

# The Ketupat Eating Tradition on Lebaran Ketupat Day in Java

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**Abstract--**This article discusses an anthropological study of the cultural power contained in the *ketupat* eating tradition (*ketupat* is a food name) among many Javanese Muslim families on the *Lebaran Ketupat* day, held annually at 8 Shawwal, the tenth month in the Hijri calendar. This study aims to identify the cultural power that forms the *ketupat* eating tradition on the *Lebaran Ketupat* day in anthropology perspective. In achieving this goal, the authors use qualitative research methods with cultural anthropology approach. As a tradition related to human behavior, the *ketupat* eating tradition on the *Lebaran Ketupat* day is certainly very appropriate to be discussed from the aspect of cultural anthropology. The research results show that there is a mindset that shapes the behavior of many Javanese Muslim families in carrying out that tradition. The power of that mindset has succeeded in putting the activity of *ketupat* meal on the *Lebaran Ketupat* day in the criteria of tradition. The conclusion is that the *ketupat* eating tradition on the *Lebaran Ketupat* day has strong roots among many Javanese Muslim families, so this tradition can be done every year in Shawwal month. The impact of the implementation of *ketupat* eating tradition on the *Lebaran Ketupat* day is the increasingly crowded of coconut leaves trading in various traditional markets around Javanese Muslim family towards the coming of the *Lebaran Ketupat* day and the appearance of cultural perception conformity among them in determining the food menu in that day.

**Keywords—***ketupat, Lebaran Ketupat, Shawwal, cultural anthropology*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Among Javanese Muslim families, there is a *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day which is held on 8 Syawal, the 10th month in Hijri calendar or the month after Ramadan. *Lebaran Ketupat* is the tradition of making *ketupat* food as a dish in a celebration called *Lebaran Ketupat*. This food is made from basic ingredients of rice which is the staple food for the people of Java. This basic ingredient is stewed in a *ketupat* skin made of woven coconut leaves commonly referred to as *janur*. As a complement to these *ketupat* food dishes, they generally make *opor ayam* (chicken braised in coconut milk) and *sayur ketupat* (*ketupat* soup) [1, p. 456], [2, p. 124]. Both are served and eaten together with *ketupat* food. Because the core food in the celebration on the 8th of Syawal is *ketupat*, the celebration is famously known as *Lebaran Ketupat*. Thus, the term *Lebaran*

*Ketupat* indicates the existence of the happiness in a celebration by serving *ketupat* food as its core ingredient. This celebration occurs every year among many Javanese Muslim families, thus becoming a tradition. They have expressed their wishes in a form of celebration activity on that date.

As a tradition that is very popular among the people of Java, the tradition of *Lebaran Ketupat*, of course, is a very interesting object to be researched. Until now, that object still provides an opportunity to be examined from aspects that have not been discussed in various existing writings. Previous articles focused on the narrative aspect of this tradition. However, this article focuses on the anthropological aspect. There is an article that only briefly informs *Lebaran Ketupat* as a very little part of the discussion and does not analyze it from the anthropology aspect [3, p. 209]. There are also other articles that make *ketupat* food as the core discussion and analyze it with historical approach and philosophy, and relates its discussion with the function of food usually served on Eid al-Fitr, and not make *Lebaran Ketupat* as the core object of discussion [4, pp. 4--8]. In addition to the article, there is also another article that discusses the tradition of *Lebaran Ketupat* outside Java due to the influence of the Javanese [5, pp. 217--226]. There are various other articles with discussion related to *Lebaran Ketupat*. Nevertheless, there is still other issues have not discussed. By limiting the discussion only on the *ketupat* eating tradition, this article will enrich the existing discussions as well as show its uniqueness among other discussions.

In accordance with the uniqueness mentioned above, this article aims to identify the cultural power that became the root of the *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day on 8 Shawwal among Javanese Muslim families with cultural anthropology approach. This article can be used as an alternative of reading in matters related to tradition on the *Lebaran Ketupat* day.

## II. METHOD

The *ketupat* eating on *Lebaran Ketupat* day is a tradition and the human behavior in expressing the desire and the mindset to build a harmonious and accommodative living order. They have a cultural inclination to make *ketupat* food to eat on *Lebaran Ketupat* day. The discussion related to the tradition of *Lebaran Ketupat* can be analyzed by various approaches, but in

analyzing matters related to the human behavior that form the *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day among Javanese Muslim families, the use of cultural anthropology approach is considered very precise. Anthropology is a science that put great attention in analyzing human behavior in building the order of life in society, and also in analyzing the tradition which is a form of culture that developed among the people [6, p. 193], [7, p. 35]. Therefore, in anthropology, there is a branch of study called cultural anthropology [8, pp. 95--96]. Thus, cultural anthropology is used as an approach in analyzing the topics in this article.

The tradition of eating *ketupat* on *Lebaran Ketupat* day is, a form of civilization and culture. The term culture has broad meaning that covers all human being [9, p. 103], [10, pp. 50--51]. The coverage meaning in culture term is broader than the in-civilization term. In this case, the civilization term can be understood as the human work that has the nature of smooth, progress, and beauty [6, p. 196], [11, p. 2]. Other definition relates civilization with politic, economy, and technological systems [7, p. 31], [12, p. 5].

If it is associated with the definition of civilization as mentioned in anthropology studies by Koentjaraningrat [6, p. 196], the tradition of making *ketupat* food and consuming it on *Lebaran Ketupat* day, can be categorized as a form of civilization. Meanwhile, if it is associated with the definition of culture according to Taylor as mentioned by Effat al-Sharqawi [12, p. 1], the *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day can be categorized as a form of culture managed by the locals. Similarly, if it is associated with the definition of culture in the study of anthropology as mentioned by Koentjaraningrat [6, p. 193], the tradition of making *ketupat* food to be served and eaten on *Lebaran Ketupat* day, which humans as the tradition makers within their society, can be identified as a form of culture.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Result

There is a *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day among Javanese Muslim families. This tradition has a huge influence in their lives among the society, so they are paying attention to the implementation of that tradition. They carry out this tradition on the 8th day of the month of Shawwal. Many Javanese Muslims use the six days before the day of *Lebaran Ketupat* and after Idul Fitri 1 Shawwal to perform the *sunnah* fasting. In Fiqh, six fasting days of Shawwal are included in the category of *sunnah* fasting, and preferably done right after Eid al-Fitr [13, p. 215]. Other fiqh literature mention that the six days fasting of Shawwal is preferably carried out sequentially right after Idul Fitri, which means it is carried out on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th of Shawwal [14, p. 304]. Therefore, many Javanese Muslims choose that time to perform the six-day *sunnah* fasting in the month of Shawwal. On the 8th of Shawwal, they complete the six-day fasting and celebrate it as *Lebaran Ketupat* day which is characterized by *ketupat* eating tradition. Generally, on *Lebaran Ketupat* day, the *ketupat* food is equipped with *sayur ketupat* (*ketupat* soup) and *opor ayam*

(chicken braised in coconut milk) [1, p. 456], [2, p. 124]. Besides making *ketupat* food, *sayur ketupat*, and *opor ayam*, many Muslim families also make *lepet* (food made from sticky rice, grated coconut, wrapped with coconut leaves, and then boiled) as complementary served and eaten on *Lebaran Ketupat* day [3, p. 209].

The tradition of *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day among Javanese Muslim families seems has strong roots. There are cultural forces that moves them to enliven *Lebaran Ketupat* day by eating *ketupat* as the main course. The strength of this culture is related to the main set and behavior of the community. This mindset is implemented in the form of behavior and manifested in typical activities that characterize the *Lebaran Ketupat*. This activity was conducted simultaneously by many Javanese Muslim families.

Because it has become a tradition, people are motivated to be able to make *ketupat* to be eaten on the day of *Lebaran Ketupat*. This motivation arises from a strong desire to be able to take commendable actions by sharing the food with family of close relatives [3, p. 209]. Thus, the excitement of the activity of making *ketupat* food to be served and eaten in the *Lebaran Ketupat* day is still maintained and is always carried out every year as a manifestation of their contribution to society. These shoes the existence of cultural strength in the implementation of the tradition.

#### B. Discussion

The *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day among many Javanese Muslim families is a phenomenon that arises from the similarity of perception in shaping the behavior in that day. This tradition is carried out on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Shawwal after the Muslim family fast for six days after the Eid al-Fitr. *Lebaran Ketupat* is conducted a week after Eid al-Fitr [15, p. 102]. This means that *Lebaran Ketupat* will held on the same day as Eid al-Fitr, with different date. For example, if 1 Shawwal which is the date of Eid al-Fitr falls on Friday, *Lebaran Ketupat* will be held on Friday as well, on the 8th of Shawwal. Thus, the dates 2,3,4,5,6, dan 7 Shawwal (six days) are the time of carrying out the Shawwal fasting, which is categorized *assunnah*.

*Sunnah* is part of various forms of legal provisions in Islam. In Ushul al-Fiqh, the term *sunnah* is also called the *mandub* with no different meaning [16, p. 172], [17, p. 94]. When an activity is considered *sunnah* means that the Muslims who perform it will be rewarded by Allah, and if Muslims do not perform, there will be no sanction and reward for them [17, p. 94], [18, p. 34]. Because six-day of Syawal fasting is *sunnah*, those who perform it will get reward from Allah.

The close Time between the implementation of *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day and Eid al-Fitr influences the tradition of apology and forgiveness carried out on Eid al-Fitr, and on *Lebaran Ketupat*. Some societies have a certain perception in interpreting *ketupat* food as a symbol. In Javanese, "*ketupat*" is called "*kupat*" [2, p. 125]. There is a popular understanding among some Javanese from the semiotic aspect of the word "*kupat*". The word "*kupat*" is regarded as an acronym of a combination of two words in Javanese, "*ngaku*

*lepat*" [2, p. 125], [19, pp. 81--82]. The combination of the word "*ngaku lepat*" means "confessing wrongdoing" [2, p. 125]. In this case, food of *ketupat* (*kupat*) in cultural interpretations which popular among some societies is considered as a confession wrong deeds may be done, and also as the symbol of apology towards that deeds, although in reality the person does not commit any mistakes [19, p. 81], [20]. This matter is a form of politeness behavior that arises from the perception of politeness. Thus, the tradition of sharing *ketupat* meal made for the family or other relatives does not mean that there has been wrongdoing done between the two parties, but it is only an attitude of politeness. This is in accordance with the attitude of politeness in the tradition of mutual apology and forgiveness at the time of Eid al-Fitr, although between two parties, there is no wrongdoing or commendable committed. The philosophical understanding of the *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day becomes the root and contribute in maintaining the continuity of its implementation every year [21, p. 285].

The tradition of sharing *ketupat* food with other families or relatives aimed at making other relatives enjoy the dish [3, p. 209]. This tradition can be a mean of strengthening cordial relations (family or friendship) and family ties. They can share mutual happiness on the day of *Lebaran Ketupat*. This means that each family can feel happiness as felt by other families. This phenomenon can certainly add strong intimacy and harmony in the order of life in society. It can also be considered as a root that can strengthen the tradition of making *ketupat* to be eaten in the *Lebaran Ketupat* day.

Among the Javanese society, many Muslim families have ways to fill the 8th day of Shawwal with various activity They make *ketupat* to be served and eaten on the morning of that date That tradition is the way they fill the *Lebaran Ketupat* day. This is of course in accordance with the field of study of cultural anthropology which make the human way of life the object of research [7, p. 35], [10, p. 52]. The meaning of the activity is in accordance with their mindset so that it is manifested in the form of Javanese Muslim community behavior carried out in their environment. The activity is carried out every year so that it becomes a tradition of the local people. The similarity of their ways in completing activity on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of Shawwal is a strong root for the continuity of that tradition each year.

The *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day certainly has impacts among the society. Among that various impacts, there is an impact in the form of increasing trading activities of coconut leaves in various traditional markets around the Javanese Muslim families. Near the *Lebaran Ketupat* day, many traditional markets sell coconut leaves. In 2018, the phenomenon of increased activity of coconut leaves trade before the day of *Lebaran Ketupat* occurred in Lamongan area [22]. The same phenomenon also occurred in 2016 in Kediri region [23]. In 2018, in the Kudus region there was also a phenomenon of the increasingly trade in coconut leaves before *Lebaran Ketupat* day [24]. In 2018, the phenomenon also occurred in Blora region [25]. Traditional markets around Javanese communities in other areas generally show the same phenomenon before *Lebaran Ketupat*. This trade phenomenon

occurs because the coconut leaves are the raw material for making *ketupat* skin. Making of *ketupat* skin with various models requires t skills. Therefore, in order to succeed the *Lebaran Ketupat*, traders not only sell coconut leaves but also sell *ketupat* skin that is ready to be filled with rice [22], [24], [25]. Thus, a trader who has the skill of weaving coconut leaves into a *ketupat* skin can utilize his skills to produce merchandise of *ketupat* skin. By selling *ketupat* skin, traders get more profit than just selling coconut leaves. The rise of coconut leaf trading and *ketupat* skin, of course, has illustrated the behavior of people before the tradition of eating *ketupat* in the day of *Lebaran Ketupat*.

The habit of *ketupat* eating among Javanese Muslim families also have impact on the selection of food menus on that day and strengthen the tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat*. This has an impact on strengthening the continuity of that tradition in the following years. They make the tradition as part of various ways to build other traditions among society. Thus, in addition to the strength of the continuity of the *ketupat* eating tradition on the *Lebaran Ketupat* day in the following years, there is also the strength of the continuity of this tradition in the next generations [2, p. 124]. This tradition is in accordance with their mindset so that its existence and continuity in the society receive great attention.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The discussion in this article can be concluded that among the Javanese Muslim families there is a *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day which is held on 8 Syawal every year. This *tradition* is carried out after the six days fasting of Shawwal six-days, which is categorized as *sunnah* fasting [13, p. 215], [14, p. 304]. Before the coming of *Lebaran Ketupat* day, they make *ketupat* food so that all family members can eat *ketupat* on that day. In addition, a portion of the *ketupat* food made is given to other families or relatives [3, p. 209]. The family who received the *ketupat* food, because also made *ketupat* food, did the same thing, namely to give in part from *ketupat* food made to other families or relatives that have close relationships in his environment, including to families who had given him *ketupat* food, so they could taste *ketupat* food made by other families in his neighborhood [3, p. 209]. Their behavior in carrying out this activity in *Lebaran Ketupat* day has become a tradition. As a tradition, the activity of making *ketupat* food to be served and eaten in the *Lebaran Ketupat* day can certainly be done every year among them.

There are several factors that can strengthen the sustainability of *ketupat* eating tradition on *Lebaran Ketupat* day, so it can be done every year. Some of that factors are as follows. The first is a factor of their ability to implement the mindset into a form of behavior that has become a tradition. The second is a factor of a strong desire to be able to perform commendable acts by giving some *ketupat* food made to other families or relatives that have close relationships in their environment [3, p. 209]. The third is the factor of the suitability of their perception and mindset in building the tradition. The fourth is factor of cultural understanding which popular among

society regarding the word "*kupat*", a word in Javanese which means "*ketupat*", in the context of semiotics, as a symbol of confession for conducting wrong deeds and as a symbol of apology that wrongdoing, although in reality the two parties may not do any wrong acts [2, p. 125], [19, pp. 81--82], [20]. The fifth is a factor of the need for Muslim families to strengthen the relation of kinship (*silaturahmi*) with other families in their environment. The sixth is the factor of the similarity of manner to fill in part of the activity on *Lebaran Ketupat* day among them. These various factors can serve as roots that can strengthen the survival of that tradition, so that it can be done every year in their environment.

There is also the impact of the existence of that tradition. There are at least two impacts. The first it is the increasing trade of coconut leaves which is the basic material for making *ketupat* skin in various traditional markets in various areas around the Javanese Muslim family [22], [24], [25]. The second is the formation of cultural perception among the many Javanese Muslim families in determining the menu of food on *Lebaran Ketupat* day. They have succeeded in implementing mindset in the form of behavior in filling some activities on the day of *Lebaran Ketupat* on 8 Syawal

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