

## History of *Maleman* Tradition in Ramadan and its Changes in Baseng Sub-village Sukoharjo Regency

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti mengenai perubahan tradisi *Maleman* di Dusun Baseng, Kabupaten Sukoharjo, khususnya mengenai perubahan pelaksanaan, tujuan, makanan, tempat penyajian, dan pembagian memasak makanan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan historis, yaitu dengan menganalisis peristiwa dalam sudut pandang sejarah. Sumber data yang digunakan diantaranya adalah observasi, wawancara, dan studi pustaka. Teori kebudayaan Soekmono terlihat dalam tradisi *Maleman* yang dilakukan di Dusun Baseng. Tradisi *Maleman* mencerminkan kebudayaan sebagai ciptaan manusia yang berubah sesuai dengan kebutuhannya. Hasil penelitian ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa tradisi *Maleman* di Dusun Baseng sudah mengalami perubahan mulai dari pelaksanaan, tujuan diadakannya tradisi, makanan, tempat penyajian, dan pembagian yang memasak makanan. Adanya perubahan tradisi *Maleman* di Dusun Baseng, masyarakat tetap menjalankan hingga sekarang. Meskipun tidak semua bisa dan ingin ikut menjalankan tradisi, mereka tetap saling menghargai satu sama lain.

**Kata kunci:** dusun Baseng, tradisi, *maleman*.

### Abstract

*This research aims to examine changes in the Maleman tradition in Baseng sub-village, Sukoharjo Regency, especially regarding changes in implementation, purpose, food, place of serving, and division of food cooking. This research uses a qualitative method with a historical approach, namely by analyzing events in a historical perspective. The data sources used include observation, interviews, and literature studies. Soekmono's cultural theory is seen in the Maleman tradition carried out in Baseng sub-village. The Maleman tradition reflects culture as a human creation that changes according to its needs. The results of this study can be concluded that the Maleman tradition in Baseng sub-village has undergone changes starting from the implementation, the purpose of holding the tradition, food, serving places, and the division of those who cook food. There are changes in the Maleman tradition in Baseng sub-village, the community continues to run it until now. Although not all can and want to participate in carrying out the tradition, they still respect each other.*

**Keywords:** baseng sub-village, tradition, *maleman*.

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a variety of tribes, nations and cultures that have been spread throughout Indonesia for thousands of years. Culture is a whole that has many aspects such as science, beliefs, morals, laws, customs, arts, as well as the abilities and habits possessed by humans as

members of society (Susanti & Achiriah, 2024). Meanwhile, according to Soekmono (1973) culture can be said to be a human creation to change what God has created and the efforts made by humans in accordance with their spiritual and physical needs. As a term, culture or culture is a social event whose number

increases and must be increased so that it becomes a habit (Luth, 1994). Tradition is a habitual pattern that forms culture in a community group. The relationship between society and culture is very close, because culture is the result of community life and then becomes a tradition that is continued for generations (Putri et al., 2021). Society has characteristics in their habitual patterns of life, so the culture of each community also has characteristics or markers of other community cultures. Because culture is a way of human evolution in terms of spirituality, the results of thought, literature and art (Zain, 2016).

Javanese culture is one of the cultures in Indonesia that has a great influence from the past to the present. In Java, culture is closely related to something mystical, sacred and mythical (Maskuri, 2023). Javanese tradition is one of the important elements to continue the culture in Java. Javanese society is famous for its diverse and unique traditions, due to the different social and cultural conditions of each Javanese community. Until now, Javanese people, especially in villages, still uphold the traditions of their ancestors. Javanese culture and life contain important values for the community that are used as guidelines for life. For the community, a tradition that is still carried out today is a form of maintaining peace and gratitude to God (Yahya, Faizah & Soliqah, 2022).

Islam in the process of spreading gave birth to an attitude of wisdom towards existing traditions and culture, by deconstructing the values contained in it without eliminating the forms of tradition. Among them can be seen in several traditions carried out from welcoming the arrival of the month of Ramadan to the beginning of the month of *Shawwal* with various characteristics from each region in Indonesia. Namely the *Megengan* tradition at the beginning of the month of Ramadan, the *Maleman* tradition at the end of the month of Ramadan, before *Shawwal* there is a *Nyadran* or *Nyekar* tradition (grave pilgrimage), and the *Kupatan* tradition on the seventh of *Shawwal* as a closing series of these traditions (Ridho, 2019).

In this case it can be interpreted that tradition in Java is used as a spiritual, intellectual and social struggle. When Islam was adopted as a religion, they still incorporated Javanese cultural elements. The occurrence of acculturation between Islam and local culture is due to the interpretation process of the community. The process of interpretation makes the teachings of Islam integrated in the social life of the community and the Koran is used as a foundation. Although various behaviors are not always driven directly by Quranic verses, but rather from the interpretation of the Quranic verses themselves (Usman, 2023).

The majority of Indonesian people who adhere to Islam have several traditions that must be carried out from generation to generation, one of which is the tradition during the month of Ramadan, namely the *Maleman* tradition. Historically, this tradition reminds how Islam and Javanese culture have the characteristics of integration in the history of Islamization in Java. The *Maleman* tradition for Muslims can be interpreted as a tradition to welcome the night of *Lailatul Qadar* in the last 10 days of Ramadan, more precisely on odd nights which are considered to have special features in them (Setiawan et al., 2021). The meaning of the *Maleman* tradition always differs from one region to another. The *Maleman* tradition in Baseng sub-village has a meaning as a form of gratitude to the earth and also to the giver of sustenance with the intention that all villagers are always safe and peaceful. They carry out the traditions passed down by the ancestors until now in order to preserve the existing culture.

Research from Susanti & Achiriah (2024), with the title Dynamics of the *Malem Selikuran* Tradition in Javanese Communities in Tanjung Pasir Labuhanbatu Utara village, states that there have been changes in the implementation of traditions from time to time starting from food, food places and people who carry out traditions. Vita Ery Oktaviyani (2017) stated in her research

entitled The Cult and Tradition of the *Selikuran* Tomb of Sunan Geseng in Tirto Sub-village, Tirto Village, Grabag District, Magelang Regency, Central Java that the *Malam Selikur* tradition is carried out by making pilgrimages to the graves of religious figures with the intention of praying and getting blessings. Thesis research from Alip Khun Irodad (2016), entitled The *Malem Selikuran* Ceremony Tradition in Nyatnyono Village, West Ungaran District, Semarang Regency, states that the implementation of the *Maleman* tradition is carried out to commemorate the death of Sunan Hasan Munadi and aims to ask for safety, faith, blessings, and be kept away from danger and distress. Research from Fajar Bayuaji Yulianto (2020), his thesis entitled The Meaning of the *Maleman* Tradition for the Jabon Village Community, Banyakan District, Kediri Regency, East Java Province states that there are two elements of meaning in the implementation of the *Maleman* tradition, namely the spiritual aspect in terms of inner calm and the social aspect in terms of friendship between residents to strengthen unity in society.

This research discusses the history of the *Maleman* tradition and its changes in Baseng sub-village from time to time. The long history of the *Maleman* tradition has developed in accordance with the cultural values prevailing in the community, until its current form in Baseng sub-village. The

most striking difference between the *Maleman* tradition in Baseng sub-village and other regions is in the time of its implementation. *Maleman* tradition in other areas is often carried out at night, while in Baseng sub-village it is carried out in the afternoon. The Baseng community believes that the *Maleman* tradition is a tradition carried out to welcome the night of *Lailatul Qadar*, so the implementation is carried out before sunset to welcome the night. The implementation in the afternoon also provides an opportunity for those who are fasting to break their fast later by using the food that has been distributed in the implementation of *Maleman*. The difference in the implementation of the *Maleman* tradition in Baseng sub-village makes the author interested in conducting research on this issue.

## METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods with a historical approach. Qualitative research is a method used to understand events experienced by research subjects, such as actions, perceptions, behaviors, and others in depth by describing in the form of words. This research is conducted in a natural situation and uses scientific methods (Moleong, 2017). Qualitative research methods are also carried out on an ongoing basis, where researchers will be involved long enough in the field, to

record carefully in accordance with actual events. Sources in the form of documents, photos or events found in the field will be analyzed systematically, and researchers compile detailed reports (Sugiyono, 2016).

Research using a historical approach according to Borg and Gall is research by systematically examining sources that store facts about the past, while according to Wiersman it is a research process carried out critically on past events to produce precise interpretations and writings about these events (Djamel, 2015). This research seeks to reconstruct the facts in the past about the *Maleman* tradition in Ramadan and its dynamics in an area. The reconstruction process is carried out by researching objectively, systematically and accurately carried out at the present time.

In qualitative research, data collection techniques are obtained through observation, interviews, literature studies and a combination of the three or Triangulation (Sugiyono, 2020). The observation stage was carried out by visiting Baseng sub-village, Sukoharjo Regency. At this stage, observations were made about the condition of the community and the implementation of the *Maleman* tradition in Baseng sub-village. The interview stage was carried out by exploring data with sources related to the history of the *Maleman* tradition and also changes in the implementation of the tradition. Interviews were conducted using

purposive sampling technique, namely the selection of sources based on certain considerations such as knowledge and expertise (Sugiyono, 2020). Interviews were conducted by selecting several important figures in Baseng sub-village. The author interviews Mr. Sugito, Mr. Sukijo and Mr. Yamto as community leaders of Baseng sub-village; Mr. Sumadi and Mr. Kadiman as RT heads of Baseng sub-village; and Mr. Jami'an as a religious figure of Baseng sub-village. The literature study stage aims to obtain secondary data and complement data from interviews, observations, and documentation. The literature study was conducted by collecting information from books, journals, and literature relevant to the topics discussed in the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### History of *Maleman* Tradition

The *Maleman* tradition is a Javanese Islamic culture that is still practiced today. The implementation of Ramadan worship in the Javanese tradition is commonly called *Maleman* or *Selikuran*. The word *Maleman* comes from the Javanese language, namely *Malem* which means night because it is usually carried out at night (Bakri & Muhadiyatinsih, 2019). Meanwhile, *Selikuran* is taken because this *Maleman* Tradition is carried out to welcome the night of *Lailatul Qadar* starting on the 21st (Anafah, 2017). The night of *Lailatul Qadar* is held on odd

nights in the last 10 days of Ramadan, namely the nights of 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, and 29th. Muslims around the world wait for the night of *Lailatul Qadar* to welcome a night full of blessings. At-Tabari (224-310 H) interpreted that Allah revealed the Quran to the world on a glorious night, the night of *Lailatul Qadr*. The reward of the deeds done on the night of *Lailatul Qadr* is better than the night without *Lailatul Qadr* and (Arifin, 2016).

The night of *Lailatul Qadar* is celebrated by Muslims by increasing the number of practices, especially for Javanese people who celebrate the night of *Lailatul Qadar* by mixing traditions to worship Allah, one of which is the *Maleman* tradition which contains the aim of gratitude and alms (Hayadi, 2021). The *Maleman* tradition is generally carried out by means of *Kenduri*. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), *Kenduri* is a banquet to commemorate events, ask for blessings, and so on. Koentjaraningrat states that *kenduri* is generally used to mean an important ceremony in the religious system of Javanese society. *Kenduri* is usually held at the home of someone who has an interest, either as a form of gratitude for God's favor or something else (Dzulkipli, 2021).

### History of *Maleman* Tradition in Baseng Sub-village

Baseng is one of the sub-villages in Gentan Village, Bulu Sub-district, Sukoharjo Regency. The name Baseng is taken from

an ancestor who first lived in the area, namely Kyai Bas. According to an explanation from Mr. Sukijo, in ancient times the spring and this village appeared simultaneously. Houses were built, the village was made into a village and the spring also began to appear.

Until now, Baseng sub-village continues to undergo changes and the area is divided into several neighborhood associations (RT). The majority of people in Baseng sub-village work as traders and migrate to other areas to fulfill their lives. The community interacts well with each other, and coexist amidst the differences that exist. In social life, the residents of Baseng sub-village still carry out the traditions passed down by their ancestors. Some of the traditions that are still carried out are traditions during the month of Ramadan, one of which is *Maleman*.

*Maleman* in Baseng sub-village emerged since the first person who lived in the village, namely Kyai Bas. At that time, the people who lived in Baseng were still relatively few, but they had started to carry out the *Maleman* tradition. Soekmono (1978) explains that culture is not only patterned perpendicularly downward, namely channeled to their children and grandchildren, but also patterned horizontal lines, namely spread to other people around them. The people of Baseng sub-village continue to teach the *Maleman* tradition to their children

and grandchildren with the intention that the traditions they live in will continue to the next generation. Mr. Sugito said that, in Baseng sub-village in particular and in Gentan village, *Maleman* has existed since the first person existed, namely Mbah Bas, who used to hold something called *Maleman*. This tradition is still carried out by the people here until now.

The *Maleman* tradition is the result of a combination of Javanese culture and Islam. In Islam, the meaning of the *Maleman* tradition is an effort to remind people to always remember Allah SWT. (Sari, 2022). Each region has differences in the meaning of the *Maleman* tradition, as is done by the people of Baseng sub-village who interpret *Maleman* as a form of gratitude to Allah SWT. For the sustenance given, so that a tradition of almsgiving is held together. The gratitude of the community is because the month of Ramadan is a month full of blessings, one of which is the night of Lailatul Qadar (Rizwanto, 2007). In addition, the *Maleman* tradition on the night of *Lailatul Qadar* is interpreted to establish friendship between residents of Baseng sub-village. Mr. Kadiman and Mr. Jami'an said that,

“*Maleman* is a form of gratitude where residents here are given sustenance to give alms together and then gather together to establish friendship and exchange food. From a positive perspective, *Maleman* also practices

*takharrau bi shodaqoh* to remind them and welcome the night of *Lailatul Qadar*."

### Comparison of *Maleman* Tradition in Baseng Sub-village

The *Maleman* tradition carried out in Baseng sub-village has undergone changes along with the times. In addition to these factors, there are also influences from outsiders who try to change the social conditions of the Baseng sub-village community in the implementation of *kejawen* traditions that are still very strong. These changes occur in several aspects of the implementation of the *Maleman* tradition, including:

#### 1. Implementation Time of *Maleman* Tradition

The implementation of the *Maleman* tradition of the Baseng community in the present has changed. *Maleman* used to be carried out 5 times on odd days in the last 10 days of Ramadan, namely on the nights of 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, and 29th. Nowadays, the tradition is only carried out twice, namely the nights of 21st and 29th, which are identified as the opening and closing of *Lailatul Qadar*. The two-time implementation began between 2019 and 2020. In addition, another reason for this simplification is to ease the burden on Baseng residents in incurring the costs of implementing the tradition. Mr. Yamto said that, the implementation of *Maleman* is now summarized by only taking two days, namely the 21st night as the opening

and the 29th night as the closing, the reason is because it is simpler.



Picture 1. The implementation of the *Maleman* tradition in Baseng sub-village  
Source: Personal document, March 2024

In its implementation, not all residents want or can attend the *Maleman* tradition due to several factors. One of the factors is the development of the times which has influenced young people's thinking about the *Maleman* tradition. Along with the development of the times, young people began to ignore the traditions that had previously been a habit of their parents. Young people do not follow the *Maleman* tradition because they have a different understanding from their parents or do not want to work on existing traditions. On the other hand, there are still young people who still follow the *Maleman* tradition, but they follow only as representatives in each family. Mr. Sugito explained that some young people today do not believe in such traditions and have their own views on the implementation of the *Maleman* tradition.

There are also some people who are taught that welcoming the night of *Lailatul Qadar* does not need to follow traditions such as *Maleman*. The development of religious knowledge is also

a factor in someone not following a tradition. The development of religious knowledge between ancient times and now is different. In the past, there were still many people who only followed the footsteps of their ancestors, but nowadays there are many people who think to be balanced with religious knowledge. According to Mr. Jami'an, there is a group of people who believe that their religious teachings are not guided to carry out the Maleman tradition, so they do not follow the traditions that are still carried out by the Baseng community.

However, the Maleman tradition in Baseng sub-village is not necessarily abandoned by the community, but instead there are those who lead in the direction that should be according to the view of Islam as Muslims welcome the arrival of the night of Lailatul Qadar. Parents in the past did not want to be reminded and directed to religious teachings. So that Mr. Jami'an as a religious figure who deals directly with people who still carry out traditions. The community is slowly given direction, although the results have not been maximized, it was better when compared to a few years ago. If you can't change the parents, then you can change the children. Although there are differences in understanding of the Maleman tradition among the people of Baseng hamlet, they can live side by side and they respect each other's beliefs,

because it depends on the heart of each person.

## 2. Purpose of Maleman Tradition

In the past, the *Maleman* tradition was intended for people who were believed to be ancestors, so the prayers offered during the *Maleman* process were mentioned for a figure who was considered an ancestor or a guardian in a place, one of which people believed in Dewi Sri. Whereas Dewi Sri is a term or symbol. Apart from prayers, there are foods such as *ambeng asahan* that the community considers must be served when the tradition is carried out, otherwise they consider the *Maleman* tradition invalid.

Whereas nowadays, the majority of prayers offered during the *Maleman* tradition are according to the *modin* or whoever is assigned to pray and the community only directs prayers to Allah SWT. who has provided sustenance and all favors. Mr. Jami'an said that, the problem from is because it mentions the ancestors and sometimes mentions a figure that exists in several places, while now it depends on who leads the implementation of the tradition.

The similarities in the objectives that are still contained in the implementation of the *Maleman* tradition, namely from a social perspective where this tradition is still used to foster friendship and cooperation between communities. This goal can be seen from the cooperation when cooking *Maleman*

tradition dishes and the community gathering at the house of the head of the Neighborhood Association (RT) to carry out the *Maleman* tradition.

### 3. Forms of Food Serving in *Maleman* Tradition

#### a) Food in *Maleman* Tradition

Food offerings in the *Maleman* tradition between ancient times and now have not changed much. In ancient times there were foods that had to be present when the *Maleman* tradition was carried out. If there is no one of these foods, the implementation of the *Maleman* tradition is considered invalid. As for today, it no longer uses special food offerings. The food used in the implementation of the *Maleman* tradition today is adjusted to the ability of each community. The reason behind this decision is to ease the burden on the community regarding the funds spent during the implementation of *Maleman*. Mr. Sugito said that in the past on the 21st night there were differences in the dishes, such as *nasi uduk* or coconut milk rice, plantain and *ingkung* or whole fried chicken.

#### b) How to Serve Food in *Maleman* Tradition

The serving method used in the *Maleman* tradition in the past was using containers made of leaves such as teak leaves and banana leaves. With the development of the times, advanced technology has emerged to make equipment that is easier to use according to needs. So nowadays,

the place or container used is made of plastic.



Picture 2. How to serve *Maleman* traditional food nowadays

Source: Personal document dated March 31, 2024

Mr. Kadiman said that in the past they used to use teak tree leaves, then the rice was wrapped. However, nowadays there are plastic containers that are practical and do not spill easily, placed in a container that has been given a sheet of rice paper, then the rice is arranged in the container.

#### c) Division of Cooking in *Maleman* Tradition

In the old *Maleman* tradition, the division for cooking *Maleman* dishes was divided alternately. In the past, *Maleman* was held 5 times, namely on the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, and 29th, for example in one Neighborhood Association (RT) there were 50 residents who participated, so the cooking task was divided by 10 people on each date. So, if on the 21st they have been assigned to cook, then on dates other than the 21st they are no longer in charge of cooking. The funds used for cooking come from the personal funds of those assigned to cook. Meanwhile, people who are not assigned to cook bring their

own containers from home which will later be given a share of the food when gathering at the RT Head's house.

Unlike today, the division of cooking depends on the decision of each resident in one RT. There are RT's that still use the old way and some that use the new way. One of the RT's in Baseng sub-village uses the method of distribution in the form of contributions. About 3-4 years ago the *Maleman* tradition was carried out twice, namely on the 21st and 29th, for example, if there were 20 residents who participated in *Maleman*, then the division in the form of cooking contributions was divided into 2, namely 10 people on each date. If those who get a share on the 21st, then each 1 head of household who gets a turn on that date spends 50,000, then the money that has been collected by the Head of the RT will be used to order food for residents who follow the *Maleman* tradition. This has been implemented since 2024.

Mr. Sumadi as the head of the RT said that for this year's *Maleman* food, the implementation was only ordered to one person for around 50 servings, then gathered together to pray together and then distributed to residents. The money is from the contributions of residents who participate in *Maleman*.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion, the implementation of the

Maleman tradition in Baseng sub-village is intended as a form of gratitude to Allah SWT. The sustenance provided, so that alms are held together. In addition, it also aims to establish friendship between residents of Baseng sub-village. As the times developed and religious knowledge began to enter Baseng hamlet, the implementation of the *Maleman* tradition began to undergo several changes.

These changes lie in several aspects, including: (1) The time of implementation of the *Maleman* tradition, which used to be held 5 times, namely on the nights of 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th and 29th, has now changed to only 2 times on the nights of 21st and 29th. (2) The purpose of holding the *Maleman* tradition is as a form of community gratitude then praying by mentioning creatures they believe to be ancestors, but now it has been adjusted depending on who is appointed to pray for the food served. (3) The food served has undergone changes from what was originally required to be served using *nasi uduk* or coconut milk rice, plantain and *ingkung* or whole fried chicken, now it has been adjusted to the economic conditions of residents who follow the *Maleman* tradition. (4) The way food is served has also changed from using leaves to using more modern food containers such as made of plastic. (5) The division for cooking food in the past was carried out alternately by all residents who followed

the *Maleman* tradition, but now it is adjusted to the decision in each RT's.

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