

The Inculturation of Islam in the Dongkrek Folklore as a Plague Expeller

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***Abstract:** Islam is a theological teaching based on God's revelation, different from culture, which is a product of human creation. This study uses qualitative methods with discourse analysis, linking field data, opinions, and theories to understand the inculturation of Islam in the Dongkrek folklore in Mejayan. The results align with Dundes' theory, which states that the Dongkrek folklore functions to strengthen community solidarity and uphold norms. Dongkrek combines Javanese ritual elements and Islamic prayers, demonstrating a process of inculturation in this ritual to expel the plague in the village of Mejayan. Additionally, Dongkrek serves as a coercive and supervisory tool, projecting collective imagination and ensuring adherence to community norms. The Mejayan government strives to maintain Dongkrek's optimal function in strengthening the social life of the community, which is harmonious, peaceful, and united. Dongkrek illustrates the blending of Javanese culture and Islamic teachings, showing clear evidence of inculturation in this ritual.*

***Keywords:** Inculturation; Dongkrek; Folklore; Plague.*

Abstrak: Islam adalah ajaran teologis berdasarkan wahyu Tuhan, berbeda dengan budaya yang merupakan karya manusia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan analisis wacana, yang mengaitkan data lapangan, pendapat, dan teori untuk memahami inkulturasi Islam dalam dongeng Dongkrek di Mejayan. Hasilnya sejalan dengan teori Dundes, yang menyatakan bahwa dongeng Dongkrek berfungsi memperkuat solidaritas masyarakat dan menjaga norma-norma. Dongkrek mencampurkan unsur ritual Jawa dan doa Islam, menunjukkan adanya proses inkulturasi dalam ritual ini untuk mengusir pageblug di Desa

Mejayan. Selain itu, Dongkrek juga berfungsi sebagai alat koersif dan pengawas sosial, memproyeksikan imajinasi kolektif dan menjaga kepatuhan terhadap norma-norma masyarakat. Pemerintah Mejayan berupaya agar Dongkrek tetap berfungsi optimal dalam memperkuat kehidupan sosial masyarakat yang guyub, rukun, ayem, tentrem. Dongkrek menggambarkan perpaduan budaya Jawa dan ajaran Islam, yang membuktikan adanya inkulturasi dalam ritual tersebut.

Kata kunci: *Inkulturasi; Dongkrek; Folklore; Pageblug.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the nations and countries that has diverse tribes, languages, cultures, customs, and beliefs is Indonesia. Indonesia is also included in the largest archipelago, so its wealth is abundant. Therefore, Indonesia has a historical heritage and natural beauty that is extraordinarily beautiful. ¹From the abundance of Indonesia's wealth, one of them is as a country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Indonesia has many islands and ethnic groups, so Indonesia has a diverse culture. One of the diversity of Indonesian culture is the diversity in traditional arts and folklore. One of the islands in Indonesia that has a variety of traditions and folklore is the island of Java.

Based on its history, Islam in Java did not last only a short time. Over time, many Javanese culture rituals and traditions were carried out according to Islamic teachings. So, this is one of the proofs of the Inculturation of Islam into aspects of Javanese culture. Inculturation is often interpreted as adapting, maintaining, and developing new traditions or cultures into existing cultures in certain places. ² With the influence of Islam, traditions, cultures, beliefs, and customs have Islamic elements in their teachings and implementation. The emergence of Islamic teaching culture forms two inseparable cultures: material and non-material. When viewed from the definition side, the two things can be distinguished but still inseparable.

¹ Novan Ardy Wiyani, *Concepts, Practices, and Strategies for Implementing Character Education in Elementary Schools* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2013), 16.

² JWM Bakker Sj, *Philosophy of Culture, An Introduction* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1984), 103.

Islam is a teaching based on God's revelation formulated as a religion, where the religion has a holy book as a guideline. Based on its nature, Islam has theological teachings. This is contrary to the meaning and definition of culture. Culture is the result of work, will, and creation that is anthropological and comes from humans. Culture is created from the beliefs and convictions of society regarding religion. At the same time, traditions come from a form of mutual agreement that comes from a mindset or religion that is believed. The Islamic religion itself is not a product of culture. However, Islamic teachings can influence aspects of culture to become more focused. To incorporate universal values into the practice of life, Islamic teachings require an implementation in the form of media that can be used. From the fusion of Islam and culture, the diversity of Islamic culture emerged, causing the grounding of Islamic teachings and differences of interpretation.³

Javanese society has had a culture since long ago. Folklore is one of the many cultures of Javanese society. The spread of folklore is done by inheritance from generation to generation, so it still exists today in oral and action forms and has become a tradition. In the life of society, the development of folklore is a form of effort and group technique to understand and explain the actual conditions of the surrounding environment, with adjustments to the conditions of people's thinking at that time. According to Peursen, mystical thinking in society is the most fertile field for developing thought.⁴ Since long ago, the oral tradition of Indonesian society has been the basis of mystical thought. Indonesian society.

Dongkrek is one of the folklores in the form of traditional dance and ritual arts that grew and developed in Mejayan Village, Madiun Regency, East Java. Dongkrek folklore was initiated by Raden Ngabei Lho Prawiradipura in 1866. This Dongkrek art is a form of exorcism procession in Mejayan Village and is carried out with a procession procession. Dongkrek's art tells the story of

³ Ali Sodikin and et al., *Islam and Local Culture* (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2009), 1–2.

⁴ CA van Peursen, *Cultural Strategy* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1976).

Gandarwo, who disturbs the community fighting with a powerful grandfather, which ends in the victory of the powerful grandfather. *Dongane kawula rakyat enggalo kasarasan* is an abbreviation of the sacred word Dongkrek, meaning a prayer from the community that health will soon be given. Therefore, the Mejayan community makes it a form of wisdom through a tradition of prayers and rituals.

Dongkrek folklore is a ritual dance that uses masks as its symbolic medium. The masks used are the Gandarwo/Giant mask, the beautiful Woman and Perot mask, and the powerful grandfather mask. The use of masks as symbols in the Dongkrek folklore is essential because the symbol is the content of the request for the *Pageblug exorcism ritual*.

Victor Turner, an anthropologist who focuses on ritual symbolism, put forward the theory related to rituals. He published his symbolic theory after completing his research on the Ndembu people of Zambia, Africa, which lasted for four years. Turner said that using symbols in rituals is very important; according to Turner, symbols are the minor storage units that contain various amounts of information from activities, objects, relationships, words, gestures, events, or spatial units related to various essential values in society. Symbols can explain *urgent religious and social values*, such as about the supernatural (e.g., superstition or myth), which impacts the transformation of human attitudes and behavior.⁵ According to Greetz, humans are *animal symbolism*, meaning humans have thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that are expressed symbolically.⁶ Endaswara argues that humans are cultural creatures whose culture is full of symbolism, which means thinking centered and following various patterns based on symbols.⁷

The Dongkrek Krido Sakti association chairman in Mejayan District, Madiun Regency, Walgito, stated that there are 3 types of Dongkrek performances. So, Dongkrek's art performances are rarely performed. The first type, the Dongkrek Ritual at the Tolak Balak event in Mejayan District, is carried

⁵ Victor Turner, *The Forrest of Symbols. Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (London: Cornell University Press., 1967).

⁶ Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Culture. A Brief History* (Yogyakarta: Kinasis, 1992), 3–4.

⁷ Suwardi Endraswara, *Cultural Research Methodology* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2006), 171–72.

out ritually and is sacred with *thanksgiving* and Javanese and Islamic methods. This Dongkrek is only performed in the month of Suro which is carried out with a procession led by *elders* or respected figures. Second, Dongkrek Official Event art as a welcome for guests, inauguration events, etc. Third, Dongkrek Creation or Festival, namely Dongkrek in a festival or Dongkrek dance performance creation competition usually held in a series of events for the Anniversary of Madiun Regency.

Recently, Indonesia and the whole world have been shocked by the Covid-19 pandemic which has spread and become a frightening phenomenon for human life. The people of Mejayan District then identified this Pandemic as a plague that had occurred in the past at the beginning of the formation of the dongkrek folklore. Therefore, people in various villages in the Mejayan District area often carry out the floklor dongkrek procession as a ritual to expel the plague from the Mejayan District with God's permission.

The Inculturation in the Dongkrek folklore involves elements of Javanese cultural rituals infused with Islamic teachings. The use of prayers from the verses of the Qur'an during the Dongkrek folklore ritual procession is evidence of this Inculturation. Based on the background mentioned above, this study is essential to be carried out to determine the Inculturation of Islam in the Dongkrek folklore as a plague exorcist in the Mejayan sub-district.

METHOD

The method used in the discussion of the Inculturation of Islam in the folklore of Dongkrek as a plague exorcist in Mejayan District, Madiun Regency, uses a qualitative method, and the results of the study are in the form of sentence descriptions. Qualitative research is research based on postpositivism and entrepreneurial philosophy. This study uses a discourse analysis method that connects data found in the field, opinions from sources, and previously existing theories. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using inductive and

deductive techniques in its discussion. The data obtained is then analyzed to obtain a discussion and research conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Inculturation of Islam in Javanese Culture, Javanese Folklore and Traditions

The beginning of the Inculturation of Indonesian culture from the entry of foreign nations into Indonesia which initially aimed to trade. With the entry of foreign cultures into Indonesia, indirectly, the nation brought various cultures that they had into and developed in Indonesia. This caused Indonesia to have a variety of ethnic groups with various cultures that are diverse and have developed for centuries and are influenced by foreign cultures that came to Indonesia.

The meaning of Inculturation in *De Liturgia Romana Et Inkulturations* (1995) is the effort of religion to adapt to local culture.⁸ In *the Complete Indonesian-Chinese Dictionary*, the meaning of Inculturation is explaining the meaning of Inculturation is *shi zongjiao shiyong dangdi wenhua de shiye* "使宗教适应当地文化的事业" which means: a religion that adapts to local culture.⁹ Inculturation is natural if it does not oppose religious principles or disturb others. Islam entered Indonesia in the 12th century, then grew into a large kingdom of Samudra Pasai in the 13th century centered in the North Aceh region. At that time in Java, Shiva Buddhism religion still dominated the Singosari kingdom. Only during the Majapahit kingdom could Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shiva Buddhism coexist peacefully.

That's when Islam began to enter Java, primarily through the relationship between the Javanese kingdoms and Samudra Pasai. In the end, the Majapahit troops attacked Samudra Pasai. After Samudra Pasai was conquered, Majapahit returned home with "tribute" as conquered treasures, including several daughters of the Pasai kingdom who had converted to Islam. The spoiled princess, in those days, was treated with great honor. They can bring their cooks, translators, make-up artists, etc., along with their families, all Muslims. By Majapahit, they were

⁸ Adolf Heuken SJ, *Church Encyclopedia Volume II H - Konp* (Jakarta: Cipta Loka Caraka Foundation, 1992), 104.

⁹ Liji Liang, *Complete Indonesian-Chinese Dictionary* (Jakarta: Elex Media Komputindo, 2005).

given the freedom to practice their religion per Islamic law. For that, they were given the right to build settlements around Gresik and Tuban. When trade grew, many ethnic Chinese Muslims, Gujaratis, Parsis, and also Arabs came to Java and then stayed in the settlement of the Muslim Community of Pasai. Since then, Islam has grown in Jepara, Rembang, Lasem, Tuban, and Gresik. because those who brought Islam to Java were very diverse, Sunan Kalijaga, the youngest of the nine guardians who spread Islam in Java, found it difficult to "Islamize" the Javanese. Sunan Kalijaga asked some of his students to put gamelan in the mosque's yard and then play it. Finally, people began to come because they heard the strains of the gamelan being played. Then, through gamelan and Wayang (Hindu), Sunan Kalijaga preached and invited them to embrace Islam.

Etymologically, "folklore" is an Indonesian loan word from Javanese. English is folklore. The word Folklore is a combination of the words folk and lore. Folk is a group of people with physical, social, and cultural characteristics that can be distinguished from other groups of people. These characteristics or identities are like similarities in skin color, hair shape, livelihood, language, level of education, and religion or beliefs or beliefs. However, what is more important is that they already have traditions, namely habits that they maintain and pass on to their descendants for at least two generations, which they can recognize as collective property. In addition, they are also aware of their own group identity.¹⁰

Etymologically, folklore can be interpreted as a custom passed down to the descendants of a group of people who already have a tradition.¹¹ Minimum two generation that they consider to be their joint property. ¹²In addition, they are also aware of the identity of their group. Folk can be interpreted as the equivalent of collective, which has recognizable characteristics physically or culturally. They

¹⁰ Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), 2.

¹¹ Suwardi Endraswara, *Indonesian Folklore: Nature, Form, and Function* (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2013), 31.

¹² Suwardi Endraswara, *Smart Book of Javanese Culture: Pearls of Fairness to the Javanese*, Cet. 1 (Yogyakarta: Tidal Wave, 2005), 31.

are also aware that they are members of a particular society. At the same time, lore is a folk custom, which is part of their culture, which is passed down from generation to generation either verbally or through examples accompanied by gestures, or a reminder tool.¹³

Folk is the same as a collective, with the same physical or cultural identity characteristics and personal awareness as a community. *Lore* is a *folk custom*, or part of their culture, passed down from generation to generation through oral or examples accompanied by gestures or reminder aids (mnemonic devices). Thus, folklore is defined as part of a group's culture, which is spread and passed down from generation to generation in any group, traditionally with different versions, which can be in the form of oral or examples accompanied by gestures or reminder aids (*mnemonic devices*).

Hereditary inheritance in society has functional value for the development of folklore. Symbols of community identity, solidarity, conditions, and traditions are depicted in oral traditions that support them as legitimacy tools for clans, communities, tribes, and nations.¹⁴ Bascom put forward the form of folklore as a pedagogical tool, a system projection, a tool for enforcing the implementation of a norm and also control society, and a means of validating culture. Folklore has normative values that support life-appropriate human beings and act as a filter for the negative impacts of progress science and current technology. One of the norms and values of folklore is the relationship between individuals in a group and the customs of a human collective.

Folklore is a hereditary culture that can be used to find differences between community groups. This means that from Sabang to Merauke or from Aceh to Papua have their folklore and are different in each place. Folklore differences, including food, rituals, religion, legends, and clothing, can occur everywhere—customs, music, art, and myths or mystical things. For example, in East Kalimantan, the customs differ from Javanese people's marriage or wedding

¹³ Sjamsuddhuha, *The Characteristics and Movements of Hinduism and Islam in East Java* (Surabaya: Suman Indah, 1990), 32.

¹⁴ James Danandjaja, *Folklore as Research Material for Psychological Anthropology* (Jakarta: Depdikbud, 1983).

traditions. In Kalimantan, the bride and groom wear traditional Dayak clothes, while in Java, they wear a bun and kebaya typical of Javanese people; that is the difference.

Folklore is a pattern that emerged from a community group that initially referred to an oral culture. Verbal (oral) culture is exchanging information that makes someone understand something. Therefore, verbal culture provides a gap for folklore can develop in community groups. Based on the various definitions of folklore above, it can be concluded that folklore is part of a culture whose distribution is passed down between generations. The distribution of folklore can be in different forms, both oral and using reminder tools. Folklore is traditional, unofficial, and national.¹⁵ Folklore remains even though it has been converted into printed or recorded form. Folklore will continue to be recognized as a sign of identification (identity) of a society.

In essence, folklore is a part of a culture generally spread orally. Therefore, some people sometimes need a different perception and call folklore the same as verbal/ oral tradition. However, Danandjaja said he disagreed if the term oral tradition is used to replace the term folklore, because oral tradition means has a narrower meaning than folklore.¹⁶

Dongkrek Folklore Procession in Mejayan District, Madiun Regency

The community of the Mejayan sub-district holds fast to the customs and social structure of Javanese customs. The community of Mejayan still believes in the social structure of Javanese folklore because there are still some local beliefs embedded in the souls of the community, they also still believe that some of the beliefs of Javanese folklore are true. For example, Javanese folklore in calculating days uses the Javanese calendar.¹⁷The belief of the community of Mejayan in

¹⁵ Endraswara, *Indonesian Folklore: Nature, Form, and Function*.

¹⁶ James Danandjaja, *Psychological Anthropology: Theory, Methods, and History of its Development* (Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada, 1994).

¹⁷ Kusnari Interview, January 22, 2022

local folklore makes the community of Mejayan, a community with high solidarity. The folklore also influences the lives of the community of Mejayan they believe in so that in living their lives they cannot be separated from the connection with local beliefs. One form of folklore that the community of Mejayan still believes in is Dongkrek, a ritual to expel *Pageblug* from the Mejayan area.

Dongkrek art is an art form of dance. The community holds this art by playing certain characters in the performance. It combines dance and music, and there are elements of story/drama. The word Dongkrek is sacred, meaning "*Dongane Kawula Rakyat Enggalo Kasarasan.*" In Indonesian, it means "the people's prayer for immediate healing." this means making people aware of **the** health of body and soul. Dongkrek art is an art form Madiun Regency created by Raden Tumenggung Prawirodipuro III (R. Ng. Lho Prawirodipuro) as Palang Mejayan Caruban after the end of the reign of RMT Sosrodiningrat (Regent of Madiun in 1879-1885) in 1867 in Mejayan.

Mrs. Sri Harmini, who is the 5th descendant of R. Ngabei Lo Prawiradipura, said that R.Ng. Lo Prawirodipuro (Eyang Palang) created Dongkrek because a deadly disease hit Mejayan Village at that time. The community was sick during the day and died in the evening or got sick in the morning and died at night, so Eyang Palang did penance and meditation in Gunung Kidul Caruban. Then he got enlightenment to create art/dance to ward off disaster. The revelation describes the Gandarwa troops attacking the people of Mejayan, so they had to be driven out by herding them out of Mejayan Village. From this, Eyang Palang created art that depicts the expulsion of spirits that bring plagues to Mejayan Village.¹⁸

Javanese society is a society that has hereditary cultural traditions.¹⁹In Javanese society, many traditions still exist and continue to be preserved, for example, village cleaning, ruwatan, maulidan, suronan, and so on. The Dongkrek ritual aims to expel the plague from Mejayan village. Thus, it can be concluded

¹⁸Interview with Mrs. Sri Harmini, February 12, 2022

¹⁹ Sintia Dewi and Abdurrahman Adisaputera, "Didactic Values in Children's Play Songs in Javanese in Banyumas Village, Stabat District, Langkat Regency," *Unimed Journal*, 2018, 1.

that Folklor Dongkrek has existed since ancient times and has been believed by the community as one of the mandatory methods when facing a plague. The Mejayan community still preserves the tradition or folklore of Dongkrek until now; this indicates a love and need for the community for the Dongkrek.

Dongkrek folklore ritual type is one form of Dongkrek folklore presentation that only appears once a year. This ritual used to be performed every Friday night in Legi in the month of Suro by Raden Ngabehi Lho Prawiradipura himself. Implementing the Dongkrek ritual is now carried out every Friday night, Pahing in the month of Suro, to commemorate the death of Raden Ngabehi Lho Prawiradipura. This Dongkrek ritual is sacred and is used for the ritual procession of banishing *plagueblug* or *Tolak Balak*. The Dongkrek ritual procession is usually done by carrying out a procession around the village of Mejayan and by holding a special ceremony with special procedures established long ago. The procession of this activity usually involves the entire population of Mejayan. The Dongkrek ritual folklore procession, which until now still uses the original rules or regulations, is usually carried out by the Dongkrek studio "Krido Sakti" led by Mr. Sudarsono and Mr. Walgito.²⁰

One of the mandatory things in every Javanese traditional belief procession is *the Panuwunan* or *Slametan*.²¹ *Slametan* is always present in every segment of Javanese society's life, including ruwatan activities, tolak bala, village cleaning, or exorcism of plagueblug. In this study, the researcher discusses the Dongkrek folklore ritual procession, which functions as a plague *ward*. Dongkrek Art Performance discusses the performances used as a tool for ritual ceremonies to ward off *plagues*. Dongkrek's art has a performance structure that is in order so that in his show, There are particular elements. Dongkrek Art Series starts with the opening show; overall, Dongkrek Art consists of four performance sessions until the end of the event. The opening session started with a thanksgiving

²⁰ Interview with Walgito and Sudarsono, September 2, 2021

²¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1960).

event/prayer with all levels of society. The second session contains the core of Dongkrek Art in the form of ritual offerings and a procession/parade of Dongkrek performances around the streets of Mejayan Village to ward off *the plague*. The third session contains a dance drama which tells the story of Eyang Palang's fight against Genderwo / spirits. The last or fourth session is the closing session by, holding a parade/procession, which depicts Eyang Palang's victory who has defeated Genderwo/spirits in Mejayan Village.²² Thus, it is clear that the folklor dongkrek cannot be separated from Slametan, which is this ritual's opening and main activity. This shows that in the implementation of folklor dongkrek there is an element of prayer to God to be freed from attacks and the dangers of plague. In addition, the Mejayan community also continues to respect and uphold their ancestors by remembering and continuing to pray for those who have passed away and preserving their heritage.

In addition to being a ritual, Dongkrek folklore is performed in official events and creative Dongkrek festivals. According to Eko Saputro, an official Dongkrek is a Dongkrek presentation that appears at the official village, sub-district, and district government events. Dongkrek is often performed when guests of honor or other significant events, such as the inauguration of a building. Dongkrek folklore at this official event is more creative, no longer bound by standard rules, and emphasizes artistic elements more than spiritual ones. Dongkrek folklore is also usually performed during carnivals or as a means of entertainment when someone from the community holds a celebration, such as a wedding, circumcision, etc. Dongkrek at these official events is no longer sacred but more intended to entertain the community. This type of Dongkrek accompaniment is usually more lively, and there are other elements of improvisation, such as adding musical instruments, songs, and other attractions. There are still processions in this type of Dongkrek folklore, and they can also involve the general public to join in and dance. This type of Dongkrek has

²² Observation. September 2, 2021

economic value because it can be *accepted* or invited to official events to hold Dongkrek performances, and the players get paid.²³

As for the presentation of creative dongkrek in the festival event, as stated by Jefri, a creative dongkrek dance activist and trainer, the Creative Dongkrek Festival is one of the folklore dongkrek performance activities as a creative or contemporary Dongkrek dance competition. The Dongkrek folklore procession in this activity is packaged with the latest concept and made more interesting. The movements and music presented are also created according to the abilities of each participant. The participants are usually groups from various schools in the Madiun Regency. The championship categories are taken according to the level or grade of school, starting from elementary school, junior high school, and high school or equivalent. This creative Dongkrek Festival is usually held on the anniversary of the Madiun Regency or in a series of "SEPASMA" (Sepasar ing Madiun) events. In this Dongkrek procession, there is no special ritual; it does not free the general public to dance; it is carried out on stage; there is no parade around the village, and there are no special requirements from the descendants of Eyang Palang. This type of Dongkrek Folklore is more educational, aiming to preserve culture and character education for the younger generation.²⁴

Javanese folklore is a product of the syncretization process between various elements. Among them are the influences of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, which form a cultural acculturation. This process is very beneficial for the formation of local identity. In essence, Javanese folklore is a sign of identification or local identity of traditional Javanese society. The existence of a sense of *handarbeni* (own) and *hangayomi* (protecting) is undoubtedly the obligation of Javanese society to create a *harmonious, peaceful, and peaceful life*. Various parties must consider the abundance of Javanese folklore for its study, development, and preservation.

²³ Interview with Eko Saputro, July 17, 2022

²⁴ Jefri Interview, July 17, 2022

Cultural history says that folklore is a means of universality to gain a place in a more modern area, as in the case of Mahabharata e-post and Ramayana. The Javanese people also have the Javanese Chronicle as a form of confirmation of power. Mataram's strong influence over the regions he subjugated required political integration. The civilization of the ruling Mataram dynasty has always been associated with various local folklore. For example, Joko Tarub, Ki Ageng Sela, Ki Ageng Giring, Joko Tingkir, Nyai Rara Kidul and Sunan Kalijaga. In the end there was an assimilation and symbiosis between the state and the countryside that benefited both. Finally, social harmony is achieved in it.²⁵

Further research is conducted, and it turns out that folklore and being a local identity are also a collective pride and a medium for spiritual behavior or reflection. For example, during *Suro* and *Ruwah*, many village cleaning rituals or nyadran are carried out. Javanese people often visit the graves of their ancestors and visit *punden* to carry out *slametan* and send prayers to their ancestors. Ritual events like this still exist and are believed in many village areas today.

Folklore is very useful for the formation of local cultural identity. Folklore is a way of displaying the character and cultural patterns of the region. The historical side of the region is brought out, as well as the characteristics of its markers or identification marks. The history of culture in a region can be expressed through folklore, and the region can be recognized. Folklore makes cultural patterns in community groups eternal. Studying folklore will make someone know the motives and meanings of their culture. They will also understand their thoughts, actions, and works.

Efforts to preserve folklore can be seen in Javanese expressions. Traditional, this includes the crystallization of experience, reflection of thoughts, and reflection of the feelings of the supporting community. Traditional Javanese words are short sentences that come from long experience. In folklore, there is group wisdom and social intelligence.²⁶ Based on the explanation and theory

²⁵ Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Expressions of Western and Eastern Historical Philosophy* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1986), 5.

²⁶ Sumarti Suprayitno, *The Figure of Bhima in Javanese Literary and Cultural Society*. (Yogyakarta: Javanology Project, 1986), 4.

above, there are efforts from the community and local government to continue to preserve dongkreng and attract the interest of the younger generation to participate in it. In addition, the community and government of Mejayan and Madiun district generally consider dongkreng folklore as their local identity so that a sense of pride arises and continues to explore the potential that stands out in the dongkreng.

Government and Community Views on Dongkreng Folklore in Mejayan District, Madiun Regency

According to Dundes, the functions of folklore include : (1) a tool for building and strengthening group solidarity, (2) a tool for directing inappropriate social behavior back to the right path, (3) a tool for reprimanding other people's mistakes, (4) a tool for protesting injustice, and (5) a means of enjoyable.²⁷ Entertainment. Mejayan Village Head Gunawan Wibisono, ST, said that he, as the village head and village government, hopes that dongkreng will always be preserved. Gunawan plans to hold a dongkreng traditional competition so that the people of Madiun will remember that dongkreng is an original art from Madiun and was born in the land of Mejayan.²⁸ In line with the theory stated by Dundes, the Mejayan government is trying its best to ensure that the existence of the dongkreng can function correctly. The government hopes that with the dongkreng folklore's existence, the Mejayan community will live in *harmony, harmony, and peace* without any disturbance.

Kusnari said that the Dongkreng tradition has existed for a long time, so it has become ingrained in the community, especially in Mejayan and its surroundings. The existence of the Dongkreng art creates a sense of mutual need among the community so that the community becomes harmonious and likes to work together in joy and sorrow. In addition, communication between communities is also well established so that the community can easily work together.²⁹ According to Hadi Sutiknyo, a historian and cultural expert in Madiun,

²⁷ Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965).

²⁸ Interview with Gunawan Wibisono, ST, May 21, 2022

²⁹ Kusnari Interview, January 22, 2022

the existence of dongkrek has resulted in the Mejayan community becoming a community that cares about culture and tradition. This concern is manifested by continuing to preserve dongkrek. The Mejayan community believes that efforts to preserve dongkrek are part of appreciating and upholding their ancestors who have contributed to their lives.³⁰

The opinion expressed by Kusnari and Hadi Sutiknyo above is also in line with Dundes' theory that the dongkrek folklore has functioned as it should. In this case, the dongkrek folklore has functioned as a tool to thicken the sense of collective solidarity and as a tool to justify a society. According to Andri as a player or dongkrek artist and the Dongkrek Condro Budoyo association leader, dongkrek is a valuable tradition. Dongkrek contains ancestral teachings for the next generation in facing a problem. According to him, anyone who studies or digs deeper and understands dongkrek, that person will gain broad insight related to the exemplary values of a leader who always protects his people in any situation. In addition, an influential leader does not rely on his strength but one who always remembers and always *asks* for help from God.³¹

According to Yoga, a dongkrek artist, the existence of dongkrek in the Mejayan community forms a unique belief in the players or dongkrek performers. The dongkrek artists in Mejayan village are a society that does not easily give up in facing problems caused by being inspired by the dongkrek folklore stories that have been believed in since ancient times. When a disaster or a trial from God occurs, the dongkrek artists do not stop praying to God and always try in various ways according to their beliefs.³² According to Bascom, folklore has four functions, namely (1) as a projection system, namely as a tool to reflect the dreams of a collective, (2) as a tool to validate cultural institutions and institutions, (3) as an educational tool (*pedagogical device*), and (4) as a tool of coercion and supervision so that the members of the collective will always obey the norms of society.³³

³⁰Interview with Hadi Sutiknyo, March 5, 2022

³¹Interview with Andri, April 9, 2022

³²Yoga Interview, April 9, 2022

³³ William Bascom, *Four Functions of Folklore* (Englewood: NJ Prentice-Hall, 1965), 3–20.

Based on the theory put forward by Bascom, Andri and Yoga's opinion, in this case, has shown its function as a coercive and supervisory tool so that its collective members will always obey community norms. In addition, it is also a projection system *or* a tool that reflects the dreams of a collective. Mr. Anwar, as a religious figure of Mejayan Village, said that dongkrek is one of the manifestations of a request or a way of praying to Allah to overcome the problem of plagueblug or disaster that occurred in Mejayan. In this case, he said that prayers can be done in various ways as long as they do not deviate from Islamic law and beliefs that are believed. Mr. Anwar also appealed to the community not to have the wrong intention in praying. He emphasized that praying should only be directed to Allah, not to creatures so that there is no polytheism.³⁴

Rohmat Basuki said that preserving tradition also requires education. In carrying out all actions, one should understand the basics rather than just do or follow other people who do it. Regarding the art of dongkrek, he said there needs to be education for the community, especially regarding supernatural and mystical things, so that the community does not commit idolatry.³⁵ Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani explains in his book *Badzlu al-Maa'uun fi Fadli al-Tha'un*, which explains how Islam's perspective is to respond to an epidemic or *Tha'un*. *Tha'un* is an epidemic with a speedy rate of transmission and causes mass death. The definition of the *Tha'un epidemic* is identified with the *Pageblug epidemic* in Javanese society.

The book explains the difference of opinion between Umar bin Khattab and Abu Ubaidah bin Jarrah regarding the attitude of Muslims in facing the *Tha'un* epidemic. Umar bin Khattab, who refused to enter Damascus, was considered to be running away from the fate of Allah SWT, who was affected by the *Tha'un* plague at that time. Then Umar responded that what he did was to move from one "destiny of God" to another "destiny of God ". Then Abdurrahman bin Auf arrived and gave a solution that agreed with the actions of Umar bin

³⁴ Anwar Interview, July 16, 2022

³⁵ Interview with Rohmat Basuki, July 16, 2022

Khatab. Abdurrahman bin Auf quotes the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him. *Abdurrahman Bin Auf said he heard the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, say: If you hear of an outbreak of disease in a country, then do not enter it, and if you are in that country, eat and do not leave because you avoid it (HR. Bukhari)* ³⁶.

In today's terminology, the Prophet taught how to deal with *the Pandemic*; perhaps this method is called *Lockdown*, quarantine, or PSBB. In other words, this is an action to limit contact with people outside the area affected by the outbreak. That way, it is hoped that the outbreak will not spread further to other areas; this is an effort by Muslims to deal with the outbreak or *Pandemic*. In addition, another way is to maximize efforts after that prayer. Maximum efforts are made by following the instructions of the government, medical experts and experts in science. In dealing with this *Pandemic*, it must be approached with knowledge. QS At-taubah verse 51 reads, " *Say (Muhammad), nothing will happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is our protector, and only to Allah do the believers fear*".³⁷ In this case Maximizing efforts means maximizing efforts and always praying.

Several prayers in the Qur'an were taught by the Prophet Muhammad in facing disasters. First, the prayers of the prophets in the holy book of the Qur'an, for example (1) The prayer of the Prophet Adam can be seen in QS Al-A'raf: 7 (2) The prayer of the Prophet Moses can be seen in QS Al-Qasas 28: 16 (3) The prayer of the Prophet Noah can be seen in QS Hud 11: 47 (4) The prayer of the Prophet Yunus can be seen in QS Al Anbiya 21: 87. Second, the prayers taught by scholars, for example, KH Hasyim Asy'ari " *lii khomsatun uthfi biha harrol waba'il khotimati almusthofa wal murtadlo wabnahuma wa Fatimah*". In addition There is also a way to deal with disasters, namely with the adzan pitu, which is an adzan performed by seven people simultaneously. This method is said to have been used by Walisongo in expelling *plagues* from the land of Java.

³⁶ HR Bukhori

³⁷QS At-Taubah : 51

Thus, it can be concluded that Islamic religious figures in Mejayan village strongly support the implementation of the dongkrek folklore as a way to exorcise plague. Dongkrek is considered a traditional way of praying to Allah SWT. However, religious figures in Mejayan also appealed to the community for the right intentions. They invited the community to study and review the teachings and history of the dongkrek folklore to avoid acts of shirk (associating partners with Allah SWT). Suyono, as a member of the general public, said that the community is very proud because they have dongkrek as a legacy from their ancestors. In addition to a sacred ritual that is a guideline for belief, now dongkrek is also held as entertainment and a festival so the community can be entertained.³⁸

According to Eko, dongkrek is a regional asset that needs to be preserved and continuously developed. The government is expected to pay attention to the community's efforts in maintaining the existence of this dongkrek. Until now, dongkrek has become the community's pride, especially the residents of Mejayan and the people of Madiun Regency.³⁹ Based on the opinions of Suyono and Eko Dongkrek, it has become a tool or means of enjoyable entertainment, as Dundes said.⁴⁰ Apart from that, it is also a means of education for the community, as Bascom said.⁴¹

Inculturation of Islam in Dongkrek Folklore as a Plague Banisher in Mejayan District, Madiun Regency

According to Javanese beliefs, restoring natural balance due to pagebug must be done in a way known as *ruwatan* or clean the village, or ward off disaster. The root word for *ruwatan* is *ruwat*, which means an effort to cleanse the dirt of the soul and evil intentions, such as greed, avarice, and arrogance. Javanese belief states that nature cannot purify itself. However, humans are obliged to perform *the purifying*; however, when humans are controlled by their lusts, they can forget

³⁸ Interview with Suyono, January 22, 2022

³⁹ Eko Interview, July 17, 2022

⁴⁰ Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965).

⁴¹ William Bascom, *Four Functions of Folklore* (Englewood: NJ Prentice-Hall, 1965), 3–20.

themselves to the point of feeling like the sole ruler on earth. Therefore, nature feels unacceptable if humans disturb or damage its balance. In this case, humans are considered to have gone *too far*. Then, when nature's patience reached its limit, God created *a plague* to manifest nature's resistance to human evil. Behind its harmful impacts, *a plague* also gives a message to humans to be aware and return to their natural state as *partners* and guardians of nature conservation.

Ruwatan procession in Java is manifested in various forms. This *ruwatan's form* can be in traditional art performances (such as wayang, tayub, dongkrek, etc.), putting up offerings, cleaning the environment around *the punden*, and so on. However, one of the mandatory things in every Javanese traditional belief procession is *the Panuwunan* or *Slametan*. *Slametan* is always present in every segment of Javanese society's life, including *ruwatan* activities, warding off disasters, cleaning the village, or banishing plaguebug.⁴²

The teachings of Islam teach several things in dealing with the plague. Ways to deal with the plague include making many efforts, praying a lot, giving alms, and avoiding anxiety. Dongkrek Art Series starts with the opening show; overall, Dongkrek Art consists of four performance sessions until the end of the event. The opening session started with a thanksgiving event/prayer with all levels of society. The second session contains the core of Dongkrek Art in the form of ritual offerings and a procession/parade of Dongkrek performances around the streets of Mejayan Village to ward off *plague*. The third session contains a dance drama with tells a story about the fight between Eyang Palang and Genderwo /spirits. The last or fourth session is the closing session, holding a parade/procession, which is used as a form of depiction for the victory of Eyang Palang, who has defeated Genderwo/spirits in Mejayan Village.

The implementation of the *selamatan* was accompanied by a *tahlilan* prayer led by Mr. Anwar as, a religious figure in Mejayan Village, starting with chanting *tawasul* to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the Angels, the previous Prophets, the four companions of the Prophet, the Guardians, the four Imams of the school of thought and the ancestors in Mejayan Village, especially to R.

⁴² Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1960).

Ngabei Lo Prawirodipoero, who created this art. Without religious belief, the series of ritual processes are only symbols. This prayer process is one of the solemn delivery to Allah. ⁴³In the next process, *cok bakal* / offerings in the form of *telon flowers* is installed. And *takir plontang* . Offerings in the form of four chokes will be installed right in the corner of the village. Generally, Javanese teachings are limited by *the Qibla Papat Limo Pancer*, which is the direction of *Kulon, Lor , Pancer Tengah, Wetan, and Kidul*. In Indonesia, it is known as four wind directions: south, west, north, east, and the central direction as the center.⁴⁴

From the observation results above, it is clear that Dongkrek is a folklore that contains two important elements: Javanese ritual and Islamic prayer. This shows that there has been a mixture of Javanese culture and Islamic teachings in implementing the dongkrek ritual to ward off plaguebug in Mejayan village. This also shows the Inculturation of Islam to the Dongkrek Folklore in Mejayan. In the essence of Javanese religion, ancestor worship is manifested through *slametan* . Although outwardly worshipping the spirit, its essence remains centered on God. So, the mystical attitude remains centered on God. God is the source of grace, while the ancestral spirit is only an intermediary (*wasilah*).⁴⁵

Mr. Anwar's statement stated that *offerings* in place or placed in the corner of the village that borders another village make *a magical page*. The meaning of *the magical page* is the border for *the immense universe*, namely Mejayan Village, with the belief that it is protected from disease outbreaks. According to his statement, Mejayan Village is a home for the Mejayan community who live in the village and not for the spirits, so by placing *a supernatural pager* in the form of *offerings*, *sengkolo* goods from outside the village area will not be able to enter the village.⁴⁶

⁴³ Observation, September 2, 2021

⁴⁴ Observation, September 2, 2021

⁴⁵ Suwardi Endraswara, *Javanese Psychology* (Jakarta: Buku Seru, 2013), 115.

⁴⁶ Anwar Interview, July 16, 2022

CONCLUSION

One form of folklore still believed in by the Mejayan community is Dongkrek as, a ritual to expel *Pageblug* from the Mejayan area. Folklor Dongkrek has existed since ancient times and has been believed by the community as one of the mandatory ways to deal with the plague. The tradition or folklore of dongkrek is still preserved by the Mejayan community until now, this indicates a love and need for the community for the dongkrek. Folk or Dongkrek is inseparable from Slametan, which is this ritual's opening and main activity. This shows that in the implementation of folklore Dongkrek, there is an element of prayer to God to be freed from the attacks and dangers of the plague. In addition, the Mejayan community also continues to respect and uphold their ancestors by remembering and continuing to pray for those who have passed away and preserving their heritage.

In line with the theory stated by Dundes, the Mejayan government is trying its best to ensure that the existence of the dongkrek can function properly. The government hopes that with the dongkrek folklore's existence, the Mejayan community will live in *harmony, harmony, and peace* without any disturbance. Folklore dongkrek has functioned as a tool to thicken the sense of collective solidarity and as a tool to justify a society. In addition, folklore dongkrek has shown its function as a tool of coercion and supervision so that its collective members will always obey the norms of society. In addition, it is also a projection system *or* a tool to reflect the dreams of a collective.

Islamic religious figures in Mejayan village strongly support the implementation of the dongkrek folklore as a way to expel the plague. Dongkrek is considered a traditional way of praying to Allah SWT. However, religious figures in Mejayan also appeal to the community to have the right intentions and invite the community to study and review the teachings and history contained in the dongkrek folklore to avoid acts of shirk (associating partners with Allah SWT. Dongkrek is a folklore that contains two essential elements, namely elements of Javanese ritual and elements of Islamic prayer. This shows that there has been a mixture of Javanese culture and Islamic teachings in implementing the dongkrek

ritual to expel the plague in Mejayan village. This also shows the Inculturation of Islam into the dongkreng folklore in Mejayan.

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