



KUDUS: THE MEANING OF THE SACRED CITY IN JAVA, INDONESIA

Ashadi Ashadi^{1*}

¹Department of Architecture, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: ashadi@umj.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Kudus was the only city in Java named after Arabic (al-Quds), meaning "the holy or sacred." The city in Central Java was built by Sunan Kudus, one of the walisongo (the nine saints), early Islamic spreaders in Java in the 15th–16th centuries; it was made sacred by the Javanese people. The Kudus community believed that the city's existence and continuity were related to the sacred figure of Sunan Kudus. This study aimed to understand the meaning of the sacred city of Kudus. The method used in this study was descriptive, analytical, and interpretive, referred to as the processual symbolic analysis. To reveal the meaning of Kudus as the sacred city, there were two steps. First step: interpreted every step of the ritual of Sunan Kudus haul through the symbols created and used by the people involved, which could be observed in their behavior. Second step: interpreted the relation of symbols and related it to the whole system and the practice of community life in Kudus city. The analysis and interpretation of the meaning is carried out within the framework of Javanese culture. The results of this study concluded that the ritual of Sunan Kudus haul aimed to ensure safety and welfare, support the ritual's annual continuity, and make it taboo. Kyais and students (santri) play a big role. This study was expected to contribute to knowledge in general and could position it in the global context of sacred places.

Keywords:

Kyai; Ritual; Sacred Space; Sunan Kudus; Symbol

1. INTRODUCTION

For some Javanese Muslims, the city of Kudus in Central Java is considered a Holy City. Kudus itself is a name derived from Arabic, *Al-Quds*, meaning "holy". It is estimated that the city of Kudus was founded in 1549 AD, based on the discovery of an inscription on the pulpit of the Menara Kudus Mosque. And Kudus is the only city in the entire archipelago that originates from Arabic. Meanwhile, the Muslim world has two holy cities, Mecca and Medina, which are always visited by Muslims on pilgrimage. Every month of Zulhijjah, the Islamic year, around 2,5 million Muslims perform the Hajj in the city of Mecca, followed by a pilgrimage to the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina. The two cities are considered the holiest cities for Muslims [1].

Modern Kudus City was built during the late 18th century AD to the early 19th century AD in a new location, approximately 1 km to the east of the old city center, across the Gelis River (known as Kudus *Wetan*). However, the Old City of Kudus (known as Kudus *Kulon*) developed alongside the modernization of the city, with characteristics different from those of the Modern City of Kudus. Islamic religious orientation is growing and strong in the Old City of Kudus. One of the drivers is the existence of the sacred grave of one of the *Walisongo* figures, the "Wali" of Java, namely Ja'far Sadiq, known as Sunan Kudus.

Before Islam, Hinduism grew in the Kudus area. One piece of evidence is the mosque tower, which resembles a Javanese temple [2]. The Hindu religion that is presented in the Kudus area is most likely related to the characterization of Jafar Sadiq as Sunan Kudus. The existence of a taboo among the people of Kudus Kulon against slaughtering cattle was generally associated with a prohibition issued by Sunan Kudus, who did not want to hurt or offend the feelings of the Hindu community at that time.

Based on the background above, the main question arises: What is the meaning of Kudus as a Holy City? This will be related to an understanding of the history of the city of Kudus and architecture, the characterization of Ja'far Sadiq, the Muslim community, especially their leaders (*Kyais*), ritual, and its continuity.

This study aims to reveal the meaning of the Holy City of Kudus, as it relates to the characterization of Ja'far Shadiq (Sunan Kudus) and several related matters. The study uses an anthropological-architectural approach and the Ritual Process method, as described by Victor Turner. The ritual in focus is the *Haul* of Sunan Kudus, which is held every month of Muharram in the Islamic calendar.

Especially revealing the meaning related to the history of the city and architecture, Sunan Kudus, religious leaders – *kyais*, ritual, and the sustainability of the holy city, can motivate researchers to conduct research with the same theme on other cities, both locally and globally.

1.1. BRIEF HISTORY OF KUDUS AND ARCHITECTURE

Kudus, located in Central Java, Indonesia, was one of the cities in the Islamic world included in UNESCO's monitoring program for conservation cities. Kudus was a unique city because it had many Islamic buildings influenced by Hindu Javanese culture, including the mosque's minaret [3] [Figure 1].

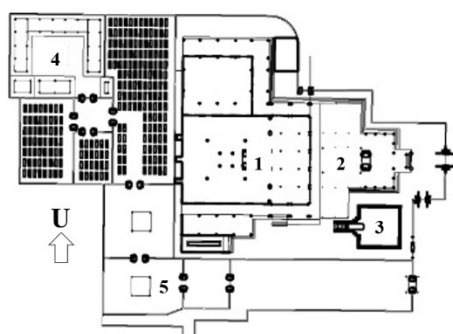


Figure 1. Menara Kudus Mosque [Photo: Ashadi]; it used to be the center of the old city of Kudus; at the back, there is the tomb of Sunan Kudus.

That minaret became a symbol of Kudus's identity and a historical monument. It was a building of antiquity, like a temple. Elements of the building showed a mixing of Hindu and Islamic cultures. It was almost certain that the ancient site in the center of Kudus city was a complex of an ancient mosque and the sacred Sunan Kudus tomb. [Figure 2 and Figure 3].



Figure 2. Map of Kudus City: Old City-Kudus Kulon and New City-Kudus Wetan.



1. The main building of the mosque
2. Veranda of the mosque
3. The minaret
4. Tomb of Sunan Kudus
5. *Tajug* building

Figure 3. Plan of the mosque and grave complex.

The area now called Kudus, in the 8th and 9th centuries AD, during the reign of the kings of the Syailendra dynasty in Java, was still a strait that separated the “island” of Muria from Java. The Strait was apparently quite wide and could be navigated properly, so the merchant ships of Semarang could take a shortcut to sail to Rembang. But later, the Strait was covered with mud flowing from the area later named Demak, which headed to Rembang through Kudus and Pati. Since the 17th century AD, shortcuts have become navigable [4][5]. Sunan Kudus was recognized as the founder of the city, even if, according to some traditions, there was already a settlement in the area called *Tajug*, identified as a “sacred city.” [6][7].

1.2. JA'FAR SHADIQ AS SUNAN KUDUS

Authentic data that can still serve as a basis for the history of Kudus and the figures behind it is an inscription on the top of the Imamate of the Kudus Tower Mosque in Kudus Kulon. The inscription is in Arabic, with the composition of the letters being unclear, meaning more or less: “In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and Merciful. Has built the Al Aqsa mosque and the land of Al Quds, the Caliph at the time of the scholars from the descendants of Muhammad to buy the eternal glory of heaven.....to get closer to the Most Merciful in the land of Al Quds (?) built the Al Manar mosque (?) which was called Al Aqsa the caliph of Allah on this earth..... the great and mujtahid master who is perfectly wise, especially with the maintenance..... of the ruler Ja'far ash-Shadiq..... in nine hundred and fifty-six of the hijrah of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and all his companions.”

In the inscription, there are names such as Al-Aqsa, Al-Manar, Al-Quds, and Ja'far Sadiq, as well as the number 956 Hijriyah, which are closely related to each other. We try to interpret the meaning and intent of these words. The words Al-Aqsa and Al-Manar are the names of mosques; Al-Quds is the name of the region or country where the mosque building is located; Ja'far Shadiq is the founder of the mosque and also the builder of the country or region; and 956 H, or coinciding with 1549 AD, is the year the mosque was founded.

Ja'far Shadiq's origins and genealogy remain unclear to this day, but there is strong suspicion that he was of Arab (Persian?) descent. The year of his birth is still a mystery; no oral or written information or news that can be relied upon. Meanwhile, his death is estimated to have occurred between 1587 and 1588, and before 1605.

According to Javanese stories, Sunan Kudus's real name was Ja'far Shadiq bin Raden Usman Haji (Sunan Ngudung). The location of Ngudung is currently unknown; some connect it with Kudus or Cepu, about 90 km southeast of Kudus.

1.3. MUSLIM SOCIETY AND THE ROLE OF KYAI

Kudus Kulon is known as a santri area, with Kauman village as its center. This opinion is not an exaggeration; in addition to 92 percent of the population of Kudus Kulon being Muslim (according to BPS Kudus in 2023), the Kudus community also has a center for religious activities, namely the Menara Mosque complex and the holy tomb of Sunan Kudus.

Daily religious life activities in the Kudus Kulon environment and its surroundings cannot be separated from the activities of the Islamic boarding school students in that area. In the Kudus Kulon area, there are more than a hundred large and small Islamic boarding schools and madrasas. They were led by Kyai, an expert in Javanese Islam.

Initial studies of Islamic boarding schools show that the kyais, together with their students, preserve the traditional Islamic chain within the intellectual network. In maintaining relationships, marriage and kinship play an important role [8].

1.4. RITUAL HAUL OF SUNAN KUDUS

Of all the religious celebrations held by the Kudus Kulon people, nothing compares to the haul celebration of Sunan Kudus, in terms of the number of people involved, the amount of money spent, the size of the area or place used, and the great atmosphere. Before Covid-19 broke out, the Sunan Kudus Haul ritual involved no fewer than 40,000 people and cost around 400 million (if all were cashed in). The areas used included highways, village roads, residential yards, mosque areas, and cemeteries. The atmosphere created by tens of thousands of people shows their hope and sincerity, especially when queuing for cricket rice (called *sego jangkrik*).

The ritual of *Haul* for respectable people who had died, among Javanese Muslims, had become a routine activity that had to be held every year. In Kudus Kulon, the *Haul* of Sunan Kudus was held every year from the 1st to the 10th of Muharram in the Islamic calendar. The main event was a ceremonial tradition of replacing the *luwur* fabric (cloth used to cover the tomb of Sunan Kudus).

Haul of Sunan Kudus was marked by the ritual of *penjamasan* (washing and maintenance) of the keris Cintoko, believed to be a weapon of Sunan Kudus, on Monday or Thursday the week after *tasyrik* (days of *tasyrik*: 11, 12, 13 *Dzulhijjah*), approximately two weeks before *Muharram*.

The event started on the 1st of Muharram with the opening of the *luwur*, or *buka luwur*, of the tomb of Sunan Kudus. At the end of *Dzulhijjah*, after praying, at around 08.00 am, in the mosque's veranda, a general teaching on Islam will be given. On the 1st of *Muharram*, in the morning at around 07.00 pm, led by a Kyai (an Islamic saint in Javanese culture), some members of the committee were already waiting in the building Tajug, and they went together to the *cungkup* (the tomb building) of Sunan Kudus. Kyai, accompanied by several people, read *tahlil* (*la ilaha illaah*) in *cungkup*, a room where Sunan Kudus' tomb was placed. Then, Kyai and people removed the *luwur* fabric inside the *cungkup*, followed by a beyond *luwur* fabric exterior.

Luwur fabric was later cut into small pieces, about 1 m² each, to be distributed to the guests when the ritual on the 10th of Muharram was held, and to the Kauman people (those living around the mosque). Starting on 1-9 *Muharram*, a community donation drive was held in the *Tajug* building.

On 7-9 *Muharram*, a new *luwur* fabric was installed on the outer and inner sides of the *Cungkup*, leaving the fabric-covered Sunan Kudus tomb. On the 8th of *Muharram*, after praying a *terbang papat* (playing music with four small tambourines). On the 9th of Muharram, in the morning, in the courtyard of the old building owned by the Foundation of Sunan Kudus Mosque and Tomb, a slaughtering of buffaloes was held. At noon, the women cooked *sego jangkrik* (rice mixed with buffalo meat and wrapped in leaves).

In *pawestren* (a place in the mosque where women pray), women cooked *bubur suro* (porridge of *Muharram*) and distributed it directly to people gathered around the mosque. At the same time, in the main room of the mosque, a *khitmal Qur'an bil ghaib* (reading the Qur'an by rote) is being performed by a male student (*santri*). At night, after praying, in the veranda of the mosque, a general teaching of Islam.

On the 10th of *Muharram*, in the morning, there were two activities at the same time. At around 06:00 pm, the distribution of blessed rice (*sego jangkrik*) began, with distribution based on the order queue. About 20,000 people participated in this event. The circulation of women and men in the queue was separated. [Figure 4 and Figure 5].



Figure 4. The atmosphere of the blessing of rice distribution [http://seputarkudus.com, accessed November 2, 2019].

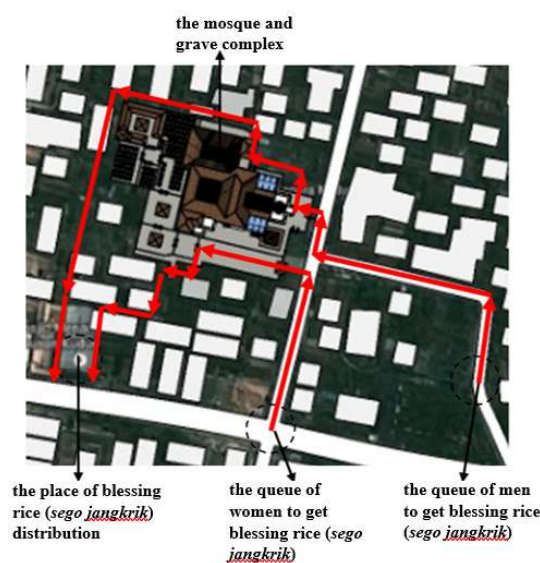


Figure 5. Queuing circulation of the blessing rice distribution [Drawing by Ashadi].

Meanwhile, in the *Tajug*, at 07.00 pm, the installation of the *luwur* fabric (*pasang luwur*), i.e., the protective fabric of the Sunan Kudus tomb. The event was by invitation, with local government officials, community elders, religious leaders, and *Kauman* people; about 250 people were invited. The ritual procession was opened by the committee, followed by the reading of the *tahlil*. Then, they went to the *cungkup* of Sunan Kudus led by *Kyai*. In the *cungkup*, they read the *tahlil* again after reading *Tahlil, Kyai*, and the people accompanying installed fabric covering the tomb of Sunan Kudus. The ritual of Sunan Kudus *Haul* had finished.

The important series of ritual traditions of Sunan Kudus *haul* was as follows: (1) washing and maintenance (*penjamasan*) *keris Cintoko*; (2) general teaching of Islam by a *Kyai*; (3) removing the *luwur* fabric (*buka luwur*); (4) making and distributing *bubur suro*; (5) making and distributing *sego jangkrik*; and (6) installing the *luwur* fabric (*pasang luwur*).

1.5. FINANCIAL AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Sunan Kudus haul ritual is held with great enthusiasm every year and attracts an ever-increasing number of visitors. It seems that such large resources are not a significant obstacle, because the active participation of the Muslim community, especially those with sufficient wealth, is very real. They donated not only money but also livestock (buffalo and goats), rice, sugar, oil, firewood, and mori cloth.

The main source of funds comes from the Menara Mosque and Sunan Kudus Tomb Foundation (*Yayasan Masjid Menara dan Makam Sunan Kudus*), which collects it from pilgrims.

The tomb of Sunan Kudus is located in the same area as the Menara Mosque, allowing pilgrims to visit both in a single visit. Both at the mosque and at the tomb, visitors almost certainly make a minimum monetary donation of 5,000 Rupiah. All money donated from pilgrims is stored and managed by the foundation.

Until now, at least four traditional houses around the Minaret Mosque, which cost hundreds of millions, have been transferred to the foundation. This shows the scale of financial donations (*infaq*) from pilgrims.

2. METHODS

This study uses the ritual process method, as described by Turner. Turner said [9] that the Ritual Process represents an attempt to liberate thought from its threaded dependence on “structure” as the sole sociological dimension. Our goal should be to study the lives of men and women at various levels of their mutual relations. In an effort to reveal the meaning of the Holy City of Kudus, the ritual is based on the *Haul*, with its symbols from each step and the entire ritual.

First step: interpreted every step of the entire process of Sunan Kudus haul through the symbols created and used by the people involved in the event, observed from their behavior. Second step: interpreted the relation of symbols and related it to the whole system and the practice of community life in Kudus city.

The analysis framework for understanding the meaning of Kudus city was based on the entire process of the Sunan Kudus haul and on the concepts of the symbols used by the people. The entire sacred ritual of the Sunan Kudus haul was carried out step by step, from the first to the sixth. There was no instance in which one step preceded the other, or vice versa; they were run in the order specified. [Figure 6].

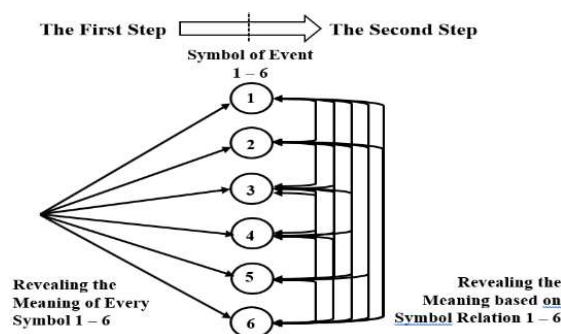


Figure 6. Diagram of Analysis Process [Author].

The symbol was a major component of the embodiment of culture because everything humans saw and experienced was processed into a series of symbols that humans understood [10]. Geertz claimed [11] that the cultural processes involving the procurement of meaning were rooted in the human ability to constantly think symbolically. Those symbols constituted a link between the human mind and the outside world, which had always faced. According to Dillistone [12], a symbol could be seen as: a word or item or object or action or event or pattern or personal or anything concrete, which represented or described or implied or signified or enveloped or

conveyed or aroused or revealed or reminded or referred to or stood replacing or showed or associated with or corresponded with or illuminated or took part in or held back, associated with something more profound or transcendent or the highest or last: a meaning, a reality, an ideal, value, achievement, confidence, people, concepts, institutions, and a state. In this study, the symbols observed include actors, actions, complementary materials, and the place of the Sunan Kudus haul ritual.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the discussion of the 5 (Five) things above, it was found that an old city is considered sacred and needs to be protected and maintained in its sacredness through the characterization of individuals deemed sacred by performing certain rituals. All of this requires the role of a religious leader - Kyai - together with his students to manage the sacredness of a city so that it can be sustainable.

The findings will be discussed in terms of the meaning of the Sunan Kudus haul ritual process, which consists of 6 (six) symbols in two steps. The first step: revealing the meaning of symbols 1–6. The second step: revealing the meaning based on the symbol relations 1–6.

3.1 REVEALING THE MEANING OF EVERY SYMBOL 1 – 6

Symbol of event 1, washing and maintenance (penjamasan) Keris Cintoko. The ritual is carried out in the middle of Dzulhijjah at the Tajuk building, located in the cemetery area. Keris Cintoko is Sunan's mainstay weapon in war because of his position as War Commander of the Demak Kingdom. Tajuk is the name of the city before Kudus; It is the old city. During this time, the Tajuk building was considered sacred, so Sunan Kudus's Keris Cintoko needed to be kept and worn there. This is closely related to the characterization of Ja'far Shadiq as the sacred Sunan Kudus.

Symbol of event 2, general teaching of Islam by a Kyai. The ritual is held on the mosque's veranda at the end of Dzulhijjah at 08.00 am. The morning teaching included recommendations to do good and abandon evil, as well as to pray for the safety of all. Here, the important role of Kyai begins to be displayed. Before the ritual of removing the *luwur* cloth from Sunan Kudus's grave was carried out, the Kyai gave advice and prayed for the common good.

Symbol of event 3, remove the *luwur* fabric (buka *luwur*) of the Sunan's tomb. This ritual is carried out on the 1st of Muharram at 7.00 am. After praying at Tajuk, several people, led by a Kyai, walked towards the cupola (*cungkup*) of Sunan Kudus's tomb. Kyai, accompanied by several people, read *tahlil* (la ilaha illaah) in *cungkup*, a room where the tomb of Sunan Kudus was located. They removed the white cloths attached there (buka *luwur*). Here, the Kyai's role is vital, even though he doesn't do much. Without his presence, no one dared to remove the white cloth because people thought the white cloth was the mosquito net for Sunan Kudus's bedroom, so it was sacred.

Symbol of event 4, make and distribute *bubur suro*. The ritual is carried out on the 9th of *Muharram* in *pawestren* (a place in the mosque where women pray). Women cooked *bubur suro* (porridge of *Muharram*) and distributed it directly to people around the mosque. At the same time, in the main room of the mosque, a *khitmal Qur'an bil ghaib* (reading the Qur'an by rote) is being performed by a male student (*santri*). In this case, the students (*santri*) are actively involved in the ritual; the women cook and distribute *suro* porridge, while the men read the Qur'an. They, of course, received orders from the *Kyai*.

Symbol of event 5, make and distribute *sego jangkrik*. The ritual is carried out on the 10th of Muharram, from morning until noon. The ritual of making *sego* crickets is carried out in a multi-purpose building belonging to the foundation, and distribution is conducted there, but it also involves road facilities, residential roads, residents' yards, mosque yards, and graves. Visitors use these places to queue. Here, visitor engagement is evident. They are willing to wait for hours while jostling to get cricket rice, which they think contains blessings from Allah SWT. These facilities, which in everyday life were profane, have now become sacred.

Symbol of event 6, install the *luwur* fabric (*pasang luwur*). The ritual is carried out on the 10th of *Muharram*, from 07.00 am until noon, led by a *Kyai*. After praying at *Tajuk*, *Kyai* and several people brought a new white cloth (*luwur*) to the cupola (*cungkup*) of Sunan Kudus's tomb, then attached it to the cupola. Putting on a new white cloth means replacing the mosquito net on Sunan Kudus's bed.

3.2 CHARACTERIZATION OF SUNAN KUDUS AND ANNUAL RITUALS

The Kudus community believed that the city's existence and continuity were linked to the sacred figure of Sunan Kudus. To justify their belief, every month of *Muharram* in the Islamic Calendar, they held a ritual called Sunan Kudus *Haul*, centered on the mosque and tomb complex of Sunan Kudus. The ritual ceremony was attended by more than 20,000 people from around the city of Kudus. In addition, the group in control of religious affairs deliberately created taboos about the persona and the sanctity of Sunan Kudus.

The figure of Sunan Kudus is believed to unify the Muslim community in Kudus, so that the sacred process associated with him is carried out every year as a “purification” of the city. This differs from Samman's opinion [13], which holds that integration can be achieved based on modernity, not religion. This provocative claim refers to the tension between the three Sacred World Cities: Rome, Mecca, and Jerusalem. This study seeks to demonstrate that integration can be achieved through religious activities.

Religious activities that make the figure of Sunan Kudus sacred have become a routine for the people in Kudus. According to Helmy [14], the sacred state is certainly temporary; it is not eternal. Therefore, the Muslim community in Kudus holds the Sunan Kudus *Haul* ritual every year to achieve eternal sacredness.

According to Seinar [15], Ritual or rite in general: a series of actions compulsively performed under certain circumstances, the non-performance of which results in tension and anxiety; a formal procedure or act in a solemn observance; any form of repetitive behavior, which was fixed by tradition, a custom of practice of a formal kind. Religious ritual was a prescribed order of performing religious or other devotional service ceremonial acts; common to these was a conviction that what was being done on earth approximates the divine or supernaturally revealed order. Ritual was viewed as a specialized form of behavior that emphasizes some concerns of daily life through a kind of performance. In the past, many scholars neglected the significance of ritual and ritualization; it now seems clear that ritualized behavior was a fundamental part of human culture.

3.3 THE ROLE OF THE KYAI AND TABOO

The sacred ritual of Sunan Kudus *Haul* is held every year. It has recently shown increased activity aimed at maintaining or restoring order, as evidenced by the safety and welfare of the community in Kudus city. In this event, *Kyai* confirmed their presence in the social and religious life of the Kudus community. The idea of Sunan Kudus' *Haul* would continue to run along with the increasing role of *Kyai*. In this regard, Swanson said that if a group had the authority, it could create the conditions for developing the concept of spirits [16]. The authority lay with the *Kyais*. The *Kyais* were the actors who had the authority to produce and control the sacred place.

As an architect, an actor was someone who had the power to create something and keep it [17]. Control was necessary before a group could shape the meaning of a place or have a specific meaning or narrative widely accepted by others. In virtually all cases of highly contested religious sites, power was necessary to exert control. Power was the means of gaining possession of a site, or at least making claims to ownership rights, and was therefore a necessary component of this process. In fact, the production of sacred places was largely governed by power relations, encompassing processes such as domination and subordination, appropriation and dispossession, and the practice of exclusionary politics. [18].

Regarding the relationship between *Kyai*'s religious authority and the local Javanese system of belief, it was notable that, according to the concept of the Javanese state organism, the king was regarded as a symbol of a microcosm, or a country. In Javanese thought, the cosmos is divided into two: the microcosmic and macrocosmic. The micro referred to the human world, or the real world, and the macro to the supernatural. The king, in this sense, was regarded as a link between the two forms of the cosmic. During the Hindu kingdom, the king was even considered a manifestation of divinity in the microcosm of life. Then Islam came and changed the whole picture of this local belief. Since Islam was the official religion of the Javanese, the authorities now had to compete with the Muslim religious authorities (the *Kyai*) [19, 20].

As the successor to the *Walisongo*, the *Kyai* was believed to have similar exceptional abilities. Because of these abilities, the *Kyai* was commonly perceived as a charismatic leader, not only by his *santri* (students), but also in the wider context of traditional Muslim in Indonesia [21]. With their expertise in Islamic knowledge, the *Kyais* are often seen as individuals who could understand the greatness of God and the secrets of the universe; thus, they seemed to have an unaffordable position, especially by the lay people. They were, at the same time, charismatic religious authorities believed to have unique abilities to communicate with God, serving as channels through which God's mercy and blessing enter society. According to Fauzi [22], in Sufism, it was believed that one could receive God's blessing through the intermediary of a sacred man, such as a saint. Some Muslims believed that a great saint's *karamah* was effective. Because the *Kyais* in general were close to God, they could reach the stage of *karamah*. As a result, a request by a *Kyai* to God, either for himself or for others, might be more readily received. Those who had *karamah* could give *barakah*, which was the positive effect arising from interaction with a sacred man.

In keeping the role, the *Kyais* also created a taboo in community life. One was the prohibition of slaughtering and eating beef because the cow was respected by the Hindu community. There was a story that Sunan Kudus did not allow his students to slaughter and consume beef as a tribute to the Hindu community. Instead, followers or students of Sunan Kudus slaughtered and consumed buffalo meat. That was why in the ceremony of the sacred ritual of Sunan Kudus *haul*, a cow was not slaughtered, but a buffalo. This taboo, until now, has been tightly held by the majority community of the sacred city. In everyday life, they tried not to slaughter animals and ate beef. Taboo, according to A.R. Radcliffe-Brown [23], was a regulation made by a leader who forbade someone from

doing certain things. As a result of the violation of the taboo, someone would fall ill and suffer more misery. Meanwhile, Freud said [24] that in fact, the taboo prohibitions lacked all justification and were of unknown origin. In the case of the ban on slaughtering and eating buffalo meat in the community of Kudus city, the Kyais imposed a taboo.

In other parts of the world, taboos were common, such as among the Karanga people of Zimbabwe. Taboos were “avoidance rules” that forbid members of the human community from performing certain actions, such as eating some kinds of food, walking on or visiting some sites that were regarded as sacred, inflicting cruelty to nonhuman animals, and using environmental resources in an unsustainable manner. For the Karanga people, taboos were understood as specific rules that forbade certain actions. The violators of the moral code as contained in taboos were said to invite misfortunes, for themselves and the community at large, in the form of bad luck, disease, drought, and even death. [25].

3.4 SPATIAL ORIENTATION BETWEEN SACRED AND PROFANE

During the ceremony of Sunan Kudus *haul*, the alley flanked by high walls among residential areas around the mosque, which during the day was a profane footpath, became a sacred space. That alley became the place where participants queued who wanted to get *sego jangkrik*. During the ceremony of Sunan Kudus *haul*, the profane space, which was used to accommodate that activity, became a sacred space. But when the ceremony was finished, that space became profane, as it was during the daily time. That meant changing the status of the sacred to the profane or otherwise.

The most important event in the process of the sacred ritual of Sunan Kudus’s Haul was not just removing and installing the *luwur* fabric of Sunan Kudus’s tomb, but also more than that. The community of Kudus city, through the sacred ritual of Sunan Kudus haul, renewed the sanctity of Sunan Kudus, as if it were purified for the first time. They expected the regularity created during this time would continue. This was in line with Eliade’s views [26] that human religious experience had two kinds of time, the profane and the sacred. Which one lasted for a while? The other was a “succession of immortality,” which could be periodically updated in a celebration that formed the sacred calendar. For a religious man, like space, time too was neither homogeneous nor continuous. On the one hand, there were the intervals of a sacred time, the time of festivals; on the other hand, there was a profane time, ordinary temporal duration, in which acts without religious meaning had their setting.

The new regularity of life had been created. People who engaged in the sacred ritual of Sunan Kudus *haul* underwent sacred intervals that did not become a part of the temporal duration, because it was the past purified by the persona and the sanctity of Sunan Kudus, and could be presented again through the processing of the sacred ritual of Sunan Kudus *haul*. When no sign of the sacred appeared, then it had to be presented; that was the representation of Ja’far Shadiq or Sunan Kudus symbol. In this regard, a sign was needed to end the tension and anxiety caused by relativity and disorientation – in short, to reveal an absolute point of support. This was an evocation of sacred forms or figures for the immediate purpose of establishing an orientation in the homogeneity of space.

Sacred places were found everywhere in the world and in every culture. Sacred places or sacred sites become imbued with special meaning through story, myth, oral tradition, folklore, or legend. They were often associated with magic and miracles and might have real or imagined powers. These places or sites were often distinct in appearance, being particularly beautiful or unique. Both the built and non-built environments were included. Places or sites as small as a stone or as immense as a mountain range were held sacred. People visit sacred places and sites for a variety of reasons. They went to feel connected to something beyond themselves and their everyday life, to get in touch with another realm. There they sought a sense of something “other”, something sacred. Often, sacred places were revered as sources of spiritual or physical healing or for renewing personal or collective memory. To visit a sacred place or site was a special journey, a pilgrimage, a matter of the heart and soul. One leaves renewed, rewarded with religious merit or insight, or with the body or spirits restored [27][28].

All activities held in the framework of the Sunan Kudus *haul*, from the step of *penjamasan keris Citoko* until the step of *pasang luwur*, were a process towards immortality, a process of renewing the sanctity of Sunan Kudus, culminating in a ritual procession to install a new *luwur* fabric to cover Sunan Kudus’s tomb. The activities that occurred and the spaces where they took place underwent a process of change towards improved sacredness. There was no unification between the sacred and the profane. It was also stated by Émile Durkheim [29] that the sacred is *par excellence* from the profane. If the profane could enter the world of the sacred, the sacred would lose its meaning. But I did not agree when Durkheim questioned whether it was difficult to change the status of the sacred to the profane or otherwise. He said that the two statuses could not even approach each other while maintaining the base’s properties.

On the contrary, Max Weber expressed this opinion. Weber stated that the only way to distinguish between religious and profane states was to refer to the extraordinary character of the religious states. A special state,

attained by religious means, could be striven for as a sacred state which was meant to take possession of the entire man and of his lasting fate. The transition from a passing to a permanent sacred state had been fluid [30].

I agree with Max Weber. In fact, changing the degree of sacredness of objects, animals, people, and space could occur at any time, depending on the needs of the human himself and how he assessed and responded to the reality of life. Moreover, when there was a person or group with strong authority within the community, they would also determine whether the degree of sacredness increased or decreased.

3.5 UNITING STRENGTH

I saw a symbol that seemed to capture the hopes and aspirations of the whole community. Ja'far Shadiq's ordination as Sunan Kudus was a highly evocative symbol of taste and a clearer illustration of the relationship between the microcosm and macrocosm. We knew that at times, especially the 18th century until the early 20th century AD, the *Kyais* and students (*santri*), aided by the people who were mostly Muslim merchants, especially in the coastal cities of North Java, including in Kudus, wanted to break free from the pressures of Dutch colonialism and economic domination of Chinese descent.

As recorded in history, on October 31, 1918, in Kudus, there were anti-Chinese riots, motivated by trade sentiment; Chinese people are seen as a barrier to indigenous economic ventures [31, 32]. The occurrence of anti-Chinese riots in Kudus in 1918, in my opinion, was related to the emergence of new nationalism of the Muslim community in Kudus *Kulon*.

In this case, the symbol attached to Ja'far Shadiq by the Kudus community is more similar to the Virgin of Guadalupe for the people of Mexico in the context of self-liberation from Spanish colonial pressure, as discussed by Eric Wolf [33]. The complexity and heterogeneity of Mexico were reconciled in Guadalupe. Political overtones were blended with individual and social aspirations, particularly for the Indian. There hardly existed a better example of a highly evocative national symbol and a clearer illustration of the relation of microcosm to macrocosm than that of the Virgin of Guadalupe of Mexico. The Guadalupe symbol thus linked together family, politics, and religion; the colonial past and the independent. It reflected the salient social relationships of Mexican life and embodied the emotions that they generated.

3.6 ATTRACTING VISITORS OR PILGRIMS

Pilgrimages to graves (*ziarah kubur*) were a widespread phenomenon in Indonesia. They could be observed in almost all regions and in most of the country's cultures and religions. In Java, thousands of graves were visited by varying numbers of pilgrims. This, however, did not mean that such pilgrimages were non-controversial. Orthodox Muslims, for example, condemned the practice, although it was very popular among less strict fellow believers with a more syncretic approach. Among the graves that attracted disproportionate numbers of visitors were those of ancestors, village founders, religious apostles, religious leaders, shamans, heroes, monarchs, and secular leaders. Although not all these deceased figures were seen as saints or sacred men, their graves were considered sacred places [34].

Basically, *ziarah* sites were the graves of Muslim saints, kings, and nobles. For example, in Java, there were the graves of the Walisongo, the founders of Islam in Java. *Ziarah* had a religious or spiritual connotation. Rituals and spiritual practices of pilgrims at all types of sites could overlap depending on the pilgrim's intentions and religious affiliation. Pilgrims visiting graves offer requests and prayers, ask for the deceased's blessing, or come to fulfill a vow. The motivations for *ziarah* were: seeking true spiritual experiences, honoring the dead, and seeking worldly gains [35].

When faced with difficulties, many people went on a pilgrimage to a sacred place to find peace. A sacred place can be associated with a divine presence, but it can also arise because a society intended it to be so. The sacred place represented the will of the people. A visit to the sacred places was meant to help many people restore their position in the common life [36].

4. CONCLUSION

In an effort to reveal the meaning of the Holy City of Kudus, the ritual is based on the Haul, with its symbols from each step and the entire ritual. The sacred ritual of Sunan Kudus, held every year, aimed to create order in the community life of Kudus city. The strength and order shown in the safety and welfare of the community would only be realized if Sunan Kudus' figure were sanctified within the framework of Javanese culture. The purification ceremony was held in steps. During the Sunan Kudus haul ceremony, the *Kyais* were important figures because only they could create it, including creating taboos. Even the sacredness and profanity of space can be created by the Authority Owner. That ceremony, which was always held by the people of the sacred city every year, showed that there was a close relationship between the people of Kudus and the figure of Sunan Kudus.

This study has formulated alternative methods and their operational procedures to determine the meaning of Kudus as a sacred city in Java. The alternative method was used to read, analyze, and interpret the meaning of Kudus city based on symbols.

The presence of tens of thousands of visitors participating in the ritual can be a driving force in improving Kudus as a religious tourism destination in Indonesia. Thus, this study also opens the door to further research on Kudus as a religious tourism destination. This study can also motivate researchers to conduct similar research in other cities, both locally and globally.

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