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Amplop Terbang: Religio-Cultural Relations among the Pilangrejo Peoples

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Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui relasi agama dan budaya dalam tradisi amplop terbang, di dalamnya memiliki nilai-nilai kebaikan yang diusung dalam tradisi tersebut yang menjadikan masyarakat Pilangrejo peka terhadap sesama. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode wawancara yang dilakukan di masyarakat Desa Pilangrejo. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa: *Pertama*, tradisi amplop terbang yang berkembang di masyarakat Pilangrejo merupakan bentuk komunikasi antar sesama manusia berupa simbol dengan menggunakan media amplop. *Kedua*, pesan-pesan ajaran agama, nilai-nilai etis serta norma yang berlaku disampaikan kepada warga masyarakat. *Ketiga*, relasi agama dan budaya menghasilkan nilai-nilai religiusitas dalam kehidupan masyarakat sehari-hari. Nilai yang paling menonjol adalah wujud bakti kepada Allah Swt dengan saling mengasihi sesama makhluk-Nya dan nilai inilah yang senantiasa dijaga oleh masyarakatnya, sehingga dapat membangun hidup saling menghormati dan berdampingan dengan damai.

Kata kunci: Nilai-nilai kebaikan, *religio-cultural relations*, amplop terbang, tradisi

Abstract

This article aims to find out the religio-cultural relations in the *amplop terbang* activities on the Pilangrejo people. This study used a qualitative approach to the method of interviews conducted in the Pilangrejo Village community. The results show that: First, the *amplop terbang* that develop in the Pilangrejo community is a form of communication between human beings in the form of symbols using envelope media. Second, messages of religious teachings, ethical values, and prevailing norms are conveyed to citizens. Third, religious and cultural relations produce values of religiosity in people's daily lives. The most prominent value is the form of devotion to Allah Swt by loving each other. The peoples can build a life of mutual respect and side by side peacefully.

Keywords: Good values, *religio-cultural relations*, *amplop terbang*, custom

Introduction

Traditions that develop in the community are in the form of symbols. The messages of religious teachings, ethical values, and norms that apply in the community are conveyed to all citizens. Therefore, tradition is a means of socializing values, especially to the younger generation who still have to adjust to people's lives. Exist Indonesian tradition has been studied by several researcher. Setiawan (2015) article about *mitoni* is a tradition of pleading for salvation to Allah SWT. Wajdi (2017) reveal that *Nyadran* is one of the legacies that there are certain sacred places. Wekke (2013) reveal that there are acculturation between Islamic and tradition in Bugis community.

Jochem van den Boogert (2017) examines the Javanese *Slametan* ritual as a syncretic ritual that is often seen as a source of Java's social harmony and religious tolerance. Some research and article discussed the relation between religion and culture. Solomon Echepe Oduma-Aboh (2014) this paper examines the religio-cultural expressions of number symbolism in Idoma Society. The other paper also reveal that there are three relation form of ethnicity, local tradition, and religion (Haryanto, 2015). The other article reveals about the relation between culture and religion in *Yaqowiyyu* ceremony in Klaten (Amaliyah, 2015). The existence of Islam and local culture relations is a concept of Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. Islam has an influence on Indonesian culture. Luthfi (2016) states the Islam and local culture relation is a part of *Islam Nusantara* concept.

Therefore this article tries to reveal the relation of *amplop terbang* with Islamic values. The cultural system that grows and develops cannot be separated from the collectible values which built together by the community. Various forms of cultural values are very influential for the people lives. The cultural values are concepts that live in the peoples minds. It concern on what they consider about valuable and important in their life. It is a guide that gives direction and orientation to the citizens lives. Both of cultural values have direct and indirect effect on human life (Sujarwa, 1999).

The inherited habit which carried the cultural values, customs, social systems, and the belief systems. Cultural values from learning outcomes become a guideline for behaving for the community is a legacy that experiences the enlightenment process from the next generation, so that certain cultural values become traditions that are usually maintained and carried out by the community. This cultural values will maintained and carried out by the community. The Values that reflect from a tradition cannot be separated from the community roles and their daily life implementation. The *amplop terbang* aims are to remember the Almighty God in every situation. The other aims are to build social value by implementing the charity to orphanage and poor widows.

Method

This article uses a qualitative approach and can be classified as field research (Sugiyono, 2005). This research was carried out in the Pilangrejo Wonosalam Demak. The informants in this article were the people of Pilangrejo, which included the Head of Pilangrejo, the government staff of Pilangrejo, and religious leaders. The data collection techniques used in this research are observation, interviews, and documentation.

The *Amplop Terbang* at a Glance

Amplop Terbang starts from the Lembaga Kesejahteraan Umat (LKU) formed by the Village. This institution is concern on the people welfare and take care about the environments. LKU provides financial and formal assistance. Through the *amplop terbang*, LKU tries to realize the culture of alms. *Amplop terbang* is acculturation from *jamak arwah* that has been carried out from the days of our ancestors. LKU covers the *amplop terbang* activities with *jamak arwah* activities. The community is expected to be

able to accept new cultural elements that are applied together. Mixed *jamak arwah* and *amplop terbang* activities by giving charity. *Amplop terbang* is the *jamak arwah* culture by sending prayers to deceased ancestors and the implement the charity for the poor. The main purpose of *amplop terbang* is to empower and build communities by reducing the burden on orphans.

Reciting the Quran and *mauidhoh khasanah* is the main concept used in the *amplop terbang*. There are two main programs in *amplop terbang*. First, the preparation stage by conducting deliberations with all village officials as a form of participation in the continuation of this tradition. Second, the pre-program stage, namely the distribution of envelopes and listed the ancestor spirits to give pray for them. The transfer of empty envelopes from one house to another, therefore this tradition is called the *amplop terbang*. After the envelope was delivered to the residents' houses to be filled with donations then collected into one. The next stage is the process of opening the envelope witnessed by all the people. The event, which is the final stage of the *amplop terbang* which are packaged in the form of recitations. The first systematics of the event is the reading of ancestors' spirits, followed by *khataman* by *khafid/khafidhoh*, *mauidhoh khasanah*, and the last is giving charity for the orphanage by the village head.

Symbolical Meaning on *Amplop Terbang*

Religion is a part of people's lives that cannot be separated. Religion gives meaning to the lives of individuals and groups, also gives hope about life after death. Religion strengthens group norms, moral sanctions for individual life and becomes the basis of values in a society. Agama dan masyarakat menurut Radcliffe-Brown sebagai fungsi sosial agama, yakni kontribusi yang diberikan agama dalam membentuk tatanan sosial (Wahyuddin, 2017). Every society habit and belief plays several parts of a decisive role in community life. This is a community form of behavior. That portrays in the form of rituals. It called religious by the community (Asror, 2014). Joachim Wach explains the interdependence relationship between religion and society revealed the reciprocal influence between the two factors (2013). Religion is a belief system. It has a system of rules that binds its followers or worship. Religion also has a system of communication and social or community interaction (Siregar, 2011). Religion is not only seen as a set of

absolute rules that come from God but is seen as a set of rules in society. Religious life categorized into three dimensions namely belief, worship, and social society (Shonhaji, 2012).

There are two religion views of religion based on its function in society positive and negative function. The group who viewed religion as a positive function are the functionalist. There are two religion views of religion based on its function in society positive and negative function. The group who viewed religion as a positive function are the functionalist. Emile Durkheim is one who saw the religion function related to social solidarity. The implementation of religious values in the form of a tradition of religious ceremonies. The sectary united by the form of practices relating to the sacred things (Pals, 1996). However, religion is also often accused of having a dysfunction for the realization of social integration. Religion is seen as a source of social conflict (Martono, 2016).

Culture is always inherited from generation to generation. There is an obligation for Javanese to inherit their customs to the next generation. The inherited customs is in accordance with the prevailing norms and rules (Suryana, 2011). The function of religion is to build brotherhood. Religion always teaches about goodness and peace. When peace, prosperity, and harmony are achieved, life will become more meaningful (Haryanto, 2013). This diversity attitude was manifested by the Pilangrejo people in the form of *amplop terbang* activities. The Pilangrejo people agreed with this tradition, and believe that the community would have a tolerance for their environment. Tolerance is realized by helping one another and loving each other. This is intended to alleviate the burden and poor neighbors (Wiwin, 2016). In other words, the social order created was able to have a positive impact on the people of Pilangrejo. They are working together to realize the ideal people in their role as social beings.

The *amplop terbang* is a form of communication between human beings in the form of symbols. The messages of religious teachings, ethical values, and norms that apply in the community are conveyed to all Pilangrejo peoples. Therefore, tradition is a means of socializing values. Culture is the whole system of ideas, actions, and results of human work in the framework of the life of society that is made into the possession of

human beings by learning. George Herbert Mead's concept about symbolic interaction theory emphasizes the relationship between symbols and interactions, and the core of the view of this approach are individuals. He argues that "individuals" act based on the meaning of objects and situations so that they are involved in the process of 'interpretation'. It continuously when they determine and negotiate these meanings (Siregar, 2011).

Amplop terbang has symbolic meaning. The use of envelopes as a medium is a symbol that exists in society. Envelopes are a symbol of money. Envelopes can also symbolize something negative like *douceur*. The community made an agreement that every time there was an empty envelope, it must be filled with money. Envelopes distributed to the people of Pilangrejo mean that all people must compete in terms of distributing money to give alms. *Amplop terbang* means to care about the environment. This is an attitude to help each other. This activities uses envelopes as a medium. *Amplop terbang* in Pilangrejo to train willingness to help and care for one another in the form of alms. This customs counteract negative interpretations of the meaning of "envelopes" which are interpreted as form of bribe. The Pilangrejo people symbolize that the envelope is something positive and useful.

Amplop Terbang: Religio-Cultural Relations

Religion is the highest and most sacred center of culture. Religion shows the mode of human consciousness towards symbolic forms. Religion is arranged in normative elements. Religion forms answer the various levels of thought, feeling, and actions in the form of a complex mindset related to human relations in society. In a society whose the people consist of religious believers, religious institutions are generally one of the cultural institutions (Jalaludin, 2016). Clifford Geertz defines religion as a symbol that acts to firmly strengthen feelings and motivations. This is enduring and comprehension to humans itself. Religion is formulated in the form of conceptions of a law, which are generally applicable with regard to human existence. These conceptions are wrapped up in a certain aura that reflects reality. These feelings and motivations seem unique but actually, it is real (exist) (Geertz, 1992). Religion in society is a universal phenomenon. The community of religions in the world believes that a religion

that is followed has a function to guide human life in order to obtain salvation in the world and happiness after death. They believe that religion teaches peace and affection for fellow human beings, fellow creatures of God (Shonhaji, 2012).

The fundamental dialectic of the society conveyed by Peter L. Berger consists of externalization, objectivities, and internalization. Externalization is the continuance of human selfhood continuously into the world, both in physical activity and mentality. Objectivities is the carrying of activities products. Internalization is the re-infiltration of that reality by humans and transforming it once again from objective world structures into subjective awareness structures. Through externalization, society is a human product. Through objectivation, society becomes a unique reality. Through internalization, humans are a product of society (Berger, 1991).

Social order is a human product that takes place continuously. This happens because agreements between communities are objective reality. The process of institutionalization begins with repeated externalizations. This pattern continues until it is understood together. Ultimately it becomes a collective habitus. Habitualization that has taken place gives rise to sedimentation or tradition. Furthermore, this will be inherited to the next generation through language. The role inherent in a person represents an institutional order in which he is located.

Religion and Culture have two equations as a system of values and a system of symbols. There are four issues that will be faced by religion and culture. First, religion faces secularism. Second, the cultural process was replaced by cultural diversification in the form of individual cultural choices. Third, religion and culture together face the problem of metaphysical alienation. Human helplessness faces reality. The last is a solution in the form of non-rational post-modern spiritualism. This is a symptom of anti-religion and cultural contradictions that create new problems. Cultural preservation should not be understood as a cultural conservation that prioritizes artifacts, but rather on efforts to preserve the spirit of its value. Maintaining the existence of religion cannot be isolated from the times by separating the text from its historical context (Saidi, 2009).

Humans and culture cannot be separate, both of them interrelate. The culture was born from the human life process. It is the result of interactions between human or human interaction with nature. There is no culture if the human does not exist. The heritage of ancestral culture is very diverse, one of which is the traditional ceremony. *Amplop terbang* are a cultural heritage that is inherited from generation to generation. The inheritance habits carry cultural values, social systems, belief systems and so on. Cultural values learned from the ancestors are guidelines for behaving for the community. Finally, these cultural values become a tradition which is maintained by the community.

Amplop terbang which developed by Pilangrejo people was a form of human communication in the form of symbols. Religious messages, ethical values, and norms are conveyed to the entire community through these symbols. *Amplop terbang* are symbols and media to spread these values. From Peter L Berger's theory about externalization, objectification, and internalization, it can be conclude that *Amplop terbang* are associated with religion. (Berger, 1991).

Pilangrejo peoples accept the relations between religion and culture. It is reflected in their active participation in the *amplop terbang*. The externalizing moments happen when social reality out of the individual. The *amplop terbang* is always associate with sacred texts like the Quran, hadith, and norms that are understood normatively by peoples. The adaptation or adjustment to normative teachings is manifested in the form of charity. This suggestion is in accordance with the teachings of Islam that with grief is a form of gratitude to Allah for the blessings given as contained in the *Surah Ibrahim* verse 7.

“And when your Lord made it known: If you are grateful, I would certainly give to you more, and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe.”
(*Ibrahim: 7*).

Socio-cultural interaction in the *amplop terbang* is the form of interaction through institutionalization and legitimacy of religious leaders and religious institutions. The role of religious leaders in *aqidah* instilling can be very well received by the Pilangrejo peoples. The proof is that the people knows about alms through lectures

by religious leaders. Pilangrejo peoples obey what *kiyai* says. It is something that must be done to get peace of life. The role of LKU Nuzulurrahmah Pilangrejo in socializing the importance of giving alms by using the symbol "envelope" is also very important. This organization facilitated the activities of the Pilangrejo peoples to carry out religious activities that were acculturated in the form of *amplop terbang*. Pilangrejo people understands Islamic teachings. Their awareness arises in the form of acts of charity. These activities are carried out to God worship and instill tolerance. This attitude is part of people's awareness of others. Social reality will eventually be embedded in the Pilangrejo peoples. This is a sign that the community is in a socio-cultural world. The *amplop terbang* has influenced the community to carry out religious teachings. The implementation of this activity was relevant with the cultivation of alms culture for the Pilangrejo peoples.

According to Clifford Geertz, religion is a system of society (Ma'ruf, 2016). Religion are beliefs and routinized behaviors associated with those beliefs (Saler, 1987). Religion contains the socio-cultural system symbols that provide a conception of reality and design to make it happen. However, symbols that involve reality do not always have to be the same as a reality that manifests in real life. According to this understanding, religion is understood as a cultural system (Azra, 1999).

Culture is defined as a pattern for behavior which consists series of rules, recipes, plans, and instructions, used by humans to regulate their behavior. Culture is thus also seen as an organization of meanings that are embodied in symbols related to human expression. Therefore religion is understood not only as a set of values outside of humans but also as a system of knowledge and a system of symbols that enables meaning. As a system of knowledge, religion is a belief system that is loaded with moral teachings and guidance on life that must be studied, studied, and then practiced by humans in their lives. In this case, religion provides guidance on good and bad, which are appropriate and inappropriate, and that is right and not right. Religious values can shape and construct human behavior in their daily lives. While religion as a symbol system, in religion there are certain symbols to actualize the teachings of the religion that he embraces. Both symbols are in the form of actions, words, objects, literature and so forth.

The role of *amplop terbang* is to remind the Pilangrejo peoples regarding the existence and relationship with their environment. Through this tradition, the people of Pilangrejo are not only reminded but are also accustomed to using abstract symbols. This symbol is at the level of thought for various social activities. It happens because this tradition is carried out once a year in Muharram. This tradition has become part of the real aspects of daily life. Thus, the *amplop terbang* when viewed from the religious aspect is a means for religious doctrines to change shape into a series of symbols implemented through the culture of alms.

The Pilangrejo community categorize as *abangan*. The santri tried to give religious direction to the Pilangrejo peoples through the *amplop terbang*. Alms is the main meaning which is intended so that the Pilangrejo people interpret their existence as a form of obedience to servants of God. Although the people of Pilangrejo are *abangan* their understanding of religion is very good. This can be seen from the enthusiasm of the community in giving charity. The Pilangrejo community as the originator of the *amplop terbang* is strongly influenced by religion. Religious values applied to society form a culture that leads to humanity. Sensitivity to the environment is getting higher. The *amplop terbang* is one of the cultural results of the Pilangrejo community which is based on religious values (Islam) for charity. This alms is intended to foster a sense of love between fellow humans and a form of respect for ancestors.

Conclusion

Every tradition carried out by the Pilangrejo peoples is a condition of value and meaning. The same is true in the *amplop terbang*. The Pilangrejo community believes that tradition is done in good faith, so the results achieved will be good. The most prominent value is the form of devotion to God by loving each other His creatures. This value is always maintained by the community. The *amplop terbang* is a transformation of religious values that are mixed with cultural values. The acculturation between the values of religion-social-and culture makes the *amplop terbang* as a symbol of the relationship between religion and culture. The good values that are carried in the *amplop terbang* can at least make Pilangrejo people sensitive to others. Live mutual respect and side by side peacefully.

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