



Javanese Islamic Tradition of Death

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ABSTRACT

Customs can reflect the soul of a society or nation and are a personality of a society or nation. The level of civilization, a person's modern way of life cannot eliminate the behavior or customs that live and are rooted in society. The death ceremony is a ritual that has been carried out for generations by the community, one of which is on the island of Java as a form of respect for the spirits, as well as a form of help from living families so that the spirits are calm and acceptable to God Almighty. Belief in spirits that are still around the house and will come to the house on certain months and days gives birth to various ceremonies. This tradition is carried out every time someone dies and is carried out by the bereaved family. The death ceremony that can survive in the midst of Javanese society cannot be separated from the factor of religious understanding adopted by most Javanese people, namely the understanding of the elderly. The belief that the prayers and rewards offered by the living to the dead will reach the deceased, makes the tradition of funeral ceremonies persist, although with various differences.

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INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian nation is a pluralistic nation, consisting of various ethnic groups that are spread throughout the territory of the Indonesian homeland. Each ethnic group has its own life and culture that differs from one tribe to another, as well as the Javanese who are bound by the unity of Javanese culture and have their own culture (Mahdayeni, Alhaddad, & Saleh, 2019). However, this does not mean that Javanese society is separated from other communities. The Javanese people remain part of the Indonesian nation, including the culture they have that will become the nation's cultural wealth. Javanese culture which is basically spectre, cool and non-sectarian will clearly support the spirit of *gotong royong* and the spirit of harmony which is very much needed in fostering the unity and integrity of the nation (Hadi, 2020). The roots of such Javanese culture have been integrated with Pancasila so there is no need to worry that the development of regional culture (especially Javanese) will have a negative impact on fostering the unity and integrity of the Nation. One potential aspect of Javanese culture is its enormous tolerance for different things, as well as its cool nature which is based on compassion *ing sesami* (meaning: love for others) which is indispensable in the development of national culture.

Java, when viewed from the tribe and from the pattern of life, has roots of knowledge that seem to never run out to be explored. Various kinds of philosophies from *wayang*, beliefs, traditions, customs and other practices always have noble characteristics and points of view. The essence of humanity is understood as a procedure in life that manifests with the wisdom component since the time of the ancestors (Hardjowirogo, 1979). This dimension views life as being blessed by a force that sustains humans. From the description above, it can be seen that the Javanese people who are part of the very diverse Indonesian nation respond positively to influences that come from outside. Such a situation will be a positive aspect for the Javanese people to be cultured in a better direction. In the process of globalization where people from all nationalities and ethnic groups mix with each other in an increasingly sophisticated technological race, there is certainly no culture that is immune to the influence of other cultures (Fauzie, 2010).

The *kejawen* tradition is a culture that is ingrained in Javanese society where the purpose of this discussion is that the culture or tradition of *kejawen* which is considered culture remains a culture, and religious teachings remain religious teachings. Because religious teachings are not the result of human creation, therefore religious teachings

cannot be mixed up in the name of good culture, including part of religion (Karomi, [2013](#); Liasari & Badrun, [2022](#)). Between religion and tradition in Java is something that cannot be mixed up even though there is no prohibition on being cultured. Meanwhile, what we can see now is that there are still Javanese people who carry out ritual activities that are rooted in Javanese culture (Fibiona & Lestari, [2022](#)). This phenomenon occurs because they believe in a power that exceeds all powers anywhere that has ever been known, namely the sacred, then ancestral spirits or spirits, and spirits such as *memedi*, *lelembu*, *tuyul*, *demit*, *jinn*, and others who occupy nature around them. According to the belief, each of these spirits can bring success, happiness, peace, or safety, but on the other hand it can also cause mental disorders, health, and even death (Idrus, [2007](#); Yaqin & Badrun, [2022](#)). So, if a person wants to live without suffering from these disturbances, he must do something to affect the universe by, for example, being concerned, fasting, abstaining from doing actions and eating certain foods, praying, and offering offerings. The last two methods are often used by Javanese people in villages.

As in death, Javanese people generally believe that the spirit of the ancestors (spirits) will eventually leave their place of residence, and at certain times their family will hold a *slametan* to mark the distance travelled by the spirit to the spirit realm, its eternal place. later. But the spirit can be contacted by relatives and descendants at any time if needed. The Javanese Islamic community has a habit or custom of holding the salvation of the dead, namely salvation or commemoration of *nigang ndinteni* (third day), *pitung ndinteni* (seventh day), *ngawandasa ndinteni* (forty day), *nyatus ndinteni* (hundredth day), *mendak pisan* (one year anniversary), *mendak kaping kalih* (two-year anniversary of death), and the last and most frequently commemorated event is *nyewu* (thousandth day after death). In addition to food and prayers sent for the dead, Javanese people sometimes complement it with various offerings or offerings. These offerings have their own meaning and cannot be expressed in prayers. Each of these *slametan* has its own meaning according to the name and the number of days along with offerings as completeness.

The ritual tradition after death is still carried out by many people because it is driven by a strong belief system and belief in the value system and customs that have been passed down from generation to generation, so they do not dare to violate it. Even as if the tradition is not influenced by the existence of modernity. Although there are some Javanese people who no longer adhere to the *kejawen* tradition. They do not leave it, but by replacing the "content" of the ceremony with the same "container", namely with *tahlilan* as stated above. Death is an inevitable reality, rejecting death is impossible because death is a predetermined destiny. Death is also an important material for contemplation precisely because humans have lived, been created into this world.

METHOD

The scope of tradition cannot be separated from talking about humans and culture in their behavior in society. Meanwhile, Mircea Eliade, understands tradition as a conscious repetition of certain paradigmatic attitudes to reveal human ontologies, both to the universe and to God (Suyanto, [2005](#)). Claude Lévi-Strauss understands tradition as a form of knowledge in a society that is manifested in the habit of solving certain problems or celebrating certain things. This knowledge usually has a basis of truth, both mystically and rationally by being able to answer the problems at hand. Tradition, in this case, is also related to the interpretation of a society in seeing reality to be addressed with beliefs and beliefs. Tradition is formed from myths, legends, epics, real history that has happened, as well as the reflection of a character on the life that was currently a problem. The form of tradition itself is very diverse. Starting from religious ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, death ceremonies, birth ceremonies, celebrations of certain days, as well as traditions in the form of art. Usually, the various traditions from one region to another have a similar pattern, but there are slight differences. It is also related to the knowledge that exists in the community and has its own basic meaning and philosophy (Ritzer & Goodman, [2011](#)).

According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, "tradition can be a representation of the knowledge of a society." This is because behind tradition there is always a meaning and world view. According to David Kaplan, "it's not that much of the implementation of certain religious ceremonies that can strengthen solidarity or social cohesion, if there is no operational explanation" in functional and maintenance relationships". Tradition in a society to see its value can be viewed from the role and function with an anthropological approach (Anshori, [2019](#)). Some values such as religious values, moral values, educational values, and spiritual values that exist in the tradition can only be seen and studied in the form of manifestation, which is then interpreted. In this view, tradition is an access that continues to be taken from time to time to maintain the balance of the dimensions of the cosmos of the universe. The Death Tradition of Javanese Islam. Rationality is the main basis for shifting tradition towards simpler practical reasons with the aim of not changing the main essence. The scarcity of natural elements makes humans eventually turn to technology on the grounds that their roles and functions are still the same. New technology encourages people to use elements that are simpler and

don't complicate things. This can be done if there are figures who allow or give permission. The overall embodiment of a tradition seeks to find significance with the origin and role of function, so if these two things are still attached it will not be a significant problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ritual Beliefs and Practices in the Death Tradition of Javanese Muslims

Facing Sakaratul Maut

Sakaratul maut by Javanese Muslims is considered a process of releasing the spirit from the body (body). Linguistically, it is understood that *sakaratul maut* is a dying condition (can't do anything) on the way to death. Human powerlessness in the face of death because the spirit is not comfortable anymore in the body because it is being uprooted by angels. No matter how great a human being can fight the angel Azrael who is carrying out orders from God to take his life. In this case, it can be concluded that *sakaratul maut* is a state of a person's powerlessness in undergoing the loss of life while being revoked by the angel Azrael. People have unique ways of dealing with relatives who are facing death. There is a tradition that sick people should be visited and attended to (Aufa, [2017](#)).

This pattern is intended so that if things happen that are not desirable, then the relatives are ready and at the scene of the incident. Under these conditions, the family will gather, ready when needed, and pray. In praying the main thing that is said is praying for healing. However, if there is no healing for him, then pray for the process of his death to be facilitated (so as not to suffer too much). *Sakaratul maut* is marked by the unconsciousness and awareness of someone who is about to die. He could still see and hear the people around him, but his memory was starting to blur. To guide people who are undergoing *sakaratul maut*, usually the family tries to guide them to say the creed so that they die in a state of mentioning the name of God. People who die in a state of always remembering God will always get guidance from God's light in the grave, as well as other realms later. After death, at the house of the deceased, usually there is a yellow flag, but there is also a white flag.

Both have the meaning that in the house, someone died. The yellow flag means that something is "withering" which comes from the word "wither". In Indonesian, withered means dead, but it is more appropriate to use it for plants. *Lelayu* comes from the middle Javanese language, which means that someone dies. This withering symbol is then transformed into yellow. Meanwhile, those who use the white flag as a sign that someone has died in their house has a different perception. The color white is meant as a sacred form. Humans who return to another world must be holy because they will face God. The white color is a manifestation of the color of submission to Allah as reflected in the hajj clothes, as well as the cloth used for the shroud. Likewise, when a person surrenders in war, using a white flag.

Bathing

Bathing in the perspective of Muslims is a form of holiness. In this case, water plays a very big role and function to clean dirt that is inherent in the body. Bathing in terms of holiness can be seen from the outside and the mind. By birth, water is used to cleanse the body so that all the dirt that is attached to it disappears. Inwardly, bathing is a manifestation to neutralize oneself. Like the components of the universe, that water is a neutral element. It can be shaped anything depending on the shaper. Therefore, before a person comes to God, he must wash away all impurities through water. For people who die in normal circumstances (not martyrs), it is obligatory to take a bath. This is related to the nature when he was born: from the holy back to the holy.

Humans are born like blank paper, so to return home, their bodies must be cleaned first. In this case, water brings naturality to humans before returning. Indeed, it seems unrelated when it is considered that what is released (returns) is the spirit, while the body will only crawl on the ground. However, it is necessary to know that the dimensions between the spirit and the body are still bound. Thus, even though what is washed is the body, but the purpose of purifying the corpse is to cleanse the spirit of the worldly qualities that have been experienced, and also self-renewal. The family (with the help of residents) usually prepares lots and various kinds of water. First, the Leri water is mixed with the splice. How to make it, namely when washing rice, the water turns white like milk. *Sambetan* water is made from several *dringo*, turmeric and *bengel* which are ground until smooth (Poerwanto, [2008](#)).

After being ground until smooth, this component is then put into water so that the water looks yellowish. In this perception, Leri water and *sambetan* water combined are able to make the soul cool. The release of the soul from the body is very torturous and feels very hot. Second, camphor water. Camphor water is plain water mixed with camphor. The purpose of this water is to kill small bacteria on the skin. In addition, this water is also intended so that the corpse does not quickly smell bad. Third, soapy water. Soapy water is used to clean any adhering dirt. There is a

suggestion that the soap used is also the soap usually used by the deceased when he was still alive (one type). Fourth, plain clear water. Water can be sourced from wells or from rivers. What is clear, this water is kept pure. In addition to some of the water, water from straw that has been burned for shampooing is also prepared. This water is used to wash the hair to make it really clean.

Wrapping the Corpse

Shrouding the corpse is actually almost the same as giving him clothes. Meanwhile, the clothes for the dead are plain white clothes (without any other colors). The white clothes are also not allowed to have stitches. What is allowed is only binding in some parts so that it does not come off. Even when the bond is in the grave (before it is covered with soil) it must be removed first. The ties for the corpse after being shrouded are usually located on the left side of the body so that when the corpse is tilted to the right during burial it is easy to open it. The shroud is cut according to the length (height) of the corpse and is given less to make it easier to tie (Karim, [2017](#)). Usually, *Karim* or *Modin* will also cut the cloth in small pieces to make a rope which is usually placed at the very bottom. The shroud is placed on the karanda by being spread out one by one with a place for the head position towards the Qibla. Next, the corpse is placed on a cloth that has been stretched earlier and folded so that it covers the entire body, except the face. The face or face is not covered because it is the embodiment and figure of humanity later when he has to face the grave. In shrouding the dead, cotton, fine camphor, perfume, and several other necessities are also usually prepared. Cotton is used to cover the ear holes, nostrils, and mouth if they are still slightly open. The hole is closed to prevent flies (or the like) from entering the hole before the body is buried. Fine mothballs are usually sprinkled on the cloth shroud so that small insects such as ants do not get close to the dead body. Fragrant oil is usually used to make sweets already smells not too strong (the stench is inferior to perfume smell).

Separating the Corpse

The prayer for the corpse is performed by facing the body, when performed without the corpse (it has been buried) it is called the supernatural prayer. However, the procedure is different from prayer in general. The corpse prayer is only performed by standing (no need for bowing, prostration, *i'tidal* and *tahiyat*). It is feared when the corpse prays until its prostates, as if worshiping the corpse in front of it. In these funeral prayers, it is usually performed by neighbors and relatives, though not as a whole. Some women are also *makmum*, for those who are not hindered. For some people who isolate the corpse, they are given *salawat* money. *Salawat* money is a sum of money given to people who mourn the corpse as a sign of gratitude from the family because they have agreed to mourn and pray for the corpse. This money is given when the congregation has finished performing the funeral prayer and is still in a standing position while praying after the prayer. *Salawat* money is usually wrapped in an envelope, distributed by one of the people designated by the family by putting it in the pocket of the person who is praying after the funeral prayer. The amount of money for this *selawat* has no general provisions.

Procession Before

Delivering the corpse that has been placed in a karanda covered with a green cloth with the words "*la ilaha illallah muhammadar rasulullah*", then delivered to the funeral. The corpse that has been embalmed is likened to a bride. For the deceased himself, this moment is a parting as well as a point of further journey to another realm. The grave also becomes a realm for accountability for all sorts of things done in this world. Therefore, his departure to the grave must be accompanied as a form of honor. For Muslims in Java have the belief that if the person who died still has unmarried children's, then also prepared banana tree seedlings whose number is equal to the number of unmarried children. The seedlings of this banana tree will later be brought to the tomb and placed near the tomb (Layungkuning, [2013](#)).

This is meant to symbolize that the children remain close to their parents, and that the parents who have died do not need to worry about the children left behind even though they are not yet adults. Other equipment that needs to be prepared is if there is a family member who died and someone is pregnant, then chicken eggs need to be prepared. These chicken eggs will be broken at the door of the courtyard when the corpse is left. This is a symbol of hope that the pregnant family member is not disturbed by anything and can give birth smoothly and easily as easily as breaking an egg. Before the body is taken to the funeral, usually the *modin* or *karim* representing the party will give a short speech. In a short speech, in essence, he wanted to convey if the deceased had ever done wrong to family, relatives, and the community to ask for forgiveness. *Modin* or *karim* also asked everyone around: that the corpse will not be buried if it still has debts. The new corpse will be buried when it is completely clean from debt and has also been forgiven of his sins for life. This is intended so that later this seemingly trivial thing can become a painful and painful grave torment. After that, the family will perform *Brobosan/Tlusupan*, called *Lodosan*.

Brobosan/Tlusupan is done by entering the bottom of the coffin from left to right when it will be taken to the tomb. *Brobosan/Tlusupan* is done by the family left behind to remove the body to the cemetery. It is intended so that the party left behind does not always remember the deceased. *Brobosan/ Tlusupan* is done on the basis that after death, the spirit still often comes to the house. This lasted for 40 days. Therefore, in order for the deceased not to appear in the form of a memory to the people left behind, *Brobosan/ Tlusupan* is done. It can be said that this event is like a last hug before the body is delivered to the funeral. With the final farewell, it is hoped that all family members have sincerely departed for the deceased to be buried.

Delivering the Body to the Cemetery

At the time the body was about to be dispatched, according to Muslims in Java, there was a woman from a deceased family who brought a broom stick and a flashlight (a lamp). The woman precedes the departure of the body by sweeping the yard or road as much as 7 steps from the beginning of the departure of the body. This is done as a symbol of hope that the deceased will get a clean and bright path or the right path on his way to the afterlife. The family makes a *sawur* consisting of seven kinds of flowers, white and yellow rice, as well as money. *Sawur* is sprinkled on the *karanda* to leave a fragrant trail leading to the cemetery. *Sawur* with a flower component of seven forms which must be intended so that the angels accompany the departing (return) of the deceased. Meanwhile, money and rice were intended as provisions for his long journey. *Sawur* continues until it reaches the grave. The rest of the *sawur* will be sprinkled on the grave, after the body is buried. A sprinkling of flowers forms a fragrance, also accompanied by a sprinkling of money. This symbolization is a manifestation that there is so much generosity that accompanies every inch of the journey (Hendrajaya & Almu'tasim, [2020](#)).

Burial of the Body

Next, the body is buried. The body is faced to the Qibla with the cheek position against the ground (deliberately kissed to the earth as a place to return, namely humans who started from the ground returned to the ground). Next, *gethuk* (gelu) granules are inserted in the hollow parts of the corpse for the purpose of gripping so that the corpse does not turn from its smell to the earth. The body is deliberately kissed to the earth also takes the essence of the person who prostrates when praying. In the process of long waiting, he had to prostrate. Therefore, humans return to Allah must also be in the form of prostration (by kissing the earth). If during the burial process the prayer time passes, then before it is filled with soil, there must be someone who calls the call to prayer above the corpse's ear. Adhan is the same as the call to prayer for the five daily prayers. After that, just connect with iqamat. This is done with the intention of also calling the deceased to prayer.

Although he has died, but his position has not been buried so that his spirit must also be called to prostrate to Allah SWT. In fact, even though he has died, he has not been greeted by the Angels of Munkar and Nakir so that he has not been recorded as a grave expert. After the body is laid facing the Qibla in a position to kiss the earth, the *dangka* is installed sideways in a tight line. In addition, some related to graves were also buried such as objects used to measure graves. In burying, there are three people who trample the soil in the grave, while others return the soil that was once dug into the hole. If the family has prepared the tombstone, it will be installed immediately. Tombstones are intended as a sign that the place is someone's grave. Tombstones are inscribed with the person's name, along with the date of birth and death. Some tombstones are made of wood, and some are made of cement. At the top of the pointed slightly blunt. The *maesan* will be planted on top of the grave, one at the head and the other at the feet.

Salvation

"Salvation" comes from the word "congratulations," which means to pray for salvation. Salvation for people who have died is not in the Qur'an for sure, so it is not an obligation. There is that it is recommended for pious children to pray for parents who have passed away. Javanese Muslims believe that a pious child's reward can still be received by someone who has died. Based on this philosophy, Javanese Muslims try to pray for people who have died as a form of filial charity because in reality not everyone has children (some die before having children/before marriage). However, because they feel that neither the child nor the family are experts in efficacious prayer, they then gather the neighbor's (community) up to 40 people to pray for the deceased in the grave. The prayer of 40 believers is considered equivalent to the prayer of a guardian (the prayer of a guardian is very efficacious because he is a lover of God). By equalizing the prayers of 40 believers, they hope that the deceased will find help in his grave by inviting the residents to come together for salvation. *Tahlilan* / salvation which is carried out to commemorate and pray for the deceased which is usually carried out on the first day of death until the day 7, and then carried out on the day 40, day 100 and so on. There are also those who do *tahlilan* on the day 1000 (Sholikhin, [2010](#)).

Meaning of Death of Javanese Islam

In the perspective of Javanese Muslims, death is a way back to God. In other words, even though the human is dead, he is not really dead. What dies is the body, while the spirit is still alive. The spirit travels to another realm, namely to the grave. This basis is the belief for Javanese Muslims to understand that the dead do not just end up in a state of rot. The only thing that rots is the body, while the spirit is not dead. This is because the human spirit comes from God, just like the spirit of Prophet Adam AS which was blown by Allah into clay. Humans originally resided in heaven, but because they could not face the temptations of Satan, they had to leave heaven. Therefore, to be able to return to heaven, humans must always worship Allah and repent a lot. Man to return must be separated from the clay that encloses him, namely the bones and lumps of flesh stained with blood (Rifai, [1980](#)).

Therefore, human life on this earth, from birth to death, has a very important role for the survival of the universe. Through the body, humans can build, but also can damage. In this case, because humans have promised and are able to become representatives of Allah, then all their characteristics and actions will be judged. As a form of justice from Allah SWT, heaven and hell have been prepared. However, before humans are judged for their deeds and deeds and put into one of these places, humans must also be held accountable for their actions in the grave, after being separated from the body. that the dead will be in the grave. For people who have good deeds (do not get tormented), then he will experience a very long sleep until the Day of Judgment. Likewise, the person whose life is filled with bad deeds, then he will get tormented until the Day of Judgment. The coming of the apocalypse will destroy the universe, but the human spirit is resurrected to be reckoned with for his deeds. The apocalypse itself occurred after the Angel Israfil blew the trumpet as a sign that there were no more believers.

CONCLUSION

There are several things that can be concluded in writing this. First, when carefully understood, that belief and Javanese Islamic tradition of death has noble values that can be makes humans can understand its origin, namely from the ground. The death tradition of Javanese Muslims is also a tribute on humans who have lived (became caliphs) in this world. With that set of knowledge, practices and traditions of death Javanese Islam always has a symbolic element with other realms. Second, Javanese Muslims in interpreting death as a way back because human nature comes from God. To return, human bring nothing but account for his actions so far. For humans who have gained knowledge spiritual, will always get light from God. As for return, humans must be in a holy form, and if there are many sins, a pious child must always pray for it because God is forgiving.

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