

# *Ngalap Berkah To The Sacred Tomb In Surakarta: An Ethnographic Study At The Tomb Of Ki Ageng Henis*

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**Abstract** – The objective of this study is to describe the pattern of pilgrimage practices and to reveal the primary purpose of pilgrims at Ki Ageng Henis' tomb. This is a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach. Data collection were technically done through field method covering observation and interviews. The results of this study are as follows: 1) there are three patterns of pilgrimage practices at the tomb of Ki Ageng Henis, namely the pattern of Javanese traditional pilgrimage practice, Islamic pilgrimage practice pattern, and tourist pilgrimage practice pattern; 2) the primary aim of pilgrims visiting the tomb of Ki Ageng Henis is seeking for blessings ngalap berkah due to the presence of the figure of Ki Ageng Henis. the tomb of Ki Ageng Henis can serve as a symbol of community harmony due to the diversity of pilgrims who visit it.

**Keywords** – pilgrimage practices; sacred tomb; Ethnography; symbols of harmony

## I. INTRODUCTION

Javanese people make pilgrimages to ancestral tombs, relative tombs, and figure tombs. The tomb of the figure is considered a sacred tomb because it is the tomb of a pious or holy person [1]. People perceived sacred to be a type of human-supernatural relationship [2]. Sacred tombs differ from ordinary tombs. Thus, sacred tomb, as the tomb of a figure, is visited by many pilgrims for a number of reasons. Pilgrims have different beliefs about the figure laid to rest in the sacred tomb.

According to belief, the spirits of figures in sacred tombs can entrust or transmit supernatural powers on those who perform special laku "practices" at their tomba at the right time, so that they do not make pilgrimages every day and must bring *ubarampe* 'offerings' when they visit [3]. There are those who perform rituals of slaughtering animals, those who prepare offerings in the form of *jajan pasar* 'traditional made snacks' and *pala pendhem*, and those who are willing to sleep in the graves to perform *tirakat*. There are even those who make contracts by auctioning human souls. This type of human soul contract is termed to as *pesugihan*<sup>1</sup>. [4]. However, *pesugihan* contracts are not used in all sacred tombs. Other rituals at sacred tombs include slaughtering animals and giving food offerings.

The trend of *laku* ritual practice in the Javanese people's pilgrimage tradition in sacred tombs is quite deep. Pilgrimages to sacred tombs became common, particularly from the post-independence period until the New Order era. Many visitors to sacred tombs ask that their intentions or wishes be granted. This is inextricably linked to the ancient Javanese belief in ancestral spirits, who were thought to possess supernatural powers and could grant pilgrims' requests.

The Javanese people have a strong belief in mystical things, especially spirits. There is even a distinction between the three main types of spirits: *memedi*, which scares humans, *lelembut* (spirits that cause possession), and *tuyul* [5]. This apart from just

<sup>1</sup> *Pesugihan* is a set of myths or rituals that are believed to be used to obtain instant wealth such as through shortcuts. Usually with the support of supernatural beings or creatures. *Pesugihan* performers make a pact with supernatural beings before performing *pesugihan* rituals.

that, there are other types that live in a place called demit and the guardian spirit of a place called *danyang*, which some call *baureksa*. For example, the spirit of *baureksa*, who lives in a small statue of Ganesha under a banyan tree at the intersection of three Modjokuto highways, is seen as being able to help people who are sick or impoverished. Belief in spirits is a collection of different images, so there is only agreement based on personal opinion and experience, especially among the abangan community [6]. Even a thanksgiving event called '*slametan*' is held in order to avoid bad things caused by spirits. This demonstrates how strong the image of spirits is in the spiritual life of Javanese society, as it raises the assumption that ancestral spirits can grant wishes. This assumption arises because it has been influenced by belief in the power of ancestral spirits, thus the event of *ngalap berkah* seeking for blessings can still be found in sacred tombs today.

Pilgrims who perform *ngalap berkah* will honour their ancestors in various ways, including performing certain rituals. Beliefs about ancestors can continue to influence the lives of people who are still alive, leading Javanese people to worship the spirits of those who have died as well as the spirits of their ancestors. [2], [5], [7], [8]. Ki Ageng Henis, a Javanese figure with a history of establishing an Islamic kingdom in Java. Therefore, his tomb is still standing and is visited by pilgrims.

Sacred tombs are still perceived as a special place to increase spirituality among the Javanese people, so that even visitors who come solely for the purpose of visiting cannot act arbitrarily. Visits to ancestral tombs and sacred tombs are generally another religious activity for the Javanese people in the Javanese religion system '*kejawen*' [2]. Therefore, visitors to the sacred tomb are not permitted to act carelessly in both actions and words. This is because the tomb belongs to the ancestors, and they regard it as a sacred place that must be respected as if the ancestors were still alive.

The procedures for pilgrimages between tombs are not all the same because they are also adapted to local beliefs and traditions, so differences in both the procedures for pilgrimage practices and pilgrimage equipment are possible. It will be different from a pilgrimage to the Tomb of Panembahan Senapati in Yogyakarta and a pilgrimage to the tomb of Dato Ri Tiro in Bulukumba [9], [10]. The pilgrimage procedure can differ not only between tombs but also within one tomb, as was the case at Sunan Tembayat's tomb in Klaten. This is influenced by pilgrims' understanding at the praxis and conceptual interpretation levels, so that at Sunan Tembayat's tomb, two patterns of pilgrimage practices can be found, namely pilgrims who practice meditation and *nenepi* and pilgrims who recite the holy Qur'an, *tahlil*, and dhikr [11]. Even though the times have changed, there are still traces of past pilgrimage practices to be found. This is due to the desire to preserve and continue ancestral beliefs.

Because the tomb is viewed as a major turning point in the Javanese community's life consciousness, visiting ancestral tombs and performing tomb rituals remains the most significant part of the Javanese people's behaviour in interpreting their lives [12]. The sacred tomb holds a special place in the spiritual life of the Javanese people, so the understanding of why people behave during pilgrimages follows certain patterns. The objective of this study is to describe the pattern of pilgrimage practices at the sacred tomb of Ki Ageng Henis in Surakarta. Furthermore, the purpose of pilgrims to sacred tombs is to be disclosed in this study.

Studies on tomb pilgrimage have most likely been conducted by domestic and international researchers and published in a variety of journals, both national and international, such as pilgrimage traditions discovered in the tomb of Prince Sambernyowo, which was studied from an economic standpoint [13], the presence of the tomb has provided job opportunities and economic development for the Giri Layu community. Another study on the meaning of equipment in pilgrimage activities such as incense, meaning of *paureh* (a concoction of leaves, roots and various types of flowers), meaning of water, sand and lime buried in the tombs [14]. The study of the sacredness of tombs in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara found that in the beliefs of pilgrims there are three categories of models, namely beliefs based on traditional Islamic patterns, mystical beliefs based on tradition, and beliefs based on mere rationality [15].

## **II. METHODS**

This is a qualitative study using an ethnographic approach. The data in this study is qualitative, and the data collection method used was field data collection through observation and interviews with the tomb's caretaker. The data is then described in order to explain the pattern of pilgrimage practices at the tomb of Ki Ageng Henis. Furthermore, data in the form of descriptions were analyzed to determine the main purpose of pilgrims and reveal symbols of the existence of Ki Ageng Henis' tomb.

## **III. RESULTS**

Sacred burials are tombs that are held in high esteem by the local community. This tomb is the final burial place of a famous figure from his era, whose story has since evolved into legend. [16]–[18]. Surakarta, as the cultural center of Java, also

has many sacred tombs scattered throughout its territory, such as the tomb of Ki Ageng Henis. Ki Ageng Henis is such an important figure in Surakarta that the mayor and his staff always plan a pilgrimage to him for the city's anniversary. Ki Ageng Henis' figure, which is still remembered and even worshiped, is inextricably linked to its history. The following is a history of Ki Ageng Henis, as well as the site of his tomb.

### **B. The figure of Ki Ageng Henis**

Ki Ageng Henis played a key role in the establishment of an Islamic empire in Java. Ki Ageng Henis is the son of Ki Ageng Sela and a direct descendant of Prabu Brawijaya V, the last king of Majapahit, according to the genealogy. Ki Ageng Henis is the youngest of seven children and the only son among his older sisters. Ki Ageng Henis served the Sultan of Pajang Hadiwijaya during his lifetime, and as a result of his endeavours, he was given a fief in Laweyan.

Ki Ageng Henis is the father of two sons, Ki Ageng Pemanahan and Ki Ageng Karatongan ([pariwisatasolo.surakarta.go.id](http://pariwisatasolo.surakarta.go.id)). Ki Ageng Pemanahan is the father of Sutawijaya, the first Mataram King, who holds the title Panembahan Senapati. Ki Ageng Henis was Panembahan Senapati's grandfather, and Panembahan Senapati was the first king of the Islamic Mataram kingdom, descended from whom the ruling kings of Surakarta Palace, Yogyakarta Palace, Mangkunegara, and Pakualaman descended. This means that, according to genealogy, Ki Ageng Henis is of kingly descent and inherited from the rulers of Java.

Ki Ageng Henis was well-known for being a preacher of Islam who was able to subtly enforce Islamization. Ki Beluk, who was originally a Hindu, converted to Islam after much debate with Ki Ageng Henis and gave up the temple to serve as a mosque. He performed to spread Islam in the kingdom of Pajang and its surrounding areas. Ki Ageng Henis also taught how to make batik in Laweyan as a medium of *da'wah*.

Laweyan has always been a busy trading area, owing to its location on the banks of the Bengawan Solo River, which enables trade transportation. During the formation of the Islamic Trade Union in the 19th century, Laweyan became an icon of the city of batik. Until now, the Laweyan area has become a center of batik and one of the tourist destinations of Surakarta's batik village. The tomb of Ki Ageng Henis and the Laweyan Mosque have become religious destinations in Surakarta and are listed on the official website of the City of Surakarta's tourism office.

### **C. Ki Ageng Henis' Tomb**

Ki Ageng Henis' tomb is located in Belukan, Pajang Village, Laweyan District, Surakarta. This tomb is still located in the Laweyan batik village. The location is right next to a tributary of the Bengawan Solo. Ki Ageng Henis' tomb was built and laid out during the reign of Pakubuwana X. The door leading to Ki Ageng Henis' tomb was designed with two entrances. Ki Ageng Henis' tomb complex is divided into two layers. The first layer houses the tombs of relatives and servants, or ring two, while the second layer houses the tombs of important figures, including Ki Ageng Henis' tomb.

The tomb is located south of the mosque. During the Pajang Sultanate, Ki Beluk built this mosque as a Hindu temple. Ki Beluk frequently discussed Islam with Ki Ageng Henis until he finally embraced Islam and gave up the temple to function as a mosque. This mosque was built in 1546 during the reign of Sultan Hadiwijaya. Furthermore, this mosque is known as the Laweyan Mosque, and it is the oldest mosque in Surakarta. The mosque's name is derived from the name of the surrounding neighborhood, Laweyan. Laweyan is a fief granted to Ki Ageng Henis by Sultan Hadiwijaya. The mosque structure has been restored several times, but the temple's typical architecture and the twelve teak pillars have been preserved. The tomb of Ki Ageng Henis and the burial complex of relatives and royal figures are just south of the mosque. The tomb of Ki Ageng Henis has a caretaker named Imam, who is also known as Mas Imam. He became a caretaker to replace his father, who had died. It has been three years since he took over his father's responsibilities as caretaker of Ki Ageng Henis' tomb. The caretaker of Ki Ageng Henis' tomb has been handed down from generation to generation.

### **D. Pilgrimage Practice at Ki Ageng Henis' Tomb**

People who come for pilgrimages, tours, or to learn about history must take their shoes off before entering the tomb. When pilgrims arrive in front of Ki Ageng Henis' tomb to pray, they should sit in the available spot with a mat. Pilgrims can sit immediately if there is no mat because the area has been tiled and is always clean. The pilgrims then began to pray; when they finished, some sprinkled roses on the gravestones, while others did not. Pilgrims to Ki Ageng Henis' grave who want to burn

incense or incense have a special place in the form of a small bowl of pottery near the gravestone. There are also pilgrims who, before embarking on a pilgrimage, make plans to perform *atur sembah* by bringing their palms together and then closer to the forehead. After completing the pilgrimage, the tomb's doors are usually closed and locked again, particularly the door that leads to the tomb.

Pilgrims also make pilgrimages by standing near the tomb. They then prayed, extending out their hands. While sitting, several other pilgrims raised their hands. They left the pilgrimage site without sowing flowers after they finished their pilgrimage. There are also pilgrims who come in groups and make pilgrimages while being led by one of the group's members. They use Arabic prayers. They pray for those who have died, and some pray to God Almighty for salvation.

Pilgrims flock to the tomb of Ki Ageng Henis during the city of Surakarta's anniversary. This is one of the three mandatory tombs visited by Surakarta city officials when celebrating anniversaries, beginning with the mayor, deputy mayor, muspika, and other related officials. Javanese traditional clothing, known as *beskap*, is typically worn by officials. This pilgrimage to pray for Ki Ageng Henis and remember his services has become an annual routine agenda item for the Surakarta city government. During pilgrimage, the group is usually led by one of the groups using Arabic after they have finished praying. After finishing, proceed with the procession of sowing roses on the tombstone, so that the tombstone is completely covered with sowing roses.

In addition to the anniversary of the city of Surakarta, the tomb of Ki Ageng Henis usually has pilgrims on Friday nights, but on other days it is uncertain because sometimes there are group visits that come on Sunday tours or groups of school children who study history come on Sunday. In general, this tomb has begun to be devoid of pilgrims, as only a small number of people visit it. Sometimes there are family members or relatives who still have the breed of the person buried in the Ki Ageng Henis's tomb complex, but this happens infrequently. Pilgrims use roses sprinkled on tombs as a pilgrimage intermediary.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION**

##### **A. Pilgrimage Practice Patterns at Ki Ageng Henis' Tomb**

The results revealed that there were differences in the pilgrimages performed by pilgrims. The procedures, pilgrimage media, and prayers used reveal these differences. Pilgrims who perform *atur sembah* arrangements, burn incense, and burn incense are those who follow the pattern of Javanese traditional pilgrimage practices. These procedures are based on Javanese rituals. This relates to Javanese beliefs, which are still influenced by mysticism and belief in ancestral spirits. They tend to treat sacred grave figures with etiquette as a form of respect for these figures. This type of respect is influenced by the cult of figures, so that even after they have died, they are still respected. These pilgrims usually come for pilgrimages on specific days because they believe in a good day that is adjusted to the day of Ki Ageng Henis's death, or usually on Friday night Legi, Friday night Kliwon, and night 1 Suro.

In addition, pilgrims who perform pilgrimages in accordance with Islamic teachings, pray in Arabic, and do not appear to treat tombs specifically can be classified as part of the Islamic pilgrimage pattern. Pilgrims who follow this pattern typically visit the tomb to pray for the dead. However, there is a belief that the person who is buried is a pious person as a *wasilah* 'intermediary' and can act as an intermediary so that prayers are quickly answered by God Almighty, so they pray for themselves as well as the dead. Some pilgrims follow this pattern and sprinkle flowers on the tomb, while others do not and do not rely on specific days for pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage practice pattern discovered in Ki Ageng Henis' tomb is the tourist pilgrimage practice pattern. This pattern of pilgrimage practice is commonly associated with visitors who want to learn about the history of Ki Ageng Henis and his tomb. Apart from that, they usually take the time to pray for Ki Ageng Henis. They came to KI Ageng Henis' tomb on intent to travel religious tourism, historical tourism, and cultural tourism, so there was no special spiritual preparation.

##### **B. Pilgrims' Major Destination**

The majority of pilgrims who come to Ki Ageng Henis' tomb come to seek for blessings / *karomah*, also known as *ngalap berkah*. However, there are two differences in *ngalap berkah* 'seeking for blessing' among pilgrims who are affected by the pilgrimage's purpose. There are those who come to Ki Ageng Henis' tomb to seek his blessings. Second, there are pilgrims who come to Ki Ageng Henis' tomb in order to make Ki Ageng Henis a prayer intermediary. These two factors distinguish *ngalap berkah* in the practice of pilgrimage to Ki Ageng Henis' tomb.

Nonetheless, the tomb of Ki Ageng Henis was able to peacefully reconcile these differences. This demonstrates the pilgrims' willingness to work together. There are various patterns of pilgrimage practices that can be accommodated in one tomb, and while the purpose is different, it does not make other pilgrims inconvenient.

## V. CONCLUSION

At Ki Ageng Henis' tomb, there are three patterns of pilgrimage practice: Javanese traditional pilgrimage practice, Islamic pilgrimage practice, and tourist pilgrimage practice. These three patterns can be practiced peacefully side by side at Ki Ageng Henis' tomb, giving each other space so that all pilgrims feel comfortable. Thus, the tomb of Ki Ageng Henis in Surakarta can both reflect and become a symbol of harmony.

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