

Offering Rituals (*Sesajen*): Synthesis of Religion and Culture from the Perspective of Islamic Religious Groups

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Abstract: This research examines the community's offering rituals to honor gods, ancestral spirits, and guardian spirits of sacred places. This ritual caused controversy among Muslims because it contained elements of shirk. This research aims to seek a synthesis of this controversy. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method approach with an ethnographic type. Data collection was carried out through observation and interviews. Data analysis uses interactive methods. The research results show that offering rituals can be synthesized from a religious and cultural perspective with the following conditions: 1) offering rituals are positioned as cultural events, not as offerings as in religion; 2) the meaning of the offering ritual is thanksgiving which is consumed by the community, not left to be eaten by spirits or ancestral spirits because it would be wasteful; 3) the intention of the offering ritual is only for Allah alone and is not mixed or added with other names. As in religion, the intention of sacrifice is for Allah alone, but the object (sacrificial animal) is for humans.

Keywords: Ancestral spirits culture, islamic religious group, offering ritual, supernatural, sacred

A. Introduction

The tradition of offerings (*sesajen*) is a ritual humans have had for a long time. In the era of information so fast and in moments like this, changes occur in all sectors¹, offering rituals in people's lives, including in the Banyumas area, Central Java. Offerings as a cultural behavior of society are generally found in traditional and rural communities, and most work as farmers. Some urban communities still have offerings, such as in coastal areas.

¹ Abdul Kadir Riyadi, "Tasawuf dalam Cengkeraman Materialisme Historis: Kajian Pemikiran Husein Muruwwa," *Jurnal THEOLOGIA* 31, no. 2 (2020): 277-312, <https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2020.31.2.6746>.

The offering ritual is a cultural heritage carried out to worship gods, supernatural spirits, and spirits who guard sacred places believed to bring glory and ward off danger or as a vehicle to ask for safety and protection from strange things to avoid disasters caused by spirits.² The place used for the offering ritual is believed to be sacred. The offering ritual is also a form of gratitude for what happens in life, which is one way to overcome various crises. This is an expression of kindness from the grace of Almighty God, which can guarantee life's survival³.

Much research has been carried out regarding offering rituals, including research conducted by Alfiah et al., (2022) regarding *ruwahan* or earth alms. The research results stated that *ruwahan* was created to create a sense of security and preserve culture. In this regard, the ulama forbids sacrifice because it contains elements of shirk in the form of requests for prayers other than Allah. However, if the implementation of the offering ritual is aimed at sharing alms and establishing friendships like Muslims in general, then the law is valid⁴.

Another study related to the law regarding the implementation of offering rituals at marriage states that offerings such as placing *trataq*, *siram* offerings, *midodareni*, and *daup* offerings carried out at bridal social gatherings are types of haram rituals. This ritual involves elements of prayer offered to other than Allah. Even offerings are included in the act of shirk, which is strictly prohibited by Islamic law. So, the law is that carrying out the marriage offering ritual is haram⁵.

Research on kupat offerings in the Gumbregan tradition in Kemiri Gunung Kidul which believes that all animals are kings. The results of the research state that the kupat offering symbolizes eating livestock and lazing around because livestock are safe, protected from harm, and protected by God Almighty. Kupat

² MA Dr. Ayatullah Humaeni et al, *Sesajen: Menelusuri Makna Dan Akar Tradisi Sesajen Masyarakat Muslim Banten Dan Masyarakat Hindu Bali*, 3rd ed. (LP2M UIN SMH Banten, 2021).

³ Martina Dhale Teresia Noiman Derung, Maria Frameliza Zefanya, Yohanes Emanuel Bisu, "Studi Analisis Pengalaman Krisis Manusia Dalam Misteri Ritual Sesajen Jawa Ditinjau Dari Sosiologi Agama Menurut Weber," *In Theos: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Dan Teologi* 2, no. 10 (2022): 334–44, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.56393/intheos.v2i3.1278>.

⁴ Lailul Alfiah, Salsabilla Libnatus Asfarina, and Moh. Fuad Ali Aldinar, "Pemberian Sesajen Untuk Ritual Ruwah Desa Perspektif Hukum Islam," *Ma'mal: Jurnal Laboratorium Syariah Dan Hukum* 3, no. 1 (2022): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.15642/malv3i1.118>.

⁵ Wahid Firmansyah et al, "Hukum Sesajen dalam Pesta Pernikahan Menurut Perspektif Hukum Islam," *Mamba'ul 'Ulum* 19, no. 1 (2023): 80–91, <file:///C:/Users/asus/Downloads/8.+JURNAL+WAHID.pdf>.

offerings in the Gumbregan tradition have spiritual, social, and traditional preservation benefits⁶.

This research is motivated by the offering rituals carried out by Muslims, including in the Banyumas area, Central Java, such as the Bonokeling community's earth almsgiving (*sedekah bumi*), *suran*, *sadranan*, and *unggah-unggahan*. Islam, which came in the 13th century, has not been able to change tradition in a more appropriate direction. Denying it directly is impossible because the offering ritual has become a kind of *mbalung sumsun* (entrenched) in people's lives, especially on the island of Java. This study attempts to solve the problem of synthesizing the position of offering rituals between religion and culture so that these rituals are not lost substantially. However, does its meaning and purpose not conflict with Islamic law?

Therefore, this research is different from previous studies. This research has essential value for all parties. The results of this research provide a solution for Muslims so that those who carry out the offering ritual and those who oppose it can still interact in harmony and peace. Theologically, it justifies *aqidah*, so that Muslims feel comfortable when they see the offerings made by some Muslims.

B. Literatur Review: Offering (*Sesajen*) Rituals

Etymologically, offerings (*sesajen*) come from the word *saji* (phallus) and get miners "en" so that they become *saji-en*. The existence of the miner said that composes it to melt and turn into *sajen*. The word *Saji* means serving something; when it gets the suffix "en" into *sajen*, it changes its meaning to "give something in the form of food."⁷

According to Aryono Suyono in Humaeni et al. (2021), *sesajen* are tiny foods, small objects, flowers, and decorations arranged according to religious conceptions into meaningful symbols. They were offered to gods, spirits, and other inhabitants of the supernatural world who wished to communicate with

⁶ Suharti Ida Sulastri, "Sesaji Kupat dalam Tradisi Gumbregan di Desa Kemiri Kecamatan Tanjungsari Kabupaten Gunungkidul," *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora* 22, no. 1 (2017): 57–70, file:///C:/Users/asus/Downloads/19102-47376-1-PB.pdf.

⁷ Mukhlas Alkaf, "Berbagai Ragam Sajen Pada Pementasan Tari Rakyat Dalam Ritual Slametan," *Jurnal Seni Budaya Gelar* 11, no. 2 (2013): 211–23, file:///C:/Users/asus/Downloads/1469-4307-1-PB (1).pdf.

humans⁸. Offerings are made as a means of contact with the Almighty through the gods and ancestors to maintain peace in the family and community⁹. *Sesajen* is part of a ritual offered in a ceremony that has a specific purpose.

So, a *sesajen* is the presentation or giving of an object, whether in the form of fruit, flowers, plants, incense, animals, cigarettes, drinks, etc. These objects communicate something considered to have an important role, namely something outside himself. They can be God, supernatural beings, or ancestral spirits.

Sesajen, apart from having a meaning related to a means of connecting with the supernatural, also has a symbolic meaning. The tool or object is generally attached and becomes the object's name. For example, "*cengkir*" means *kencenge pikir* (strongly thought), "*janur kuning*" means "*sing kukuh sing ngening*." Burning *dupa* or *kemenyan* means "a sign of the availability of food for supernatural beings. *Pisang raja* means "the hope of living like a king." Cigarettes (*rokok*) or *kinang* have the meaning of giving the habit of inhabiting *pepunden*. *Kacang Panjang* (Long beans) have a meaning that is intended to guide the cake, meaning that the alert (*lanjaran*) is a parent who always provides proper guidance, direction, and education to their children¹⁰ if the object they offer is a tree, plant, or fruit and is also considered as a medium for plant conservation¹¹.

Thus, the offering ritual is a human activity that offers something addressed to gods, spirits, ancestral spirits, guardian spirits of objects such as keris, sticks, spears, or sacred places such as trees, rocks, rivers, mountains, sea, etc.

⁸ (Dr. Ayatullah Humaeni et al, 2021: 32-33)

⁹ Marco Edward and Elia Shabani Mligo, "The Contribution of African Traditional Sacrifices towards Solving Existential Problems: A Case of the Sukuma People in Shinyanga Region TEKU Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies (TJIS) The Contribution of African Traditional Sacrifices Towards Solving," *TEKU Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies (TJIS)* Vol. 1, no. 1 (2021): 11–19, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353935183_The_Contribution_of_African_Traditional_Sacrifices_towards_Solving_Existential_Problems_A_Case_of_the_Sukuma_People_in_Shinyanga_Region.

¹⁰ Haniyatouroufah, "Ritual Sesaji Sebagai Bentuk Persembahan Untuk Kanjeng," *Bahasa Dan Sastra Jawa* 03, no. 05 (2013): 20–23, <http://ejournal.lumpwr.ac.id/index.php/aditya/article/download/755/729>.

¹¹ Tutut Indah Sulistiyowati, "Tradisi, Edukasi, Dan Konservasi Dalam Ritual Ngungguhne Beras Warga Desa Jugo Kecamatan Mojo Kabupaten Kediri," *Sinkesjar*, 2022, 8–11, <https://proceeding.unpkediri.ac.id/index.php/seinkesjar/article/view/2985>.

C. Method

This research was conducted in Banyumas Regency, which has many ritual offerings (*sesajen*). In field observations, not all offering rituals were used as a source of data collection. Even so, there are only seven places to focus on, namely the offering ritual in the Cowongan tradition (asking for rain), *pagubugan* (asking the Goddess Shri so that the rice harvest will bring good luck), the Bonokeling community's earth alms, Rajab jara around the Cikakak village mosque, alms farming community, Mbah Ragasemangsang's grave, and Mbah Makhдум's grave. So, this research focuses on the position of ritual offerings against religious and cultural standards.

This study uses a qualitative method¹². The type of research used is ethnographic research, namely an effort to understand the local community's perspective on life to gain a view of their world through an interpretive viewpoint to answer more detailed explanations of social phenomena.¹³

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, determining informants deliberately selected according to the research objectives. Therefore, informants are actors and people who know about the research object. Researchers conducted observations in May – September 2023. Interviews were conducted using an in-depth interview model using unstructured questions and were carried out not just once but repeatedly. This is an effort to check a statement with the reality that occurred based on the researcher's observations.

Research is equipped with various information through electronic media, print media, pamphlets, journals, and books related to the research object to strengthen the data. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using interactive methods¹⁴, and the validity of the data uses a triangulation test¹⁵.

¹² Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan Kombinasi (Mixed Methods)*, 2nd ed. (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2018).

¹³ Hartini Salama Mohammad Siddiq, "Etnografi Sebagai Teori Dan Metode," *Kordinat* 18, no. 1 (2019): 23–48, <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/kordinat/article/view/11471/5781>.

¹⁴ A. M. Miles, M. B., & Huberman, "Qualitative Data Analysis," *News.Ge* (California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014).

¹⁵ Muhammad Idrus, *Metode Penelitian Ilmu Sosial Pendekatan Kualitatif Dan Kuantitatif*, 2nd ed. (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2009).

D. Result

1. Perception of Ritual Offerings for Ritual Practitioners, Administrators, and Cultural Observers

Observing the implementation of the offering ritual carried out by the perpetrator in a predetermined place provides insight and understanding that does not fully reflect the accurate purpose. Between beliefs and doubts often arise in their minds. This can be seen from their expressions when arguing with people who come to carry out the offering ritual.

Expressions of the custodian of the ritual place, performer, and observer of the ritual offerings.

1.	 there is a tumpengan to eat together after reciting. There is no advantage of offerings because they are not good, and there is no sunnah. The disadvantage is that it is polytheistic to give offerings to someone other than Allah. Offerings should not be made because they deviate from religion. It is better not to use offerings as symbols because the direction will be not to ask Allah but to eat the devil." Of course, sometimes people go to the grave with offerings, but I don't allow it to be out of our control. Well... Usually, there are various forms related to the day, and what it means depends on their dignity, and they have a different direction."	MJ, Ritual site waiters
2.	... Yes, it's okay; it's just that the offerings have been passed down for generations, so we are pretty worried and worried. Although it has no impact. Most requests for offerings are suggestions from farmers who want their harvest to be safe. But I believe more that the harvest is by what the farmers themselves strive for.....	Yn, locksmith
3	Sesajen is an offering to gods, subtle creatures, and ancestral spirits, as in the offering of the earth's alms. The offerings are food, rice, side dishes, bananas, young coconuts, coffee, and flowers; it's all buried into the ground....	Smtr, locksmith

	When making offerings for the almighty, it continues to descend to the ancestors because we believe in the existence of supernatural things or invisible beings.....	
4.	Well, because to preserve something, he performs on a show. The offerings are performed at the performance of memeti performances and selamatan. We raise it as a performance art as it exists on my YouTube." Thus, the loss of a tradition... Because of a changing life journey, now there are middlemen, many are increasingly modern cultivators, work often uses machines." But it develops with the times; it must change if I will raise it as a performing art."	Tt, Locksmith and ritual performer
5.	".... The ritual of offerings can gradually be lost because the foundation of the teachings is not expressed. Whenever there is a ritual offering, the reference refers to the stories of the ancients, the ancestors, folk stories, and legends. The ritual offerings are related to supernatural matters. But this is different from supernatural news from religion, which contains the value of Shari'a. His teachings are clear and express. Both are related to the unseen, but because the foundation is expressed in religion, it will not fade". "...In the past, when Kliwon Tuesday came, many certain flowers (such as roses) were scattered by people at the crossroads. But now it doesn't exist, or at least it's scarce."	AT, Observers

Source: Primary data processed, September 2023.

Examining the perceptions of administrators, performers, and cultural figures regarding offering rituals carried out in places that are considered sacred and sacred can be mapped as follows:

1. Experiencing a shift in belief values regarding the benefits of ritual offerings.
There is doubt regarding the utility value of ritual offerings offered to spirits,

- ghosts, and gods. In plain view, when the caretakers know who is giving the food offerings, there is a catch of the power of rationality that is revealed, that the offerings offered to spirits are hypocrisy. This kind of action is prohibited by religion.
2. The management as custodian of the ritual offering place has many years of experience. They can certainly observe, pay attention, and feel the impact of the offerings. Doubts arise when the positive impact is not found to be significant. Moreover, faced with developments in science and technology which continue to open the horizons of human thinking.
 3. Realizing that ritual offerings are becoming less and less popular with the public, ritual offering practitioners are adopting them as cultural arts performances. The offering ritual is still carried out at certain moments, but it is no longer a ritual that is carried out with full service and sacredness. This offering ritual is held with more artistic value and is interesting to watch.

2. Offering Rituals from the Perspective of Religious Group Figures in Islam

The leaders of Islamic religious groups, whether from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (DDII), Al-Irsyad, Salafi, and the Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Institute (LDII) certainly cannot be separated from the main standards of the Al-Qur'an and as-Sunnah in providing postulates regarding offering rituals. However, the interpretation of ritual offerings between one character and another has different points of view according to their scientific background and social communication.

The following are several views of religious leaders regarding the offering rituals carried out by the people in Banyumas.

No.	Excerpt of statement	Informan
1.	The offering ritual for those who do it is to seek protection safety, ask for rain, and so on. Based on the belief that there is a creature who controls sustenance, with the view that it requires offerings. ...Because it assumes that there is a being that can determine human sustenance other than Allah and	SB, Informan A.

	is far from Islamic teachings, as is the proposition " <i>iyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in</i> " in Surah Al-Fatihah which means, "Only You we worship and only We ask you for help." So, asking anyone other than Allah for anything that is an offering is not permissible.	
2	...offerings aim to prevent problems and bring blessings. This is always the goal of the person who performs the offering ritual. It's just that in Islam, the measure of goodness is not only assessed from its form and purpose but also needs to be assessed from its implementation. Is this practice by Islamic teachings? In Islam, there is a rule that states: <i>الغاية لا تبرر الوسائل</i>: (the goal cannot be to legalize all means). ...usually, people who carry out offering rituals already believe that the object of the offering in question has mystical powers that can provide benefits or cause harm. The proof is that if they face a big problem, they offer offerings to these objects, and it turns out the issue has been resolved, then they will state that it was thanks to the help and assistance of these objects... Worshipping other than Allah will be cursed. The Messenger said: <i>لعن الله من ذبح لغير الله</i> — رواه مسلم (Allah curses those who slaughter animals for other than Allah - HR. Imam Muslim- hadith no. 1978).	Ab.Zn, Informan B.
3.	 offerings are an idolatrous act because Islam teaches <i>la haula wa la quwwata illa billahil 'aliyyil azhimi</i>, which means there is no power and effort except by the power of Allah. Those who make offerings still believe in other beings; they grieve God. Offerings are <i>shirk</i> behavior where shirk is	Jr, informan F

	<i>ladzulmun 'adzim</i> (great injustice). There is no benefit; even offering offerings is a wasteful practice, does not educate, and does not enlighten, so it must be dealt with wisely.	
4.	... The process can be changed in offerings, for example, if the food offerings are consumed together with the community. But if the alms of the sea is a bit difficult because the waste is greater and the trust remains with the guardians of the sea. I agree, but not all offerings can be directed to positive things, such as sea alms." If an offering is said to be a symbol..., it still cannot be because it wastes a food offering (wasteful) even though its intention is to Allah. But if the offerings are used to eat together with the poor or to pray together and the food offerings are to eat together, then that's fine."	Lbb, informan C
5	"Offerings are food left and believed to be eaten by a power outside God as an offering. Offerings are food that is left over and is believed to be eaten by forces outside it, and then the food is wrapped in a blessing and eaten together. It's not an offering anymore. In general, there are two things: if the offering is an offering to power beyond human strength, then there is trust in humans; if he doesn't or should do this... That's wrong. But if it is not motivated by certain beliefs, it is just an ordinary cultural event."	Rdn, informan C

Source: primary data processed, September 2023

Statements from informants from Islamic religious groups regarding the dynamics of offering rituals carried out by the community can at least be grouped into three:

1. They recognize that offerings rituals are made to gods, ancestral spirits, and spirits to seek protection safety, and avoid danger. As heirs of their ancestors, these perpetrators have confidence that their actions are right. The ritual behavior of offerings still exists in the lives of Muslims.¹⁶
2. offerings rituals are sacrificial activities that are not addressed to God. If you mention the name of Allah but still juxtapose the title for spirits, ancestral spirits, and spirits who are the guardians of a place. There is a mixture between the haq and the vanity, that is, between actual deities and false worshippers. They are syncretic adherents of Javanese Islam, commonly called Islam Kejawen. The perpetrators of these offering rituals are mistaken and can be categorized as idolatrous.
3. If there is a shift in the implementation of the offering ritual, which is a ritual offered to spirits, spirits, or ancestral spirits as performance art, then the value is different from the actual offering ritual. Offerings that were initially carried out hidmatically, sacral, and magically turned into cultural events. In this case, the perpetrators depend on their intentions, if the ritual of the offering is made a cultural event, then it is certainly permissible. But with a note that ubo rampe offerings used by humans are not offered to ancestral spirits or spirits, because it will be mubadzir, an act that is forbidden.

E. Discussion

Before discussing the synthesis of offering rituals between culture and religion, offerings are first discussed from a cultural perspective and from a religious perspective, based on observations and findings from field data conducted by researchers and scientists.

1. *Sesajen* in Cultural Perspectives

Cultural traditions that exist in society and are reflected in the form of offerings are called *sesaji*. The tradition of offerings generally aims to obtain salvation from God, for example the *suran* culture. The offering rituals vary

¹⁶ Imam Setyobudi Umayra Ratna , Cahya, "Ritual Numbal Dalam Upacara Ruwatan Bumi Di Kampung Banceuy-Subang," *Jurnal Budaya Etnika* 3, no. 1 (2019): 41–60, <https://jurnal.isbi.ac.id/index.php/etnika/article/download/1126/745>.

greatly, according to the type and place of offering. As a forbidden offering ritual, namely offering activities placed in places that are considered sacred, such as mountains, rivers, seas, lakes, and/or caves. Likewise, the *slametan* ritual, namely *wilujengan*, and *kenduren* is usually carried out by Muslims on the 8th of Muharram or Friday of every month¹⁷. The nuances of the offerings combine beliefs in Islam with beliefs passed down from ancestors.

This is like the Ngasa offering ritual in the village of Jalawastu, Kedependan, Brebes, around the slopes of Mount Beetle, which is a form of worship for the spirits of ancestors and natural forces. The process in this Ngasa custom is not in harmony with Islamic sharia and aqidah because in praying while burning incense and supplications to the gods and ancestors, not to Allah. The perpetrators of Ngasa also still follow the teachings and rules of their ancestors and are afraid to violate them because it can cause their ancestors to be angry, it can cause disaster¹⁸.

Sasaji (offerings) have sacred value in some Indonesian people, especially the Javanese. The sacredness of offerings is generally a medium for *ngalap berkah* (seeking blessings) in certain places or objects that are considered holy and are believed to have supernatural powers. Historically, offerings are a cultural heritage from Hinduism and Buddhism which are often used to worship certain gods, or spirits, or inhabit a place such as a tree, rock, mountain, or other thing that is believed to bring good luck. The reason for giving offerings is as a form of hope in order to achieve what one desires in worldly life¹⁹.

Offerings can also be said to be the actualization of the perpetrator's thoughts, desires, and feelings to get closer to God. Offerings are symbolic discourses used for spiritual negotiations with spirits so they do not interfere²⁰.

¹⁷ Madhan Anis, "Suran: Upacara Tradisional Dalam Masyarakat Jawa," *Jurnal Seuneubok Lada* 2 (2014): 53–60.

¹⁸ Siti Rubay'atul Adawiyah, "Upacara Adat Ngasa Di Kampung Budaya Jalawastu Dalam Perspektif Teologis," *Jurnal Riset Agama* 2, no. 1 (2022): 200–219, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jra.v2i1.17124>.

¹⁹ Sri Wahyuni and Idrus Alkaf, "Makna Tradisi Sesajen Dalam Pembangunan Rumah Masyarakat Jawa: Studi Kasus Pembangunan Di Desa Srimulyo Kecamatan Air Saleh Kabupaten Banyuasin" 1, no. 2 (2020): 50–63.

²⁰ Ujang Kusnadi Adam et al., "Sesajen Sebagai Nilai Hidup Bermasyarakat Di Kampung Cipicung Girang Kota Bandung," *Indonesian Journal of Sociology, Education, and Development* 1, no. 1 (2019): 27–35, <https://doi.org/10.52483/ijsed.v1i1.3>.

The offering ritual is expressed as a form of gratitude to ancestors, parents, and everything that has lived so far because we would never exist without them. Using offerings made from natural elements will reconnect the energy of the past with the future²¹.

In practice, offerings include three forms: First, honoring ancestors and giving alms to neighbors, but the reward is intended for ancestors who have died. Second, respect supernatural creatures and, at the same time, be grateful to Allah SWT. Third, relate to and care about all of Allah's creatures.²² Application of cultural traditions as an effort to achieve mutual harmony.²³

Thus, offerings have expressed and implied textual and contextual meanings and give denotatype and symbolic meanings. Offerings Rituals are also used as a medium to get closer and glorify themselves to God; a means for community members to offer to God and ancestral spirits, connect the energy of the past with the present, and a form of expression of gratitude and effort so that a procession runs smoothly so that what is expected and asked for can be achieved. Caretakers and offerings rituals in the Banyumas area recognize and understand this discourse.

From a cultural perspective, offerings rituals are a form of respect and at the same time offerings to gods, gods, ancestral spirits, spirits, and subtle spirits who occupy certain places, such as trees, rocks, mountains, seas, and rivers. The ritual of offerings presents objects according to the type of ritual. There are various objects in the form of flowers, animals, and types of food. Of the types of flowers, there are roses and cantilevers. Of the types of animals, there are cemani chickens, buffalo heads, and goat heads. From the type of food, there are rice, red-and-white porridge, lempur, tempe, tahu, banana, young coconut, coffee, and tea.

²¹ Deni Miharja, Endah Wahidah, and Yeni Huriyani, "Makna Ritual Sesajen Dalam Ajar Pikukuh Sunda (Sunda Wiwitan) (Sudi Terhadap Penganut Ajar Pikukuh Sunda Di Padepokan Bumi Dega Sunda Academy Bandung," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 4, no. 2 (2021): 125–42.

²² Aminullah Aminullah, "Sinkretisme Agama Dan Budaya Dalam Tradisi Sesajen Di Desa Prenduan," *Dirosat: Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2017): 1, <https://doi.org/10.28944/dirosatv2i1.64>.

²³ Mas'udi Mas'udi, "Kerukunan Dalam Keanekaragaman: Struktur Keberagamaan Masyarakat Pucakwangi," *Jurnal THEOLOGIA* 29, no. 2 (2018): 243–70, <https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2018.29.2.2449>.

2. *Sesajen* in Islamic Religious Perspectives

In Islam, the offering ritual has been known since the time of the Prophet Adam (PBUH). This is as expressed in the Qur'an in surah al-Maidah/5: 27, as follows.

“Relate to them in truth O Prophet the story of Adam’s two sons—how each offered a sacrifice: one’s offering was accepted while the other’s was not, so he threatened His brother, “I will kill you!” His brother replied, “Allah only accepts the offering of the sincerely devout”. (Q.S. Al-Maidah/5: 27).

This verse is interpreted by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia to mean that this story begins with an order to the Prophet Muhammad SAW to tell the Jewish people about the story of the two sons of Adam, Qabil, and Habil when both of them sacrificed, the sacrifice was offered, sincerely by either of the two. In this story, the sacrifice made by Abel was accepted by Allah, while the sacrifice made by Qabil was rejected. So Qabil became unhappy with this fact and then said I will kill you. Hearing this threat, Habil said Allah only accepts the charity of pious people. If you intend to move your hand toward me to kill me, then know that I will not respond by moving my hand toward you to kill you. I am afraid of God's wrath and threats if I do that. He is God, Ruler of all nature.²⁴ Sacrifices are made only to God, not to be offered to others. Sacrifice is based on devotion, so total surrender is valued for the person who sacrifices.

When Muhammad (pbuh) was still among the people, some made offerings ritual. This is reflected in the following verse.

“The pagans set aside for Allah a share of the crops and cattle He created, saying, “This portion is for Allah,” so they claim, “and this ‘one’ for our associate-gods.” Yet the portion of their associate gods is not shared with Allah while Allah’s portion is shared with their associate gods. What unfair judgment! (Q.S. al-An’am/6: 136).

²⁴ Kemenag RI, "Web Interpretation - Letter of Al-Ma'idah Verse 27," n.d., <https://tafsirweb.com/1911-surat-al-maidah-ayat-27.html>.

The offering ritual described in this verse contains the meaning of syncretism, namely offerings that are addressed to God but still include other gods (idols) that are believed to be part of the offering.

Ibn Kathir, in his interpretation, stated that this verse is a reproach and insult from Allah to the polytheists who commit heresy, kufr, and shirk. They made part of His creation to be offered to other than Allah, even though Allah is the Creator of all things.²⁵

In his interpretation of Hidayatul Islam, Abu Musa states that the meaning of the verse is that what they give to gods other than Allah is purely an approach to other than Allah. Likewise, what they intend to God—according to them—is to reach Him because it contains shirk.²⁶

In Islam, the sin of shirk is a sin that Allah SWT will not forgive: "Indeed, Allah does not forgive associating others with Him in worship, but forgives anything else of whoever He wills. And whoever associates others with Allah has indeed committed a grave sin. (Q.S. an-Nisa/4: 48).

If an offering in a religion is shirk, then the perpetrator is declared to have deviated from Allah's provisions and can, therefore, be called a wrongdoer (unjust), disobedient, and immoral. This action can bring disaster as Allah says: And We do not destroy cities unless their inhabitants commit injustice (Q.S. al-Qashash: 59). The Saudi Arabian Ministry interpreted this verse as "Your God (O Rasulullah) did not destroy the countries around Makkah in your time, so he sent an apostle to the capital (Makah) who recited Our verses to them. We will not destroy countries unless their inhabitants are cruel to themselves because of disbelief in Allah and obedience to Him; therefore, they deserve punishment and torment."²⁷

Thus, when a person takes precautions against the ritual of the offering, he has practiced and represented the conviction of the heart for the truth of the verse to avoid a disaster. Offerings ritual must be held properly, that is, only offered to

²⁵ 'Imadudin Abi al-Fida Isma'il ibn Katsir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (Semarang: Toha Putra, n.d.).

²⁶ Abu Yahya Marwan bin Musa, "Tafsir Al Qur'an Hidayatul Insan Jilid 1," *Tafsir Al Qur'an Al Karim* 4 (2016): 1–448.

²⁷ RI, "Tafsir Web - Surat Al-Ma'idah Ayat 27."

God, namely Allah Almighty. When ritual offerings are held not only for the worship of God, but also to noble spirits, spirits, and spirits guarding sacred places, it is considered shirk, a behavior that must be abandoned.

3. Synthese between Religion and Culture in the Ritual of *Sesajen*

Ritual offerings intended for gods, ancestral spirits, spirits, and/or ghosts who occupy sacred places are a tradition that continues in Islamic society. This fact becomes a discourse and becomes a thesis. Behind this, there is another reality, where some Islamic communities carry out offering rituals because they are considered to contain shirk values. This rejection is an antithesis. Therefore, theoretically and practically it is necessary to build a synthesis that provides a solution to this contradiction.

Sesaji expressed through syncretism is an attempt to get out of this contradiction. However, this is still a problem, because there is syncretism regarding *aqidah* which is prohibited by Islamic teachings.

Roibin (2013) has philosophically introduced Islam-Kejawen through the *slametan* tradition. The ritual symbolizes mystical unity and social unity. Theology is understood as a rationally reasoned theology so that there is maturation through scientific discourse full of various critical-objective-philosophical arguments. The process needs to create maturity of faith through intense dialogue with various social phenomena that develop dynamically. Its dimension shifted to rational-formalistic theology. On the other hand, personal theological patterns need to lead to communal behavior patterns. In the second pattern, emotional behavior, which considers many individual needs, *slametan* rituals are widely measured in the perspective of individual interests shifted by considering more social benefits. Human interests communally take priority over personal interests.²⁸ The pattern developed towards a compromise because individualistic theology prioritizes communal elements when dealing with ritual offerings involving collaborative aspects. This compromise includes calming the realm of social interaction.

²⁸ Roibin Roibin, "Dialektika Agama Dan Budaya Dalam Tradisi Selamatan Pernikahan Adat Jawa Di Ngajum, Malang," *EL-HARAKAH (TERAKREDITASI)* 15, no. 1 (2013): 34, <https://doi.org/10.18860/el.v15i1.2671>.

The synthesis of offerings ritual between religion and culture is not in terms of withdrawing interests from the personal side to the communal. Still, the acceptance of a ritual that does not eliminate both elements between individual and social, but also the existence of offerings ritual is maintained, and its theological dimension is substantially accepted by religion.

When offerings are interpreted as an effort to maintain societal values and norms and are expected by ancestors so that every human being gets closer to God Almighty and endlessly prays²⁹, then his spiritual value derived from culture is returned to religion. Offerings rituals are a product of the human mind and have various material values maintained. However, for its spiritual value attached to its substance, it is raised in a divine dimension that has a clear and valid foundation, namely the Shari'a. Because when the spiritual value of ritual offerings is only fixed on culture, there is no explicit foundation. In this zone, the ritual offerings become weak, especially conceptually.

The sacrificial ritual is essentially a ritual of offering an object (animal) to God Almighty. This sacrificial ritual order is authentic and its purpose is also clear. The offerings are directed to God, but the sacrificial animals are beneficial to humans. The intention is to serve God, but the object is useful for humans. This is as expressed in the Al-Qur'an surah Al-Hajj: 37 as follows.

Neither their meat nor blood reaches Allah. Rather, it is your piety that reaches Him. This is how He has subjected them to you so that you may proclaim the greatness of Allah for what He has guided you to, and give good news to the good-doers. (Q.S. Al Hajj/22:37).

This verse was revealed in connection with the Jahiliyah, who channeled camel flesh and blood into the Baitullah (Kaaba). Then the friends said: "That we have more rights to divide Jerusalem." Then a verse appears (Al-Hajj/22:37), which confirms that Allah will not accept the flesh and blood of their sacrifices but will take their piety.³⁰

²⁹ Ujang Kusandi Adam et al., "Cultural Acculturation – Religion and Harmony in Offerings Culture in Cipicung Girang Village," *Sosietas Journal of Sociological Education Cultural Acculturation – Religion and Harmony* in 9, no. 1 (2019): 637–47, <http://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/sosietas/>.

³⁰ MD Dahlan Qamaruddin Shaleh, Dahlan, *Asbabun Nuzul, Latar Beakang Historis Turunnyaya Ayat Ayat Al Qur'an*, 5th ed. (Bandung: Diponegoro, 1985).

The Prophet said: O people of Medina, do not eat sacrificial meat after three days. They then complained to the Prophet that they had families and servants. Then the Prophet said: Eat for yourself, give it to (others) to eat, hold it, and keep it"³¹. Sacrificial meat was given to the poor, the poor, the dhu'afa, and those who needed help.

The authenticity of the Qur'an and the Hadith is very clear about the command of the Shari'a that the sacrificial offering is neither flesh nor blood (the object) but the ability to carry out His command. Therefore, it is understandable that the type of sacrificial animal is also determined by the Shari'ah, a provision that does not change. Sacrifice is a form of worship that falls into the realm of *mahdhah* worship but has a very high social effect.

The synthesis built into the ritual issue of offerings is to narrow down offerings to one and place them as cultural events. The shift in the utility value of offerings to the human realm is based on rational theological choices to exclude theology that rests on emotional dignity. Subtle beings, spirits, and ancestral spirits enter the unseen realm so that human sacrifice and devotion are not offerings in material form but respect through their behavior, attitude, and mind. This framework will realize the existence of ritual offerings maintained; personal individuals maintained, socially supported communities, and theologically protected aqidah ummah.

F. Conclusion

The offering ritual is a form of offering that has been carried out since the time of the first humans, namely the time of the Prophet Adam. Offerings rituals are offered to gods, demigods, ancestral spirits, spirits, and spirits who occupy and guard certain places such as rocks, trees, mountains, rivers, crossroads, and cemeteries that are considered sacred, sacred, and sacred. The tradition of offering rituals is still adhered to by the community, including some people in the Banyumas area, Central Java. The hope for those who carry out the offering ritual is good luck and the denial of things that can bring accidents, disasters, sorrow, and curses.

³¹ Imam Muslim, *Shohih Muslim*, n.d.

The results showed that the community's ritual offerings had more syncretic nuances between Islam and the ancestors' beliefs, often termed Islam-Javanese. Ritual offerings can be synthesized in religious and cultural perspectives if: 1) offerings rituals are placed as cultural events, not forms of offerings as in religion; 2) offerings are shifted in meaning to thanksgiving or prayer consumed by the community, not left to be consumed by subtle beings, ancestral spirits, because it will be *mubadzir* where God (Allah) does not like evil. The offering to them is shown with respect through their behavior, attitude, and mind, thus allowing them to live in the unseen realm, a realm different from material beings, though equally on earth; 3) The ritual intention is for Allah alone and is not interspersed or supplemented by any other mention. As in religion, sacrificing is for Allah, but the object (the sacrificial animal) is for man. The offering ritual intends to serve a meal as alms *ihlas* to others, especially those poor, the dhu 'afa, and or those who need it. Then, ask God that he accept his alms' intentions.

In this way, the offering ritual is not lost. Ritual offerings still exist and are maintained socially. The offering ritual can be displayed as cultural art so that it becomes a cultural event that can be witnessed by future generations. []

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