Acculturation between Islamic Teaching and Javanese Tradition in Mubeng Beteng Ritual among Moslems in Yogyakarta Indonesia

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Abstract—Yogyakarta Palace is a palace complex located in the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It was built by Prince Mangkubumi in 1755, several months after the signing of Giyanti Agreement. The palace is the main seat of the Sultan of Yogyakarta and his family. It serves as a cultural center for the Javanese people and contains a museum that displays the sultanate’s artifacts. One of the rituals in Yogyakarta Palace is Mubeng Beteng. It is an annual event for celebrating the Javanese new year. This event has become a tradition since hundreds years ago. In this ritual, some people in Yogyakarta take part and all of the participants walk together around Yogyakarta Palace fortress without speaking anything. This act symbolizes the reflection of self about what we have done in one year. This research is a field research using an anthropological approach. It is used to see the background, purpose, and ritual practices of mubeng beteng for Moslem society in Yogyakarta. This study earns two main findings. The first is that the Moslem community of Yogyakarta interpret the mubeng beteng ritual as a spiritual and cultural acculturation and the second is that the acculturation form between Islam and Javanese culture in the mubeng beteng ritual is reflected in such things (a) mubeng beteng ritual is like tawaf in Kaaba, because both are equally filled with praying and meditation and (b) in the mubeng beteng ritual, the symbol of leader is Kyai Tunggul Wulung flag to be believed to be taken from the cloth of Kaaba in Mecca. These are forms of acculturation between Islam and Javanese culture in the Mubeng Beteng ritual.

Keywords—Tradition, Acculturation, and Mubeng Beteng Ritual.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since its establishment, as Kraton (palace) is believed to be the wellspring of civilization that is never subsided by time, Kraton Ngayogyakarto Hadiningrat is one of the four centers of Javanese kingdoms (projo kejawen) which is the rightful heir to the cultural heyday of Mataram. Therefore, the kings of Mataram and the Sultans of Yogyakarta are honored the title raja pinandhita and narendra Sadibyo, i.e., the title as productive creators of culture. In relation to this, the Sultans together with indigenous experts give birth to original ideas about art, literature, social systems, economic systems, and so on. [1]

With the Palace as the center, the people of Yogyakarta have evolved into a separate system of civilization since before joining the Republic of Indonesia (1945). In fact, Yogyakarta has had its own system of government since the palace was established [2] Kraton as the center of civilization is seen from culture dispersal patterns that radiate out centrifugally. [3]

Aside from being a ritual, culture also serves as a tool to educate the Java community that they should have noble character, respect others, preserve nature, and thank God, and as a tool of “proselytism”. In terms of cultural heritage, famous traditional ceremonies that are still preserved until today are, among others, tumplak wajik, [4] Gerebeg. [5] Sekaten. [6] Siraman Pusaka, [7] Labuhan, [8] and mubeng beteng.

It has become a tradition that every 1 Suro’s night/ eve or Hijri New Year, some residents of Yogyakarta perform a ritual tradition of laku prhatin mubeng beteng (walking around the fortress of Kraton Yogyakarta in silence or without speaking any word out)[9]. The mubeng beteng ritual that has still been performed by some Moslems in Yogyakarta is an interesting thing to study, especially to reveal the meaning of it for the Moslem community in Java and values of acculturation between Islam and Javanese culture in the Beteng mubeng practices. Ultimately, this research attempts to reveal the minds of the Moslem community of Java in relation to Islam and Javanese culture itself.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are some studies concerning the mubeng beteng ritual such as, first, the study by Endah Susilantini entitled Mubeng Beteng Aktivitas Masyarakat Yogyakarta that examines the Yogyakarta people’s tradition which is still practiced until today, i.e., mubeng beteng. However, this study does not discuss at all the values of Islam in the mubeng beteng ritual [10].

Second, N N. in his “Ngibarake Pusaka Dwaja Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung” talks about Kyai Tunggul Wulung being hoisted in public and paraded around the fortress. Unfortunately, this work does not talk about the values of Islam, but merely about the origin of the fabric of Kyai Tunggul Wulung. [11]

Third, B. Sularto in his Grebeg di Kasultanan Yogyakarta slightly mentions the mubeng beteng ritual every 1 Suro’s eve. However, the history of the emergence of the mubeng beteng tradition is only a glimpse to discuss in this study, while the lengthy discussion is about the tradition of grebeg Maulud and sekaten. As for the study of acculturation with Islamic values, it is not mentioned at all. [12]

Based on those facts in previously mentioned publications, research on acculturation of Islam and Javanese culture in the mubeng beteng ritual among Moslem communities in...
Yogyakarta needs to be implemented. This study attempts to reveal Moslem view on mubeng beteng and finds the meeting points of the history between mubeng beteng and tradition of Islam developed in Indonesia, especially in Yogyakarta.

III. METHODOLOGY

This is a field research using field data as the primary data. The data source is divided into two, i.e., primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source is taken from the respondents consisting of the participants of mubeng beteng ritual and courtiers of the palace, to reveal the significance of mubeng beteng for each respondent. As for the secondary data source, it is the data on mubeng beteng, and interpretations of behavior on mubeng beteng contained in books, magazines, journals or other publications.

This study uses an anthropological approach by employing two ways to collect data. The first is the observation of participation, i.e., collecting data done by observing the direct involvement of the object under study and systematically recording the phenomena to be investigated, [13] such as a general overview of the process of mubeng beteng ritual. The second is interviews with ritual participants, courtiers, community, and religious leaders.

IV. RESULTS

4.1. Procession and History of Mubeng Benteng Ritual in Yogyakarta

Mubeng Beteng is an annual tradition by marching in silence around the Yogyakarta Palace fortress performed as one of the rituals routinely held by the Yogyakarta Palace and attended by residents of Yogyakarta. Mubeng Beteng ritual is performed at the time of entering the beginning of the New Year to the Javanese calendar or so-called 1 Suro.

Mubeng beteng ritual has become a tradition done in a specific time that is one Suro’s eve. Basically, the tradition is an encapsulation of an expression of concern, which essentially depends on the beliefs of each person who believes in this ritual. [14] This ritual done by the citizens by way of silence has symbolic significance that in the silent contains a philosophical meaning and that in the change of the Hijri year; preferably every person should be concerned about, among other things, reducing their speaking.

Historically, this ritual began in the era of Sultan Hamengkubuwono I. In 1919, Kraton Yogyakarta at the request of the people of Yogyakarta performed rituals such as flag-raising heirloom named Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung, [15] while walking around the palace fortress. The ceremony was intended to prevent and stop the spread of influenza, which at that time widely affected the people of Yogyakarta. Once the magnitude of society’s belief at the time against the sacred heritage, they considered all diseases could be eradicated.

Here is an excerpt from the story on actual events, relating to Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung flag hung in public in 1919 in Yogyakarta: [16]

“Sapérangan para sedulur ing Ngagjojokarto lan sakiwotengépadha duvé panganggep jèn wesi adji lan pusaka duvè daja rupa-rupa. Umpamané pijandel marang dwadjja (kelèbèt gendèra) Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung (pusaka ing Kraton) jaiuku jen suk anamb-ambahan (epidemi) lelaran nular, sapérangan rakjat padha njawan supaja kelèbèt pusaka mau diarak mubeng kutha, kaja kangi kalakon tahun 1919 mubalé lelaran influenza”.

“Sawénèh ana ank tjrìta jën Kanjeng KiaiTunggul Wulung kang asli iku asalé saka tjuwilan singeb “Ka’aba” ing Mekah, kang ngampil Kiai Iman Sapi’i utusané Ingkang Sinuwun Hamengkubuwono I tahun 1784 M.”

Meaning: Some people of Yogyakarta and surrounding areas have the assumption that heirloom has efficacy and various meanings, like with Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung. In the event of outbreaks of infectious diseases, most people begged the flag to be paraded in procession around the city, as happened in 1919 when influenza epidemics occurred.

Some people reported that the original Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung was from the lid of the Kaaba in Mecca, which was taken by Kiai Iman Sapi’i on the orders of Sultan Hamengkubuwono I in 1784 AD.

The tradition of mubeng beteng ritual accompanied with the procession of parading Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung carried out by the Yogyakarta palace is massive, with the specific sequence. The front is Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung flag accompanied by a battalion of palace soldiers that have been designated for the task, and then followed by the citizens of Yogyakarta from various parts to follow the ceremony carnival. [17]

The physically shape of Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung flag is rectangular, with a purplish black background and striped yellow edge, in the midst of the flag has an image of a hawk with rajah (meaningful letters) in Arabic letters. In details, Kyai Tunggul Wulung is described as follows:

“Déné wudjudé dwadjja (kelèbèt) Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung wungu kladuk ireng plisir ing pinggir kuning, tengahé pepetan putih nganggo buntut tjawang loro, sarta ujud bunderan dalah bunder londjong loro warnané abang. Kelèbèt mau karakit ana landhean kang ing putjuké anak waose lantjip papat (caturtsula) kaparingan asma Kandjeng Kiai Santri. Kandjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung kaarak wudjud putran (duplicat), déné kang asli winadhanan pethi sarta uja kaarak ing djèdjèrè,aking lawasé wudjud wus mbrebret (mbedhel) mula bandjur diputrami mau. Ing djèdjèrè uga ana klebèt pusaka sidji kang kaarak warnané idjo sarta kuning, warna kaja mangkono mau arané Paréanom” [18]

Meaning: “As for the color of Kanjeng Kiai Wulung Tunggul flag, it is purplish black with yellow at the edge of the flag. In the middle, there is a white image with a forked tail and also there are also red round and oval images. The flag is placed on a cane with its end having caturtsula named Kiai Kanjeng Santri. Kiai Kanjeng Tunggul Wulung paraded is the duplicate, while the original is placed inside a trunk paraded as well. Since the original is old age and easily torn, a duplicate is made. Next to it, there is also a participating heirloom, with green and yellow in color called Pareanom”.

Based on the origins of the tradition of mubeng beteng ritual, which in the past was done by the community to obtain a cure on outbreak of influenza and plague, the subsequent tradition of parading Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung flag is
implemented every eight years on the commemoration of the Prophet’s birthday. At that moment, other heirlooms are also paraded in the procession, among others, Kanjeng Kiae Ageng, Kanjeng Kiae Gadawadana, and Kanjeng Kiae Gadatapan (all in spear-shaped) along with Bendhé, Wedhung, Cemethi, Ketipung in the year called Tahun Dal (Dal Year/every eight years). [19]

4.2. Acculturation in the Mubeng Beteng Ritual

In the tradition of mubeng beteng, there are some symbols that are actually also done in the rituals of Islam. First, mubeng beteng is as a symbol of tawaf at the Kaaba. Among the pillars of Hajj, tawaf is a pillar that is not easy to grasp its symbolism contained therein. Moving around the Kaaba seven times has a very deep meaning for the lives of every human being in the totality of their dimensions, not just in the context of ritual or hereafter interests alone.

Tawaf implies that the motion of every human life is not just for life itself, but all the motion in life happens and is done toward Allah SWT as the center of the vortex of human movement or as the center of orbit of human life.

Briefly, a symbol of tawaf is that every human being should have a strong sense of the right and straight understanding of from where life comes from and where to go forward, i.e., from and towards Allah. Tawaf (literally circling) is one of the Islamic rituals of pilgrimage by going around the Kaaba (the most sacred site in Islam) seven times, in a counterclockwise direction with the starts and ends at Hajar Aswad (the holly black stone), while the Kaaba is located on the left. Kaaba is the central direction/qibla of worship of Moslems. Here, in the House we become the guests of Allah SWT.

Tawaf round as many as 7 times reflect the rotation of the earth to the sun that marks the range of times, day and night, which shows the time, day, month and year. Tawaf symbolizes the values of monotheism. In tawaf, humans are directed to always draw closer to Allah SWT not just once, but repeatedly, and each time in life, as symbolized in the worship of tawaf performed seven times round. It symbolizes that humans always draw closer to God during the seven days of the week, meaning humans should be able to draw closer to God every moment and every day of his life.

In connection with the mubeng beteng ritual, the participants seem to perform tawaf around the Kraton Yogyakarta. Kraton is positioned as if to “Kaaba” in the ritual, so circled as many as seven rounds. This is done because the Palace has a cultural, social, and spiritual significance for people of Yogyakarta. [20]

The construction of the palace is based on consideration on the balance and harmony of natural elements. Kraton becomes a point of equilibrium between water and fire. Fire is represented by Mount Merapi while the water is symbolized by the South Sea. Palace located in the midpoint becomes a point of equilibrium between vertical and horizontal. The point here is denoted by the horizontal balance of the South Seas that reflect human relationships with fellow human beings and Mount Merapi that symbolizes the vertical balance that is the human relationship with the Creator. [21]

In this case, Kraton position occupies a central or pancer or the Kaaba for Moslems in the rituals of worship. Therefore, according to one of the participants, mubeng beteng done seven times round is the proverbial of keeping the heart and the Kaaba within oneself. Something good and noble must always be protected, conserved, and balanced. [22]

“Seven times” in mubeng beteng is a symbol of Sufism that the way to approach God for a Salik will pass through seven hurdles, seven obstacles, and seven perils. Fariduddin Atthar, [23] a Sufi in his Manthiq al-Thair assumed that the way to God is very long and must pass through seven valleys. Seven valleys are to symbolize the stages of the spiritual journey of the human soul in attaining Divine Love. At each stage of the valleys or the journey, there are many challenges and mystical experiences experienced by the souls who travel the spiritual journey. In addition, in every valley, the souls of men will go through different experiences. [24]

Secondly, both tawaf and mubeng beteng ritual are equally filled with remembrance and contemplation. In practice, the tawaf is done by the Kaaba seven times round, walking rotating counter-clockwise, starting from the Black Stone, while the position of the Kaaba is located on the left. Furthermore, tawaf is done with a full appreciation of the presence of Allah, dhikr, prayers and asking forgiveness from Him. This symbolizes that every human being must always pray to God to feel His presence every day, by remembering Him, remembrance, praying to Him and asking forgiveness from Him.

In connection with the mubeng beteng ritual, there are several ways done by several groups of the community. Based on interviews with several participants of the ritual, the participants perform mubeng beteng with silence or in a Javanese term topo mbisu, i.e., walking around the Kraton fortress silently by not being allowed to talk to anyone. The perpetrators of ritual usually fill the silence with a thoughtful and reflective about life, God’s unimaginable grace, and natural phenomena around. There are also those who fill their silence with sirr dhikr (reciting only in heart). [25]

There are also, however, those who perform the ritual not in silence, but with dhikr and praising the Prophet slowly and in very low voice. Hence, the mubeng beteng ritual has already been experiencing acculturation to the values of Islam. This means that mubeng beteng has changed from the initial ritual of topo mbisu to mubeng beteng with devotions and prayers. The development application of this ritual becomes interesting because it has undergone changes. [26]

Third, in the mubeng beteng ritual, the guiding and ritual leader is Kyai Tunggul Wulung, in the form of a flag as said to be Qiblah kiswah in Mecca. The participants of the mubeng beteng ritual walk behind the flag and should not be in front of it. According to Rahman, one of the participants of the mubeng beteng ritual, the meaning walking behind and following the flag is human devotion to a way of life. According to him, the flag is described as a way of life of Moslems, the Qur’an. Therefore, to a Moslem, the Qur’an should be the driving directions, compass in life, and distinguishing between right and wrong. [27]
V. CONCLUSION
Acculturation of Islam and Javanese culture contained in the mubeng beteng ritual is reflected in some respects; firstly, mubeng beteng is as a symbol of tawaf at the Kaaba. The element of circling the fortress seven times is one form of acculturation. Secondly, both tawaf and mubeng beteng ritual are equally filled with remembrance and contemplation. Thirdly, in the mubeng beteng ritual, the guiding and ritual leader of the parade is Kyai Tunggul Wulung, which is a flag to be said as the kiswah of Qiblah in Mecca. In this case, Kyai Tunggul Wulung is described as a way of life of Moslems, the Qur’an. Thus, to a Moslem, the Qur’an should be the driving directions, compass in life, and distinguishing between right and wrong

REFERENCES
[4] Tumpak Wajik ceremony is a ceremony of making Wajik (typical food made of glutinous rice with coconut sugar) to initiate the making of parade used in Garebeg ceremony. Ibid.
[5] Garebeg is held three times in a year of Javanese calendar which are in twelfth of the Mulud month (3rd month), in the first of the Sawal month (10th month) and in the tenth of the Besar month (12th month). In these days, the Sultan is pleased to give alms to the people as the embodiment of thank to God for the prosperity of the kingdom. These Alms are called Hajat Dalem, such pareden/gunungan (resembling the form of a mountain) consisting of Pareden Kakung, Pareden estri, Pareden Pawohan, Pareden Gpek, Pareden Bharat, and Pareden Kuta Bromo only made once in eight years in Garebeg Mulud in Dal year. See. B. Sularto, Grebeg di Kasultanan Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1993), pp. 77.
[6] Sekatana is a royal ceremony held for seven days. This ceremony is actually a celebration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad. According to folklore, Sekatena comes from Islamic term credo, ie, Syahadatian. Sekatana begins with the release of two sets of Gamelan sekat, KK Gantur Madu and KK Nagawilaga, from the palace to be placed in the North and South Pagongan in front of Mesjid Gedhe. See. A. Sadewa, Fongsi Serat Putwulang dalam Politik Kerajaan, (Yogyakarta: Depdikbud, 1989), pp. 16.
[7] In the first month of the Javanese calendar, Suro, the Yogyakarta Palace has a typical traditional ceremony, i.e., a ceremony of Siraman/Jamasan Pusaka and Labuhan. Siraman/Jamasan Pusaka is a ceremony performed in order to clean and care for the Pusaka Kerajaan (Royal Heirlooms). See. T. Behrent, Kraton, pp. 50.
[8] Labuhan is an alms giving ceremony conducted at least in two places, Purang Kusumo and the slopes of Mount Merapi. In those places, the objects owned by the Sultan such as Nyamping (batik cloth), Rasakan (clothing) and so on are drowned. The objects are then contested by surrounding community or visitors. See. B. Sularto, Grebeg di Kasultanan; T. Behrent, Kraton, pp. 50.
[9] Currently, the mubeng beteng ritual participants actually come from various societies, including those from several regions in Indonesia, and the students studying in the city of Yogyakarta. Thus in general, spiritual traditions of beteng mubeng can be accepted by all people, including students and young people. See. Slamet Sutrisno, “1 Sura, Etsos Bangsa dan Zaman Waras”, dalam Kedaulatan Rakyat, 19 January 2007.
[12] B. Sularto, Grebeg di Kasultanan,
[14] Currently, the mubeng beteng ritual participants actually come from various societies, including those from several regions in Indonesia, and the students studying in the city of Yogyakarta. Thus in general, spiritual traditions of beteng mubeng can be accepted by all people, including students and young people. See. Slamet Sutrisno, “1 Sura, Etsos Bangsa dan Zaman Waras”, dalam Kedaulatan Rakyat, 19 January 2007.
[15] The physical form of Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung flag is rectangular, with a purlish black background and striped yellow edge; in the midst of the flag has a hawk image with a rajah (meaningful letters) in Arabic letters. T. Behrent, Kraton, pp. 50.
[16] Similarly, the incident repeated in 1932, 1946, and 1951 with the same ceremony that Kanjeng Kiai Tunggul Wulung was paraed to prevent the spread of bubonic plague, because the disease had killed so many people. Therefore, the people of Yogyakarta appealed to the Palace demanding that the flag was paraed again, because at that time the health infrastructure was not adequate, therefore the demand became one of the alternatives of the people, in order to cope with the disease. Indah Susilantini, “Mubeng Beteng Aktifitas Spiritual masyarakat Yogyakarta”, Jantra, Vol II. No. 3, June 2007, 171.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Interview with Mr. Mamah, a participant of Mubeng Beteng, 23 August, 2016.
[22] Fariduddin Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Ibrahim is better known by the name of Attar, meaning The spreader of fragrance. Although his life is known only a little with certainty, it is safe to say that he was born around the year 506 AH / 1119 AD near Nishapur Northwest Persia and died around the year 607 AH / 1220 AD in Syakakhuh in a very advanced age. Al-Attar had a title among Sufis with Saitu al-Salikin (Whip of Sufis), because he was able to lead them to be in holy guidance and inspire their love in pouring their love into works of beautifully divine poetry and prose. One of Attar’s skills having long been known by the population of Nishapur was storytelling. He often served patients and customers by telling stories that captivated their attention. Where there were no customers who came, he wrote a story. Among the works of the famous ‘Attar are Thahdika al-Awlya (anecdote of The Guardian), Ilahi-nanah (The Godhead), Musibat-nanah (Book of Adversity) and Mantiq al-Tayr (bird parliament). All of his works were written in lovely, rich prose-poem with wisdom and in very interesting parable stories.See. Abdul Hadi W.M,“Cinta Ilahi dalam Tasawuf Menurut Faridudin Attar Melalui Mantiq at-Thair”, dikutulis Sejarah Seni dan Sastra Islam, ICAS-Paramadina Jakarta; Faridu’d-Din Attar, Masyurawah Burung, translated by Hartoyo Andangadija (Jakarta: Donia Pustaka Jaya, 1983).
[25] Interview with Ahmad, a participant of mubeng Beteng ritual, 26 August 2016
[26] Interview with Rahman, a participant of mubeng Beteng ritual, 25 August 2016