



Gemblong and Kalang Obong Traditions on the 7th Day and After Death in Sendangdawuhan Village

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Abstract. *The Indonesian nation consists of various religions, cultures, races, and tribes, or what can be called multicultural. In society, we are required to appreciate and respect the differences that exist in this country. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the Kalang Obong culture that can coexist with the Muslim community. In essence, Kalang Obong is held in a death ceremony. The conclusion of this research is that living in a nation and state that consists of various cultures, must have the awareness to respect and maintain the Kalang Obong Tradition. A tolerant attitude in religious moderation is needed by every citizen and community leader for the realization of peace.*

Keywords: *Religious Moderation, Kalang Obong, Multicultural*

1. INTRODUCTION

In a society, tradition is an integral part that is passed down from generation to generation. There are traditions that are still preserved today, but some are almost extinct. Young people have an important task in maintaining and preserving the traditions of the ancestors, otherwise known as *nguri-nguri* tradition. The word "tradition" is very familiar to our ears and can be found in various fields of life. The beginning of the formation of tradition comes from the thoughts or beliefs of the community which are then realized in the form of religious activities or ceremonies to preserve the tradition. This tradition runs side by side with the religion embraced by the Kalang community. Therefore, it is important to keep the tradition alive until the next generation.

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), tradition is a hereditary custom (from ancestors) that is still practiced in society (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), 2024). Mursal Esten states that tradition is a hereditary habit based on the cultural values of the community concerned (Mursal Esten and Wisran Hadi, 1999). Soekanto Soerjono added that tradition is an action that is carried out repeatedly in the same form (Soerjono Soekanto, 2002). Tradition serves as a means for a group of people to express their values, beliefs, history, and cultural identity. Meanwhile, according to Kendah (2017), traditions are ancestral activities that are usually carried out by community members through various types of rituals (Restin Trisna Utami and Atiq Sabardila, 2023).

In Indonesia, there are many traditions that are still preserved today. For example, in Central Kalimantan there is the tradition of Tiwah Ritual, in Papua there is the tradition of Potong Jari as an expression of grief for the loss of a family member, in Banyuwangi there is the Kebo-Keboan tradition on 10 Suro or 10 Muharram, and in Semarang there is the Dugderan tradition to welcome the fasting month of Ramadan. All of this shows how rich and diverse Indonesia is in terms of race, culture, language, customs and religion, creating a variety of different traditions and beliefs.

One strategy to maintain harmony is to behave moderately in understanding diversity. Indonesia, as a heterogeneous nation with various ethnicities, cultures, traditions and local wisdom, can integrate religious values in religious rituals so that they run in harmony with peace and harmony. Religious moderation is important in this context, because with moderation, true religious values can be implemented in a peaceful and tolerant manner. The diversity of cultures and traditions is a wealth that must be maintained and preserved.

Education and cultural socialization regarding this diversity are important in the implementation of accommodative religious moderation. Through education, people are taught to appreciate and understand the differences that exist in religious and cultural practices, and recognize the right of each individual to carry out their beliefs and cultural practices. This will encourage mutual respect and appreciation between religious communities. A person with a good understanding of religion will be friendly to others, especially in the face of differences.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the context of social life, traditions and cultures with diverse viewpoints, derived from historical heritage, have resulted in the grouping of individuals into majorities and minorities. This grouping should be interpreted as a wealth derived from the diversity of beliefs, which becomes a unifying force in the life of the nation (Nasrun Nurhakim,dkk, 2024). If people are able to harmonize religion, culture and tradition, the Indonesian nation will be more advanced, and the cultural heritage and traditions left by the ancestors will not be eroded by the times. People with a good understanding of religion will be friendly to others, especially in the face of differences. One strategy to maintain harmony requires a moderate attitude and behavior in understanding diversity. Because Indonesia is a heterogeneous nation with various ethnicities, cultures, traditions and local wisdom, religious values in terms of religious rituals can be combined intertwined with harmony and peace.

This research discusses the death ceremony ritual as one of the traditions carried out in various regions as a form of respect for people who have passed away. The traditional death ceremony is a form of respect for people who have died, where in its implementation there are

several series of activities carried out or prepared by the family or local community, such as bathing, shrouding, praying, and burying (Rian Jamrud dkk, 2022). The death ceremony has spiritual, social, and solidarity functions. In its implementation, there are several series of activities carried out or prepared by the family or local community, such as bathing, shrouding, praying, and burying the body. In Hinduism, there is the Ngaben death ceremony which involves burning the body, while in Buddhism, there is a ceremony led by a monk and the body is then put into a crematorium.

Religious ceremonies or rituals based on belief in supernatural powers are still practiced by some groups of people in Indonesia. These rituals, which are passed down from generation to generation, are believed to be a means of connecting with ancestral spirits and a form of respect from living families or relatives to the deceased. The relationship between religion, tradition and death ceremonies in Indonesia is very close and inseparable.

This writing is expected to be useful in revitalizing traditions in the modern era, so that these traditions do not become extinct due to the changing times. This research has limitations in its scope, which only examines and shows the value of moderation contained in the Kalang Obong tradition, so that it can be implemented in fostering the spirit of religious moderation, especially in Sendangdawuhan Village, Rowosari District, Kendal Regency. Therefore, further research is still needed to discuss religious moderation and local wisdom in a broader but still specific context.

The method used in this research is a qualitative method, which aims to solve research problems and produce relevant findings. Data collection techniques were conducted through interviews and verbal interactions to obtain actual and direct information from the source.

3. METHODS

The research method is a way of solving a problem in a study so as to provide a research result. This research uses qualitative research. With data collection techniques to obtain information directly through interviews and verbal interactions. So that you can get actual information directly.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Sendangdawuhan Village

Sendangdawuhan Village is located in Rowosari Sub-district, Kendal Regency, Central Java, where the majority of the population work as farmers, and are generally followers of Islam even though Javanese culture smelling of animism and dynamism is still strong. The people of Sendangdawuhan Village often incorporate Javanese culture with Islamic religious

activities. For example, the Kalang and Gemblong traditions are performed during death ceremonies. Especially for Dukuh Tempel and Gertasombo, the community is still thick with the Kalang tradition.

Research Results

The Kendal community still adheres to the Hindu tradition, which was abandoned by their ancestors many years ago. However, only a few districts still adhere to this tradition, such as Rowosari District, Weleri District, Gemuh District and Ringinarum District. Especially for Rowosari Subdistrict, there are 2 villages, namely Sendangdawuhan Village and Karangsari Village.

Although the majority of people in Sendangdawuhan Village are Muslims. However, because their parents still adhere to this Kalang Tradition, children and young people cannot avoid it. This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation, and marriage to a Kalang person means that the child must follow the Kalang custom. However, if the marriage is with a non-Kalang person, the child can choose between following Kalang custom or not following Kalang.

This Kalang tradition is closely related to religious moderation, the indicators of religious moderation that will be used are four things, namely: 1) national commitment; 2) tolerance; 3) non-violence; and 4) accommodating local culture (Neneng Sri Wulan and Hisny Fajrussalam, 2021). Sendangdawuhan Village is very tolerant of all forms of tradition and culture inherited from the ancestors. The legacy left by the ancestors in the form of Kalang Obong, made Kendal Regency get an intangible cultural heritage award by the Ministry of Education and Culture and Research in 2018.

The Kalang Ritual or Kalang Obong Ceremony Tradition is a death ceremony that is still maintained by the Kalang Community. Kalang is the name of a group of people or ethnic groups spread across the island of Java, especially Java Island (Cultural Heritage, 2024). The story of the Kalang people is found in the *Negarakartagama* book, where the word *Atuha Kalang* is written, which means the person who is entrusted with the task of managing the forest (Ita Fajar April Liani, 2021). Kalang comes from the Javanese language which means boundary. In other words, Kalang is a community that is isolated in community life, because in the past there was an assumption that they were dangerous (Purwati 2024). Kalang people are divided into two groups, namely Kalang Obong and Kalang Kamplong. Suwariyah, a Kalang shaman, said that before the Mataram Kingdom existed, there was already a Kalang tribe. The Kalang people are symbolized by buffaloes, because buffaloes are considered very strong. Therefore, the Kalang people were considered the strongest in ancient Mataram in 1586

AD. In the past, the Kalang people were a group of people who had a profession as loggers and porters in every construction project carried out by the Majapahit royal government. His position, which did not move from the lower class of Javanese society in the past, was very identical to Candala, a group of pariah races during the Hindu trade in India (Muslichin, 2011). Over time, the Kalang tribe was considered dangerous, so they were marginalized from the crowd so that they occupied the banks of the border river. Such as the Blora area and the Bromo slope area (Purwati 2024). The Kalang tribe in ancient times did not have a religion because their beliefs were dynamism and animism.

The Kalang Obong group is the Kalang group of men who are entitled and obliged to hold the Kalang Obong Ceremony, while the Kalang Kamplong group is the Kalang group of female descendants who are not entitled or have no obligation to hold the Obong Ceremony because they are no longer considered pure, because their husbands come from outside Kalang. When pregnant at the age of 7 months, a *tinggap sayur* is held, to determine whether the child she is carrying follows Kalang or not.

As is the case, some of the Kalang people in Sendangdawuhan Village, Rowosari Subdistrict, Kendal Regency, still hold fast and maintain the Obong Ceremony from the past until now. The main purpose of holding the Obong Ceremony is to carry out the mandate of the ancestors of the Kalang Community so that their children and grandchildren perfect the spirits of the ancestors. The belief of the Kalang community is that the spirits are still around, so the ceremony is held on the 7th day and 1 year or *Sependak*. At the 7th ceremony, only the clothes left by the deceased are burned. While at 1 year, all objects left by the deceased are burned, such as mattresses, new clothes, bags, and so on. This ceremony is carried out because in ancient times, Hindus who came to Indonesia still maintained their traditions and customs, such as the caste system and the death ceremony by burning the body. For example, in Bali, the corpse is burned while in Kalang it is replaced with a bride doll made of teak wood, made half-body because it is positioned sitting. In addition, there is also the slaughter of buffaloes. Although not all use buffaloes, because this is done by people who can afford it. Buffaloes are slaughtered and only the head and skin are used in the ceremony. The meat is distributed during the *walimahan* ceremony.

The Obong ceremony has direct and indirect influences on aspects of people's lives. Among other things, Kalang people who perform the Obong Ceremony will get religious emotional satisfaction because they have fulfilled the mandate of their ancestors and then also, as a form of asking God to forgive all the sins committed by the deceased. In addition, the Obong Ceremony strengthens the social arena of the community, because during the ceremony

all residents gather and interact with each other, both from the Kalang and non-Kalang communities. Because there is no one to tell, only through *gepok tular*. And when giving sangu or money to the deceased/almarhumah, the residents while saying to buy cigarettes, buy cassava, and others.

There are three reasons why the Kalang Obong Ceremony is still maintained by the Kalang Community. First, the Obong Ceremony is seen from the belief factor. Based on the results of interviews and research, in reality, the Kalang people of Sendangdawuhan Village, especially in Tempel and Gertasombo hamlets, 90% are Kalang people and still maintain the tradition of death ceremonies. The Kalang Obong ceremony, which they usually perform when one year (*sependhak*) from the death of the deceased, can be maintained in the midst of the progress of the times because they keep the mandate or message from the ancestors, so that they perform the ceremony to strengthen their identity as Kalang people and strengthen their religious life. Even some people, when they were still alive, separated which clothes would be burned at 7 days and which would be burned at 1 year. Nowadays, the deceased who still leaves gold jewelry, is given to the living family to be guarded, unlike in the past, even if it is jewelry, it is also burned because it is a legacy. This is done as a return of favor to the parents. They teach their children that they must be devoted to their parents, even after their parents have passed away. In Kalang society, it is illustrated that even though the child is not a Kalang, the parents still belong to the Kalang tribe. The child must still perform the Kalang Obong ceremony on 7 days and 1 year.

Discussion

In a series of Obong ceremonies, several rituals are performed, such as giving offerings three times a year, or what is commonly called *Gemblong* or *ewuh*. At the time of the first $\frac{1}{4}$ sependak, $\frac{2}{4}$ sependak second, and $\frac{3}{4}$ sependak third. By arranging the food up high, illustrating the height of Mount Semeru. After the morning it is distributed to neighbors. *Gemblong* is served on a cot and water in a barrel or reservoir. In ancient times it was served by the side of the water river, because fire and water were considered strong ancestral spirits.

During the Obong ceremony, the one who really has a role is a shaman who is a Kalang descendant. The shaman entrusts everything to the deceased what his children and grandchildren have prepared, because if something is missing, the spirit will stop and the bell held by the shaman will miss. When reciting the mantra the shaman must mention one by one what has been prepared such as, *inkung* or a whole chicken that is burned, rice, fruit, eggs, ducks and so on. The interesting thing about the "shaman" of kalang, namely the female group, named *Nyi Sonteng*. It is called *sonteng* because when carrying out the procession, she always

carries an iron kentengan tool that is hit so that it produces a "teng-teng" sound. The Kalang community believes that women have more authority than men. Especially in terms of rituals carried out by the Kalang community. Women are believed to be the embodiment of Demang Kalang or the supernatural figure of the ancestors of the Kalang community (Tiyas Nurrahmawati and Prembayun Miji Lestari, 2024).

Second, the Obong Ceremony is seen from historical factors. The term "kalang" was first found in the inscription of the Temple Grave in Tegalsari Village, Tegalharjo Subdistrict, Magelang Regency, which is dated 753 Saka (831 AD). So it is suspected that this tribe has existed since Java has not yet recognized Hinduism (Kalang Tribe, 2024). After Hinduism entered, the Kalang people were increasingly marginalized by the caste system, due to the obscurity of their ancestors. The Kalang people were forced to live in isolated areas, such as beaches, river banks, high mountain slopes, and barren lands.

Third, the Kalang Obong ceremony is seen from cultural factors. The Kalang Obong ceremony is carried out because of cultural acculturation, namely Hindu and Islamic acculturation. Although the majority of the population adheres to Islam, they still carry out this tradition, so that animism and dynamism beliefs are increasingly fading.

The impact obtained from the Kalang Obong Ceremony, when viewed from trust and social factors. The impact of the Kalang Obong Ceremony on trust is that it creates a sense of calm and tranquility, because the family left behind feels that they no longer have a burden of dependence on their family who has died. The impact on the social community is to create mutual cooperation, which can be seen when the Kalang Obong ceremony is held, the community helps each other selflessly or expects compensation from those who hold the Kalang Obong ceremony.

Burning Procession

It is called Kalang Obong, because in its implementation, there is an activity of "obong" or burning objects. The objects burned are the personal belongings of the person who died. On the 7th anniversary, the family prepares some personal objects to be burned, including clothes, bags, and others. Some other objects are left for the one-year anniversary of the death (*Sependhak*).

Another thing that distinguishes the 7-day and one-year Kalang Obong processions is the time of the burning procession. On the 7th day, the items that are burned are the relics of the deceased which are carried out at around 2 pm. Whereas on the one-year anniversary of death, the Kalang Obong tradition begins with the slaughter of buffaloes carried out by the family of the deceased. This buffalo slaughter is not mandatory because it is usually carried

out by families who are able or get a message from the deceased if they have died to slaughter a buffalo. This *sependak* ceremony is carried out at 3 am.

In addition, the family also prepares a place that will be used to place a statue made to resemble a half-body human. There is a *puspa* (*sarira*), a doll as a symbol of the spirit of the dead. In the obong ceremony, the *puspa* is made of teak wood *tanpo soco* (teak wood that is not deformed or edged) with a height of about 35 cm and a width of 15 cm equipped with clothes and jewelry as befits a living person. Whereas in the *sradha* ceremony (Majapahit period), the *puspa* or symbol of the corpse is made from a flower arrangement (Diman Suryanto, 2003). The statue is made of wood or plywood equipped with human clothes. If it is a man, he wears a shirt, cap and sarong. If the woman uses kebaya, veil, and jarik. The place to put the statue is made like a playhouse made of wood, with a tasseled roof, and a shawl or jarik. Offerings or *ewuh* are placed around the statue. On the first night, the spirit is summoned and circled around the house three times, then put in the doll. After that, it enters the room or house-house from the tasseled roof to sleep, then in the afternoon it is woken up to be bathed and changed clothes, after that it sits in the living room *woken up by the family* and sleeps again at night. The second night, the family takes out the statue and offerings to be prayed for by the *sonteng* shaman. The statue is carried out by family members. Then the offerings are distributed to children and grandchildren for provisions, so that they are healthy, and full because it is a form of *aweh mangan* (feeding).

The procession continues with the giving of money to the people who are present. This money is intended to provide pocket money for the deceased. After giving money, the statue and its equipment are put back into the place that has been provided to be burned the next day. The Kalang Obong tradition is believed to be a medium of communication between the Kalang tribe and the spirits of other relatives who have died. The burning of offerings symbolizes the elimination of the sins of relatives who have died during their lifetime.

It should also be remembered that the procession must be carried out in the place of origin of the kalang tribe. Not just any place can be used for Kalang Obong. The next day, in the morning before dawn at 3 o'clock, the ceremony continues with the burning of personal objects belonging to the deceased family, and the items are all new. The burning is carried out by three male relatives who begin by circling the objects to be burned 3 times and have been prepared in the yard. In the process of flipping the object must use a thatched rod (*mbulung*) which comes from the Sago Tree.

The burning process is not arbitrary, the objects are stacked in a place made with houses made of dried reeds, which means from the kalang family and *opo-opo* leaves with the philosophy that there is nothing, no obstacles, hopefully everything will go smoothly. The more that is burned indicates caste, if there are many he is rich. The fire from the burnings also indicates, if it sticks straight up and runs out quickly, it means that the person is good.

When the fire is about to burn out, the family scatters pennies for the guests to fight over. Which will also be used as provisions for the deceased. Another thing that distinguishes the kalang tribe from the non-Kalang is the shape of the gravestone used. The headstone for the kalang tribe must be in the form of a block, which is marked by a sign at the top of the headstone that has a little part removed, the right and left are shaped like shoulders.

During his lifetime the Kalang people also performed *Ewuh* or *Gemblong* earlier, in one year it was done 4 times, after that in 5 months it was done 2 times, and in 7 months it was done 2 times. *Ewuh* is done on Tuesday Wage and Friday Wage. Which usually contains bananas, boiled eggs, *kluban urap*, *gemblong abang putih*, *suruh gambir*, fruits, coffee, and others.

The Kalang Obong tradition is rarely held these days or is threatened with extinction. However, the ceremony commemorating the one-year anniversary of the death of Kalang tribe members still exists and is held in areas in Central Java Province such as in Kendal Regency. The Kalang Obong ceremony in Kendal is held in Tempel and Gertasombo hamlets, which are still thick with Kalang customs compared to other hamlets in Sendangdawuhan Village, Rowosari Subdistrict, Kendal Regency. Nowadays, the younger generation often does not care about tradition, so it is feared that no one will continue the Kalang tradition. The younger generation has a role to play in preserving the local culture of ethnic groups in the regions so that it does not fade (Zida Ardiani dan Fredy Hermanto, 2022).

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The Kalang *Obong* and *Gemblong* traditions in Sendangdawuhan Village are local cultures that are still preserved by the Kalang community. The *Gemblong* tradition is generally held four times a year, while the kalang obong ceremony is held on seven days of death and one year of death.

In modern times like today, many people have begun to abandon the Kalang Obong tradition. This is because there is a negative assumption from some people regarding this tradition. However, the good and bad of the Kalang Obong procession depends on the person who judges it. *Dukun Sonteng* only emphasized that if the tradition is not preserved, it will

become extinct and eroded by the times. Meanwhile, he hopes that the Kalang Obong tradition will not be lost. This is because the tradition is an ancestral heritage and should be preserved.

Suggestion

This research has limitations only in studying to show the value of moderation contained in the Kalang Obong tradition so that it can be implemented in fostering the spirit of religious moderation, especially in Sendangdawuhan Village, Rowosari District, Kendal Regency. So it still requires further research in a broad but specific scope in religious moderation and local wisdom. Because if it is not based on an attitude of religious moderation, it will cause division so that the Kalang Obong tradition can become extinct.

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