



## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTERPRETATION OF THE MALEMAN TRADITION IN THE SASAK COMMUNITY OF LOMBOK

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**Abstract:** Traditions in society is not only the product of the cultural heritage of a particular community that has been preserved for generations, but also of an interpretation of the transcendental values of teachings derived from the holy text of the Quran. It may also be the result of a marriage between religious understanding and the tradition of its adherents or the relationship between religion and local traditions. In this regard, this study aimed to unveil and analyze the cultural realities within the 'Maleman' tradition of the Sasak community as a product of interpreting the Quranic text regarding the night of 'lailatul qadar', which was the focal point of this study. Anchored in a phenomenological qualitative approach and an interactive analysis model from in-depth interviews and participant observations, symbolic meanings and religiosity values were discovered within the 'Maleman' tradition. It was the result of the Sasaknese community's interpretation within their cultural landscape that has been preserved to this day. Additional findings indicated that the ritual of lighting the 'dile Jojor', a traditional torch made from the castor seeds, on the odd nights of the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, and 29th of Ramadan was intended to welcome 'laelatul qadar', which the Sasak community of Lombok believed to be a night that must be 'pursued' (QS. al-Qadr [97]: 1-5 and guided by (QS. al-Taghabun [64]): 8. Similarly, the selection of raw materials for 'Dile Jojor' from the fruit of the 'Jarak' (Castor) tree, symbolically analogized from the term 'syajarah mubarakah zaituna' (QS. al-Nur [24]): 35. Both have a common element, namely they contain oil that can produce light."

**Keywords:** Cultural Social Interpretation, Tradition of Maleman, Sasak Lombok

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## Introduction

THE NEXUS between Islam as a religion and indigenous cultural traditions is notably evident within the realm of religious anthropology. In this perspective, it is posited that religion serves as a manifestation of the cultural system.<sup>1</sup> Grounded in this theoretical framework, Islam, as a revealed Abrahamic faith, is perceived to have emerged within a society steeped in cultural richness, rather than cultural vacuity. This thesis is subsequently elaborated upon concerning various facets of Islamic teachings, elucidating the intricate interplay between religion and culture.

In practical terms, the Quran is congruent with the realities of life, signifying that human existence and life itself are under the guidance of the Quran, which can be construed either textually or interpreted contextually within the cultural milieu of its adherents.

Prior studies have revealed that Quranic verses pertaining to social and cultural aspects are perceived by commentators to outnumber those related to legal matters.<sup>2</sup> Hence, scrutinizing the relationship between religion and culture becomes imperative, as exemplified by the work of Imam Muhsin, as encapsulated in his discourse on the Quran and Javanese culture.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, interpretations of the Quran are also present within various cultures (languages) in the Indonesian archipelago, such as Quranic exegesis in the Javanese language,<sup>4</sup> Sundanese language<sup>5</sup>, and Bimanese language.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bassam Tibbi, *Islam and Cultural Accommodation of Social Change*, (San Francisco: Westview Pres, 1991), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Dadan Rusmana, *Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Sosial Budaya: Tafsir Maudhui Terhadap Ayat-Ayat Al-Qur'an yang Berkaitan dengan Budaya, Sejarah, Bahasa dan Sastra* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2014), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Muhsin, the emergence of various Islamic practices among Muslims reflects differences in understanding the Quran. Therefore, it is essential to understand the process and products of interpreting the Quran in the diverse Islamic practices of different communities, approach them wisely, and avoid complications. See Imam Muhsin., *Al-Qur'an dan Budaya Jawa dalam Tafsir al-Huda karya bakri Syahid*, Vol.1 cet.1,(Yogyakarta: Kalimedia, 20169.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, *Tafsir al-Ibriz li Ma'rifah Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Aziz* karya KH. Bisri Musthofa, *Tafsir Faidlur Rahman* karya KH. Sholeh Darat.

Despite the presence of various works of Quranic interpretation in local languages and research directly related to nocturnal cultural practices, such as Hayadi's study on 'maleman' as a tradition associated with commemorating the Night of Lailatul Qadar<sup>7</sup>, However, a social and cultural exegesis that delves into the symbolic significance of the indigenous Sasak community's 'dile jojor' tradition during the enduring, generation-spanning observance of maleman has yet to be discovered.

On the basis of this premise, this article aims to explore the symbolic significance as understood by the community through a socio-cultural interpretation, employing a phenomenological approach. This will be achieved through participant observation of the maleman tradition with the 'dile jojor' ritual in various locations across Lombok and conducting in-depth interviews with key figures in Sasak traditional leadership, religious authorities, community leaders, and individuals involved in the practice of this culture. Subsequently, an interactive analysis of all collected data and cultural symbols, as explained by the informants, will be conducted to unearth the authentic meanings and their relevance to certain Quranic verses emphasizing the Night of Lailatul Qadar as a night of a thousand months filled with blessings, thereby establishing the symbolic significance of 'dile jojor' as a pivotal ritual within the maleman observance of the Sasak community in Lombok.

From the cultural perspective of the Sasak community, did 'dile jojor' merely function as a symbol of illuminated lamps, left to burn without a deeper meaning, or did it carry a significance not widely understood, particularly among the younger generation? The selection of 'dile jojor' as a source of illumination made from the "*Jarak*" (Castor) fruit for welcoming the Night of Lailatul Qadar raises questions about its symbolic meaning and whether its ritual implementation holds religious value stemming

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<sup>5</sup> Jajang A. Rohmana, "Memahami al- Qur'an dengan Kearifan Lokal: Nuansa budaya Sunda dalam tafsir al-Qur'an berbahasa Sunda" *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 3, no.1 (2014), 79-99.

<sup>6</sup> <https://balitbangdiklat.kemenag.go.id>, accessed 17 December 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Hayadi, "Maleman: Tradisi Menghidupkan Malam lailatul qadar di Desa Bilok Petung", *Jurnal Irfani*, 2, No.1 (2021), 40-49.

from interpretations and linguistic analogies in the Quran, or if it is solely a generational tradition passed down through the ages?

### **The Interrelation between Religion and Traditional Community Practices**

In terminological terms, religion is equivalent to the concept of 'religi' in European languages, and the Arabic term 'din,' within which it encompasses a way of life governed by norms or rules. The highest norms or rules are believed to originate from the divine. Religion can also be understood as the earnest observance of ritual obligations and a profound spiritual reverence.<sup>8</sup>

Religion, as per Glock and Stark, as cited by Djamaruddin Ancok,<sup>9</sup> is a system of symbols and beliefs, a system of values and behaviors, all of which revolve around issues that are deeply perceived as the most meaningful.<sup>10</sup>

As a system, religion provides specific explanations and interpretations for various issues, imparting meaning to the world by referencing the transcendental realm. This implies that the explanations and meanings inherent in religion transcend the limitations of human thought and logic.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, religion establishes "moral guidelines" that control and confine the conduct of its adherents.<sup>12</sup> In the subsequent tier, religion enforces various institutions and norms, demanding that its followers conduct themselves in accordance with these prescribed institutions and norms. The objective is to guide and lead its adherents on the right path, a path that directs them toward salvation.

Taking into account the aspects discussed above, scholars hold varying opinions, and it is nearly impossible to formulate a universally accepted definition of religion. Hence, according to

<sup>8</sup> The American Heritage Concise Dictionary, *Microsoft Encarta 97 Encyclopedia*, (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994), Third ed. Copyright.

<sup>9</sup> Djamaruddin Ancok, *Psikologi Islami: Solusi Islam Atas Problema-problem Psikologi*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001), 77.

<sup>10</sup> Robert H. Thouless, *Psikologi Agama*, (Jakarta: CV. Atisa, 1988), 10.

<sup>11</sup> Clifford Geertz, *the Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Anis Malik Thoha, there are at least three approaches to defining religion: functional, institutional, and substantive.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it can be stated that religion is a set of human customs or behaviors grounded in the path, regulations, or laws of God, which, when adhered to or obeyed, results in just or commensurate rewards for its adherents.

The term "tradition" is synonymous with the Arabic words 'adah and 'urf. The literal meaning of 'adah' is akin to the Indonesian word "kebiasaan" or "habit." On the other hand, the term 'urf conveys the notion of "something that is known or recognized".<sup>14</sup> Based on these interpretations, tradition implies the repetition or practice that has become a customary habit, applicable to both individual ('*ada fardliyah*) and collective ('*adah jama'iyyah*) habits. In this context, 'urf is also understood as a practice that occurs repeatedly and is acceptable to individuals of sound judgment. Thus, according to this interpretation, 'urf primarily refers to a shared habit among many people within a community, while "*adat*" is more closely related to the customs of a specific, smaller group within a society. On the other hand, tradition generally alludes to long-standing conventions within a community that are intentionally adopted or as a result of unintentional adaptations to prevailing circumstances, prioritizing actions or practices.<sup>15</sup>

Initially, Islam arrived in an ahistorical form, in the form of revelation, intersecting and "interacting" with the traditions of Arab society, leading to a reciprocal acculturation.<sup>16</sup> This gave rise to the tradition of Arab Islam (historical Islam). In this context, the initially ahistorical Islam serves as the essence, core, or nucleus

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<sup>13</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, (Depok: Perspektif, 2005), 13-14.

<sup>14</sup> Muhammad Musthafa Syalabi, *Ushul al-Fiqh al-Islami*, (Beirut: Dar al-Nahdalah al-'Arabiyyah, 1986), 313-315.

<sup>15</sup> Levy, R., *The Social Structure of Islam*, (London; Cambridge University Press, 1957), 248.

<sup>16</sup> Islam, as a value system, feeds into culture by providing a specific shape and hue. Conversely, the existing cultural system, almost inevitably, reciprocates to Islam by offering opportunities for the growth and development of religious views, understanding, and practices in a particular pattern.

that illuminates the culture or tradition of Arab Islam. Meanwhile, Arab tradition, after interacting with the teachings of Islam, represents the embodiment of the configuration of Islam for the first time.

Islam, in the form of Allah's revelation, was understood and initially practiced by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions within the social and cultural context of Arab society. The values of Islam were translated into the structures of Arab society by the Prophet (Q. S. al-Nahl [16]: 44, 64), providing explanations and practical examples in accordance with the demands of the situation, conditions, and traditions of Arab society at that time (Q. S. al-Syu'ara [26]: 195). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated, "Verily, the prophets, including myself, have been commanded to communicate (interact) with the community in accordance with their perspectives and cognitive abilities."<sup>17</sup>

Hence, when successfully garnering widespread interest among its adherents, a religion undergoes a process of transcending cultural boundaries by involving two crucial elements: First, translation and adaptation. Second, the process of crossing these cultural boundaries gives rise to significant theological tensions. These tensions occur in the apprehension and preservation of the core message of the religion, including religious practices. Thus, concepts such as orthodoxy and orthopraxy are continually advocated in responding to the relationship between religion and the local traditions of a community.<sup>18</sup> The patterns of relating and reinterpreting Islam by incorporating local traditions as described above can give rise to what is known as syncretism.

According to Bowen, syncretism refers to the blending of two or more traditions, occurring when a community adopts a new

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<sup>17</sup> Khutsymah ibn Sulayman. *Min Hadis Khutsaymah ibn Sulayman al-Qurasyiyyi*; Pentahkik: Umar 'Abd al-Salam, (Bayrut: Dār al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1400/1980), 74.

<sup>18</sup> Akhmad Muzakki, "Islam dan Lokalitas", *Media Indonesia*, 21 February 2003.

religion and endeavors to harmonize it with the existing cultural ideas and practices within the community.<sup>19</sup>

The potential for acculturation and the relationship between Islam and local culture in a general sense is recognized by Islam itself, as stated in the Quran and the Sunnah. Specifically in the realm of jurisprudence, since the process of legal interpretation (*istimbāth al-ahkām*), local culture is accommodated within one of the principles of jurisprudence, namely, "*al-ādah muhakkamah*." However, according to its boundaries and scope, Islamic law is only competent in matters of outward actions (*zhahir*), so both *al-urf* and *al-ādah al-muhakkamah* can only be applied for the resolution of material aspects of local traditions, not for non-material traditions.

The process of adaptation between Islamic teachings (revelation) and the societal context can be observed through the abundance of verses with "*asbāb al-nuzūl*." *Asbāb al-nuzūl* serves as an explanation of the reasons or causality behind a teaching that is integrated and established within the social environment of the community. *Asbāb al-nuzūl* also serves as evidence of the "negotiation" between the Quranic text and the societal context, with the community as the target or purpose of the revelation.

The Quran and Quranic interpretation share a profound connection, yet their nature differs. The close relationship between the two becomes apparent in practical terms, where the Quran often serves as the basis for various activities.<sup>20</sup> In fact, various religious behaviors are not always directly driven by the Quranic verses themselves but rather by interpretations of these Quranic verses.<sup>21</sup> This can be understood because the Quranic text cannot independently construct its historical trajectory, except through the dialectical process between humanity and reality on one side,

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<sup>19</sup> John R. Bowen, *Religions in Practice*, (tp. 2002), 170.

<sup>20</sup> See Ahmad al-Syarbashi, *Qishshat al-Tafsīr* (Kairo: Dâr al-Qalam, 1962), 15-16.

<sup>21</sup> Imam Muhsin, "Perubahan Budaya dalam Tafsir al-Qur'an: Telaah terhadap Penafsiran Muhammad Abduh dalam *Tafsir al-Manar*", *Jurnal Thaqafiyat*, 16, No.2, (2015), 121-144.

and the Quranic text on the other.<sup>22</sup> This is a logical consequence of the Quran's existence as the Word of God, which has become incarnate in the form of text. To comprehend the meaning and purpose of its sacred messages, a "dialogue" with the text is necessary.<sup>23</sup> In its process, humans play a central role, and the outcome is something distinctly human (humanistic) rather than divine. This is where Quranic interpretation can be positioned as a cultural phenomenon that, borrowing Amin Abdullah's terminology, falls within the realm of "historicity-profanity".<sup>24</sup>

This is where the importance lies in examining the relationship between the sacred text of the Quran, which was revealed to shape and inspire the life of the community, and the "Maleman" tradition that continues to thrive within the Sasak community of Lombok.

### **"Maleman" in the Sasak community's tradition and its symbolic meaning.**

The term "maleman" is generally understood by the Sasak community in Lombok as the night of "Likuran," especially on odd-numbered nights, starting from the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, and 29th days of the month of Ramadan. This maleman tradition is not only known among the Sasak people of Lombok but may also have been known, perhaps even earlier, outside the Sasak community, such as in Java, Sulawesi, and other regions. However, the ways and processes of its observance differ from those of the Sasak people. In Java, for example, in places like Surakarta and Yogyakarta, the observance of maleman, often referred to as the "malam selikuran," is a religious tradition that begins with the recitation of a prayer for safety to Allah SWT, followed by a ceremonial dish called "tumpeng seribu".<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> Islah Gusmian, *Khazanah Tafsir Indonesia: Dari Hermenutika hingga Ideologi* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2003), 27.

<sup>23</sup> Komaruddin Hidayat, *Memahami Bahasa Agama: Sebuah Kajian Hermeneutik* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1996), 137.

<sup>24</sup> J.W.M. Bakker SJ., *Filsafat Kebudayaan: Sebuah Pengantar* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1992), 14.

<sup>25</sup> The "Tumpeng Seribu" symbolizes the promise of Allah SWT, who will grant rewards equivalent to a thousand months to His servants who sincerely

tumpeng, following the recitation of the prayer, is then carried by the palace servants (*abdi dalem*) and paraded through the streets on foot using “ting” lamps, to be distributed to the Abdi Dalem (Palace Servants) and the community,<sup>26</sup> heading towards a designated location that has been prepared. This demonstrates that the Maleman tradition is carried out formally by the palace authorities.

Meanwhile, in Demak, Central Java, the practice of maleman, which has been ongoing since the time of Walisongo, is carried out individually by the community. It involves acts of devotion such as i'tikaf (seclusion inside the mosque), where individuals engage in various forms of worship, including reciting the Quran, performing Tahajjud prayers, Tasbih prayers, Hajat prayers, dhikr (remembrance of Allah), reading salawat, and other acts of devotion. However, since the 1950s until today, the maleman tradition has been coordinated by its chief imam and carried out collectively. This includes optional prayers performed in unison as directed by their guides. It's important to note that while the movements are synchronized with the imam, the intentions remain individual. This ritual takes place from 11:00 PM to 2:00 AM, following the conclusion of the Taraweeh prayers. Once the specific rituals are completed according to the prescribed guidelines, the remaining time is left to the individual devotees. Some of them return home, while others continue their worship until the pre-dawn meal.<sup>27</sup>

In Minahasa, North Sulawesi, as in other places, maleman is also highly regarded. It is believed that during the odd-numbered nights of the last ten days of Ramadan, Lailatul Qadar descends

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worship on the night of Lailatul Qadar. Syamsul Bakri and Siti Nurlaili Muhadiatiningsih, “Tradisi Malam Selikuran Kraton Kesunanan Surakarta”, *Ibda’ Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Budaya*, 17, No.1 (2019), 28.

<sup>26</sup> The “Ting” lamp is a light that illuminates in vast quantities, accompanying the tradition of Selikuran night from the palace to the Grand Mosque of Surakarta. This “Ting” lamp serves as a symbol of dim light, acting as a medium to remind us of the darkness of the night when the Prophet Muhammad descended from Jabal Nur after receiving revelation. *Ibid*, 26-28.

<sup>27</sup> Laili Anafah, “Tradisi Maleman di Masjid Agung Demak”, *Sabda: Jurnal Kajian Kebayaan*, by Institute of Research and Community Service Diponegoro University (LPPM UNDIP), 2017.

along with the angels. This makes the mosque the central place of worship activities that distinguish it from other nights.<sup>28</sup>

In contrast to the maleman celebration among the Sasak community in Lombok, which is passed down through generations, and in addition to religious rituals like dhikr (remembrance of Allah), Quranic recitation (*tadarrus*), *i'tikaf*, and various voluntary prayers, there are also cultural rituals considered equally important in welcoming the Night of Lailatul Qadar through the maleman tradition. One such ritual is the lighting of "*dile jojor*".<sup>29</sup> Before lighting the "*dile jojor*," as iftar (the evening meal to break the fast) approaches, every family capable of doing so brings a tray of food to the mosque or prayer hall to break their fast together. The Maghrib prayer is performed in congregation, followed by collective dhikr (remembrance of Allah) and supplications. Only after this, the cultural ritual of lighting the "*dile jojor*" is carried out. These illuminated decorations are then placed from the entrance of the house to every corner of it. Some even put them in their rooms and under trees surrounding the house, creating a bright and luminous atmosphere.

The Sasak community of Lombok interprets this ritual as a way to welcome the arrival of the blessed Lailatul Qadar. This interpretation is rooted in the Quranic verse of Allah SWT which states:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُّبَرَّكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنْذِرِينَ

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<sup>28</sup> <https://regional.kompas.com.read.2018/06/07>.

<sup>29</sup> "*Dile jojor*" is a term used by the Sasak people in Lombok to refer to a traditional lamp used during the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan. It is made from the dried fruits of either the jarak or jamplung trees, both of which are commonly found throughout the island of Lombok. Typically, jarak fruits are more frequently used in making "*dile jojor*" because the jarak tree is of medium size, making it easier to find and quicker to bear fruit. The process of creating "*dile jojor*" involves grinding the dried jarak or jamplung fruits into a fine powder and mixing them with kapok fibers from the randu fruit to serve as an adhesive. This mixture is then attached to bamboo sticks, which are typically 2 cm in diameter and 20-30 cm in length. "*Dile jojor*" lamps, once prepared, are used as sources of light during the maleman tradition and can often be found for sale in traditional markets, typically beginning around the middle of the Ramadan month.

"Indeed, We sent it [the Quran] down during a blessed night. Indeed, We were to warn [mankind]." (Quran, Surah Al-Dukhan, 44:3).

According to one traditional leader, the mentioned verse can generally be understood as the moment when the divine light of glory (Lailatul Qadar) is descended along with the angels, including the Angel Gabriel (Jibril).<sup>30</sup> It must be welcomed with Light. In other words, Light must be welcomed with Light. According to him, this concept is not easily explainable to everyone. Therefore, the easiest way to convey understanding to the general public is to actualize it through visible and simple means or to visualize it in the form of light by lighting the "dile jojor" in order to attain and perpetuate the value of the divine light within each person. This is where the saying holds true: **خَاطِبُوا النَّاسَ عَلَى قَدْرِ عُقُولِهِمْ** "Speak to others according to their level of intellect".<sup>31</sup> One of the contents and purposes of the descent of Lailatul Qadar with the angels on that night is to bring the mission of al-Nur (the Light)<sup>32</sup> So that every person may receive the divine guidance and light at that moment.<sup>33</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the "dile jojor" that has been lit and then placed in various locations, according to the belief of some Sasak people in Lombok, serves as a safeguard against the interference of jinn, demons, calamities, and unwanted negative influences in human life. Specifically, when "dile jojor" is placed under a tree, the intention is to promote the tree's lush growth and abundant fruit production while protecting it from harm.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, according to TGH. Sohimun Faisal, the lamp or "dile jojor" made from the fruit of the jarak plant generally symbolizes light as Allah's guidance. The symbol of a lamp (al-mishbah) as a source of light is immortalized in Allah's words:

<sup>30</sup> Q.S. Al-Qadr (97): 1-5.

<sup>31</sup> Muzaiyyin Arifin, *Ilmu Pendidikan Islam*, (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 1991), 80.

<sup>32</sup> Q.S. al-Taghabun (64): 8.

<sup>33</sup> Mamiq Abdul Hakim, Adat Sasak community leader, interview 13 April 2022, in Mataram.

<sup>34</sup> H. Nawani, Academician and Adat Sasak community leader, interview 18 April 2022, in Mataram.

...الْمُصَبَّاحُ فِي رُجَاجَةِ الرُّجَاجَةِ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرْرَى يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ  
مُبْرَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ....

“ ...The lamp is within glass. The glass is as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things..” (Quran, Surah Al-Nur, 24:35).

The use of jarak (castor) trees as the primary material for making “dile jojor” to illuminate during the maleman ritual is due, in part, to the fact that these trees are easily obtainable and can be cultivated by anyone without requiring significant expenses. Additionally, they bear fruit relatively soon after planting, and their light can last for a sufficient duration. Furthermore, the cultural heritage of using jarak fruit as maleman lamps should be preserved. Even though electricity is widely available in many places, the presence of jarak fruit, which emerges from the tree as a source of illumination during maleman, holds cultural value that cannot be replaced by other forms of lighting. This is because the jarak tree itself is directly associated with the term “syajarah” found in the aforementioned verse of Surah al-Nur.<sup>35</sup>

Those who receive the guidance of the divine light symbolized by the “dile jojor,” according to TGH. Muhammad Muchlis, are individuals who are not preoccupied with worldly matters such as buying and selling, but rather, they honor Allah through abundant remembrance (tasbih), devoutly performing prayers, and demonstrating social concern for others by giving alms (zakat). This can be done in mosques or at home during the morning and evening. Such individuals are assured by Allah that they will receive a reward better than what they have done, and they will be granted additional blessings from Him. Furthermore, Allah affirms that He will provide sustenance to whomever He wills without limits.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> TGH. Sohimun Faisal, Sasak religious and community leader, interview 19 April 2022.

<sup>36</sup> TGH. Muhammad Muchlis, Sasak religious and community leader, interview 12 May 2022.

What has been expounded by TGH. Muchlis above appears to allude to the verses of Allah found in Surah Al-Nur (24): 35-38. Furthermore, it can be asserted that the maleman process carried out by the Sasak Lombok community, commencing with collective remembrance (zikir) and communal supplications at the mosque, coupled with the congregational Maghrib prayer and the breaking of fast together, subsequently followed by the collective performance of Isha and Tarawih prayers, as well as participation in i'tikaf and Qur'an recitation, all the while abstaining from various worldly activities, undeniably manifests as a realization of those who are extolled and shall be duly rewarded to the fullest extent in this world and in the hereafter. The words of Allah in Surah Al-Nur mentioned above are further affirmed by Allah in the subsequent phrasing:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ اُنْثِي وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيهَ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً  
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"Whoever performs righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer, then verily We shall grant them a reward according to their best deeds." (Quran, Surah Al-Nahl, 16:97)

Engaging in the maleman tradition during the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan by presenting the "dile jojor" with good intentions, noble aims, and in a virtuous manner, subsequently leading to positive consequences, is an exhortation emphasized by the Quran in the following wording:

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجُحْلِيْنَ

"Be of those who are forgiving, and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant." (Quran, Surah Al-A'raf, 7:199).

The verse above serves as the foundation for scholars in establishing operational laws within society for matters that are not explicitly mentioned in the Quran and Hadith. It is likely that the Maleman tradition with "dile jojor" falls within this context.

### Analysis of Cultural Interpretation of the Sasak Community's Maleman Tradition

As is well-known, the Quran holds a primary and fundamental position as the "moral code" for humanity. It serves

as a way of life and aims to provide guidance to people. It was revealed in societies rich in cultural values, each with its own primordial bonds. Therefore, the dissemination of its teachings is directly confronted with various challenges. Besides its values, its teachings must break through geographical boundaries, each with its unique characteristics, and penetrate diverse cultural layers. Simultaneously, the values of Quranic teachings are confronted with two imperatives. First, the necessity of realizing its guidance through interpretations grounded in local cultural realities. Second, the necessity of preserving its authentic identity throughout the ages.<sup>37</sup> In anticipating social changes, the values of the Quran should not necessarily change or be updated. Rather, it is the institutions and structures in implementing its teachings that undergo transformations.

Based on this, it cannot be denied that the interpretation of the Quran will give rise to various interpretations of its verses, which sometimes differ among different interpretations, and often lead to opposing claims. However, all of this stems from the motivation to seek the best way to contextualize the content of the Quran with the ongoing realities of life. In this context, the author intends to conduct an analysis of the cultural tradition of the Sasak community's maleman as a religious phenomenon that interacts with the sacred text of the Quran.

The interpretation of the radiance of "dile jojer," for example, is understood as a way to welcome the arrival or descent of Lailatul Qadar along with the angels, symbolized by light. In this context, it can be interpreted that one way for the earthly "creatures" to honor and glorify the arrival of heavenly "beings" made of light is to welcome them with light through "dile jojer." This is preceded by various acts of righteousness, such as prayer, remembrance, supplication, charity, and bringing offerings for communal iftar in the mosque, as well as giving alms. Following this, it is accompanied by the congregation of the Isha prayer and Tarawih, as well as various other righteous acts. All of this is done

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<sup>37</sup> Umar Syihab, *al-Qur'an dan Rekayasa Sosial*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Kartini, 2020), 9.

with the intention of gaining the pleasure and rewards of goodness and blessings from Allah SWT, as promised in His word:

لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدُهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ

يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

"Those who do such deeds do so in the hope that Allah will reward them with better rewards than their actions and that Allah will increase His grace upon them. Allah provides sustenance to whomever He wills without measure." (Q.S. al-Nur [24]: 38).

According to Imam al-Shawiy, as cited by Fuad Kauma, the term "Cahaya" (Light) (al-Nur) in Surah al-Nur, verse 35, which is associated with Lailatul Qadar, refers to Allah creating light (al-Nur) in the sky, such as the sun, moon, stars, planets, the Throne (Arsh), and the angels. Meanwhile, others assert that Allah has made the prophets, messengers, scholars, and righteous individuals as lights or lanterns on Earth, not in a literal sense but in a metaphorical sense. Their presence illuminates the perception of people's hearts, enabling them to distinguish between truth (*haq*) and falsehood (*batil*).<sup>38</sup>

Imam al-Shawiy, as referenced by Fuad Kauma, interprets the term "Cahaya" (al-Nur) in Surah al-Nur, verse 35, in connection with Lailatul Qadar, as a reference to Allah's creation of celestial light in the sky, including the sun, moon, stars, planets, the Throne (Arsh), and the angels. On the other hand, some scholars suggest that Allah has symbolically designated the prophets, messengers, scholars, and righteous individuals as sources of light or guidance on Earth. This symbolism is not meant to be understood literally but rather metaphorically. Their presence serves to enlighten and clarify the hearts and minds of people, enabling them to discern between truth (*haq*) and falsehood (*Batil*).

A person enveloped by the guidance of Divine light is likened to a house: their heart resembles a lamp, their knowledge (about Allah) is like a grand light, their mouth serves as a "door," and their tongue acts as the "key." When someone moves their tongue to proclaim the beliefs that reside within their heart, the radiance

<sup>38</sup> Fuad Kauma, *Tamsil al- Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Mitra Pustaka, 2000), 30.

of the grand lamp emanates, piercing through to the Throne of Allah. Thus, their words are likened to illuminating light, their actions resemble the light that shines outwardly and inwardly, and their ultimate destination on the Day of Judgment is towards this light. This is how the analogy represents those who are continuously guided and enlightened by Allah.

## Conclusion

The tradition of "*Maleman*" in Sasak Lombok's culture not only holds cultural and religious significance in welcoming the arrival of the night of Lailatul Qadar, as practiced in several other regions in Indonesia such as Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Demak, and Minahasa. It also carries symbolic meanings tied to the ritual of lighting '*dile jojor*' in every household, rich in the symbolic significance of welcoming light with light. This is derived from Divine light to obtain blessings for all earthly beings. This includes the hope for the health and protection from calamities for the entire family, the multiplication and well-being of livestock, and the lush fruitfulness and protection from diseases of plants. It is believed that placing '*dile jojor*' from the entrance gate to the entire yard and the shelters for the domestic animals and beneficial plants brings these blessings to the homeowners.

The arrival of the night of Lailatul Qadar is highly anticipated, and it is evident in the presence and participation of all family members in lighting the '*dile jojor*'. Thus, its symbolic meaning can become a positive energy in welcoming the night of Lailatul Qadar in the *Maleman* tradition. This belief is grounded in an understanding of the verses of the Quran found in Surah al-Qadr, emphasizing the greatness of the night of Lailatul Qadar, the message to hold fast to the divine verses in Surah al-Taghabun, and the guidance in Surah al-Nur on how to enliven the holy night with religious rituals in the house of Allah. In addition, the term '*Syajarah*' is used as an analogy for the use of raw materials from the seeds of the castor oil plant in making '*dile jojor*'.

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