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Inter-Islamic Engagement in Local Tradition: Sedekah Bumi of Jepara, Central Java
LU'LU'UL MAKNUN ALFATAH, Prof. Fatimah Husein, Ph.D.; Prof. Izak Y. M. Lattu, Ph.D.
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ABSTRACT

The *sedekah bumi* tradition in Kepuk Village, Jepara, serves as a dynamic arena where Islamic values and local agrarian culture intersect. However, this tradition faces challenges from religious narratives that label its practices—such as *sesajen* (offerings), grave visitations, and the *tayub* performance—as forms of polytheism (*syirik*), heresy (*bid'ah*), and mixing of unrelated men and women *(ikhtilat*). This study aims to examine these religious narratives challenge and analyze how a pluralistic grassroots communities (comprising *Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah*, and Shia affiliations) negotiate and transform the tradition. Utilizing a qualitative method with a critical ethnography approach, data was collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document study, followed by thematic analysis. The theoretical framework integrates Lived Religion (Ammerman), supported by the theory of Interreligious *Civic Sphere* (Lattu) and the Interaction of Islam and Local Tradition (Hamzah). The findings reveal that the grassroots community does not respond to religious narratives challenge with open conflict, but rather through functional compromise and cultural intelligence. Four main negotiation strategies were identified: (1) material and ecological rationalization by re-signifying *sesajen* as *şadaqah* (charity); (2) re-signification of symbols and prayer narratives by local cultural authorities; (3) selective participation across religious groups to maintain civic solidarity without compromising theological beliefs; and (4) spatial differentiation through cultural festivalization (such as the *Memeden gadhu Festival*), which separates sacred rituals from profane celebrations. In conclusion, through lived religion and civic engagement, the community successfully grounds religious dogmas to foster social cohesion while peacefully preserving their cultural identity.

Keywords: *Sedekah bumi*, Lived Religion, Cultural Negotiation, Civic Engagement, Interaction of Islam and Local Culture.

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INTISARI

Tradisi sedekah bumi di Desa Kepuk, Jepara, merupakan arena dinamis tempat bertemunya nilai-nilai Islam dan budaya agraris lokal. Namun, tradisi ini menghadapi tantangan dari narasi keagamaan yang melabeli praktik-praktiknya—seperti sesajen, ziarah kubur, dan kesenian tayub—sebagai bentuk kesyirikan, bid'ah, dan percampuran tanpa hubungan antara laki-laki dan perempuan (ikhtilat). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji tantangan doktrinal tersebut dan menganalisis bagaimana masyarakat awam yang majemuk (terdiri dari afiliasi Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, dan Syi'ah) menegosiasikan serta mentransformasikan tradisi ini. Melalui metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnografi kritis, data dikumpulkan menggunakan pengamatan terlibat, wawancara mendalam, dan studi dokumen, yang kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Kerangka teoretis yang digunakan meliputi Lived Religion (Ammerman)*, dengan teori pembantu* Civic Engagement (Lattu) *serta Interaksi Islam dan Tradisi Lokal* (Hamzah)*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat akar rumput tidak merespons tantangan doktrinal dengan konflik terbuka, melainkan melalui kompromi fungsional dan kecerdasan kultural. Ditemukan empat strategi negosiasi utama: (1) rasionalisasi material dan ekologis dengan memaknai ulang sesajen sebagai şadaqah; (2) re-signifikasi simbol dan narasi doa oleh otoritas kultural lokal; (3) partisipasi selektif lintas kelompok keagamaan demi merawat solidaritas kewargaan tanpa mengorbankan akidah; dan (4) diferensiasi ruang melalui festivalisasi budaya (seperti Festival Memeden gadhu) yang memisahkan ritus sakral dari perayaan profan. Kesimpulannya, melalui laku lived religion dan keterlibatan sipil, masyarakat mampu membumikan dogma agama untuk merawat kohesi sosial sekaligus mempertahankan identitas budaya secara damai.*

Kata Kunci: *Sedekah bumi,* Lived Religion*, Negosiasi Kultural,* Civic Engagement*, Interaksi Islam dan Budaya Lokal.*