

Tedhak Siten: an Islam-Java Acculturation

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate one specific tradition of Indonesia, namely tedhak siten as an acculturation of Islamic and Javanese values and practices. The Javanese are the largest ethnic group in Indonesia. Tedhak siten comprises a series of traditional processions to recognize a stage of childhood when it is the first time a child learns to set foot on the ground. Through a qualitative study, it was found that up to this day, the Javanese people still hold this ceremony even though it is in the modern era. In addition to reasons of belief, Javanese people are famous for their love for culture or customs handed down by their ancestors. The series of events include walking on colored glutinous rice, climbing stairs made of sugarcane, entering a chicken coop, picking objects, fighting over coins, and taking a flower bath. Each of these rituals has its own meaning and purpose for the future of the child. Although some people claim that tedhak siten is not mandatory, some continue to hold this ceremony, and some have abandoned this custom. This indicates that there is the shift in the value of a culture or tradition is due to the development of modernization, which then replaces the long-cherished culture.

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1. Introduction

Diversity never fades with time in Indonesia. The many tribes, customs, cultures, and characters of its people make Indonesia famous as a country that always upholds traditions. One of them is the *tedhak siten* custom or also called *mudun lemah*. This custom is a custom that is still being held by the Javanese tribal community. The traditional *tedhak siten* ceremony is still trusted by the Javanese and is carried out from generation to generation. In addition to being verbal, it is also added with gestures that always contain meaning so that this research is partly oral folklore. Javanese society has a unique culture. The Javanese are rich with traditions that are still alive, such as research relating to *slametan* [1].

The cultural system uses symbols as a means or medium to create messages. This is also reinforced that culture itself is the result of human behavior or creation, which requires materials or conveyances to convey its goals and objectives. Symbols are at the core of human culture and action. Symbolism plays a very prominent role in Javanese customs. In a human's life, ever since a child was born to his/her naming, cosmological numbers are important, hence gives birth to a tradition such as *petangan* [2]. The symbolism is evident in traditional ceremonies, a genetic heritage from the older generation to the younger

generation. One of the long-cherished heritages is ritual traditions. Javanese people realize that *tedhak siten* is a tradition considered not to deviate from Islam's teachings [3][4]. The *tedhak siten* tradition is intended to honor the earth where children begin to learn to set their feet on the ground in the hope that one day the child will be successful in living his life [5]. This traditional ceremony has several purposes, including as a form of gratitude because the child will begin to learn to walk, and it does not conflict with the values contained in each belief.

2. Method

The method for this research used the qualitative method, by investigating the phenomena through interviews and enriching it with literature review. This study focuses on the level of trust regarding the *tedhak siten* custom for residents of Tulungagung City, East Java Province, Indonesia. This study also analysis religious aspect, namely Islam. Thus, there is an Islamic religion and there is an Islamic culture. From a scientific point of view, the two can be distinguished, but from a cultural point of view, it is impossible to separate them.

The integration is so closely interwoven that it is often difficult to settle a case, whether the tradition is religion or culture. In human relationship with God, humans obey His commands and prohibitions. However, the relationship amongst humans is included in the category of culture. Religion and culture can influence each other because they are both values and symbols. Religion is a symbol of obedience to God. Likewise, the culture requires one to obey with the accepted norms so that humans can live in their environment. Religious culture is a symbol that represents religious values.

The informants in this study were 10 (ten) people consisting of the community and adherents of Javanese beliefs. The interviews items entails the nativity of informants, the *tedhak siten* ritual existence, understandings of *tedhak siten* procession and the opinions regarding *tedhak siten* continuance as tradition in life.

3. Results and Discussion

Islam is the most popular religion in Indonesia. Most adherents of Islam are on the island of Java. Java is an island in Indonesia located in the Greater Sunda archipelago and is the 13th largest island in the world. The total population on the island of Java is around 150 million. Java Island is inhabited by 60% of Indonesia's total population. Based on the results of research and discussion, samples have been taken that the majority of Javanese people and Muslims still adhere to their customs and culture even though the era is modern. One of the traditional ceremonies that we have studied is the *tedhak siten* [6].

All *tedhak siten* sequences contain several meanings from beginning to end. And all the equipment from *tedhak siten* is also important in carrying out the ceremony. There are several sequences in the *tedhak siten* ceremony, such as walking in seven colors, the children are guided to walk in seven containers, which are red, white, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple, the colors are made of glutinous rice [7]. In *tedhak siten* the child is locked up with a chicken. After that, money is sown to be fought over by the surrounding children and a salvation event is held. At that time, the shaman had just bathed him with a spell, of course, after the child was given food in the form of roasted chicken pieces. It aims as a form of gratitude because the child will begin to learn to walk [8].

Three out of ten respondents still hold the traditional *tedhak siten* ceremony. Because in this custom it can describe a sense of gratitude to God for having been given a baby and upholding the customs of the ancestors. As for other assumptions from the survey results as much as seven out of ten are respondents who have never previously held a *tedhak siten* ceremony. The assumption of these informants is that this traditional ceremony is not mandatory. It all depends on one's beliefs.

Table 1. Results of Interviews

No.	Question	Results
1.	Are you a native Javanese relative?	9 out of 10 are native to the Javanese tribe
2.	Is <i>tedhak siten</i> still valid in your neighborhood?	5 out of 10 answers stated that the <i>addat tedhak siten</i> is still being implemented. The rest, this custom is rarely implemented.
3.	Have you ever held <i>tedhak siten</i>	6 out of 10 respondents stated that they had never held a <i>tedhak siten</i> .
4.	The sequence of the <i>tedhak siten</i> ceremony contains several meanings. Can you explain some?	Based on the answers from 10 respondents, the order of the <i>tedhak siten</i> ceremony is still the same. This means that the Javanese people understand the <i>tedhak siten</i> custom. The following is the order of the <i>tedhak siten</i> ceremony: 1. Sungkeman 2. Walking on jenang 7 (seven) colors. 3. Climb the ladder made of sugar cane. 4. Enter the chicken coop and choose a toy 5. Children are bathed in water with seven kinds of flowers 6. Throwing money 7. Pray together
5.	Is <i>tedhak siten</i> a culture/custom that must be implemented? Why?	9 out of 10 respondents stated that this <i>tedhak siten</i> custom needs to be implemented because it is a form of gratitude to God Almighty for having been given a baby and respecting ancestral customs. (Wulan). Aryo as one of the respondents stated: "It depends on the parents themselves because the purpose of <i>tedhak siten</i> is for children to grow up to be independent children and according to family expectations. It is still found that some parents do not hold the traditional <i>tedhak siten</i> ceremony due to reasons of living in the midst of modernization times".
6.	In your opinion, what is the meaning of <i>tedhak siten</i> ?	Indri: The meaning of this <i>tedhak siten</i> is that parents can learn to be grateful for the growth and development of the children who have been born

As stated by informants:

"It depends on the parents themselves because the purpose of tedhak siten is for children to grow up to be independent children and according to family expectations."

It is still found that some parents do not hold the traditional tedhak siten ceremony due to reasons of living in the midst of modernization times". (Mr. Aryo)

"In its implementation the child is locked up with a chicken. After that, money was sown to be fought over by the surrounding children and a prayer event was held. Then, the child is bathed by a shaman with a spell. After the process of being bathed, the child is fed in the form of pieces of grilled chicken." (Mrs. Sri Wahyuni)

Mrs. Sri Wahyuni is one of the culturalists in Tulungagung Regency. He also added that all *tedhak siten* sequences contain several meanings from beginning to end. All the equipment from *tedhak siten* is also an important part because each one has meaning for the future of the child. Meanwhile, Indri stated that this *tedhak siten* is something that must be implemented because *tedhak siten* is a form of gratitude to God for the trust to have children.

"Tedhak siten is an offering that symbolizes requests and prayers to God to receive blessings and protection, blessings from ancestors, and to fight bad deeds from humans and evil spirits," (Mr. Eko)

Tedak siten uses offerings or offerings that symbolize requests and prayers to God to receive blessings and protection, blessings from ancestors, and combat evil deeds from humans and evil spirits. Islam has taught various ways to be grateful, starting from giving charity, praying, and similar thing, namely *aqiqah*.

Buya Yahya in 2021 as Caregiver of the Cirebon Al-Bahjah Da'wah Development Institute, explained about *mudun lemah* or similar to the stepping on earth for the first time by a child. According to him, as long as the intention is for good and does not violate Islamic law, it is permissible to do so. Buya Yahya emphasized gratitude, praying and reading the Quran, giving alms, extending friendship, and other good things. From a scientific point of view, religion and customs, the two can be distinguished. Between the second and the first form an integration. In human relationships with God, humans obey His commands and prohibitions. However, the relationship between humans is included in the category of culture. Religion and culture can influence each other because they are both values and symbols. Religion is a symbol of obedience to God. Likewise, culture, so that humans can live in their environment. So, religious culture is a symbol that represents religious values.

4. Conclusion

Mudun lemah tradition carried out by the people of Tulungagung includes two aspects, namely normative Islam and historical Islam, because this weak *mudun* tradition has a history (history), so this tradition has existed since ancient times before Islam came to Java. Then until Islam came to Java, and until now this tradition still exists. Some Muslim communities think that *tedhak siten* can be done and does not interfere with the value of faith in Islam other than as an expression of gratitude, this *tedhak siten* event also aims to ask for safety and prosperity in treading their way of life. In essence, Muslims must continue to obey all the rules that already exist in Islam, we as Muslims must be good at studying Islam properly and correctly. The process of interaction between Islam and culture can occur in

two ways and in two possibilities. First, Islam colors, cultivates, and renews culture and the second is Islam which is colored by culture.

The problem is that it depends on the two entities, namely the cultural entity and the Islamic entity. There are times when culture cannot be linked to Islam if that culture can make us (Muslims) violate Islamic laws. Although religion and culture are interrelated, they both have limitations. Religion as culture can also be seen from the control mechanism because religion is a social institution that functions as control over existing institutions. In this study, we also explain that the *tedhak siten* custom is a common thing to be implemented, even if it is not implemented it will not be a problem. The reason why the author brought up this research is that we are in the era of modernization, where customs are starting to be forgotten. This inspires us to bring the theme of *tedhak siten* into this scientific paper. Moreover, there were no obstacles during the research to complete this paper. We also hope that the government is able to support the movement of community activities in order to preserve customs so that they are not eroded by the progress of the times.

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