

## Offerings a Reflection of God in the Tradition of the Bonokeling Community in Banyumas Regency, Indonesia

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this research are to find out the position of offerings in the Bonokeling community which they do regularly at a predetermined time. This research method uses qualitative descriptive with ethnographic type. Data were collected through observation and interview. Data analysis used interactive method. The result of the research found: 1) The offerings carried out by the Bonokeling community are a reflection of offerings to God and the spirits of their ancestors who are believed to realize safety, peace and prosperity; 2) The dish as an offering to God is an offering that has existed since the time of the prophet Adam, as well as the sacrifice performed by his two sons named Qabil and Habil; 3) God, who is embodied in the ritual of offerings, is included in the realm of the supernatural, the consequence is that human sacrifice and devotion are not offerings in material form, but respect through behavior and inner attitude reflected in the form of intention and sincerity as a taqwa (manifestation of obedience to God). Therefore, offerings buried for ancestral spirits are behaviors and attitudes that are not under the realm of the supernatural, because spirits in the supernatural realm do not require material offerings, except for human behavior and inner attitudes towards them, such as prayer.*

**Keywords:** Offerings, Ancestral Spirits, the Supernatural, Bonokeling.

### Introduction

The tradition of offerings is a form of ritual that has long been owned by humans, including in the information age (Riyadi, 2020). The Bonokeling community as an adherent of Islam in the Banyumas region, Central Java, Indonesia is part of the community that still practices offering rituals.

The implementation of offering rituals is always related to the supernatural and can be in the form of God, spirits or spirits of ancestors. The implementation of offering rituals is in order to worship those who are believed to bring good luck and reject distress or as a vehicle to ask for safety and protection from the supernatural realm in order to avoid disasters caused by supernatural spirits (Dr. Ayatullah Humaeni et al., 2021). The places used for offering rituals are believed to be sacred, holy, sacred and have supernatural powers.

Ritual offerings are also a behavior of gratitude for what happens in life. This gratitude is one way to overcome various kinds of crises faced and as an expression of kindness for the gifts of God Almighty that can ensure continuity in a life (Kholis, 2022; Teresia Noiman, et al., 2022).

The continuity of the offering ritual for the Bonokeling community is an undeniable part of their life. At predetermined times they always perform the rituals as an expression of gratitude and offerings to God and their ancestors who are recognized as having an influence on their life order. At the same time, they acknowledge the omnipotence of God, and also recognize the strong influence of the spirits of their ancestors on their lives. Recognition in such a description is problematic in the principles of Islamic *aqeedah*.

There have been many studies on the ritual of offerings, including research on the identification of offerings in culture. It was found that the existence of offerings became a cultural identity and local wisdom whose implementation was only carried out by parties who still had concerns and from only among traditional leaders (Ujang Kusnadi Adam et al., 2019).

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Another study related to the purpose of offerings stated that the ritual of offerings means *tasyakuran* (thanksgiving) for being given smoothness and as a form of respect for success in conducting wedding events (Khotijah, 2018). The offering ritual is expected to bring goodness in living a life full of trials (Indrahti et al., 2019). In the symbolic meaning, the ritual of offerings is also expressed as an effort to maintain livestock so that they are safe, kept away from disturbances, and receive protection from God Almighty (Ida Sulastri, 2017; Alim, 2021). This is evidence that the community still believes in the traditional culture of offering rituals as a thanksgiving for the life obtained (Derung et al., 2022; Lestari et al., 2023).

Other research is related to the law of performing ritual offerings. The results of research on a series of ritual offerings in marriage, stating that the ritual offerings have elements of prayers offered to other than Allah. So the ritual of offerings is included in the act of shirk which is prohibited by Islamic law. So the law of performing wedding offerings is haram (Firmansyah et al., 2023). Ritual offerings that can reflect shirk can exceed the limits of worship only to Allah (Syam, 2023). If the implementation of the offering ritual aims to share with each other with alms and establish friendship like Muslims in general, then the law is valid (Alfiah et al., 2022).

The research conducted is related to offering rituals such as earth alms, suran, sadranan and or uploading that have been carried out by the Bonokeling community, which is predominantly Muslim. In history, it is stated that Islam came to Indonesia since the 13th century (Dalimunthe, 2016), but has not been able to change the tradition of offering rituals to a more appropriate direction. It is not possible to dismiss frontally the tradition of offerings that contain problems in the principle of divine monotheism in Islam, because the ritual of offerings is very strong in the life of the Bonokeling community. This research attempts to answer the question of how the position of offering rituals that reflect the worship of God and recognition of the existence of the spirits of the ancestors who are recognized to have given gifts in the form of land fertility and crops that are expected, so that they can realize a peaceful and prosperous life.

This research is different from previous studies. This research has a very meaningful value for all parties. Because the results of this research provide solutions for Muslims, especially the Bonokeling community who perform ritual offerings feel comfortable. Even theologically, it can explain which offerings are justified and which offerings should be avoided, so that the Bonokeling community and the surrounding Muslims can sort them out more scientifically.

## Methods

This research was conducted in the Bonokeling community in Banyumas regency, an area that has many offerings ritual traditions. In the field observation, the offering rituals used as the source of data collection are earth alms as an expression of gratitude to God who has given many blessings; *kupatan* offering tradition which is held every Monday *Pabing* starting at 07.00-12.00 WIB; *Perlon Rikat* tradition (cleaning the Bonokeling tomb environment) as a ritual to give prayers to their ancestors; and *unggahan* tradition which is held on every Friday *Klimon* at the end of *Sya'ban* month, in order to welcome the holy month of *Ramadan*. All of these traditions are filled with ritual offerings. There are offerings that are distributed to the community to be eaten together, but there are also offerings that are buried as offerings to ancestral spirits and or spirits that are considered to control nature (gods).

The research approach uses qualitative methods (Sugiyono, 2018). The type of research is included in ethnographic research, as an effort to understand the point of view of the surrounding community in relation to life to get a view of their world through an interpretative perspective in order to answer a more detailed explanation of social symptoms (Mohammad Siddiq, 2019).

The selection of informants was carried out through purposive sampling techniques, namely determining informants by deliberately choosing them according to the research objectives. Therefore, informants are actors and people who really know about the object of research, such as caretakers, observers and cultural actors and religious leaders. Researchers have conducted observations in May 2023 - August 2024. Interviews were conducted using the indepth interview model through unstructured questions, and were

conducted not only once, but repeatedly. This is an effort to check a statement with the reality that occurs according to the researcher's observations.

In order to strengthen the data, the research was complemented by various information, both through electronic media, print media, pamphlets, journals and books related to the object of research. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using the interactive method (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, 2014).

Data analysis was carried out using process analysis (Creswell, 2018), namely preparing data from the results of observations, interviews, and FGD activity notes. Then the research was operationalized as follows:

*First*, identifying the Bonokeling community as part of a community, which has its own characteristics. The selection of the Bonokeling Community as a research location is based on the fact that the community has the potential for dynamic development in carrying out their traditions.

*Second*, the author extracts information and reflects the overall meaning of field notes during observations and turns them into ideas. The Bonokeling community is part of a community that does not close itself off from people outside its community. Their social interactions with anyone run normally without any obstacles, even though they are in one location.

*Third*, the data obtained is categorized in the form of terms, sentences, or paragraphs since data collection. The Bonokeling community as members of the community has several characteristics as follows: (1) At certain times, they hold ritual offerings; (2) The Bonokeling community has a social structure consisting of the Customary Leader, Deputy Customary Leader, Main Figures in ritual events and community members who are descendants of the Bonokeling grandfather; and (3) The Bonokeling community's clothing for men always wears a headband called *\*Blangkon\**. So they are often referred to as followers of *Blangkon Islam*.

*Fourth*, the author provides descriptions according to certain themes to be analyzed. The Bonokeling community is a community that has unique customs and is still related to Islamic teachings. However, the implementation of its customs is carried out internally, so that it does not disturb the community in general.

*Fifth*, the author describes the findings and relates them to several themes that are the focus of this study. The Bonokeling community has several rituals that are held routinely according to a predetermined schedule, in one year. In an effort to carry out these rituals consistently, the Bonokeling community always holds internal meetings routinely, interacts with the community outside, and participates in national events, such as the commemoration of Indonesian Independence Day. This applies so that all rituals run smoothly.

## Literature Review

### *Bonokeling Community and its Teachings*

Bonokeling community is mostly located in Pekuncen village, Jatilawang, Banyumas, Central Java Indonesia. They still highly uphold the culture and customary beliefs originating from their ancestors. The belief is *Aboge Islam*, a sect that uses the Javanese calendar based on a combination of the Javanese calendar and the *Saka* calendar, especially in determining Islamic holidays such as fasting, *'idu al-fitri* and *'id al-adha*. The process of understanding Islamic teachings is based on a figure, and the process of regeneration of teaching is passed down from generation to generation within family relatives (Taufik, 2020).

Bonokeling is the name of a famous religious (Islamic) leader of his time. He is also referred to as a *patih* in the *Pasirluhur* Kingdom, a place bordering Central Java and West Java. A man who possessed religious and mystical knowledge is believed, especially by his descendants, to have brought enlightenment to life and can bring salvation in this world and the hereafter. Therefore, his descendants still uphold the traditions taught by *Kyai* Bonokeling.

The search for Bonokeling's name is still unclear. According to the community, Bonokeling is a figure that was deliberately created and is not actually his real name. *Bono* means container (place). *Keling* is black.

Revealing the true story is considered *pamali* (customary prohibition). Including the real name and who the kyai Bonokeling really is. That is why until now the secrecy of his teachings and history is still full of mystery, because indeed his knowledge and teachings are placed below the surface (Susanto, 2023).

Apart from the mysterious figure of the Bonokeling cleric, there are teaching values that are clearly believed to be the teachings originating from this figure. Before the coming of *Ramadhan*, precisely on the last Friday of Sya'ban month or Ruwah month (Javanese term) the Bonokeling community performs the tradition of *unggaban* rituals to remember and pray for the ancestors, and most importantly the parents. This ritual aims to obtain safety for the family, offspring, and also maintain harmony with the ancestors (Annisa et al., 2017).

The Bonokeling community has many life teachings related to divinity, humanity and the universe. Among the teachings about God is expressed as “*nyong urip ono sing gawe urip*” (I live there is someone who created it). The Bonokeling community is invited to think that there is someone who gives life in this world. A person cannot live on his own accord. Many of the events he experiences are beyond his control. The divine message that is often delivered is: “*sing penting yakin karo sing gawe urip*”. God who created human beings will definitely organize human life. The obligation of the Bonokeling community is to live their lives in a straight line in accordance with the teachings of the ancestors, especially the teachings of Bonokeling (Purwana et al., 2015). In another observation, the teachings brought by Bonokeling and still practiced until now (2024) are a five-point teaching:

*Monembah*, which means that humans are encouraged to worship and worship God according to their respective beliefs.

*Moguru*, which means obeying parents' orders.

*Mongabdi*, which is mutual respect and relationship between fellow humans.

*Makaryo*, which is work. Humans without work cannot earn income that can support life in the world.

*Manages manunggaling kawula lan gusti*, which is that the relationship between humans and God is not through any intermediary. In Bonokeling belief, every person born on earth is entrusted by God. Therefore, human interaction with God is direct without intermediaries (K-YN, 2019).

The directly practiced teachings are reflected in the *unggaban* ritual. This ritual aims to pray for parents, ancestors so that they are safe. It is hoped that this ritual will affect social life, namely caring for each other, realizing harmony and improving religious life (Annisa et al., 2017).

On the other hand, the teachings that symbolize the five fingers in the palm of the hand are also introduced. The little finger symbolizes the importance of prayer as a form of mortal human existence and believes that God guarantees forgiveness. The ring finger symbolizes gratitude which is realized by the tradition of slametan. The middle finger is the knowledge that guides us to choose what is good and what is bad. The index finger is a symbol of wisdom to be fair and true to all humans, the universe, the place where we live and ourselves. The culmination is the thumb, which means that humans must be good at controlling their lusts (Mdk/Shr, 2021).

These are some of the teachings of the Bonokeling community that include relationships with divinity (religion), social, intellectual, psychological and humanity. The teachings presented have many philosophical, sociological and ascetic meanings. The disclosure of these teachings requires participatory and deepening steps to know deeply.

#### *Offerings and Worship*

The origin of the term *sesajen* comes from the word *saji* (to serve), meaning to serve (food) to the spirits as an expression of human belief. Offerings indicate that humans believe there is a higher power above human power (Dr. Ayatullah Humaeni et al., 2021).

In people's lives, offerings are part of the culture that is reflected in the form of offerings. Like the *suran* culture which aims to get salvation from God. There are several cultural traditions of *suran*, including the *larungan* ritual, which is installing offerings in sacred places such as mountains, beaches, seas, ponds, caves and or others. Then there are *slametan* rituals, namely *kenduren*, *wilujengan*, holding *slametan* alms which are usually carried out on the 8th of Muharram or Friday of the month (Anis, 2014). The nuances of offerings blend between beliefs in Islam and beliefs that come from the ancestors.

Offerings have a sacred value in some Indonesian communities, especially Javanese communities. The sacredness of offerings is generally as a medium of “seeking blessings” in certain places or objects that are considered sacred and believed to have supernatural powers. Historically, offerings are a heritage of Hindu and Buddhist culture that is often used as a means and material in worship of gods, certain spirits or who inhabit a place such as trees, rocks, mountains or others that are believed to provide good luck. The reason for giving offerings as a form of hope is to achieve what is desired in worldly life (Wahyuni et al., 2020).

Offerings can also be said to be an actualization of the thoughts, desires, and feelings of the perpetrator to get closer to God. Offerings are symbolic discourses used as a means for spiritual negotiation with subtle beings so as not to disturb them (Ujang Kusandi Adam et al., 2019).

In its application, offerings include three forms, namely: First, honoring ancestors and giving alms to neighbors, but the merit is intended for deceased ancestors. Second, to honor supernatural beings and at the same time give thanks to Allah swt. Third, to connect and care for all creatures of Allah swt. (Aminullah, 2017), and respect for each other and for something that has been living all this time, because without them we would never exist so that by using offerings from natural elements it will be able to reconnect the energy of the past with the future (Miharja et al., 2021). The implementation of cultural traditions is an effort to lead to mutual harmony (Mas'udi, 2018). The implementation of offerings will always be related to offerings to God and spirits. Therefore, the ritual of offerings includes the religious side which is manifested by gratitude to God for His grace and includes the cultural side as a ritual passed down by ancestors to honor deceased ancestors (Alfiah et al., 2022).

In the Bonokeling community, the implementation of offerings is done in the following ways.

First, the community members are informed to organize the offerings. Each household member makes offerings consisting of rice and side dishes, according to the number of members. The offerings are wrapped in banana leaves or otherwise, corresponding to one portion of food for one person.

Secondly, all the offerings are brought to the Village Head. Then, by the appointed officer, the offerings are divided into two parts. One part is taken to a certain place to be offered by being buried. The other part is distributed to the community to be enjoyed together. Since the food packages are mixed randomly, it is possible that they will enjoy food that does not come from the food packages they made themselves or vice versa (interview with the Customary Chief of the Bonokeling Community, Mr. Sumitro, July 2024).

When the Bonokeling community performs the offering ritual, it is carried out simply, where each member of the community hands over a package of rice that has been mixed with side dishes (such as noodles, tempeh, eggs, chicken, etc.) in proportion to the number of family members. The rice, wrapped in banana leaves, is collected in the village, some of which is placed on an *ancak* to be eaten together, while others are buried in gratitude to God and the spirits of the ancestors. Except for the wrapped rice, which is accompanied by side dishes, the offerings to be buried are equipped with incense, young coconut, yellow *dadap* leaves, green *dadap* leaves, roses, roasted cassava, real tea and coffee.

It is unknown when the Bonokeling offerings ritual was started by the community. The ritual is not obligatory, but the community performs it based on the agreement of the community. The following is a picture of the content of the offerings made by the Bonokeling community.





**Figure 1.** The Bonokeling Community's Earth Offerings Are Placed in An Ancah (A Special Food Place for Offerings), Which Will Be Eaten Together

(Source: Research Team, September 2023)



**Figure 2.** Earth Offerings of The Bonokeling Community That Will Be Buried, As an Expression of Gratitude to The Spirits of Their Ancestors.

(Source: Research Team, September 2023)

The implementation of the offering ritual in the Bonokeling community has two models, namely: First, offerings that are presented to God, but the material is eaten together in their community. Second, offerings that are buried as offerings to their ancestors and their manifestations are given to the earth. They believe that offerings as offerings to God and the spirits of the ancestors can realize safety, peace, tranquility and prosperity.

Thus, offerings have symbolic meaning and as a medium to get closer to God; a means for community members to make offerings to God and ancestral spirits; a form of expression of gratitude and effort so that a procession runs smoothly, so that what is expected and requested can be achieved; and a means to realize friendship, togetherness, harmony, equality and peace between residents.

#### *Offerings, God and Spirits*

The Bonokeling community that performs the offering ritual is mostly Muslim. So it is natural that the offering of offerings cannot be separated from the mention of the name of God. The concept of divinity in the Bonokeling community is like the concept of divinity in ancient Javanese society which is more animistic and dynamic. Even after the arrival of religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, adherents of both of these styles continue to exist under the term mysticism. The adherents of the mysticism sect maintain their unique identity by maintaining the authenticity of their teachings. Some others syncretize with other religious traditions (Smith, 2020). Islam, as the majority religion practiced by the Javanese people, is an important anchor in this syncretization process.

In his research, Clifford Geertz (1976), an American anthropologist, divided Javanese religion into a large trichotomy, namely *Santri*, *Priyayi*, and *Abangan* (Geertz, 1976). *Abangan* is a term used by Geertz to define spiritual groups after the occurrence of religious syncretism. This group is then better known by the community as the *Kejawen* group (Bontoro, 2002). The concept of *Kejawen* divinity is explicitly close to the concept of Islamic divinity. *Kejawen* teaching literature is also dominated by the writings of post-Javanese-Islamic artists such as the Surakarta palace artist Ranggawarsita (1802). For example, Ranggawarsita describes the God's existence in the Substance, names (*Asma*), Attributes, and *Af'al* of God. This concept is equivalent to the concept of Allah in Islamic teachings which in His Essence has *Asma* and Attributes (Kholid Karomi, 2013). The Essence of God is the absolute existence of God. *Asma* (name) of God cannot be separated from His existence, and at the same time describes the nature of God. *Af'al* (action) is a

consequence of the asma and nature of God. This understanding is widely adopted by the *Kejawen* or Javanese school of thought.

Belief in the *Kejawen* spiritual stream cannot be separated from its characteristics that like mystical things and supernatural powers. Therefore, the pattern of Javanese-Islamic syncretism emerged as a blend of pre-Islamic spiritual streams and Islam (Fajfrlíková, 2018). Adherents of the spiritual stream believe in the existence of One God. However, they also need interaction with the spirits of ancestors who have already left the profane world. They express this belief in cultural rituals such as offerings, pilgrimages, and nature alms (Wasisto, 2021). This is where the Bonokeling community finds its genealogical relationship. Bonokeling is a *Kejawen* Islamic community that believes in God with unique specifications. This is reflected in the concept of divinity which has several terms.

First, the Javanese school of thought is more comfortable referring to God with abstract expressions, such as: "*cedak tanpa senggolan* (close without touching); *adob tanpa wangenan* (far beyond measure)". This expression means that God cannot be imagined in physical form, close but not touching and far but limitless.

Second, the Javanese school has special names in narrating God with several terms such as *Sang Hyang Taya* (Who Does Not Exist but Exists), *Sang Hyang Wenang* (The Almighty), *Sang Hyang Tunggal* (The Almighty), Sangkan Paraning Dumadi (Origin and Purpose of what exists). *Kejawen* considers that mentioning God with exclusive terms makes it easier for them to feel His existence (Yogiswari, 2020).

The mention of the name of God as something that has all-powerful power, becomes difficult to separate from other supernatural powers that exist in spirits or ancestral spirits. So that when worshiping through ritual offerings between God and the spirits of the ancestors cannot be separated strictly.

Belief in God and spirits is widely found in various corners of Indonesia. Even people's belief in supernatural powers that are considered capable of helping to realize their hopes and desires in uncertain conditions is still very high, even though society has developed in the current of modernization marked by advances in technology and information (Humaeni, 2016). So the belief of the Bonokeling community in offerings as part of offerings to God and spirits until now remains a well-preserved tradition (Interview with the Head of the Bonokeling Community, Mr. Sumitro, July 2024).

The position of spirits and ancestral spirits with God in the *Kejawen* belief and or the Bonokeling community is equal. In fact, the relationship between ancestral spirits and God is that of creatures and the Creator, whose status cannot be the same. The difficulty in distinguishing between ancestral spirits and God is because both are equally supernatural. So the problem of distinguishing between the two must be returned to the human intention which will make God and ancestral spirits as objects of offerings or as subjects in fulfilling human hopes and prayers.

#### *Offerings Reflection of God in Islamic Perspective*

Islam's view of the offering ritual in the Bonokeling community is a natural thing. Because the Bonokeling community is predominantly Muslim. In the Islamic perspective, the offering ritual is actually not a new problem. The offering ritual has existed since the time of the Prophet Adam, a.s. This can be seen in the Qur'an in the letter al Maidah: 27 as follows.

وَأْتَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْآخَرَ قَالَ لَأَفْتُنَّكَ أَنَّ مَا يُتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (المائدة : ٢٧)

Meaning: Tell them the true story of the two sons of Adam (Habil and Qabil), when they both sacrificed, it was accepted by one of them (Habil) and not accepted by the other (Qabil). He said (Qabil): "I will definitely kill you!". Habil said: "Indeed, Allah only accepts (sacrifice) from those who are pious" (Q.S. Al-Maidah: 27).

The verse is interpreted by Sayyid Quthb very beautifully. The two sons of Adama are facing a problem that does not imply hostility. Both are carrying out obedience before Allah, namely offering a sacrifice to draw closer to Allah. The passive verb majhul (مَجْهُولٌ) shows that whether or not a sacrifice is accepted depends on the power and rules of the unseen. So there are two benefits that can be taken, namely: 1) we should not discuss in detail how the sacrifice is accepted; and 2) the person whose sacrifice is accepted does not bear sin and takes refuge to prevent murder. Because the problem is the business of the Almighty. Returning the problem to the unseen, basically returns the problem to its root. This return is done with full faith. With gentle direction to the person who is going to do evil (kill) to be pious to Allah. Then show the way that can make his deeds accepted, and make a subtle offer in a non-frank manner, without criticizing and letting him go further (Quthb, 2022). There are nuances of behavior and inner attitudes that should be prioritized.

The verse is also interpreted by other commentators who explain that in fact the two sons of Adam offered sacrifices for Allah. The sacrifice of one of them was accepted, while the sacrifice of the other was rejected. The two people differed in giving their sacrifices, because one was a sheep breeder, while the other was a farmer. When ordered to make a sacrifice, in fact the livestock owner sacrificed a goat of the highest quality accompanied by a sincere and pious heart. As for the farmer, he sacrificed his harvest, but it was of poor quality accompanied by a less sincere heart. It turned out that from the two sacrifices, Allah only accepted the sacrifice from the livestock owner (Habil), and did not accept the sacrifice from the farmer (Qabil) (Katsir, n.d.). The point of emphasis here is not just the material or object for the sacrifice, but the intention and inner behavior when worshiping his Lord. Sacrifice is only made for Allah alone, it should not be offered to others. Sacrifice is carried out based on piety, so that there is a value of total surrender for the person making the sacrifice.

When the Prophet Muhammad saw was still among the people, the ritual of offerings was also held by some of the community. This is reflected in the following verse.

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا فَقَالُوا هَذَا لِلَّهِ بِرِءْسِهِمْ وَهَذَا لِشُرَكَائِنَا فَمَا كَانَ لِشُرَكَائِهِمْ فَلَا يَصِلُ إِلَى اللَّهِ طُومًا  
كَانَ لِلَّهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ إِلَى شُرَكَائِهِمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (الأنعام: ١٣٦)

Meaning: And they donated to Allah part of the produce of the land and livestock that Allah created, then they said according to their opinion: "This is for Allah and this is for our idols." So the offerings intended for their idols do not reach Allah; and offerings that are intended for Allah, then those offerings reach their idols. Their decisions were very bad (Q.S. al-An'am: 136).

The offering ritual described in this verse contains the meaning of singretism, namely an offering that is addressed to Allah, but also includes other gods (idols) that are believed to be part of what must be offered.

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

Qurais Shihab in his interpretation stated that polytheists who worship idols are in a continuous illusion. Plants and animals created by Allah such as camels, cows and sheep, they make some of them for Allah by serving them to guests and giving them to those in need. While the rest is offered to the idols, it will arrive and what they think is given to Allah will not arrive. This shows that their beliefs are misguided, and become a kind of purification of Allah from all kinds of evil (Shihab, 2007).

In his interpretation of *Hidayatul Islam*, Abu Musa stated that the meaning of the verse is that what they give to gods other than Allah is a pure approach to other than Allah; Likewise, what they intend to Allah - in their opinion - will not reach Him. Because it contains shirk (Musa, 2016).

In the Islamic view, the sin of shirk is a sin that will not be forgiven by Allah SWT, as His word means: "Indeed, Allah will not forgive the sin of shirk, and He forgives all sins other than (shirk), for which He wills, whoever associates Allah, verily he has committed a great sin (Q.S. an-Nisa: 48).



Thus, the ritual of offerings must be carried out properly, namely only offered to God, namely Allah SWT. When the ritual of offerings is held not only for worship of God, but also to ancestral spirits and other spirits, then it is considered an act of shirk, a behavior that must be abandoned. Unless the offering for the perpetrator is intended for environmental conservation, such as in a place where there are water sources near a large tree. Then the place is given offerings to prevent people from approaching, so that the place is protected from damage. So such intentions are certainly permissible (interview with religious figures, A. Aziz, August 2024).

Offerings as a ritual reflection that shows the existence of God raises the problem of belief in the Bonokeling community. Because the existence of God is not placed in His oneness, but rather mixed with the spirits of his ancestors. Offerings expressed through the form of syncretism are an attempt to find a way out for the solution to this problem. However, it remains a problem, because syncretism related to faith is a belief that is prohibited by Islamic teachings. Getting out of the syncretism zone in the Bonokeling community is very difficult to do, because it is a belief.

Analyzing the issue of syncretism in offerings, a philosophical approach will provide a more comprehensive understanding. Offerings in Javanese Islam which are often manifested in *slametan* are a reflection of gratitude directed to God, but the objects used as offerings are to be eaten together. The ritual symbolizes mystical unity and social unity. Theology is understood as theology that argues and is rationally reasoned, so that there is maturity through scientific discourse that is 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 dimensions shift to rational-formalistic theology. On the other hand, theological patterns that are personal in nature need to move towards communal behavioral patterns. In the second pattern, personal behavior as a pattern that considers individual needs, as the ritual of offerings in slametan is often measured in terms of its benefits from the perspective of individual interests, is shifted to considering more of its social benefits. Communal human interests are prioritized over individual interests (Roibin, 2013). The pattern developed is towards compromise, because theology which is individualistic when dealing with ritual offerings involving communal elements, prioritizes the communal elements. This compromise has calmed the social realm that protects relationships between people. Because when the offering is presented to God, but the material of the offering is used as a human dish, it can be understood that they actually believe that God does not eat offerings. They perform the ritual offering as an expression of gratitude to God (Interview with Islamic cultural figure, Ahmad Thohari, September 2023).

When offerings are interpreted as an effort to maintain values and norms in society and are expected by the ancestors so that every human being will be closer to God Almighty and pray without ceasing (Ujang Kusnadi Adam et al., 2019), then the spiritual value that comes from culture is returned to religion (Islam). The offering ritual as a product of human reason and has various material values is still maintained in its existence. However, the spiritual value that is inherent in its substance is raised in the divine dimension which has a clear and valid basis, namely sharia. Because when the spiritual value of the offering ritual is only focused on culture, it will be stuck in the realm of stories, there is no written basis. In this zone, the offering ritual becomes weak, especially conceptually. The sacrificial ritual is essentially a ritual of offering an object (animal) to the Almighty, namely God. The command of this sacrificial ritual is authentic and its purpose is also clear. The offering is to God, but the animal that is sacrificed is useful for humans. The intention of devotion is to God, but the usefulness of the object is for humans. This is as stated in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hajj: 37 as follows.

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومَهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤها وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ النَّفْسُ مِنْكُمْ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَانَكُمْ وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Meaning: The flesh and blood of a camel (sacrifice) cannot achieve Allah's pleasure, but your piety can achieve it. Thus Allah subjected it to you so that you may glorify Allah for His guidance to you. And convey good news to those who do good. (Q.S. Al Hajj:37).

This verse was revealed in relation to the Jahiliyah people who covered the Baitullah (Kaaba) with camel meat and blood. Then the companions said: "That we have more right to fill Baitullah". Then a verse came

down (Al-Hajj: 37) which emphasized that Allah would not accept the flesh and blood of their sacrifices, but would accept their piety (Shaleh et al., 1985).

Regarding sacrifice, the Prophet said: O people of Medina, do not eat sacrificial meat after three days. They then complained to the Messenger of Allah that they had families, servants and maids. Then the Messenger of Allah said: Eat for yourself, give it to (others) to eat, hold on to it, and keep it." (Imam Muslim, n.d.). Sacrificial meat is used for humans. Not buried, offered to the spirits of ancestors or spirits. Sacrificial objects can be eaten alone, given to the needy, poor, weak people (*dhū'afā*), and people who need help.

If we look closely at the expression of the Qur'an and the Hadith, it is very clear about the command of the sharia that the ritual of sacrifice is not an offering of meat or blood (objects) to God, but sincerity in carrying out His command. Therefore, it can be understood that the type of sacrificial animal is also determined by the sharia, a provision that does not change. Sacrifice as a form of worship falls into the realm of mahdhah worship, but the meat is distributed to the community so that it has a very high social effect.

The solution to the problem of ritual offerings in the Bonokeling community so that its existence is maintained both personally and communally, it is necessary to place the position of offerings as a cultural event. Not in the realm of worship that is manifested in the sharia. The validity of God reflected in the ritual offerings is still recognized. The shift in the utility value of offerings to the human realm is based on the choice of rational theology by setting aside theology that is based on emotional desires. Spirits, spirits and ancestral spirits enter the supernatural realm, so that human sacrifice and devotion are not offerings in material form, but respect through behavior, attitudes and the soul. This also negates the placement of the sacred God mixed in the profane realm. God is holy and omniscient, so that the behavior of ritual offerings is not an offering of objects or materials such as animals or others, but the behavior and attitude of the soul that is most prioritized. As in sacrifice, it is not the flesh or blood of animals (objects) that is offered, but the intention and sincerity as a construct of piety that is manifested.

## Conclusion

Based on the description above, this study has several conclusions that can be expressed as follows.

The Sesajen ritual carried out by the Bonokeling community is a reflection of offerings to God and the spirits of their ancestors who are believed to be able to realize safety, peace and prosperity in their lives. Therefore, the sesajen ritual is always carried out according to the times that have been determined.

There are two ways to offer offerings by the Bonokelig community, namely offerings that are offered to God, but the offering material is eaten together with the community and offerings that are buried as offerings to spirits. The purpose of carrying out the sesajen ritual is so that their lives always get peace, prosperity, peace and are protected from disaster. The genealogy of the sesajen ritual can be traced back to the time of the Prophet Adam, as with the offerings carried out by his two children named Qabil and Habil.

When the offerings are used by humans to be eaten together, it can be analogized with the sacrificial worship that is intended for God, but the material is used for humans. God who is reflected in the offering ritual enters the supernatural realm, the consequence is that human sacrifice and devotion are not offerings in the form of material, but rather respect through behavior and inner attitudes that are reflected in the form of intentions and sincerity as a manifestation of piety. This simultaneously negates the placement of the sacred God mixed in the profane realm. Therefore, offerings buried for ancestral spirits are behavior and attitudes that are not in accordance with the supernatural realm, because spirits who are in the supernatural realm do not need material offerings, except for human behavior and inner attitudes towards them, such as prayer. In this logic, it can also be understood that the spirits of the ancestors are no longer able to provide benefits to humans who are still alive, so that the offering ritual to them is seen as a presentation that is not in accordance with Islamic faith, unless it is placed as a cultural event.

## Recommendation

There are two recommendations from the results of this study, first: for stakeholders to be careful in providing policies to their condition. Because the Bonokeling community has specific characteristics compared to the people in their environment. Second, for the surrounding community, they should be aware that in their environment there is a different community, so that the emergence of this awareness can be a provision in building harmonious interactions.

## Implication

The results of this study will provide implications in raising public awareness about the reflection of God that the Bonokeling community has so that they can sincerely accept this phenomenon.

## Research Limitations

This study is limited because it only relies on descriptive analysis of a limited data set. Thus, further studies are needed to examine the impact of implementing the Bonokeling community tradition socially and religiously. At the same time, the existence of the Bonokeling community's customs as local wisdom is faced with the development of information technology and science which often becomes a challenge in maintaining its consistency.

## Author Contributions

Abdul R, as chairman in managing all research mechanisms up to the completion of manuscripts; Imam S., observer and writes drafts; Sedy N., observer and counts data; M. Yamin, observer and edits data; and Ulul H., observer and edits data. All authors have read and agree to the published version of the manuscript.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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