

## Community religious expression through *sholawat* in Bangunrejo Kidul Kedunggalar Ngawi village

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### Article

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### Abstract

**Purpose** - Islam and Javanese culture can dialogue in harmony, the two are not contradictory. One form of acculturation of the two can be seen from the traditions of rural communities as a form of rural Sufism, namely praising the prophet Mohammad. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village still maintain the tradition of praising the prophet as a medium of Islamic symbols. This article looks at how praising the prophet is a form of acculturation between Islam and Javanese culture, the media for *da'wa*, and the religious expression of rural communities.

**Method** - This research is qualitative descriptive, data collection is done through involved observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation.

**Result** - Praising the prophet is a form of acculturation of Islamic and Javanese culture as seen from the reading of *shalawat*, *dhikr*, and prayer accompanied by poetry in Javanese songs while waiting for congregational prayers in the mosque between the call to prayer (*adzan*) and *iqamat*. Moral praise is a medium of *da'wa* aimed at shaping the personality of the community in accordance with Islamic values and upholding the identity of Javanese culture. The value of *da'wa* in praising the prophet is in the form of perspectives and norms related to *aqidah*, morals, worship, sharia, and other moral appeals extracted from the Quran and hadith. Praising the prophet is rural Sufism as well as a model for seeking rural spirituality, namely Sufism in low traditions or village traditions as opposed to cosmopolitan traditions. The existence of praising the prophet in society has a dual function, apart from being a religious expression, it is also a safeguard for the existing religious traditions. Praising the prophet becomes a religious education for a cultural inheritance to the next generation as well as for increasing the spirituality and piety of the community. The tradition of praising the prophet is widespread in NU, especially in rural communities, and has become a religious expression to strengthen Nusantara Islam.

**Implication** - The contribution of this article is to strengthen the perspective of the sociology of *da'wa* in seeing the problem of *da'wa* in the community, one of which is with local wisdom so that Islam can be accepted.

**Originality** - This study examines *sholawat* as an acculturation of Islam and culture, media of *da'wah*, and religious expression of the cultural Islamic community, where the religious behavior of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village in the context of the sociology of religion where religion is understood as action (religion in action).

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**Kata kunci:**

Shalawat puji-pujian, akulturasi budaya, dakwah islam, ekspresi keberagamaan, islam nusantara.

**Abstrak**

**Tujuan** - Islam dan budaya Jawa dapat berdialog secara harmonis, keduanya tidak bertentangan. Salah satu bentuk akulturasi keduanya dapat dilihat dari tradisi masyarakat pedesaan sebagai bentuk tasawuf pedesaan, yaitu pujian. Masyarakat Desa Bangunrejo Kidul masih mempertahankan tradisi puji-pujian sebagai media syiar Islam. Artikel ini melihat bagaimana pujian merupakan bentuk akulturasi antara Islam dan budaya Jawa, media dakwah, dan ekspresi keagamaan masyarakat pedesaan.

**Metode** - Penelitian ini bersifat deskriptif kualitatif, pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi.

**Hasil** - Pujian merupakan bentuk akulturasi budaya Islam dan budaya Jawa yang terlihat dari pembacaan shalawat, dzikir, dan doa disertai syair dalam bahasa Jawa yang dilantunkan sambil menunggu salat berjamaah di masjid antara adzan dan iqamat. Pujian moral merupakan media dakwah yang bertujuan untuk membentuk kepribadian masyarakat yang sesuai dengan nilai-nilai Islam dan menjunjung tinggi jati diri budaya Jawa. Nilai dakwah dalam pujian berupa cara pandang dan norma yang berkaitan dengan akidah, akhlak, ibadah, syariah, dan himbauan moral lainnya yang bersumber dari Al-Qur'an dan hadits. Pujian adalah tasawuf pedesaan sekaligus model untuk mencari spiritualitas pedesaan, yaitu tasawuf dalam tradisi rendah atau tradisi desa yang bertentangan dengan tradisi kosmopolitan. Eksistensi pujian dalam masyarakat memiliki fungsi ganda, selain sebagai ekspresi keagamaan, juga sebagai pelindung tradisi keagamaan yang ada. Pujian menjadi pendidikan agama untuk pewarisan budaya kepada generasi penerus serta untuk meningkatkan kerohanian dan ketakwaan masyarakat. Tradisi puji-pujian tersebar luas di NU, terutama di masyarakat pedesaan dan telah menjadi ekspresi keagamaan untuk memperkuat Islam Nusantara.

**Implikasi** - Kontribusi artikel ini untuk memperkuat perspektif sosiologi dakwah dalam melihat permasalahan dakwah di masyarakat, salah satunya dengan kearifan lokal agar Islam dapat diterima.

**Orisinalitas** - Kajian ini mengkaji sholawat sebagai akulturasi Islam dan budaya, media dakwah, dan ekspresi keagamaan masyarakat Islam kultural, dimana perilaku keagamaan masyarakat Desa Bangunrejo Kidul dalam konteks sosiologi agama dimana agama berada. dipahami sebagai tindakan (religion in action).

## Introduction

The influence of Islam in the life of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village can be seen from every aspect, including traditions and culture. His philosophy of life is rooted far from the past through their traditions and culture of knowing God. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village do not confront religion and culture, because both are compatible and develop harmoniously in society. Religion becomes the spirit while culture becomes the container. Religion has become an ageing *aji* and *di-sarira* culture which has led to the growth of religious and tolerant attitudes. They place religion and culture proportionally and make it a worldview that affects every social interaction and daily activity. According to Berger, the interaction between religion, humans, and society runs dialectically. Because individuals are formed by social structures and do not have a role in the formation of social structures (Berger, 1969). The community can change its socio-cultural structure, on the contrary, the community is influenced and social institutions are formed, including the tradition of praising the prophet in shaping the character of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village.

For the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, tradition, culture, and religion become a set of values to bind togetherness and social harmony. By praising the prophet, they build religiosity within the society. In principle, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village are religious, people who have the awareness to embrace religion, believe in God, and practice it in everyday life. This is a view of the life of people whose pragmatic value is to achieve certain psychological states, namely peace of mind, happiness in hereafter, and a balance of life (Faishol, et al., 2014). This view of life has shifted along with the changing times. This does not mean that the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village lose their identity and are uprooted from their own cultural roots.

The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village use religion as the basis for their daily activities, beliefs, views, concepts, cultural values, and other values as well as the local wisdom. The religious behavior of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village is reflected in the context of the sociology of religion where religion is understood as action (religion in action). Religion is considered a belief system that is manifested in certain social interactions and behaviors. Religion is related to human experience, either as individuals or groups so every behavior they perform is always related to the belief system of the religion they adhere to. Individual and social behavior is driven by internal forces based on previously internalized religious values. One of these values is the tradition of praising the prophet in addition to other traditions such as *genduri*, *ruwahan*, *rejeban*, *muludan*, *tahlil*, *yassin*, *dhikr*, and other Javanese Islamic culture.

The tradition of praising the prophet becomes social capital and a social code of conduct to create social harmony that moves the religious awareness of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. For the community, praising the prophet becomes a cultural mechanism for Islamic symbols and maintains the religious traditions inherited by the guardians. However, the differences in views and traditions that are practiced by the community become a space that allows social friction to arise. Cultural mechanisms are important in reducing conflict so that its presence is productive (Liliweri, 2003). The *shalawat* of praising the prophet is a *syiiran* tradition that is sung between the time of *adhan* and *iqamat* before performing the five daily prayers. This tradition is deeply rooted in

Indonesian society, especially among traditional NU Muslims who live in rural areas. Praising the prophet is an ancestral tradition whose existence is now starting to be challenged by some Islamists





of which is with local wisdom so that Islam can be accepted by the country's side. Collecting data through three ways, namely: direct observation; deep interview; and recorded documents (Sutopo, 1998) regarding the expression of Islam and the diversity of the NU cultural Islamic community in

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developing *da'wah* through the media of praise and prayer in Bangunrejo Kidul Village, Kedunggalar Ngawi. Data analysis through interactive analysis model which includes data reduction, data submission, and concluding. The conclusions obtained were tested for their truth and validity through data triangulation and review from informants.

## Results and Discussions

### *Praise and Islamic Values: Acculturation of Javanese Islamic Culture*

Bangunrejo Kidul Village is one of the villages in Kedunggalar Ngawi District. The majority of the livelihoods of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village are farmers. This village consists of 9 hamlets including Dusun Pohjagal (the center of village administration), Ngubalan, Blumbang, Pohsluku, Sidodadi, Garangan, Bangun, Golan, and Gelon. Each hamlet has a different history and origin. Dusun Gelon has the oldest origin compared to other hamlets. Bangunrejo Kidul Village consists of 10 RW (the second smallest unit of the community) and 53 RT (the smallest unit of the community). The majority of the residents of Bangunrejo Kidul Village follow Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) so typical NU routine activities such as *dhikr*, *tahlil*, *manaqib*, *benjanjen*, *yassin*, and other spiritual community activities are performed on regular basis. Reading the *shalawat* of praise between the *adzan* and *iqomah* before the imam comes to perform congregational prayers has become a habit of the people in mosques such as Miftakhul Huda, Baitul Muttaqien, Babus Salam, Nurul Amin, Darun Najah, Al-Ikhlash, Al-Iman, Nurun Hidayah, Al-Mustaqim, Madhep Mantep Mosque, and Demak.

The praises sung in the mosque are an expression of the religious art of the traditional Islamic community, especially in rural communities. In addition to the *shalawat* of praise in the verse, the lyrics have the beauty of art that has literary value as well as the beauty of rhythm so that it can attract those who listen. The tradition of praise cannot work with Javanese Islamic literary arts, especially in the form of *syi'ir* poetry (*singir*), as a literary tradition that developed in Islamic boarding schools for the teaching of Islam (Mukhsin., 2010). Javanese people have long been known to have high civilization, noble cultural values, and great ethics. The life structure of Javanese society is congruent, the concepts adopted are derived from religious teachings and have an impact on their mentality. For the Javanese people, the religion of *ageming aji* is something that is appreciated, admired, and practiced in daily life. Religion becomes part of the real life of its adherents, ideas, activities, and works religious adherents (Kahmad, 2002). In the praise, there is a new form of culture as a result of the acculturation of Islam and Javanese culture. This acculturation is understood as the preservation of Javanese culture as long as it does not conflict with Islamic teachings. Islamization does not have to be Arabized, because Islam is a comprehensive religion in culture, attitude, and mentality (Rachmad, 2015).

The tradition of *shalawat* of praise or *singiran* is the result of harmonious acculturation between Islamic values and Javanese culture. The result of this acculturation is in the form of new Islamic religious literature that contains elements of Islamic teachings. Javanese people have the intellectual and emotional intelligence to translate religious arguments into cultural traditions that are easy to understand so that they become spiritual intelligence amid social life in the middle. For

example  
, praise  
is taken  
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Prophet  
SAW,  
"the  
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short time to pray even though it is in the form of *syi'iran*. This is inseparable from the former propagator of Islam through cultural media introducing religion to the community with a Sufism pattern (Azra, 2005), one of which is praise. The spread of Islam in Java by the Sufis made Javanese Islam with a Sufism pattern which influenced the way of thinking and acting in expressing Islam. One of its expressions is the emergence of Javanese Islamic literary arts in the form of praise or *syi'iran* in Javanese so that it becomes a place for people to learn small-scale Sufism by practicing *kidungan* for whining.

The tradition of praise has become a separate cultural system for the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village by prioritizing four things: first, a constitutive symbol that is formed as a belief as well as the core of religion. Constitutive symbols are formed from the core belief (belief) in praise in the form of Javanese-Arabic *syi'iran* lyrics containing moral calls, invitations to prayer, doing good, *sirah nabawiyah*, and other religious values. Second, the cognitive symbols that make up discourse and knowledge, in praise for example in *Wong Agomo's* stanza it is stated: *pamikire, sekolahmu nganti gedhe, sandang pangan ora susah golek dewe, pokok temen anggonmu sinau, wong tua-mu wis seneng lang setuju (you continue to study, nevermind about food or clothes, your job is just to focus on your study, your parents are happy with it)*. Third, the symbol of moral judgment forms values, norms, and rules (code of conduct) where praising the prophet conveys moral values for getting along, worshiping, doing good to others, and maintaining faith. This is in line with the hymns at *Maghrib-maghrib (sunset time)*, namely: *tonggo-tonggo podo nyawang (neighbors see), tonggo-tonggo podo nyawang, podo nangis koyo wong nembang. Yen ngajine arang-arang iku tondo imane kurang.* (they are crying as if they are singing. If one seldom reads the Quran, it means their faith is not strong enough). Fourth, the symbol of feeling of expression in the form of lyrics, tones of *syi'iran*, and expressions of faith for the greatness of God, the position as 'abdullah, and the love for the Prophet Muhammad through praise. According to Saussure, the relationship between the form and the meaning is not personal but collegial social which is based on social consensus (social consensus) (Sumandiyo, 2003).

The entry of Islam into Indonesia influenced the literary world of the archipelago. Before the arrival of Islam, the Indonesian literary world contained many Hindu and Buddhist teachings such as the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata which recounted the Hindu way of life, the structure of society, politics, thought, and culture (Fang, 1975). After the arrival of Islam, the literary world experienced a shift where Islamic values began to enter and influence the narrative of the story in it, of course with a specific purpose. For example, telling the majesty of Islam, the prophets, their heroes, and others can attract people to convert to Islam and strengthen their faith (Fang, 1975). According to its contents, Islamic literature is divided into five aspects, namely stories of the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, stories of prophets such as the *Anbiya Hikayat Yusuf* book, Islamic propagators and heroes such as Iskandar Zulkarnain, Amir Hamzah, and others, as well as imaginary stories that emerged in the archipelago (Fang, 1975). For example, in the praise of the Prophet's Birthday, it is stated: *Gusti Kanjeng Nabi was born in Mecca, on Monday 12 Maulud, the year of the Elephant. His Father's name was Sayyid Abdullah, and His Mother's name was Siti Aminah.* All of the stories above aim to explain Islamic religious values, and invite readers or listeners to convert to Islam. The influence of Islamic culture in the field of literature is also seen in the *syi'iran* song *Iilir-Iilir* which is intended to invite people to wake up from their "long sleep" to see

short time to pray even though it is in the form of *syi'iran*. This is inseparable from the former that the *tandure wis sumilir* (plant is growing), *tak ijo royo-royo* (freshly green) as if meeting a newly married couple. Seeing the fact that Islam has flourished "*ijo royo-royo*" (freshly green) so that people are happy to embrace a new religion as if they were "a newly married couple."

In acculturation, not all existing cultures are affected by the new culture, or vice versa, the new culture does not necessarily dominate the established culture. The pattern of acculturation of Islamic and Javanese culture has at least three forms, namely: the dominance of Islamic culture, a mixture of the two such as mosques, clothes, songs, *qasidah*, *tahlil*, and forming its own style by forming a new culture in the pattern of interconnection integration (Karim, 2007). . Therefore, Islam and culture have an inseparable relationship, religion is a symbol that represents obedience to God, while culture contains values and symbols so that humans can live in it (Subqi, et al., 2018). JID | 55 In Java, which has many cultures, the preservation of the culture that was mixed well by the elders in several areas is still maintained. On the other hand, there is opposition from Islamists not only on the *furu'iyah* or minor friction but on the core of both. Islam as a religion bases its doctrine on monotheism which rejects all forms of polytheism in all its forms. While Java is a culture that is based on forces outside of itself, namely *religion's magic* (Arsadani, 2012). Religion without culture only develops as a "private religion," without religious culture as a collectivity, there is no place (Yusof, 2016). Islam is open to responding to local Javanese culture, customs, and traditions as long as they do not conflict with the spirit of the Quran and Hadith texts. This is what underlies the rules of *fiqhiyah: al-'adatu al-muhakkamah*."

Praising the prophet is part of the teachings of Islam that developed in Javanese society, in this case, Bangunrejo Kidul Village which is thick with tradition and culture. Praising becomes a "melting pot" or meeting place as well as "semi-permeable" between religion and Javanese culture. The two are relevant, related, but not equated. Both influence each other because there are values and symbols in each entity. Because the two are indeed different, religion is universal, perennial, and absolute in truth, while culture in particular, relative, and temporary. Islam is a complete religion, including *din*, *dunya*, and *dawlah*. Islam teaches rules and values that are mutually agreed upon between communities known as culture. Culture without religion has no spirit and is dry from moral values, while religion without culture does not develop. This becomes an important meaning and finding where Javanese culture is used as a medium for developing non-violent Islam. In addition, it becomes a theoretical contribution from the perspective of the sociology of *da'wah* in the relationship between Javanese culture and Islam.

Islam is not present in a space without dialectics, Islam is present not only bringing *al-'aqidah wa al-syariah* but Islam is *al-dien al-adabi wa al-hadlarah*, *al-akhlaq wa al-insaniyah*, and *al-'ilmi wa al-tsaqofah* as in the tradition of praising the prophet, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village as part of Javanese Islamic culture. Through praising the prophet, social solidarity is created and Islamic *da'wah* can be widely accepted by rural communities because it feels close to their daily language. Praising the prophet has a life force in the community of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, because the tradition is part of religion, namely a cultural system based on everyday human actions. Religion is a system of symbols for a reality that causes humans to act as long as they do not deviate from the scriptures of religious teachings (Geertz, 2015).

*Praising the Prophet as a Media of Da'wah: Affirming the Islam of the Archipelago*

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Praising the prophet becomes social capital to build awareness and cultural piety to strengthen public morality based on the principle: *al-muhafadhah al-'ala qadim as-shalih wa al-ahdu bi al-jadil al-ashlah*. Praising the prophet is a tool to maintain the dignity of Indonesian Islam through the method of cultural *da'wah*. Moreover, the Indonesian nation is currently faced with two main problems: first, the trans-national Islamic movement which carries the ideology of violence, and the Islamic caliphate as the extreme right. There is also an extreme left movement, namely religious liberalism which can undermine moderate Islam. The word "*pujian*" (praise) comes from the Javanese term "*puji*" (to praise) which means to praise or *ngalembono*, the addition of the suffix "an" means sincere acknowledgment and appreciation for the goodness or superiority of something. Another meaning is prayer together, praying in the evening to glorify God. Praise means praising words, praising goodness, a series of words both in Arabic or in regional languages in the form of poetry in the form of sentences containing praise for Allah and His Messenger such as *Asma' al-husna*, *dhikr*, prayer, blessings, moral values, and advice that is read between the time of *adzan* and *iqamat*. According to Said Aqil, NU's strength rests on three things: first, *Aswaja's* understanding which gave birth to moderate Islamic discourse; second, values, traditions, and cultural institutions such as *pesantren* and *tariqat* networks; and third, the network structure as an organizational infrastructure spread throughout the archipelago (Siradj, 2013).

The term praise is a vocabulary that is attached to the NU cultural Islamic community as a form of rural Sufism movement to maintain the traditions and ideology of *Ahl Sunnah Waljmaah an-Nahdliyah*. In their daily life, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village are familiar with this term because it is a daily religious practice. Praising the prophet is an expression of Islamic teachings that contain the moral message of previous scholars even though they use a thick Javanese language (Muzakka, 2006). Praising the prophet is performed after the call to prayer before the *iqamat* while waiting for the congregational prayer time due to taking advantage of time rather than for something that has no benefit, hence, the praying time is filled with good things until the priest comes (Fatah, 2012). Illustrated in the hymns entitled *Krungu Kenthong*, it is chanted as: *krungu kenthong enggal-enggal terus wudlu, terus pujian nunggu imam-e mlebu* (once you heard the sound of *Kenthong*, just go and take your *wudhu*, and then praise the lord while waiting for the imam to enter the mosque.) People who come early can sing praises to pray, *dhikr*, *shalawat* to the prophet, or *istighfar* so that it adds to the value of the reward. Usually, the praises are led by a muezzin or *Bilal* and then followed by the people who have joined the congregation.

Historically, the praise that developed in traditional Islamic circles of NU was introduced by Walisongo, especially Sunan Kalijaga. In his *da'wah*, Sunan Kalijaga used cultural media such as *wayang*, *gendhing*, *gamelan*, and others to convey Islamic *da'wah*. Sunan Kalijaga's cultural way of preaching emphasized local cultural wisdom, namely by reviving and redeveloping local culture through creative methods of Javanese art. Sunan Kalijaga delivered his *da'wah* using the *wicaksono* method emphasizing the three basic values of the Javanese community, namely: *momong*, *momor*, and *momot*. First, *momong* is willing to nurture, it is hoped that by praising the prophet one will become the guardian in socio-religious and cultural matters. Second, *Momor* is

willing to  
make friends  
with anyone,  
and praises  
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community in  
various  
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Third,  
*momot*,  
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s aspirations,  
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innovations from various groups such as Sunan Kalijaga who was able to place religion, power, and culture in a balanced portion. With praises, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village are familiar with the "Gusti," (Lord), the mosque, and other Islamic teachings. This is in line with the pieces of praise from *Pitakon Kubur* (Questions in the afterlife), they are: *he manungso sopo Pangeran-mu, Gusti Allah Pangeran kulo; he manungso sopo nabi-mu, Nabi Muhammad nabi kulo; he manungso opo kitab-mu, kitab Alquran panutan kulo; he manungso ndi kibratmu, Ka'batullah kibrat kulo* (who is your Lord? Allah the almighty is my lord? who is your prophet? Mohammad is my prophet? what is your holy book? The Alquran is my guidance, What is your Qibla? Ka'batullah is my Qibla. With chants, people easily memorize Islamic teachings because Javanese people admire arts, especially songs.

Islam has a cultural pattern as a form of adaptation to the dynamics of the times that shape identity and habits. The existence of Islam with a taste of local culture was adopted and became a way of life for the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, both the *da'wah* method and daily activities as a form of Indonesian Islamic identity. Religion that carries Islam with culture in principle puts forward several values: first, local traditions influenced by religious teachings produce local Islamic customs. Second, popular Islam is not only understood as the modernization of Islam, but more than that, it flexibly applies Islam in everyday life by staying within the corridor of sharia. Third, the notion of popular Islam cannot be equated with "populist" or majority; and fourth, popular Islam emphasizes the rise of Islam for community empowerment (Waintrub, 2011). So far, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village who have followed NU have balanced religion and culture in harmony well, so that it has become their own "identity politics".

From a moral point of view, praise or *sholawat* as a medium of *da'wah* is intended to shape the personality of the community in accordance with Islamic values and uphold the identity of Javanese culture. Praise or *sholawat* is a form of cultural inheritance to the next generation. Praise is a meeting point between religion and culture so Islam has the form of a "new religion" that dialogues between text, reality, humanity, and culture. Without culture, religion loses the touch of *ar-ruh al-insaniyah* and *ar-tsaqofah* because it displays a dogmatic face with a fundamental character and there is no respect for culture and humanity. Praise or *sholawat* is at the forefront so that people may not feel the culture shock of religious understanding. Religion remains cultured, this is the religion of the NU cultural community, especially rural communities. Religion of ordinary people.

The tradition of praise or *sholawatan* has become the character and the identity of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village which is chanted at a noble time, namely between the call to prayer and *iqamat*. Today, this tradition has become a hot topic of discussion because the trans-national Islamic movement with the *Khilafah Islamiyah* ideology is trying to suppress the tradition that has been running for hundreds of years. According to them, the tradition of praising or *sholawatan* had no *dalil* (guidance) in Islam. It did not exist at the time of the prophet, and was considered disturbing the solemnity of other worshipers who wanted to perform *sunnah* prayers, *iktikaf*, and caused noise in the community. This tradition is considered heresy *dhalalah*, *laisa minal Islam*, and must be abandoned. People who accept this tradition of praise or *sholawatan* are felt to be starting to fade in terms of the number of devotees or the material side because they are considered

ancient and irrelevant to the times. In NU's traditional Islamic community, this tradition is a righteous practice, a good tradition, and exemplified by previous scholars as a medium to remind



the public with *da'wah* messages. Praise can be likened to a bus driver who calls passengers to get on according to their direction and passengers on the bus don't feel disturbed by the screams of the *bus conductor*. NU's traditional Islamic community and rural communities still firmly practice and guard this tradition as a form of engaging tradition.

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Praises that are chanted can be in Arabic, Javanese, or sometimes a mixture of both. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village are happy with the praises besides being good, and pleasant to hear, indirectly encouraging changes in the awareness of one's religiosity who initially rarely worshiped, moved his soul to be better. Praise or *sholawatan* has become a tradition that is chanted in mosques and prayer rooms in Java, which attracts the surrounding community to come to pray together. This makes praise or *sholawatan* a spiritual foundation to create peace of mind and social harmony in society. Said Aqil stated *nahnu ash-habul haqq, haqqudini wal haqqul ijtima'i* (we are the right group, right in religion and right in state society). This tradition is part of the mainstream NU, in principle, the paradigms of *al-amnu qobla faith* (creating harmony before teaching faith) and *al-mua'arasau qabla 'aqidah* (building communication before introducing creed) (Siraj, 2013).

Praises chanted through speakers/prayer in the mosques of Bangunrejo Kidul Village such as Miftakhul Huda, Baitul Muttaqin, Nur Amin, Babus Salam, Al-Ikhlash, and others indirectly called on the people who heard to join together. Praises containing the prophet's prayers, *dhikr*, moral appeals, advice, self-preservation from bad things, and *istighfar* are effective strategies for *syi'ar dinul Islam* in society. By reading *shalawat*, people can increase *mahabbah* on the Prophet Muhammad, including those who listen. Textually in the hadith it is stated: "The prayer that is read between the *adhan* and *iqamat* is efficacious, so pray for all of you" HR Abu Ya'la). This hadith, which serves as a guide for the traditional NU Islamic community in creating praises, is sung melodiously. The NU traditional Islamic community has also expanded spiritual associations to open up space for rural Sufism that can encourage personal and social piety in rural communities.

The spiritual community places Islam as a social ethic that puts forward two things (Mibtadin, 2020). First, Islam is a source and vision of morality. Islam is a source of orthodoxy and conflict and is only a guardian of human morality. If the function of religion is only in this aspect, it will kill the initiative and creativity of the Muslims themselves. Praise encourages Islam to become a dynamic religion and plays a role in the struggle of human life through a touch of culture (Sudarminta, 1991). Second, Islam as a giver of peace has an important function in supporting the process of human civilization. The sense of peace that arises from God's belief is a measure of world harmony, where religious truth is explicitly related to values, so it is approached with culture such as praise. This approach, it encourages religious people to be open to each other and learn from one another so that Islam can become a meaningful religion for everyone (Mibtadin, 2018).

As a social ethic, it becomes the spirit (*ar-ruh*) in carrying out social transformation and religious traditions that prioritize local values as the basis for building a peaceful, tolerant, and civilized society (Mibtadin, 2021). NU's traditional Islam has a legitimacy that is deeply rooted in the lives of rural communities. Praise becomes social capital that can make an important contribution to the process of building the character of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. It is not surprising that the spiritual community has a dynamic, progressive, and accommodating character in realizing

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to its nature. Sufism is expected to help in the forming process of that universal authority can be realized. With these values, society gives birth to positive-based humanitarian attitudes and actions because they are a source of meaning and wisdom. Through "spiritual associations" NU seeks to instill Islam in the community of beliefs that drive the power of civilized humanitarian action.

#### *Praises as an Expression of Religion in Rural Communities*

The melodious chanting of *shalawat* of praise makes the soul calm and attracts the desire of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village to go to the mosque to pray in congregation. The practice of praise serves as a guide to enter into the core goal, namely the five obligatory prayers facing Allah SWT. There are many benefits of praise, including treating boredom while waiting for congregational prayers, preventing jokes from causing a noisy atmosphere, and backbiting. With praise, it is hoped that the community will be closer to Allah and His Prophet. Praise has a variety of lafadz, poetry, and tones. Praises can be delivered gently, enthusiastically, or solemnly living the meaning so that one can feel its beauty. Praise becomes a space for spiritual seekers of the village community (rural Sufism).

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According to Kurt, the existence of religious communities in responding to modernity puts forward five forms of movement, namely: modernization, anti-modernization, liberation theology, new religious movements, and religious syncretism (Kurt, 1995). Meanwhile, Jamil saw the symptoms of the revival of Sufism as a form of revival of a new religion (new religion). These new religions emerged driven by two things: first, a spiritual crisis; and second, the emergence of religious radicalism. This causes urban communities to experience mental dryness and split personalities with legalistic and textual religious patterns that are *high tradition*. They are trying to find a new alternative way of religion that is more humanist and tolerant (Mukhsin, 2007). In addition to new religious movements (NRMs) and the revival of local religions which have become a contemporary religious phenomenon in Indonesia, there are also symptoms of urban Sufism (urban Sufism) which are a movement against rural Sufism (Mibtadin, 2021).

Praise is a form of rural Sufism and a model of seeking rural spirituality called Sufism in low traditions or village traditions as opposed to cosmopolitan traditions, namely the legalistic variant held by the ulama (Gellner, 1981). Gellner believes that the Sufism tradition was the element that was first displaced by modernism because Sufism is part of the rural religious tradition. Gellner's thesis was broken because the existence of Sufism as part of the rural religious tradition still persists and even thrives in various areas, both urban and rural areas. This is inseparable from the role of NU's traditional Islam which actively mobilizes grassroots masses to form religious enclaves in the form of "spiritual associations" such as recitations, *taklim* assemblies, and *dhikr shalawat* assemblies to strengthen the faith of rural communities. Rural Sufism's development is quite encouraging when viewed from the perspective of religious expression because it is a forum for the development of grassroots community spirituality.

According to Howell, the Sufism tradition does not just die but transforms form and movement according to its locality setting (Howell, 2001). The social basis of urban Sufism is an urban society with a better level of education, easy access to information, adequacy of material, and all-absurd materialistic living facilities, giving rise to instantaneous pressures and lifestyles. This makes urban people feel alienated from themselves, their families, and the environment. The existence of urban

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to its nature. Sufism is expected to strengthen the forming process of that universal humanity which is satisfied with formalistic puritan religious practices that are dry from spiritual values. In the end, urban Sufism chose a different space and segmentation from rural Sufism. Rural Sufism is a term to describe the phenomenon of the Sufism movement or spirituality that is rife in the periphery and is carried out by traditional Muslims. The forms include praise that emphasizes dhikr, istighfar, and prayer and aims to strengthen faith and alleviate the dryness of the soul and spiritual thirst of rural communities in dealing with social problems. The existence of praise in the community has a dual function, apart from being a form of religious expression, it is also a safeguard against the existing religious traditions.

The phenomenon of the spiritual awakening movement shows problems in religious psychology, alienation, and the spiritual crisis of modern society (Stanislov and Glov, 1996). This alienation encourages people to seek the peace of mind through new spiritual spaces as a form of religious expression. Through recitations, assemblies of *taklim*, and assemblies of *dhikr*, their praises have rediscovered the meaning of their existence as complete human beings with all their human nature. Several factors encouraging the development of the rural Sufism model in rural communities are; first, the rise of "spiritual associations" as a vehicle for seeking the meaning of life and psychological therapy to solve mental problems so that they do not a split personality. Second, through "spiritual associations" they build socialization to strengthen *al-ukhuwah al-Islamiyah*.

Praise becomes the castle of tradition in maintaining the integrity of tradition, and religious culture, and placing religious morality as the foundation of social life that teaches harmony. Islam has become a social ethic, a form of concern for morality for the sake of creating social welfare which is manifested in social harmony. In the lyric of *Without Wathon* it is stated: *kelawan tonggo, Dulur Lan Mitro, Kang Podo Rukun Ojo Daksiyo, Iku Sunahe Rosul Kang Mulyo*, Prophet Muhammad, our role model. Praise is a medium for local religious leaders such as village kyai and village students to greet and communicate with the grassroots masses to convey the message of Islamic *da'wah*. Praise is a form of local wisdom regardless of the method, the important thing is that the message of *da'wah* reaches the community. This is a cultural *da'wah* through praise that not only teaches religious knowledge but also protects the valuable culture of Java.

Indirect praise is an effort to shape personality and build society (*liyundziru qaumahum*). According to Said Aqil, NU has two tasks related to society: first, character building in the form of mental and spiritual development, personality formation, and community character who have a responsibility to God, humans, and nature. Second, strengthening nation-building by planting love for the homeland (Siraj, 2014). Praise can encourage public awareness to be open by moving the culture of civil society (civic culture) and placing Islam as a social ethic embodied in social harmony. In principle, praise encourages the religious style of the community based on the noble character in living life as personal goodness. In Sufism, it is known as *takhalluq bi akhlaqillah* and monotheism as core values leading to the attitude of *tepo sliro* (understanding), *ngajeni* (respect), and *nguwongke uwong* (humanist). In addition, praise is a *washilah* for shaping the character of the society to achieve *al-insan al-kamil* because it can only reflect the nature of Allah and be practiced in everyday life. *Insan Kami* (Good people) is a plenary person who moves civilization based on a good character to create peace and tranquility of heart as in the pieces of praise for the Hoyote

The implication of this article about praise is to increase spirituality and religious piety as a form of Shahada, namely *Bejo Teman Wong Ono Dunyo Bisa Ngaji, Rino lan Wengi Eling-eling Kang Maha Suci*.

Praise as part of the NU tradition that carries Islam Nusantara aims to teach the community subtly, *nuturi tanpo nathoni* (giving advice without hurting), and giving advice (*wejangan*) without realizing it so that it becomes habituation. Praises have a double meaning as a medium of *dhikr* and guidance. As a medium of *dhikr*, praises are chanted while waiting for the arrival of the congregation and the priest to perform congregational prayers. As a guide, the praises contain moral values, invitations to do good, do good deeds, as well as criticism of the diversity of Islamism which likes to blame and even disbelieve Muslims. Some of the praises that are often chanted by the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village are the *padang bulan, sikso kubur, allahul kafi, robbana firlana, shalawat asyghil, turi putih, gusti kanjeng nabi, ilir-ilir, sangu pati, mampir ngombe, tibbil qulub, hasbirabbi, krungu kenthong, hoyote syahadat, magrib-magrib, nyuwun jawah, rukun Islam, pamit ngaji, pejah khusnul khotimah, eling-eling, zaman akhir, miftakhul jannah, shalawat badar*, and others. JID | 61

Praise is a symbol of cultural resistance to trans-national Islamic movements that carry the ideology of violence, the Islamic caliphate, and try to suppress local religious traditions because they are considered *laissez-faire* of Islam. Praises and other religious traditions such as salvation, *haul, talqin, tahlilan, yasinan, manaqib, diba'*, pilgrimage to the grave, and *zanji* are considered to be out of the correct religious framework. Traditional Islam through praise shows Islam is a friendly and accommodating religion to local culture because it is cosmopolitanism and universalism (*rahmatan li'alamin*). The idea of Islam Nusantara is important to be launched to find the right formula so that normative Islam originating from God can be contextualized into Javanese culture originating from humans without losing their respective identities. As a part of rural Sufism, praise for small efforts to strengthen Nusantara Islam departs from the principle of *al-Islam shalih likuli zaman wa makan* which is accommodating and collaborates with the local culture where it presents. The choice of walisongo and NU preachers to ground Islamic values through a culture of having a "life force" in society. Various approaches such as Suluk religious discourses, praise, *dhikr*, and *shalawat* are basically forms of spiritual intelligence of NU preachers in grounding Islamic values in society which they continue to practice.

Praise becomes a space for spirituality to strengthen faith and is expected to be able to encourage people to a universal attitude and respect locality. Faith is a multidimensional concept that includes activities to create meaning (meaning production) (Fowler, 1981). Faith is part of activities that are relational and form relationships between subjects (self), others (the others), and shared centers of value and power. At this point, faith manifests itself outwardly in the form of an open attitude that fosters an awareness of respect and dialogue. This view of life creates an open attitude with a willingness to accept the truth that comes from outside of him, even though he comes from a different group. Through the praises of the village clerics in instilling harmony as a form of God's guidance, Fowler calls a religious sense a "sense of oneness". In the snippet of *Krungu Kenthong*, it is stated :*shalat bareng ojo ndisiki imam-e, wiwit niat kanthi tumut teko salam-e. (when praying together, don't move before the imam, start it with a good intention till the end.)*

The implication of this article about praise is to increase spirituality and religious piety as a form of implementing a sense of oneness that encourages the strengthening of the diversity of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. According to Fowler, the manifestation of faith is a living belief (*lebensglaube*) that moves dynamically toward the best values as a way to God. The effort is in the form of a continuous process without stopping that occurs in daily activities in real life (Fowler, 1981). Therefore, praise is a process of seeking spirituality towards Allah with a dynamic lifestyle. Praise is a medium that can encourage the formation of a religious person or person of mature faith to borrow Fowler's term, a person who can interpret the world and create a dynamic worldview (*mabda al-hayah*). This is in line with the praises of *Syi'ir Tanpo Wathon*, namely: *lamun palastro ing pungkasane ora kesasar ruh lan sukmane, den gadang Allah Suwarga manggone, utuh mayite lan ulese*.

## Conclusion

The conclusions of this article are: first, praise is a form of acculturation of Islamic and Javanese culture as seen from the reading of *shalawat*, *dhikr*, and prayer accompanied by poetry in Javanese Arabic which is chanted while waiting for the congregational prayer at the mosque between the call to prayer and *iqamat*. Second, for the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, the tradition of praise is still well maintained and practiced as a medium for Islamic symbols as well as religious expression. Moral praise is a medium of *da'wah* aimed at shaping the personality of the community in accordance with Islamic values and upholding the identity of Javanese culture. The value of *da'wah* in praise lies in the form of perspectives and norms related to *aqidah*, *morals*, worship and *sharia*, as well as other moral appeals extracted from the Quran and hadith.

Third, praise becomes rural Sufism and a searching model for seeking rural spirituality, namely Sufism in low traditions/village traditions as opposed to cosmopolitan traditions, namely the legalistic variant held by ulama. The existence of praise has a dual function, apart from being a religious expression, it is also a safeguard for the existing religious traditions. Praise becomes a religious education for a cultural inheritance to the next generation and aims to increase the spirituality and religious piety of the community. The tradition of praise is widespread among NU traditional Muslims, especially in rural communities, and has become an expression of community diversity to strengthen Nusantara Islam. This article has limitations both in methodology and scope of discussion, it becomes a space as well as a starting point for other research to study Islamic values in praise and blessings. In addition, it can also examine the existence of praise amid a wave of transnational Islamic ideology which is known to be anti-local.

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