

SYMBOLIC MEANING OF BUKA LUWUR: A HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL STUDY OF SUNAN KUDUS GRAVE

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Abstract

This article describes the symbolic meaning of Luwur (a covering cloth) of the grave of Sunan Kudus, the first preacher of Kudus in the annual tradition of Buka Luwur (replacement with new Luwur every month of Muharam/Sura). The tradition is performed by the Foundation Administrator of Mosque, Menara, and Sunan Kudus Grave (YM3SK) together with the residents of Kauman, Kudus, Central Java. The data of this study were obtained from observation, interview, and reference investigation with a qualitative descriptive analysis. The research result showed that the luwur of Sunan Kudus grave behind al-Aqsha Menara Mosque assigns various symbolic meanings. The event of Buka Luwur tradition is performed in every first to tenth of Sura/Muharam month, through the distribution of Asura porridge and jangkrik rice to the residents of Kauman village, Islamic art performance, learning about Islamic New Year (Muharram), and replacement of the old Luwur with the new one. The motif of Luwur consists of jasmine, unthuk banyu, kompol, and wiru, which symbolize honor to Sunan Kudus. The tradition has been conserved to honor the traces of dakwah of Sunan Kudus.

Artikel ini menjelaskan makna simbolis dari Luwur makam Sunan Kudus, da'i pertama di Kudus dalam tradisi tahunan Buka Luwur (penggantian Luwur baru setiap bulan Muharam/Sura). Tradisi tersebut dilakukan oleh Pengurus Yayasan Masjid, Menara, dan Makam Sunan Kudus (YM3SK) bersama warga Desa Kauman, Kecamatan Kota, Kudus, Jawa Tengah. Data penelitian ini berasal dari observasi, wawancara dan investigasi referensi dengan analisis deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Luwur makam Sunan Kudus di belakang Masjid Al-Aqsha Menara memiliki berbagai makna simbolis. Rangkaian acara tradisi Buka Luwur dilakukan setiap bulan Sura/Muharam pertama hingga kesepuluh, yaitu pembagian bubur Asura dan nasi jangkrik kepada warga desa Kauman, pertunjukan atraksi Seni Islam, program pengajaran Tahun Baru Islam (Muharram), dan penggantian Luwur lama dengan yang baru. Motif Luwur terdiri dari melati, unthuk banyu, kompol, dan wiru, yang memiliki makna simbolis penghormatan terhadap Sunan Kudus. Tradisi tersebut dilestarikan untuk menghormati jejak-jejak dakwah Sunan Kudus.

Keywords: tradition; conservation; symbolic meaning

Introduction

The dignity of a nation or a community can be measured through their honor to the ancestors. The honor the following generations do towards their ancestors will grow along with their understanding about the ancestor's early paces by conserving the tradition and understanding the meaning behind. Sort of tradition is realized by the following generations according to social condition strengthened by their cultural characters. To *Nahdliyin* people, the annual tradition of celebrating the birth of the Prophet PBUH (*maulud Nabi SAW*) and the commemoration of the death of their public figure becomes a tradition popularly called as *khoul*. However, in order that the tradition is preserved across generations, a teaching of cultural meaning and symbols is the key task to equip them with adequate knowledge and understanding of the tradition and the culture.

The honor to the ancestors holds sublime messages: first, to pray for the ancestors in a hope that they will be granted by God a glorious place for their dedication in building the civilization; second, to commemorate the public figure's death every year (*khoul*) colossally; third, to document the ancestors' paces in manuscripts, like autobiography books and their masterpieces; fourth, to honor the generation/its heir; fifth, to build a grave with a good physical

performance with various motifs and its variety. Those efforts of honor are adjusted to capability and creativity of each region and backgrounded by religious understanding (Rosyid, 2019).

This manuscript studies about the annual tradition around the grave of Sunan Kudus, the first preacher in Kudus City, Central Java. People in Kudus commemorate the death day of *ulama* (Islamic scholars) every year, generally called as *khoul*. Since the day, date, and month of Sunan Kudus' death has not been unable to trace, the event is called *Buka Luwur* (replacing the white cloth covering/protecting the grave of Sunan Kudus with the new *Luwur*) on every 1st to 10th of Sura month coinciding with the New Year of Hijriyah. The tradition of *Buka Luwur* has been based on the fact of the spread and development of Islam in Kudus City for the preaching (*dakwah*) of Sunan Kudus. The fact of preaching trace has been referred to the territory of al-Aqsha Mosque. The historical and cultural site in the era of pre-Sunan Kudus that can now be witnessed are the discovery of statue, praying site (Langgar Bubrah) and other material heritages (the twin gate in al-Aqsha Mosque) which prove the fact that the religion in Kudus before Islam was Hindu (Rosyid, 2018).

It is normal that the trace of preachers is respected by Nahdliyin residents in Kudus as a real form of dignifying the ancestors. As a religion of preach, Islam has developed with various patterns that it succeeds and grows along *Nusantara*. Islam came to South Asia (including *Nusantara*), giving impact on the significance of language realized in Arabic writing even the occurrence of transition from oral literature tradition to the writing one (Kersten, 2018). Tradition of writing had been used as a medium and material of preaching by preachers in *Nusantara* by exploring and writing books. Developing awareness on the achievements of former preachers upon instilling Islamic values among society and students in boarding schools in the colonialism era is vital for the present and future generation. According to Bizawie (Bizawie, 2016) the sustainability of Islamic boarding school serves as the main factor strengthening the built networking and preservation. The main action of scholars (*ulama*) to preserve tradition in Islamic Boarding School is building a solid communication and cooperation with others. However, the heritage of Sunan Kudus in terms of books or trace of boarding school has not been detected by the author.

Walisongo are preachers who struggled for introducing Islamic teaching to the public in Java. The word "songo" in 'walisongo' represents the number of the preachers, which means nine. There are diverse opinions concerning

walisongo in terms of the actors and years of work. The variety of opinion occurs due to the difference of historical resources which was not always similar, some of which are derived from oral tradition. According to Abdullah (Abdullah, 2015), *walisongo* is divided into six batches. The first batch is in 1404 to 1421 AD, which was the batch of Maulana Malik Ibrahim (1404-1419 AD), Maulana Ishaq, Ahmad Jumadil Qubra, Muhammad al-Maghribi, Malik Israil, Muhammad Ali Akbar, Hasanuddin, Aliyudin, dan Syekh Subakir. The second batch is in 1421-1438 AD, which is the batch of Sunan Ampel (1401-1481 M). The third batch is in 1436-1463 AD, the batch of Ja'far Shodiq (Sunan Kudus, died in 1550 AD), Syarif Hidayatullah (Sunan Gunung Jati, 1448-1568 M). The fourth is in 1463-1466 AD, the batch of Raden Paku (Sunan Giri) in 1442-1506 AD, Makdum Ibrahim (Sunan Bonang) in 1465-1525 AD, Raden Said (Sunan Kalijaga), Sunan Drajat (in 1470-1522 AD). The fifth is in 1466-1678 AD, the batch of Raden Patah/Sultan who firstly ruled the Sultanate of Bintoro Demak (1448-1518 AD), Fathullah Khan/Fatahillah, and Sixth, Umar Said (Sunan Muria) and Ki Ageng Pandanaran (Sunan Tembayat).

There are two aspects that need exploration for the variety of opinions concerning *walisongo*, especially Sunan Kudus. According to de Graaf et al. (1998), Jakfar Shodiq is a name of Arabic scholar in Madinah (700-765 M) and is buried in Madinah. The word *Jakfar Shodiq* is borrowed by a *qadi* (headman) in Java and believed as a figure who builds the Great Mosque of Kudus (which is now called as al-Aqsha Mosque, people in Kudus call it *Masjid Menara*). Jakfar Shodiq is a son of a headman of the Great Mosque of Demak who died in 1524 AD when he led a troop of Bintoro Demak Sultanate in a battle against Majapahit Kingdom (de Graaf et al., 1998, p. 70). In a speech (oral) tradition, Sunan Kudus is a Chinese descendent named Jak Tik Su, even there is part of the members of *walisongo* claimed to be from China, like Bong Swi Hoo (Sunan Ampel), Toh A Bo (Sunan Gunung Jati), Bo Bing Nang (Sunan Bonang), and Gan Sie Cang (Sunan Kalijaga). These data need to be more deeply explored. According to Sunyoto, Sunan Kudus (Ja'far Shodiq) is a son of Sunan Ngudung/Raden Usman Haji with Nyai Anom Manyuran binti Nyi Ageng/Gede Maloka (daughter of Sunan Ampel with Nyi Ageng Manila). This manuscript focuses on Sunan Kudus/Ja'far Shodiq (in the era of *Walisongo* in 1436-1463 AD) who dies in 1550 AD and is buried in the complex of special cemetery behind al-Aqsha Mosque of *Menara Kudus* (Kudus Minaret).

This study choose Sunan Kudus due to special tradition, annual celebration with *Luwur* replacement, conserved by society around Kudus driven by the Management of Kudus Minaret and Sunan Kudus Grave (YM3SK) . This program is regularly conducted on the first to tenth of Muharam/Sura. The old *Luwur* is replaced and given by the committee to the families all over the village of Kauman, Kudus. The Grave of Sunan Kudus administratively belongs to Kauman Village. This grave is not used for funerals anymore because the graveyard is full. Besides, *Luwur* is given free for the guests invited by the committee at the peak of event on the tenth of Muharam, the date the new *Luwur* is used. The giving/distribution of *Luwur* is also done by the committee of the death commemoration of Kiai Mutamakin (a preacher in the region of Pati) every tenth of Sura in Kajen village, Margoyoso, Pati, the neighbour of Kudus. However, the *luwur* of the Grave of Kiai Mutamakin is auctioned by the committee to the public attending the commemoration ceremony (*khoul*) and it is usually sold out.

The tradition in Sunan Kudus Grave has attracted several researchers. The first research is conducted by Al-Hasan (2013), which suggested that the *khoul* tradition has contributed to the development of those who preserve the tradition as a medium for remembering death, commemorating the virtue and struggle of figures, and realizing peace in mind for the residents. The second is by Umi (2016), which pointed out that the *khoul* tradition serves to reminisce the virtue of the ancestors and imitate their good deeds to implement in life. It encourages them to help and care one another. Another similar research is conducted by Yulianti (2018), which asserted that the tradition of *khoul* has social meaning, such as interaction and social solidarity for maintaining *silaturahmi* (good relationship) to build the *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), to improve the residents' piety, and to follow the virtues and attitudes of the commemorated figure. According to Amin (2020), under the perspective of anthropology, *khoul* for Javanese is a form of honor to the dead figures so that their soul rest in peace in the grave. Fuadi (2013) stated that the tradition of *Buka Luwur* in the grave of Sunan Kudus means peoples' effort to honor the merit of Sunan Kudus. Their enthusiasm to preserve the tradition is influenced by their background of age, education, and religion

Correspondingly, Fathurohman & Setiawan (2017) suggested that *buka Luwur* symbolizes nobility, tolerance, mutual help. It trains and habituates people to give charity to get closer to God, and develops good morals. It teaches about care to each other and opens the sense of togetherness (Argarini, 2015).

Nuha, (2016) highlighted that *Buka Luwur* in the Grave of Sunan Kudus is a religious ceremony serving as a cultural medium which contains a value of exemplary and uniting social groups around Kudus that becomes a social tightening power. According to Falah et al. (2017), the fact that people around Kudus live in diversity encourage them to preserve this tradition to honor Sunan Kudus, to give charity to others, and to meet spiritual satisfaction. Khotimah (2018) advised that the value attached to this tradition, maintaining the prohibition to slaughter cows, is a proof of respecting Hinduism. Therefore, the existing value is religiousity, tolerance, *ekasila*, and enculturalization in form of education, carnival, and the art of *terbang papat*. A study by Maftuchah & Fauji (2020) concerns more on *luwur*, including its motifs, and also the symbolical meaning of *buka Luwur* of Sunan Kudus tomb.

The current study expose the typical traditions of residents in Kauman Village, Kudus, which are still maintained, the specialties of the tradition of *Buka Luwur* in the Grave of Sunan Kudus, the symbolic meanings of *Luwur* of Sunan Kudus Grave. Understanding of the symbolic meaning of the tradition can strengthen people's motivation to conserve the tradition of *Buka Luwur* in the Grave of Sunan Kudus.

Method

The research data were collected through observation, interview, and literature review. They are described analytically to acknowledge the symbolic meaning behind the tradition of replacing *Luwur* of the Sunan Kudus Grave. Observation is done by attending the event since the first to the tenth of Sura/Muharam (with various programs). Interview is conducted with the committee of *Buka Luwur* event, the management of Sunan Kudus, invited guests, and the residents of Kauman Village, Kudus. Some information is also collected from literatures concerning tradition of *khoul* and others. The collected data are then described, analyzed, and interpreted. They are described based on the facts with scientific investigation. The results regarding the symbolic meaning of *Luwur* cloth are presented with scientific approach, such as oral stories, and non-scientific prediction.

Finding and Discussion

Luwur is installed only in the Grave of Sunan Kudus to cover, to decorate, and to show special meaning compared to the other graves (with no *Luwur*) round. It is replaced with the new one every Sura/Muharam month. The

activities are centralized in al Aqsha Mosque of Menara Kudus (Kudus Minaret) and around the complex of Sunan Kudus Grave behind Al-Aqsha Mosque, Kauman Village, Kudus. The honor to Sunan Kudus by Muslim generation, especially the Management/Functionary of the Mosque and Sunan Kudus Grave is realized in various motifs of *Luwur*. The diverse motifs are symbols expressed in form of cultural work (*Luwur*).

Typical Tradition Preserved by the Residents of Kauman, Kudus

Based on the reported data of Kudus Central Bureau of Statistics in 2020, Kauman Village, Kudus is 0.03-km² width. Its agricultural land was zero with one RW (Citizen Association) and three RT (Neighborhood Association) with the total 395 families, 200 women and 195 men. According to the data, there are 53 families around the area of RT.1 (Block Menara 1), 35 families in RT.2 (Block Menara 2), and 33 families in RT.3 (Block Menara 3). Their professions are entrepreneurs, government officers, labors, retired residents, and so on. However, there found no rice fields and farmlands around the area. Geographically, the village is fully inhabited with narrow alleys as most residence around the urban areas of Kudus.

The customs and culture of the region are always maintained by the cultural actors. Making efforts for cultural conservation is a form of respect to the cultural legacy giver. It is what has been done by the residents of Kauman, Kudus. They conserve the attitude of not doing the taboos. One of the prohibited examples of taboo is building a house with two floors because it is considered imitating the height of the building of Menara Kudus. Beside Sunan Kudus Grave, right north side of the grave, there are four houses they perceive taboo as the houses have a bed/couch (*ranjam*) covered or installed with *selambu* (a circling cloth/mosquito net). Covering the beds with *selambu* is considered imitating the *luwur* of Sunan Kudus Grave. Another typical custom is that when sleeping, the owners of the four houses must position their feet away from Sunan Kudus Grave. For example, if the house is in the south side of the grave, the feet should direct to the south, contrary to the grave.

According to the local story, when the taboos are violated by people, they will get sanctions. When somebody build a storied house, he/she is reported to be sick or even crazy. According to another story, before he/she died, his/her body was rotting. There is also a warning that somebody who sleeps with the feet facing Sunan Kudus Grave will be disturbed by genie, the

khodam (servant) or student of Sunan Kudus. He could be moved to another place during sleeping.

The use of term for the commemoration event is also set. The Nahdliyin Muslims in Kudus (except the Functionary/Management of al-Aqsha Mosque) use the term *khoul* but the Functionaries of al Aqsha Mosque use the term *Buka Luwur*. The residents and Functionary of YM3SK do not know the fixed date of the death of Sunan Kudus. Therefore, the event is performed every first to tenth of Sura. On the first of Sura, the *luwur* is removed, and is replaced with the new one on the tenth. The event of *buka Luwur* has a typicality/uniqueness, i.e., the serving of dish called *nasi jangkrik*, i.e., a portion of a ready-to-eat rice being shared to the pilgrims attending the event of *Buka Luwur*. The rice is completed with buffalo meat or goat meat as the side dish (given by donors) and wrapped by teak wood's leaves. Buffalo or goat meat is selected in the oral/narration tradition to conserve the message of Sunan Kudus who forbade people of Kudus to slaughter a cow, an animal respected by Hindu in the era of Sunan Kudus. Before preaching in Kudus, Sunan Kudus worked in Bintoro Demak Sultanate. The prohibition of slaughtering cows is still maintained by Kudus residents, especially by Nahdliyin, during the wedding parties, for example. Once, a resident slaughtered a cow during a wedding event. When the event began, a storm suddenly smashed in the event (Rosyid, 2019). The incident strengthened the belief that slaughtering a cow is taboo. However, for non-Nahdliyin residents, slaughtering cows becomes a tradition on the tenth of Dzulhijjah for typical Muslim sacrifice. They argued that Islam does not prohibit slaughtering cows. So far, beef has been easily found to be purchased in traditional or modern market in Kudus. There are also butchers in Kudus. The local government of Kudus Regency also has a slaughterhouse (RPH) which serves the slaughtering of consumers/residents' cattle including cows. People are highly interested in consuming beef as they can find it in meatball.

Typical Tradition of Buka Luwur in the Grave of Sunan Kudus

Some important moment performed by cultural actors has typicalities, such as the annual tradition of *Buka Luwur* in the Grave of Sunan Kudus. The typicalities are the sequential event series from the ritual abstersion of *Keris Cintoko* as well as the sharing of *Sura* porridge, *jangkrik* rice to the *luwur* cloth of Sunan Kudus Grave (Rosyid, 2019). The author has analyzed the aspect of meaning of the *Sura* porridge in the cultural perspective of tradition of *Buka*

Luwur (Rosyid, 2020b). The event of *Buka Luwur* usually begins with prayer. In the past, Sunan Kudus was a soldier and commander of battle in Bintoro Demak Sultanate (neighbour of Kudus City). When living in Kudus, as a figure who had ever been in a battlefield, he must habitually have had *Keris* (weapon) for self-defense. The *keris* of Sunan Kudus is ritually cleaned in the commemoration of *Buka Luwur* on Monday or Thursday, the first week of *tasyrik* days (11,12, and 13 Dzulhijjah). The material used to ritually clean the *keris* is called *banyu londho*, water of coconut soaked for three days and black sticky rice husk. Both materials are splashed to the *keris* three times. Next, it is cleaned with lemon water and then dried on the husk (rice mill waste of black sticky rice). It is aimed at maintaining the authenticity of the black color of the *keris* and to avoid rust. After that the prayer is done and the *keris* is put into a box stored in Tajug. The absterion of *keris* is done together with the absterion of *Tumbak Trisula* the heritage of Sunan Kudus. These three eyed-spears are installed in the right and left of the *mihrab* of al-Aqsha Mosque. *Keris Cintoko* is stored in the roof of the inside part of Tajug and the two spears on the right-left of *mihrab* because there has not been a representative museum to store them. In Kudus, there are only Museum of Kretek and Museum of Ancient Fossils Patiayam.

The typical tradition of *Buka Luwur* besides the absterion of *Keris* and *Tumbak* is cooking *Bubur Sura* made by the Committee of *Buka Luwur* and women, girls, and residents of Kauman Village, Menara Kudus. The story of the resque of Prophet Noah along with his followers due to flash flood has inspired this tradition. At the moment of post-flood, on the 10th of Sura (Asyura) the prayer is recited along with the serving of porridge. The *Sura Porridge* in the commemoration of *Buka Luwur* in the Grave of Sunan Kudus, in 2018, was cooked in six stoves, in which each stove produced 150 portions of porridge. The porridge was distributed to the residents of Kauman Village and assisted by part of the neighboring residents. The porridge was traditionally cooked on the 9th of Sura for 3 hours. The main ingredients are 9 crops, i.e., corns, rice, green bean, soy, *tolo* beans, cassava, peanut, sweet potato, and banana. The accompanying components of the porridge are slices of *tempe*-tofu, omelet, chili, a whole shrimp, *pelas*, and anchovy. The porridge along with the components are placed in plate covered by banana leaves.

The typical term in the event of *buka Luwur* is the distribution/sharing of *jangkrik* rice. The rice is served and wrapped in teak wood leaves, completed with side dishes of goat or buffalo meat, not beef. According to Argarini, rice

is a visualization symbol of charity and the caring message of the Kauman Village's residents to the guests attending the event of *Buka Luwur* (Argarini, 2015). The event of *Buka Luwur* in 2019 was attended by 389 invited guests consisting of *ulama* (scholars), religious public figures, Communication Forum of Regional Leaders (Forkompinda) of Kudus, and the Association of *Auliya* Grave Stakeholders of all Java territory (PPMA). The served dishes were 2,396 baskets of *jangkrik* rice and 33,662 packs of gift. The *jangkrik* rice in the event of *Buka Luwur* in 2018 was conducted on September 20. The committee made 29,032 packages of *jangkrik* rice given to the invited and non-invited guests. The distribution activity was done in the peak of the event of *buka Luwur*. Besides, the rice was also distributed to all residents around Kauman Village, Menara. The rice was sent to each house by the committee. However, the pilgrims who did not get invitations (due to location limit) were given the package of *jangkrik* rice by queuing. There were 2,498 invited guests, each of whom were given the rice wrapped by woven bamboo vessel (basket). The committee slaughtered 11 buffalos and 84 goats and got 12 thousand kilograms of rice donated by residents. Both kinds of *berkat* were wrapped by teak wood leaves as many as 78.500 leaves sheet. There were 14 buffalos to be slaughtered, 84 goats, 7 chickens, 12 soy sauces, 15,270 kg of rice, 482 sugar, 51.5 kg of onion 9.5 kg garlic, 56.5 kg of salt, 18 bunch of bananas, 283 coconuts. They were all the residents' donation and after the *berkat* were ready, they were sent to invited residents (invited guests), general residents who did not hold written invitation, and all householders in Kauman Village.

It was different from the event in 2020. According to the committee of *Buka Luwur*, M. Kharis, the event in 2020 AD/1442 H, due to corona pandemic, only 26,074 packs and 1,832 baskets of *jangkrik rice-uyah asem* were distributed by the committee on Saturday 29 August 2020 to the management of waterspring in 9 Sub-districts, Kudus and given to the residents around the location. In detail, there were 830 packs in Bae Sub-district, 1,955 in Dawe Sub-district, 3,055 in Gebog Sub-district, 2,880 in Jati sub-district, 930 in Jekulo Sub-district, 2,105 in Kaliwungu Sub-district, 1,405 in Kota Sub-district, 880 in Mejobo Sub-district, and 1,105 in Undaan sub-district. The other packs of rice were given to the parties who donated buffalo, goat, and groceries to the committee.

The Symbolic Meaning of Luwur of Sunan Kudus Grave

In the back part of al-Aqsha Mosque, *Menara Kudus* there is a complex of old grave among others, i.e., the grave of Sunan Kudus along with his family, his troops, and ex-local government of Kudus. The length of Sunan Kudus Grave is 225 cm, the width 70 cm, and the height 40 cm, the height of the tombstone is 68 cm and the width is 14 cm. There is a building protecting the grave (*cungkup*) in the complex of this grave. The *cungkup* (a building of roof protecting the grave) consists of *jirat*, *ranjam*, *nisan*, and *fitrage* which is removed/replaced with the new *Luwur*.

According to Salam, the complex of grave consists of three blocks (1) the family of Sunan Kudus, i.e., his son and second wife. He was granted eight descendents, i.e., *Adipati* Pecat Tanda Terung, daughter of Pangeran Husein, of the same mother as that of Raden Fatah, Sultan of Bintoro Demak. Among the eight children of Sunan Kudus, only four are buried in the same complex as Sunan Kudus, those are Pangeran Poncowati, Panembahan Palembang, Panembahan Mekaos Honggokusumo, dan Pangeran Sudjoko (he died in young age). The grave in the complex which has not been identified is Nyi Ageng Pembayun, Panembahan Kodi, Panembahan Karimun, Ratu Probobinabar (a warlord), Ratu Pakojo, Panembahan Kuleco (Salam, 1986). (2) the graves which are in the same complex and close to the grave of Sunan Kudus are those of Pangeran Pedamaran I to 5, and (3) the complex of high officials in pre-colonial and colonial era. They are K.H.R Padmonegoro (former Regent of Kudus, a son in law of Susuhunan Paku Buwono III in the era of 1749-1788), R.Ayu Tjondrohadi Negoro, R.Ayu Tisno Wijoyo Patih Tumenggung, KRT Tjokrohadi Negoro, R.Ayu Ng.Sumodi Projo, RM Pratisna Surya Kusumo, R.Bagus Sutikna Tjokronegoro, Penghulu Bedogas, etc. (Salam, 1977).

The complex of grave is not used for funeral anymore since it is already full. The last figure who was buried in the complex of grave was K.H.R. Asnawi, the 12th descendent of Sunan Kudus. He was born on Friday *Pon* 1861 AD/1281 H from the couple of H. Abdullah Husnin with Raden Sarbinah. He used to be called Ahmad Syamsi until the age of 25. His name was changed into Raden Haji Ilyas after coming back from Hajj in 1886, and then his name was changed into Asnawi until he died (Ihsan, et. al, 2016). According to Hana, et al. (2017), the genealogy of R. Asnawi to Sunan Kudus includes Sunan Kudus (Ja'far Shodiq), Panembahan Palembang, Pangeran Gemiring, Pangeran Pengaringan, Pangeran Pedamaran 1 and 2, Raden Ngabehi Condro Paruna, Raden Dipoyudo, Raden Puspo Kusumo, Nganten Salamah, Nganten Sofiah,

Raden Abdullah Khusnin, and Raden Asnawi. He was born in 1861 AD/1281 H in Damaran Village, Sub-district of Kota, Kudus. In 1917 AD, he pioneered the establishment of Madrasah Qudsiyah, and it was officially established in 1919 AD/1337 until now. He passed away on Saturday Kliwon, 25 Jumadil Akhir 1379 H/26 December 1959 and was buried behind Al-Aqsha Mosque, Menara Kudus, in one complex with the Grave of Makam Sunan Kudus.

Studying the symbolic meaning of the tradition of *Buka Luwur* in the grave of Sunan Kudus needs to start with mapping the territory of Sunan Kudus grave. Based on the author observation, the area of al-Aqsha Mosque can be mapped comprising, first, al-Aqsha called by *Masjid Menara* by Kudus residents, whose building was driven by Sunan Kudus. Second, *Menara* (minaret) which is popularly known as *Menara Masjid* al-Aqsha located in front right part of al-Aqsha Mosque. Third, complex of Sunan Kudus Grave is located exactly behind al-Aqsha Mosque. The three buildings are ancient buildings, and they have become cultural heritages, i.e., *Menara* (Minaret) and two gates in the foyer and inside al-Aqsha Mosque.

The cloth of *Luwur* in the Grave of Sunan Kudus is white colored covering/circling around on the Grave of Sunan Kudus and in every Islamic New Year (hijriyah) the cloth is replaced with the new one. The old *Luwur* cloth is cut into pieces by the Committee of Buka Luwur and were given for free to the residents of Kauman Village and the invited guests. They are also given *jangkrik* rice (at the peak of the event on 10 Muharram/Asura). The size of cloth pieces are more or less 20 cm long. *Luwur* or *kelambu/selambu* (mosquito net) installed on the Grave of Sunan Kudus is removed (old *Luwur*) on 1st 1 Sura/Muharam and replaced with the new *Luwur* at the peak of event on 10th Sura. There are six teams or 33 persons who make the new *Luwur*. Five teams are responsible for making new *Luwur* which is going to be installed, while another team is in charge of removing old *Luwur* and installing the new one. The *luwur* cloth has three qualities, i.e., good, average, normal. During the removal of *Luwur*, the committee makes new *Luwur* in Tajug, (since the *luwur* is removed on 1-9 Sura to be replaced with the new one), the Grave of sunan Kudus is visible. *Luwur* is a 34.8 piece or 34.29 meter per piece.

The motif and variety of *Luwur* consists of jasmine, *unthuk banyu*, *kompol*, *melaten*, *ranjam*, and *wiru*. Jasmine means holy and great; it is hoped that the Grave is purified and placed in the great place). *Unthuk banyu* means a place for praying to God so as to be given eases and fortune, and etc. by mediator or *wasilah* of Sunan Kudus. The motif of *wiru* or *wiron* in the folds (like a

traditional fan) (Javanese: *ilir*) on the top of *Luwur*. Therefore, if the pilgrims pray, they need to be patient to get the grant from God.

Every motif in the *luwur* is adjusted to certain/specific place during the *luwur* installation on the Sunan Kudus Grave. The *ranjam* motif is in the inner part of the Grave, *kompol* motif on the corner of grave, *melatin* for decorating the inner part of the grave, *blue* motif wiru for the coverage of grave or to place in every side of grave, *kompol* motif on each corner and pillar of the grave, *selambu* motif to put along the sides of the grave, and jasmine motif is placed in the inner part of the grave. The stages of *Luwur* installation starts from the north part of the grave, and is continued to the west side, east side, and finally the south side. The difference lies on the fact that the *luwur* cloth is made all in white color, while the front part of the grave is made of green colored cloth and is given a writing of *La ilaha illa Allah Muhamad Rasulullah*.

Referring to the above description, the *luwur* cloth of the Sunan Kudus Grave is not merely functioned as the coverage or decoration of grave, but it also contains beneficial values to the cloth receivers (the residents in Kauman Village of Menara Kudus and the specially invited guests on the tenth Muharam/Sura). According to Rosyid's analysis, the residents receiving the *luwur* cloth every year, collect the cloth and use it to make *koko* shirt, headkerchief (*rida*), turban, to be put in the wallet, wrap of placenta, and wrap of *keris*. Some also use it as a medium to subdue a buffalo when the bridle is loose during the buffalo slaughter by holding the *luwur* cloth to face to the buffalo. The use of *luwur* cloth is in accordance with each resident's wishes. The belief of the cloth receivers is based on the perception that when the *luwur* cloth is circling around the grave, it is always "illuminated" by the recitation of Al Qur'an by the pilgrims or prayers. However, for those who follow the rational Islamic thought (non-traditional), the effort is considered vulnerable to idolatry (Rosyid, 2019). Besides, it also has symbolic meaning. According to Herusatoto (2000), human is a cultural creature full of symbol, i.e., understanding which follows basic pattern symbol/ego. Symbolism appears in customary ceremonies or hereditary inheritance to get closer to God. According to Fathurohman and Setiawan (2017), the symbol realized in the tradition of *Buka Luwur* of Sunan Kudus Grave is the value of tolerance, helping each other, training and getting accustomed to charity and getting closer to God. Meanwhile, the tradition of *Buka Luwur* also has moral values of symbolization of spirituality, religiosity, and virtue (Prihantari, 2019). In *Buka Luwur* tradition, there are some event equipment, such as incense, *ingkung*, *opor*, traditional market's snacks, *sego*

jangkrik (*jangkrik* rice), Asyura porridge, *Luwur* cloth symbolizing prayer (getting closer to God), charity, and respect (Mualifah, 2018). The tradition also has symbolic meaning of tolerance (the event still maintains the taboo of not slaughtering cow, an animal respected by Hindu in the past, as the advice of Sunan Kudus is inherited orally and conserved), diversity (inviting all elements of society with various strata and religion in Kudus to attend the event), locality (serving typical food called *jangkrik* rice), participative (all residents in Kauman Village become the committee of the event), continuity (conducted every 1st to 10th of Sura), and mutual cooperation (involving special committee in a cooperation of *Takmir* dan *Foundation* of al-Aqsha Mosque) (Rosyid, 2020b). The tradition is still conserved due to the social environment, its diversity, age factor, and educational background of Kudus residents who conserve the tradition (Fuadi, 2013). Thereafter, the symbol in the *luwur* of Sunan Kudus Grave is a part of the efforts of Kudus residents to get themselves closer to God through the mediator (*wasilah*) of Sunan Kudus through the media of *Luwur*, which is annually replaced and massively packaged in *Buka Luwur* event.

The series of *Buka Luwur* from the first to tenth of Sura/Muharam covers the abstersion of the Heritage of Sunan Kudus (Keris Cintoko), public Islamic teaching celebrating the New Year of Hijriyah, removing the old *Luwur* (continued with a process of making new *Luwur*), religious discussion (*masail diniyah*), *rasul prayer* accompanied by tambourine/*rebana* originally from Kudus (*terbang papat*), *khotmil quran* (recital of al-Quran-30 juz by *hafidz*), donation to orphaned children, distribution/sharing of Sura porridge to the residents of Kauman Village, recitation of *Kitab al-Barzanji* (History of the Prophet PBUH), distribution of *berkat* (gift), and installation of new *Luwur* (Rosyid, 2020a). The efforts made by the functionary/*takmir* of al-Aqsha Mosque and the Village Government aims to always condition all the residents of Kauman Village to always get ready to welcome Sura/Muharam month to conserve the tradition of *Buka Luwur*. The next stage is forming a committee and socializing to public the discussion (*musyawarah*) result of the committee via printed media and social media for the publication of the annual event.

If the tradition of *Buka Luwur* in Sunan Kudus Grave is understood symbolically by the today's generation and next generation, the tradition will be undoubtedly preserved. There will be positive impact to the old, young and children generation in Kudus to keep loving their ancestors, i.e. Sunan Kudus, who have been meritorious to build the Islamic civilization in Kudus. The honor to Sunan Kudus by Muslim generation, especially the functionary

of Mosque and Sunan Kudus Grave, is realized in the variety of *Luwur* motifs, which is the symbol expressed in form of cultural works (*Luwur*). The variety of *Luwur* consists of jasmine flower, *unthuk banyu*, *kompol*, and *wiru*. Jasmine flower means greatness, majesty, and holiness. Therefore, through the *luwur* motif, it is expected that Sunan Kudus Grave is always respected by being prayed for, in order for him to be purified because the grave is a holy place.

The motif of *unthuk banyu* has a meaning of a place used as a medium for the residents to pray to God in the hope of being granted easiness in life, praying by the *wasilah* (mediator) of Sunan Kudus. The dead people can be the medium of prayer due to their closeness to God. Muslim-Nahdliyin perceive that the dead are truly still alive. The motif of *wiron* atau *wiru* is a motif or form of folds, like a hand-held fan, at the end of the cloth. The making of *wiron/wiru* needs patience reflecting that the pilgrims should be patient in praying if they wish God to grant their prayer (Rosyid, 2021). Things that can be done by the functionary/management of Mosque and Sunan Kudus Grave on the meanings of *Luwur* are filling the website of al-Aqsha Mosque or other social media in order for the meanings are understood by public. To interest and motivate the readers in learning, they can design the colors like the real ones. Why are the motifs of *Luwur* maintained annually? The *luwur* motifs are not altered because the symbolic meaning of *Luwur* suits the evidence inherited by Sunan Kudus, and his merits can still be viewed until now. The real form of cultural heritage is the complex of al-Aqsha Mosque consisting of Mosque, area of Sunan Kudus Grave, Menara Mosque, Kauman Village, which are known as the area of Menara Kudus. This area is an old city which should be conserved by Kudus residents and the regional government to conserve the past trace.

Conclusion

Typical traditions are owned by the Indonesian nation including the tradition of *Buka Luwur* in the Grave of Sunan Kudus every first to tenth of Muharam/Sura. The tradition has been preserved by the Foundation of Mosque, Minaret, and Sunan Kudus Grave (YM3SK) together with the residents of Kauman Village, Kudus. The tradition of *Buka Luwur* has typical meanings, so it is preserved in terms of form and motifs. *Luwur* is a white colored cloth with various motifs circling around the Grave of Sunan Kudus. It saves a variety of symbolic and spiritual meanings. The event series of *Buka Luwur* tradition starts with the abstersion of Sunan Kudus *Keris Cintoko*, distribution of *Sura*

porridge, *jangkrik* rice, and pieces of *Luwur* cloth to the residents of Kauman Village and invited guests in the peak event of *Buka Luwur*, on the 10th of Muharam/Sura. The various motifs of *Luwur* includes jasmine flower, *unthuk banyu*, *kompol*, and *wiru*. Jasmine flower means holy and great. Therefore, this motif symbolizes holiness for being in a great place, Sunan Kudus Grave. The motif of *unthuk banyu* means a place for praying to God for easiness in life with the mediator (*wasilah*) of Sunan Kudus. The motif of *wiru/wiron* is a motif/folds like a hand-held fan, at the end of *Luwur* cloth. Making *wiru/wiron* needs a high patience. Therefore, pilgrims should be patient during praying so that God grants the prayer. Those meanings are less understood by the public, so this manuscript can provide additional views that Sunan Kudus and his grave should be treated as a clean, holy, and convenient place for worshippers to achieve the blessings of Allah the Almighty.

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