

THE DYNAMICS OF THE BENGKULU TABOT: FROM SACRED TO PROFAN

Dinamika Tabot Bengkulu: dari Keramat menjadi Profan

¹Agus Sapriansa, ²Arditya Prayogi*

¹UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, ²IAIN Pekalongan
¹sapriansya70@gmail.com, ²arditya.prayogi@iainpekalongan.ac.id

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ABSTRAK

Abstract: *This article was written with the background that there is a double meaning to the implementation of the Tabot Tradition. This interpretation causes the implementation of Tabot in Bengkulu to change its function. From the beginning, which was sacred-magical belonging to a certain community, it developed into a profane festival belonging to the Bengkulu people with all the festive attributes displayed. This article is a qualitative researchs using historical research methods. The stages of the research carried out were heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. From the results of the analysis, it is known that the Tabot tradition in Bengkulu was originally sacred. Its implementation is closely related to the entry of Shia-Punjab understanding to Bengkulu. In its implementation, the Tabot tradition is recorded in the Story of Tabot script which has a sacred dimension. However, along with the times, the implementation of the Tabot tradition later turned into a festival with the identity of Development Tabot which was introduced by the Bengkulu Government. This condition then resulted in the emergence of a debate related to the legality of identity in the Tabot tradition in Bengkulu.*

Keywords: Tradition, Tabot, Bengkulu, Sacred, Profan

Abstrak

Artikel ini ditulis dengan latar belakang bahwa ada makna ganda dalam pelaksanaan Tradisi Tabot. Penafsiran ini menyebabkan penerapan Tabot di Bengkulu berubah fungsinya. Dari awal yang bersifat sakral-magis milik komunitas tertentu, berkembang menjadi festival profan milik masyarakat Bengkulu dengan segala atribut kemeriahan yang ditampilkan. Artikel ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan metode penelitian sejarah. Tahapan penelitian yang dilakukan adalah heuristik, verifikasi, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Dari hasil analisis diketahui bahwa tradisi Tabot di Bengkulu pada mulanya disakralkan. Implementasinya erat kaitannya dengan masuknya paham Syiah-Punjab ke Bengkulu. Dalam pelaksanaannya, tradisi Tabot terekam dalam Aksara Cerita Tabot yang memiliki dimensi sakral. Namun seiring dengan perkembangan zaman, pelaksanaan tradisi Tabot kemudian berubah menjadi festival dengan identitas Tabot Pembangunan yang diperkenalkan oleh Pemerintah Bengkulu. Kondisi ini kemudian mengakibatkan munculnya perdebatan terkait legalitas identitas dalam tradisi Tabot di Bengkulu.

Introduction

Talking about the culture of the Bengkulu region, it will not be separated from the talk about the Tabot tradition. As a tradition, Bengkulu people always celebrate it every year in the month of Muharram, based on commemorating the death of Husain R.A, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, in Padang Karbala on Ashura day 10 Muharram 61 H in the event of Karbala (Campo, 2009: 421).

Although the people of Bengkulu already consider this tradition as one of the local cultures, it should be underlined that this tradition is not the original tradition of the Bengkulu people. This tradition originated in Iraq, then developed in Iran, spread to India, and finally entered Indonesia and the Bengkulu region (Development Team, 1982: 18).

There is no certainty of information about when the Tabot entered Bengkulu, but it is believed that this tradition arrived in Bengkulu between the late 17th century AD and early 18th century AD, the era when Bengkulu was under British colonial rule (Setiyanto, 2006: 253). At that time, the British had an interest in monopolizing the pepper trade in the Bengkulu area. For this purpose, the British brought the Sepoi or Cipei from Madras (1760-1785) and Bengal (1785-1824), who embraced Shi'ite Islam (Zulkifli, 2013: 5). The Sepoi people who were brought in then settled and mingled with the indigenous people. From this process, they introduced the Tabot tradition to the Bengkulu people. However, there are local sources regarding the Tabot tradition, which is the work of the Bengkulu people in the form of a manuscript with Arabic-Malay script entitled "The Story of Tabot" which dates from 1886. This manuscript consists of ten articles that tell the background of the holding of the Tabot and the life journey of Husain R.A, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, from childhood, to adulthood, until the death of Al-Husain in the Padang Karbala incident.

At a glance the text also provides an overview of the instructions regarding the implementation of the Tabot tradition. Based on this manuscript, the researchers are interested in seeing the dynamics of the implementation of the Tabot tradition in Bengkulu, whether there are changes or shifts in its implementation, considering that currently the Tabot tradition is no longer only presenting sacred rituals, but since the 1990s the Tabot tradition has developed into an annual community cultural festival as well as a regional tourism promotion event. Of course, this is interesting to reveal, so that historical values can be maintained and the standardized cultural order can be thoroughly understood by the community. In addition, most Bengkulu people do not fully understand the meaning of the Tabot itself, so it is feared that the Tabot tradition will be isolated among the supporting communities.

This article aims to reconstruct the history of the Tabot Tradition in Bengkulu, from its early stages to its development based on the Tabot Story script, including the various problems that exist in it. This article is an effort to be able to provide information on the Tabot tradition to the public in written form, with the hope that the public understands the Tabot tradition properly, both in terms of history and the developments that occur in it. Articles about

the Tabot Tradition in Bengkulu have actually been widely researched, but most of them do not use manuscript sources as a reference for their writings. Like the writings of Hamidi (1991), Yuliati (2010), and Gumay (2011). This whole article describes the history, use and development of the Tabot in society. However, even though they both discuss the Tabot, this article is different from the previous articles, especially when viewed from the use of the local script "The Story of Tabot". In addition, the approach (Prayogi, 2021) in this article is directed at the dynamics of changing the Tabot tradition as a historical process. As a result, this article can be an elaboration of similar articles and can enrich perspectives in viewing the Tabot as a cultural tradition.

1. Method

The research method used for writing this article is the historical method. The historical method is a process of critically examining and analyzing past records and relics as well as imaginative reconstructions based on data obtained through the stages of the historical method (Gottschalk, 1986: 32). The historical method consists of four stages, namely heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The first stage is Heuristics, the stage of finding and finding sources through literature study. The historical sources for the preparation of this article are written sources in the form of books and manuscripts related to the Tabot tradition. The Tabot Story Manuscript is stored in the National Library of Indonesia on the fifth floor of the manuscript collection section. In the catalog, Tabot Stories scripts have the ML code. 145. From a physical point of view, the manuscript has a size of 21 cm x 17 cm, this manuscript consists of 8 pages written in Arabic-Malay script, in the manuscript there is a note dated July 6, 1886. The condition of the manuscript suffered some damage, such as the paper on some pages which has become so fragile that it is no longer possible to read. As for in this article, the script used is a script that has been made into digital form.

The second stage is the critical stage. There are two types of criticism, namely external and internal criticism. External criticism is taken by testing the authenticity of historical sources by critically examining the form of the source, age, time, and everything related to research. Internal criticism is a careful and accurate examination of the contents of the source, whether it is believed to be true or in this case means testing the credibility of historical sources (Herlina, 2008: 24-33). After going through the critical stage, historical data is obtained in the form of historical information that is relevant to the discussion of the topic of the article. The next stage is interpretation. This stage is the stage of interpretation after the data is collected and criticized so as to produce a description. Analytical and synthetic interpretations (Kuntowijoyo, 2005: 78-80), various data and information on the Bengkulu Tabot tradition are described and described for analysis and integration. This stage contains various descriptions which are then assembled into a unified whole (Herlina, 2008: 36-54). The last stage is historiography. Stages of writing history which is an explanation that explains the results of interpretation to become historiography or historical writing.

2. Result and Discussion

Theory of the Entry of the Tabot Tradition in Bengkulu

The emergence of the Tabot tradition cannot be separated from the event of the death of Al Husain in an unequal battle between Al-Husayn and Yazid bin Ubaidillah's troops led by Ubaidillah bin Ziyad. Islamic history records this event as one of the darkest events known as the Karbala incident. This incident is the culmination of a series of events that illustrate how unfavorable the socio-political conditions of Muslims were after Muawiyah's death as a caliph. The following will explain how the process of the emergence of the Tabot Tradition after the Karbala Incident, followed by the spread of the tradition from the Middle East to various regions including the Bengkulu region.

There is no written explanation explaining when the Tabot tradition began to be known in the Bengkulu community. In fact, William Marsden, a writer who has observed many Sumatran people, and was in Bengkulu when Bengkulu was ruled by the British, did not mention Tabot at all (Marsden, 2008). To trace it, Tabot is associated with the theory of the entry of Shiites into Indonesia, although until now it is still causing debate among supporters of the Shia theory and groups who criticize the theory. There are opinions expressed by Fatimi, Jamil, Hasjmi, Azmi, Atjeh, and Sunyoto. They believe that Shi'ism has been present in Indonesia since the beginning of Islamization and that Shi'ites have played an important role in this process.

Referring to the Shia theory, it is stated that in the early days of the Islamic Sultanate in Indonesia, it did not only involve Sunni preachers, but also the participation of Shiites in it. So the role of Shia cannot be ruled out. However, such arguments were refuted by groups that criticized this opinion, for example the opinion of Buya Hamka. In his writings, Hamka said that in Pariaman, which is considered a supporter of the Shi'a theory as the basis of Shi'ism, he found the fact that not to mention being a political force, Shi'ism itself is not widely known by the public. According to him, no one from the Pariaman population has Shi'ism apart from the itinerant soldering irons (collecting funds) asking for donations to make Tabot (Hamka, 2017: 177-178).

Although there is no written record that is able to explain exactly when Tabot entered the Bengkulu area. However, from several sources it was found that there are at least two opinions regarding the theory of the entry of Tabot to Bengkulu. First, the theory of Sheikh Burhanuddin Ulakan or Imam Senggolo. This theory states that the entry and development of the Tabot ceremony in Bengkulu was related to the arrival of a group of merchants from Punjab. Before spreading to Southeast Asia, the Tabot culture – originating from the Middle East – was first introduced to South Asia, namely the Indian region. Then from India the Tabot tradition was brought to Bengkulu by preachers from Punjab. These preachers previously landed and stopped in Aceh, but because they felt they did not get an adequate response, they then left Aceh and continued their journey (Zubaedi, 2008). At first, the implementation of the Tabot tradition in Bengkulu was associated with the group of preachers from Punjab led by Maulana Ichsad. It's just that they did not stay in Bengkulu, a

few years later they returned to Punjab. After the death of Maulana Ichsad, the Tabot Tradition in Bengkulu was then continued by a prominent scholar named Syekh Burhanuddin or Imam Senggolo (1646-1693M) as the successor of the Tabot tradition (Gumay, 2011). Currently, the name of Sheikh Burhanuddin is highly respected by the family of the heir to Tabot, but in fact there is no clear information regarding the figure of Sheikh Burhanuddin, so this raises different opinions.

The second theory is the theory of the Sepoy army. This theory states that the Tabot tradition in Bengkulu is not inherited from the Shia group in the archipelago. This tradition was first brought and developed in Bengkulu by the Sepoy army who accompanied the British military forces when they tried to control the west coast of Sumatra during the period 1750-1825 (Azra, 1990:147). This theory is reinforced by the existence of colonial sources, so that this theory indirectly rejects the theory that states the involvement of local (Indonesian) communities in the spread of Tabot.

Tabot Bengkulu in Tabot Story: Sacred Tradition

Substantively, the Tabot tradition – broadly speaking, cannot be separated from the events of Al-Husain's death in Padang Karbala. However, in the text of the Story of Tabot, the implementation of the Tabot tradition in Bengkulu does not only stop at the event of the death of Al-Husain, but there is another story that contains mythical elements about the main figure who became the creator of this tradition, so it can be understood why the implementation of the Tabot Tradition in Bengkulu must still be carried out. There is some information that tells about the background of the implementation of the Tabot Tradition in Bengkulu, as recorded in the Story of the Tabot script.

In the story of Tabot chapters 8 and 9, it is explained that the killer of Al-Husayn was a Yazid troop named Samarlib. Apart from Samarlib, another character mentioned is Nastal. It was explained that Nastal was a friend of Al-Husain who wanted to take the mustika stored in the belt worn by Al-Husain, but his evil intentions did not work, because Al-Husain's hand slapped and held Nastal's hand which made him fall down and faint. . In his dream, it is said that Nastal met the angels, the prophets and their children, and the angels who came to visit the body of Al-Husain.

In another source it is also told that after Al-Husayn died, suddenly Al-Husayn's body was picked up and saved by a group of angels from the sky in a procession. Then the angels put Hussein's body into the procession and then it was carried by a bird flying straight into the presence of God. It was at this time that a Cipei (Sipahi: Back India) who was said to be one of the staunch Shi'ites hung on to that part of the procession unnoticed by the angels. In the middle of the road, then the presence of an uninvited human was known by the angel group and this was not at all justified, but the Cipei people pleaded with hope that they could be included in this procession, no matter where they were as long as they could be with the body of Hussein, whom he loved so much. that. Regretfully, this request could not be fulfilled by the angels. Then

immediately the procession was forced to land again. In order to comfort the hearts of the Cipei people who are being hit by sadness, the angels suggest that they make and imitate the model of the procession they carry, such as the example we now know as Tabot (Tim Penuyusun, 1982). From this it is clear that the implementation of the Tabot tradition in Bengkulu is not only influenced by Shi'ite culture, but has also been mixed and added to the beliefs of the local community, where elements of myths and fairy tales are forced to find the right story so that the Tabot tradition is still carried out. (Ras, 1968: 12).

From the historical background above, the story script from Tabot provides an overview of the activities or rituals that are the stages of implementing the tradition itself. The stages of the implementation of the Tabot Tradition as written in the story script of Tabot consist of the ritual of taking land, taking banana stems and sitting on the penja, pilgrimage, parading the fingers, parading the turban, sunsan day, parading the Tabot and throwing away the Tabot.

In the Story Text of Tabot, there is no explanation about how the incident of the killing of Al-Husain in Padang Karbala, but in Hikayat Hanafiyah it is explained that Al-Husain's martyrdom was caused by an unequal war with Yazid's army (Brakel, 1975: 194). From the overall explanation of Tabot's story script, the important point that can be drawn is that between the stages of Tabot implementation and Al-Husain's life journey from childhood to the events of his martyrdom in Padang Karbala is an inseparable unity.

In its later implementation, this sacred Bengkulu Tabot tradition took place ups and downs in the long history of the traditional life of the Bengkulu people. At least, as a sacred tradition, the Bengkulu Tabot tradition was still being carried out at least in the mid-1970s-1991s. In this period, the party who carried out the Tabot celebration only consisted of the Tabot family group, while the government's role in the celebration of the Tabot Tradition was not seen significantly. In its implementation, the family group that inherits the Tabot tradition is the party responsible for its implementation. This family group itself is a descendant of Sheikh Burhanuddin (Imam Senggolo) or members who participated in Maulana Ichsad's entourage in 1336. The Tabot family group is divided into fourteen families including: the Ibrahim family, Zainuddin Tengah Padang, Buyung, Keling, Liang, Gurai, Job, Agus Salim, Jurai, Zakaria, Mahyudin, Muhidin, Gaim, and Aswani. Each Tabot family has a leader, who is generally the head of the family or the eldest son, and is equipped with a penja that is a symbol of their group (Kerukunan Keluarga Tabot, 2002: 42).

The belief that the Tabot tradition has a sacred dimension can be seen in the belief that if they do not carry out the Tabot ritual every year, then their life will be afflicted with disaster, such as disaster and/or disease. The disaster can take the form of a dangerous disease that is even difficult to cure and the search for sustenance is increasingly difficult. Therefore, the Tabot family will always celebrate Tabot every year (Gumay, 2011: 9). In addition, for the families of the Tabot heirs, there are several taboos that they must obey in the implementation of the Tabot. Among them are not allowed to show an attitude

of joy or fun, must avoid disputes in the family during, and are prohibited from criticizing the food offerings that are brought. If they criticize the taste of the offerings that are brought, then they believe that the person concerned will fall ill and even go crazy (Hamidi, 1991: 71). Furthermore, the Tabot is truly a sacred tradition that requires magical elements. In this case, the implementation of Tabot is carried out in a closed manner, in the sense that it is only carried out by the family of the Tabot heir. However, that does not mean that the general public should not be involved at all. There are conditions that must be met by ordinary people who want to follow the Tabot ritual, which is to eat porridge or rice that has been doused with pure milk. Like it or not, the individual who tastes the food cannot comment on the taste of the food being tasted. If it is violated, then they believe the person will be struck by bad luck.

In its implementation, Tabot in this medium still displays a tradition that is sacred-magic with stages that are starting to experience adaptation from the Tabot story script. As an illustration, the rituals performed include; taking the ground, sitting penja, imprisoning, meradai, penja wine, seroban wine, gam, gedang wine, and the end of the Tabot ritual on the 10th of Muharram is the wasted Tabot.

Bengkulu Tabot Tradition Festival: Profan Tradition

The turning point of changing dimensions in the Bengkulu Tabot tradition began in the 1990s, after Bengkulu Province was invited to Jakarta to showcase Bengkulu regional culture in 1991, in order to welcome the Visit Indonesia Year (VIY). In this mid, the Tabot tradition was upgraded to a tourism festival in Bengkulu Province which was named the Tabot Festival and was under the responsibility of the Tabot Family Harmony (KKT) which was formed in 1993.

After the Tabot tradition turned into a festival, the implementation of the Tabot tradition, which was previously only carried out by the Tabot heir family, began to get attention from the government. If previously the government was not involved, since 1997 the Bengkulu provincial government, especially the Provincial Tourism Office, has been directly involved in the implementation of the Tabot festival (Poniman, 2014). When a tradition or cultural practice has been objectified, such as for tourism purposes. So the logical consequence, the tradition has become a common property, and no longer belongs to a single group. In this case, all layers and identities of society then have the right to be involved in the tradition. Finally, then, it is not surprising that the implementation of the Tabot tradition for most Bengkulu people who are not from the Tabot heir family – even KKT only carry out traditional activities without understanding and understanding the values contained in it. This then creates space for debate between sacred and profane values. each side sticks to their ideals. The struggle for idealism also influenced the development of Tabot in Bengkulu.

In the context of making the Tabot tradition a profane value, the government – in this case Bengkulu province, made breakthroughs in non-ritual aspects so that Tabot could become more attractive. The quantity aspect is the main goal in the implementation of these "breakthroughs". As a consequence,

the sacred aspect is no longer prioritized. Of course, to increase the "quantity" of visitors in the implementation of the Tabot Tradition requires maximum effort. For example, by carrying out massive promotions, such as making booklets and distributing them through relevant agencies inside and outside Bengkulu Province as well as making pamphlets. In addition, the government also involves other parties such as the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI) in Bengkulu to inform visitors, the Association of Indonesian Travel Companies (ASITA), and students by utilizing social media.

As a result, the identity (claim) of "Development Tabot" emerged. With the emergence of the term "Development Tabot", broadly speaking, there are two types of Tabot in Bengkulu, namely "Sacred Tabot" and "Development Tabot" which are used as an accompaniment to "Sacred Tabot". It's just that the Development Tabot is not equipped with a "penja finger", which is only intended for the "Sacred Tabot" family as their symbol and identity (Dahri, 2009: 101). In addition, it should be understood that "Development Tabot" is a Tabot made by community groups who are interested in the Tabot festival, be it individuals, groups, or from agencies such as banks, district or city governments in Bengkulu, as well as private parties such as service providers. . So that the benchmark of the "Development Tabot" form is adjusted to the request from the customer.

It should be understood that the making of the Tabot is not arbitrary, but requires special skills and skills, where these skills are owned by the Tabot heir family. This is certainly an opportunity for them, even the government helps promote their expertise by directing those who want to make Tabot to the Tabot families. In addition to increasing the number of Tabot, the government has also arranged a schedule for the implementation of the Tabot festival according to the government's agenda. From the schedule that has been prepared, it appears that the government has made efforts to make Tabot more attractive, by adding various kinds of activities, such as entertainment, folk music, holding festivals and various competitions with Islamic nuances. For example, tambourine competitions, hijab women's selection competitions and others. This is because Tabot was held to coincide with the Islamic New Year, so trying to package the event with an Islamic nuance.

In addition to presenting events with Islamic nuances, there will also be displays of Bengkulu arts and culture, such as the Dol, Telong-telong, and fish competitions. The addition of the Dol, Telong-telong, and fish-fish competitions is an attempt to display the Tabot in a different package. If previously Dol was a musical accompaniment to the implementation of the Tabot ritual tradition, in this period, dol music was used as a non-ritual competition that was separated from the ritual aspect. Meanwhile, the telongs that appear are actually not traditions related to the implementation of the Tabot, but are motivated by the desire of the Chinese ethnic to participate in the implementation of the Tabot. The emergence of Telong-telong makes Tabot rich in culture, namely local culture, Islam, and China. The shape of the telongs resembles the lanterns belonging to Chinese culture, which are shaped in such a way, so as to produce beautiful works of art, such as dragon shapes, cartoon characters, etc. In

addition to performing Telong-Telong, the participation of ethnic Chinese in the implementation of the Tabot is also seen from the performance of the Lion Dance dance. Not only a place to display elements of Chinese culture. In this period, the Tabot Tradition was also used as a place to revive the original Bengkulu culture, whose existence seemed to be in suspended animation.

In addition to adding competition activities, the government also provides a bazaar for all levels of Bengkulu province people who want to offer their wares or industries that want to introduce their products and sell the goods they produce. For example, provider companies, cigarettes, or other industries in Bengkulu. Their involvement also helped facilitate and assist the government in promoting Tabot. By making billboards or banners to make the Tabot festival a success. It can be seen that the Bengkulu Provincial government is not messing with their goal of making Tabot a mainstay tourist destination. This desire received a warm response from the people of Bengkulu, because if you see the public's interest in the Tabot tradition is so great. With the various kinds of activities carried out by the government, it is not surprising that currently most Bengkulu people are more familiar with the profane or non-ritual side of Tabot than the ritual aspect.

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3. Conclusion

In this article it can be concluded several things, including First, the existence of the Tabot Tradition experienced ups and downs in the life of the Bengkulu people. From these various dynamics, there is one piece of information regarding the existence of the Tabot Tradition in Bengkulu in the Story of Tabot 1886 manuscript. All of these articles are inseparable from the story of Al Husain's life journey from childhood to death in Padang Karbala. The manuscript contains elements of myth, fairy tales, and the cult of the figure of Al-Husain. The story of Al-Husain's life journey is then expressed in the form of a series of actions. This action is the ritual stage in the implementation of the Tabot Tradition. Starting with the ritual of taking soil, taking banana stems and sitting on the penja, pilgrimage, parading the fingers, parading the turban, sunsan day, parading the Tabot and throwing the Tabot.

Second, the Bengkulu Regional Government then saw Tabot as an opportunity to advance the Bengkulu tourism industry, so the government in 1991 issued a policy to increase the Tabot Tradition into an annual profane cultural festival of the community by establishing the identity of "Development Tabot", which in its implementation requires no small amount of funds. In order

for the Tabot festival to attract people's attention, its implementation emphasizes the development of artistic values and entertainment in the Tabot Tradition. In addition, in order to become a magnet for attracting tourists, the government also organizes various competitions, music events, and cheap bazaar facilities, all of which lead to economic interests. The efforts made by the government received a positive response from the people of Bengkulu. Third, this phenomenon causes the sacred values in the Tabot Tradition to fade more or less. This condition then resulted in the emergence of a debate related to the legality of identity in the Tabot tradition in Bengkulu.

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