint agreement established by ulama' and umaro', as well as the community, is very appropriate, because citizens or communities who experience death require a lot of money. This can be seen from the initial process of handling the body to the process of saving it and providing food to the family and local community. In this case, ulama' and umaro' need to have a participatory leadership spirit as explained by Wimmy Halim, namely participatory leadership aims to strengthen the community's position in policy making, so that the community feels that a policy is owned and maintained together (Wimmy Haliim, 2020).

The community around the deceased's family's house has a great sense of concern. This concern is manifested by making takziah by bringing rice or white sugar to his house. The family of the deceased also received assistance from the community during the excavation of the grave and received assistance from the umaro' (Village Head), namely in the form of assignments to village officials who served as modin in the area to assist the family of the deceased in handling the body, such as washing, shrouding, prayed, and accompanied him to the funeral.

Coordination between umaro' (Village Head) and modin is an obligation as stated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2014, in paragraph (1) Article 26, namely establishing cooperation and coordination with all stakeholders in the Village. In this context, the form of coordination that is expected is to help and ease the burden on citizens or the community.

3. Field of Death

According to researchers, the death fields are dry fields or waqf rice fields from previous communities which are currently designated for the needs of handling the death of the community in Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village. The proceeds from the auction of dead rice fields every year are around Rp. 25,000,000-30,000,000. The money is used to build buildings, buy death equipment, such as coffins, sound systems for each RT, death tarpaulins for each RT, and other needs. In ancient times, this rice field was a rice field made from community contributions which was intended for the activities of the Nahdlatul Ulama Ansor youth in the village. However, after the activities of the Ansor youth became inactive, the ulama' and umara' as well as the Ansor youth leaders agreed that the rice fields should be converted for their needs (Interview with the Head of RT: 2 RW: 7 (Ahmad Muhlish), Dukuh Menco on August 4, 2024).

Umaro' also made a policy in the form of a Village Regulation regarding the release of unproductive village land for community needs as a public burial place. The decision to acquire the land is considered very appropriate as long as it does not conflict with applicable regulations and is discussed with village institutions and community leaders. This is in line with Jaka Purwanggono's opinion, namely that leaders have a function in decision making.

Having rice fields designated for death needs is very appropriate and helps the community. The decision to free up village land for use as a cemetery was an effort or suggestion from the ulama' and a request from the community in Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village. This proposal was motivated by the fact that the land currently used for burials was full, so that one grave was sometimes used for two to three bodies (old and new bodies were stacked).

E. Death Celebration Tradition in Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village

The seven-day salvation tradition at the deceased's family's house consists of a series of events as follows: The first day to the third day of the salvation activity is reading the al-Ikhlâs letter for three days until the number reaches 100,000. If within three days of reading Surah al-Ikhlâs the number does not reach 100,000, then on the fourth day and so on read Surah al-Ikhlâs until the number of readings is fulfilled. The series of death congratulations was attended by many residents, each resident who came was given klungsu seeds or corn which were used to count the reading of Surah al-Ikhlâs. When the reading gets ten, the

residents count it with one kernel of klungsua or corn. And so on until the Isha' call to prayer sounds. The tradition of the funeral is usually held after the evening prayer, but if there are several people at the same time (more than two people die), then the time for the death ceremony is carried out after the Asr prayer and the evening prayer (Interview with the Head of RT: 2 RW: 7 (Ahmad Muhlish), Dukuh Menco on August 4, 2024).

The people of Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village, still believe that people who have died need to be prayed for by their surviving families. This is in line with the opinion of KH. Roshif Arwani, that the death celebration held by the family of the deceased is a form of charity and love of children or relatives for the family of the deceased (M. Roshif Arwani, 2019). The tradition of congratulating death in Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village tends to be carried out, even if people who experience the death of poor families. They have the belief and understanding that if they do not carry out the funeral service then they will *su'ul adab* to the family of the deceased. Apart from that, the public views it as not good. So the tradition of salvation seems to be mandatory for the family of the deceased.

1. Death Congratulations from the Fourth to the Sixth Day

Congratulations on death from the fourth to sixth days were attended by family and neighbors around the house. The reading that is read is the reading of *toyyibah* sentences. The seventh day's celebration activities were attended by residents or members of the public who received verbal or written invitations from the family of the deceased. The series of events carried out on the seventh day of celebration are reading *tahlil*, *dhikr*, prayer beads, prayers, and so on. After the event is over, the deceased's family gives blessings or gifts that have been prepared according to the number of invitations (Observation in Dukuh Menco, Berahan Wetan Village in August 2024).

The safety activities from the first to the seventh day are usually often carried out after the Maghrib prayer, because after the Asr prayer the residents are still at their place of work, such as pond farmers still in the pond to open the pond door (install the door). Meanwhile, people who work as fishermen are still at sea.

2. Celebration Activities for the Fortieth Day, Hundredth Day, Thousandth Day

The tradition of saving death on the fortieth day is almost the same as the seventh day, the hundredth day, and the thousandth day. Something that is different is that the recitation of the Qur'an on the first to the sixth day is done after salvation or after evening prayers, while the recitation of the Qur'an on the seventh day, the hundredth day, and the thousandth day is done in the morning until *dhuhur* before the salvation event is started.

The people of Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village, are one of the villages with the highest number of memorizers of the Koran in Wedung District. Therefore, every type of activity related to religion is preceded by a commentary on the Koran. Reading the holy verses of the Qur'an, sodaqoh, and other acts of worship are good deeds and have been agreed upon by waljamaah sunnah experts.

There are still many people in Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village who don't know that every series of events for saving the dead has an implied meaning in it. However, up to now they have only carried out what the previous people did. They have the belief that good activities will bring good things. Some residents have the same thoughts as Hendra and Almu'tasim, that the nyatus tradition functions to maintain society's view of a person's social status. People who do not carry out this tradition will receive a negative impression from other members of society. Some other residents only obey and do what the local ulama' orders.

F. Conclusion

This study concludes that the efforts of ulama' and umaro' to ensure that the tradition of death ceremonies is still carried out by the Muslim communities in Menco, Berahan Wetan Village, Demak Regency, Central Java Province is by providing support in the form of assistance and facilities that have been agreed upon between ulama', umaro', and the community. The form of support is realized by assisting with death arrangements, such as announcing that the community will participate in praying for the corpse in prayer rooms and mosques, raising death funds by residents or the existing community. After the funds are collected, they are given to the families of the deceased. Furthermore, the utilization of the proceeds from the auction of death rice fields for operational purposes and death needs.

This research emphasizes the importance of synergizing the role of religious leaders with government leaders in policies to preserve religious traditions. The limitations of this research have not identified the obstacles or challenges in preserving the tradition of death ceremonies in Menco Hamlet, Berahan Wetan Village. Therefore, further studies are important.

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