

Tabot Ritual in Islamic Law: Philosophical Reflections on Sunni and Shiite Harmonization

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the philosophy of the Tabot ritual, commemorating the death of Hasan in the fields of Karbala, rooted in the traditions of Shia and Sunni, from the perspective of Islamic law. The Tabot ritual embodies noble Islamic values intertwined with local wisdom and cultural acculturation in Bengkulu society. This study employs a field research approach, collecting data through in-depth interviews and documentation with religious leaders, traditional leaders, community figures, and residents in Bengkulu. The findings reveal that the nine stages of the Tabot ritual—Mengambik Tanah, Duduk Penja, Menjara, Meradai, Arak Penja, Arak Serban, Gam, Arak Gedang, and Tabot Tebuang—are imbued with profound philosophical meanings in line with Islamic principles. These include the value of acculturation in Mengambik Tanah, self-purification in Duduk Penja, the spirit of Islamic brotherhood in Menjara, and self-reflection in Tabot Tebuang. From an Islamic legal perspective, the Tabot ritual illustrates a harmonious adaptation of ritual practices while adhering to respect and coexistence within Islamic teachings. The ritual's symbolic modifications, such as removing elements deemed offensive to the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, reflect a commitment to maintaining Islamic unity. Although originating from a Shiite tradition, the Tabot ritual has been contextualized and accepted broadly, including by Sunni communities, showcasing its alignment with Islamic jurisprudential values.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis filosofi Tabot sebagai ritual memperingati wafatnya Hasan di padang Karbala yang berakar pada tradisi Syiah dan Sunni dari sudut pandang hukum Islam. Ritual Tabot merupakan perwujudan nilai-nilai luhur Islam yang terjalin dengan kearifan lokal dan akulturasi budaya masyarakat Bengkulu. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan penelitian lapangan, yaitu pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam dan dokumentasi terhadap tokoh agama, tokoh adat, tokoh masyarakat, dan warga di Bengkulu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sembilan tahapan ritual Tabot—Mengambik Tanah, Duduk Penja, Menjara, Meradai, Arak Penja, Arak Serban, Gam, Arak Gedang, dan Tabot Tebuang—memiliki makna filosofis yang mendalam dan sejalan dengan prinsip Islam. Di antaranya adalah nilai akulturasi budaya dalam Mengambik Tanah, penyucian diri dalam Duduk Penja, semangat persaudaraan Islam dalam Menjara, dan refleksi diri dalam Tabot Tebuang. Dari sudut pandang hukum Islam, ritual Tabot menggambarkan adaptasi praktik ritual yang harmonis dengan tetap berpegang pada rasa hormat dan hidup berdampingan dalam ajaran Islam. Modifikasi simbolik ritual tersebut, seperti menghilangkan unsur-unsur yang dianggap menyinggung para Sahabat Nabi Muhammad SAW, mencerminkan komitmen untuk menjaga persatuan Islam. Meski berasal dari tradisi Syiah, ritual Tabot telah dikontekstualisasikan dan diterima secara luas, termasuk oleh komunitas Sunni, yang menunjukkan keselarasan dengan nilai-nilai yurisprudensi Islam.

Keywords:

Philosophy; Islamic law; Tabot ritual

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Introduction

Every Muharram, the residents of Bengkulu hold the customary event known as Tabot to remember the heroic Hussein bin Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet Muhammad's great-grandson who lost his life in battle in the Iraqi desert of Karbala. Since the original residents of Bengkulu (the Sipai) were free from Shiite influence, the event, observed initially by the Shiites to commemorate the passing of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, eventually became merely a familial obligation to honor their ancestors' wishes. Later, the Sipai people participated in preserving Bengkulu's traditional culture through this ceremony. Since 1990, this ritual, known as the Tabot, has become a key component of Bengkulu City's tourism strategy. The Tabot celebration spread beyond the Bengkulu community to include the Painan, Padang, Pariaman, Maninjau, Pidie, Banda Aceh, Meulaboh, and Singkil groups. Tabot's operations eventually stopped in many places as it was developed. Currently, only Bengkulu and Pariaman, West Sumatra, perform this ceremony, which they call *Tabuik* (Suradi & Surahman, 2020).

In Bengkulu, the Tabot has become a symbol of harmonization between Shia and Sunni, and historical conflicts between two opposing groups for thousands of years can disappear. Apart from that, the Tabot is also a symbol of acculturation between local and Middle Eastern cultures. This acculturation gave birth to the values of brotherhood and tolerance, which teach humanity that brothers and sisters do not need to be enemies and go to war just because they are fighting over world affairs. The results of interviews reinforce this data,

Tabot is a symbol of peace in the city of Bengkulu. There are many customs and cultures mixed in the Tabot celebration. All these differences can melt into one and become a harmony that is beautiful to behold. Thousands of people witness the beauty of harmony between different cultures and customs yearly. Tabot teaches us that differences can actually give birth to beauty if appropriately managed (Efendi, 2022).

Based on these facts, researchers are interested in conducting in-depth research related to the facts that cause Tabot to become a symbol or icon of harmonization between two opposing groups, Shia and Sunni. Among other things, research related to the Tabot tradition has been carried out. Syaputra argues that Tabot is a tradition that requires character values, namely, as reflected in the equipment used, the primary purpose of the activities carried out, and the values reflected in the activities carried out. The values of character education contained in the Tabot tradition are religious, fighting spirit, love of peace, brotherhood, hard work, self-reliance, love of the motherland, and responsibility (Syaputra, 2019:136). Im Fahimah and Wahyu Abdul Jafar find that Sunni Muslim circles accept the Tabot Festival, but a few events need to be corrected because they violate the sharia. The permitted events are Duduk Penja, Meradai, Menjara/Mengandun, Arak Penja, Arak Surban, Gam, and Arak Gendang. Two processions for the Tabot event need to be repaired: Menggammik Tanah and Tabot Tebuang (Fahimah & Jafar, 2020). However this study examines the Tabot ritual practiced by the Bengkulu community, exploring its relationship with the phenomenon of Islamic law.

Method

This research is field research using a qualitative method. The primary data source is directly extracted through interviews. The data collection techniques used in this research are interviews and documentation. The informants in this research are religious leaders, traditional leaders, community leaders, and the people of Bengkulu who were interviewed in 2022. In determining the informants, researchers used a purposive sampling technique; the goal is that the data obtained is more accurate and proper on target. The approach used in this study is

sociological because it looks at social reality (Huda, 2022). This sociological approach is used to find out and describe facts in the field around the Tabot, which can become an “icon/symbol” of harmonization between Shia and Sunni groups in building religious moderation. The data analysis was carried out in stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Miles & Huberman, 2014). At the same time, the data validity technique used in this study is source triangulation (Moleong, 2018).

History of Tabot Ritual

The Tabot Cultural Festival is a traditional ritual ceremony carried out annually by the Tabot Harmony Family following the Islamic calendar, namely the 1st to 10th of Muḥarram (Erlita, 2017). Tabot in Indonesia comes from a simple ritual in Iraq, Persia, and South and North India called *ta'ziyah*. Tabot in Indonesia is divided into two parts: first, Ḥasan-Ḥusayn in Aceh, and second, Tabot in Sibolga, a simple ritual type. Second, Tabot in Bengkulu and Tabuik in Pariaman are types elaborated into theatrical performances (Rimapradesi & Jatmika, 2021: 30). Tabot culture was born not from the indigenous people of Bengkulu but as the result of a process of cultural acculturation. It can be seen that there was acculturation in the Bengkulu community; there was a mixture between the indigenous people and the Tabot people, there was cultural contact between Islamic scholars from Iran and workers from India, and the Bengkulu people formed an organization called Tabot Family Harmony which was legalized by law with a notary certificate. No written explanation was given when the Tabot ceremony became known in the Bengkulu community (Sapriansa & Prayogi, 2022: 65). An ancient record mentions the origins of the history of the first Tabot celebration,

“Ḥusayn’s headless body was left in the Karbala field. Someone named Natsal, Ḥusayn’s assistant, knew that a precious diamond or amulet was stored in Ḥusayn’s belt. According to Natsal, he should take the item and then be taken or confiscated by someone else. When Natsal undressed Husain to bring the item, Ḥusayn’s hands moved to reject Natsal’s hand. Natsal then slashed the hand of Ḥusayn’s corpse, but at the same time, he heard thunder; lightning flashed in all directions with a frightening sound. Seeing this incident, Natsal lay down on the ground. In a conscious state, Natsal saw as if a pyramid-shaped king’s palace appeared along the place in a dream, accompanied by harmonious rhythmic chants. Then he heard the words: give way to Prophet Adam, Prophet Abraham, Prophet Mūsā, Prophet Īsā, Siti Fāṭimah, and Prophet Muḥammad, paying homage to Ḥusayn. Natsal saw the face of the Prophet Muḥammad; then the Prophet slapped Natsal’s face by saying, to give a sign of your evil deeds, not only will your face remain black, but your offspring will be born with a black face. After that incident, Natsal regretted his actions; he went to Mecca to ask Allah to forgive him for his evil deeds at the Ka’bah. When he was praying, Ja’far ibn Muḥammad Siddīq, a scholar circling the Ka’bah, met him and asked what problems Natsal was facing. Natsal explained all the events that had happened to him. Then Ja’far answered that Natsal’s sins could be forgiven on condition that he and his descendants remember and commemorate Husain’s death every year through a solemn ceremony (Helfrich, 1988: 192–193).

Meanwhile, the tradition of the Tabot ceremony in Bengkulu is believed to have started during the construction of Fort Marlborough. One of the pioneers of carrying out the Bengkulu Tabot ceremony was Imam Maulana Irsyad, who arrived in Bengkulu in 1336 AD (756/757 H). namely from the end of the month of Dhulhijjah 756 H until the 10th of Muḥarram 757 H. The arrival of Imām Maulānā Irshād in bringing the Tabot culture was not well known by the people of Bengkulu because the presence of this religious leader only lasted for a short time in Bengkulu, and he always visited areas not to settle down. However, the aim was to spread the Islamic religion. However, after the arrival of Imam Sanggolo, who settled in Bengkulu and

married Bengkulu people (Mahyudi & Yanti, 2019), the workers who built Fort Malborough followed. Imam Senggolo and workers brought by the British (East Indian Company) from Madras and Bengali (southern India) to Bengkulu to construct the fort. They introduced and cultivated the Tabot tradition in Bengkulu. Remember all the martyrs and uphold the sentence of monotheism. Their descendants are known today as the *Sipai* people. Sheikh Burhanuddin lived in Bengkulu when the British entered Bengkulu between 1685 and 1825.

The mourning tradition brought from his country of origin experienced assimilation and acculturation with the original culture. Then, it was inherited and developed into what became known as the Tabot ceremony (Sari, 2019: 52). The sociocultural phenomenon of the Tabot ritual manifested in performing arts in every Tabot celebration event, which is usually held as an added event and an attraction for tourists. The ritual aspect that originally underlies it was initially the center of all traditional ceremonies; now it is complemented by various spectacle arts and cultural attractions such as *dol* music, Tabot dance, *telong-telong*, and playing fish that are held during the Tabot celebration; now it is included in the series of Tabot rituals, during 1st to 10th of Muḥarram. (Febrianty et al., 2020) This Tabot ritual has essentially changed the mindset of the Bengkulu community in an effort to maintain religious harmony, and this is evident in the rituals that are still carried out every year.

The Tabot Ritual Procession

Since the government of Bengkulu City has been involved in implementing the Tabot tradition, this tradition has changed its concept into a cultural festival with all existing tourism activities, so the Tabot ceremony for the people of Bengkulu has two objectives; the first is as a celebration of welcoming the Islamic new year. Second, with all the existing rituals, this tradition aims to commemorate the heroic story and death of the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, Husen Bin Ali, who died in Padang Karbala, Iraq (Valentine & Talalu, 2022).

The ceremonial procession of Tabot is as follows: *Mengambik tanah* (taking land). The land taken at this stage must come from sacred places containing magical elements, such as the Tapak Padri Sacred Land near Fort Marlborough and Keramat Anggut in the Pasar Tebek public cemetery. Taking land will be done on 1 Muḥarram. This land will be wrapped in a white shroud shaped like a human doll. The second stage is *Duduk Penja* (washing the fingers). *Penja* is an object made of brass, silver, or copper in the shape of a human hand, complete with fingers. *Penja* is considered a sacred object with magical elements, and it must be washed with lime water every year. *Duduk Penja* is held on the 5th of Muḥarram. The third stage is *Meradai* (collecting funds), carried out by *Jola* (responsible for collecting funds for community activities, usually consisting of children aged 10-12 years) (Arifian & Ayundasari, 2021). The *Meradai* event is held on the 6th of Muḥarram. The fourth stage is *Manjara* (6-7 Muḥarram), an event to visit other groups to test or compete in *Dol* (a drum-like musical instrument made of wood with a hole in the middle and covered with ox skin).

One of the features of this *Menjara* stage is the battle scenes performed by two groups, Tabot *Bangsal* and Tabot *Berkas*. However, the war that is waged in this festival is not dangerous. At this event, the battle between the two groups is symbolized by a *dol* match. On the first night of *Menjara*, one group of Tabots will approach another group. On the way, this group will beat *Dol* to attract masses from every village, and it passes so that the number continues to grow. When the two groups met, the fight between them began immediately clashing, beating *Dol* as hard as possible. After complaining to *Dol*, the group visited the old *gerga* (a building symbolizing Hussein's stronghold during the war). Here, the fingers of the Tabot brought together when raising the masses will do *soja* or greet the fingers of other Tabot groups. This is the end of the first day's imprisonment ritual. The next day, the *Menjara* ritual

was performed again. This time, the group that had previously visited returned to visit another group. The group walked to the old gate to pick up fingers and pick up the masses from the villages they passed.

The two groups fought, clashing against the *Dol*. The fifth stage is the *Arak Penja*, where *Penja* is placed inside the Tabot and paraded on the main streets of Bengkulu City. The sixth stage parades the *penja*, which is added with a white turban and put on the small Tabot. The seventh stage is *Gam* (calm/mourning), a stage in the Tabot ceremony that must be obeyed. The *Gam* Stage is when it is not permissible to hold any activities.

Gam comes from the word ‘*ghum*,’ which means closed or blocked, held every 9th of Muharram. The eighth stage is carried out on the 9th of Muharram, also called *Arak Gendang*. This stage begins with the release of Tabot *Besanding* at each *Gerga*. The last stage of the entire series of Tabot ceremonies is called the Tabot *Tebuang*, which was held on the 10th of Muharram (Rochmiatun, 2015). This ritual, which involves careful timing and space, provides insight into how adherents of this tradition navigate the complexities of religious expression in a diverse and pluralistic society. Thus, the existence of Tabot becomes a reflection of religious moderation in Bengkulu society.

Philosophy of Tabot Ritual

The nine stages in the Tabot ritual have a philosophy that contains noble Islamic values and acculturation of local wisdom in the Bengkulu community, including first, *Mengambik Tanah*; the term *Mengambik Tanah* in the Tabot tradition is a warning or reminiscent of the origin of human events that were created from the ground and then returned to the ground. So, humans do not need to be arrogant in living their daily lives (Megayanti & Elcaputera, 2019). The results of interviews strengthen this data,

Humans were created from the soil and will be returned to the soil as well. The procession of Mengambik Tanah is a momentum for the people of Bengkulu to contemplate the origin of their creation. Therefore, humans need to be earthly, not arrogant, because arrogance is the attitude of the sky, namely the attitude of the Creator. Earthlings must behave like the earth, namely humility, not arrogance (Mustofa, 2022).

Second, *Duduk Penja* (washing the fingers), the term *Duduk Penja* in the Tabot tradition, is a symbol of inviting people always to purify themselves, which starts with the hands because it is the hands that can make us dirty. It is the hands that can make us clean both physically and mentally. (Adha et al., 2022). The results of interviews reinforce this data,

Duduk Penja is a symbol of tahārah (purification). This ritual symbolizes sitting while cleaning himself and his soul. If he does not clean himself and his soul, whoever is human will be dirty and often do bad things. If they often taharah (purify) and vice versa, dirty humans will also be clean afterward. If a person with a lousy temperament wants to purify (repent) from his evil deeds, he will become a clean and holy person (Walid, 2022).

Third, *Menjara*, the term *Menjara* in the Tabot tradition, is a long journey at night with a *Dol* procession (a large drum-like instrument), flags, and grandeur pennants, likened to when a buffalo war is about to occur. The philosophy that can be taken in this procession is an attitude of courage and never back down. We are forbidden to look for enemies if there are enemies, but when people want to disturb us, we must have the courage to face them. The results of interviews reinforce this data,

The Menjara Ritual symbolizes courage. Enemies should not be searched for; if enemies exist, do not run (fear). Sayidina Husayn's courage in the Karbala War must inspire a Muslim's soul to defend the truth (Ilham, 2022).

Fourth, *Meradai* (collecting funds), the term *Meradai* in the Tabot tradition means an effort to evoke community emancipation in the form of rice, sugar, drinks, money, or others so that the feeling of belonging to each other in the cultural arts of the Tabot Karbala must be preserved. The philosophy of mutual help is deeply felt in the *Meradai ritual*. The results of interviews reinforce this data,

The Meradai ritual teaches Bengkulu people to be happy to help each other and not to be selfish, stingy, and sensitive to the social life around them. Helping in the Tabot tradition is natural because Tabot is a culture that already belongs to the people of Bengkulu (Tamam, 2022).

Fifth, *Arak Penja* (parading the fingers), the term *Arak Penja* in the Tabot tradition is a symbol of the five letters of the Creator, a symbol of *marukun*, and a symbol of respect for Al Husayn as the king of the martyrs in the Karbala desert. The philosophy in the *Arak Penja tradition* is always to remember history and take lessons from all events that have happened before. Sixth, *Arak Serban* (parading a turban), the term *Arak Serban* in the Tabot tradition, is an accessory used as a tie and head cover for the honorary crown of Imām Husayn which was narrated confiscated by Akmas ibn Mitsat after stealing the turban belonging to Imām Husayn, Akmas ibn Mitsat is reported to have gone mad. The philosophy of *Arak Serban* is the same as that of *Arak Penja*, which is always to remember history. History is a life experience that must be learned from (Efendi, 2022). Seven *Gam* (quiet mourning), the term *Gam* in the Tabot tradition, is a sad day tradition commemorated every 9th of Muḥarram. The *Gam* ritual is meant to reflect on why Imām Husayn had to be killed cruelly. The philosophy in the *Gam* ritual is that the struggle to defend and defend the truth requires extraordinary sacrifices; even one's life must be prepared to be sacrificed. The results of interviews reinforce this data,

The Gam ritual teaches sincerity in the struggle; no struggle does not require sacrifice. Imām Husayn is a warrior who is willing to sacrifice his life to defend the truth. He exemplified by sacrificing his own life that fighting must be totality (Hamzah, 2022).

Eighth, *Arak Gedang*, the term *Arak Gedang* in the Tabot tradition, means the peak night of the Tabot cultural ritual procession in the main arena, which is also the official closing of the festival held by the culture and tourism service. The *Arak Gedang* ritual is usually filled with art performances and folk entertainment (Rahman & Qurniati, 2022). The philosophy in the *Arak Gedang* ritual is that sadness and joy come one after another; in life, we should not drag on in sorrow. Life must be grateful for the grace of the Creator. The results of interviews reinforce this data,

The Arak Gedang ritual manifests the rotation of the wheel of life. The sorrows in life should not make you despair of God's grace. Destiny and sorrow are sunatulloh (destiny), which must be lived by being grateful and patient. Be thankful when you get happiness, and be patient when you get sadness (Pertiwi, 2022).

Nine, *Tabot Tebuang*, the term *Tabot Tebuang* in the Tabot tradition, is an expression of throwing away ugliness, arrogance, and the climax of throwing out barbarism (Astuti, 2016). The results of interviews reinforce this data,

The Tabot Tebuang Ritual is the closing of all the events of the Bengkulu Tabot festival. The Tabot Tebuang is a symbol of getting rid of bad human traits. If humans possess bad characteristics, the extraordinary impact can cause war between humans. Imām Husayn's martyrdom in Karbala results from the most apparent bad character humans possess.

Therefore, these despicable qualities should be removed so that humans can live side by side and not be enemies (Romadhoni, 2022).

Based on the interview data, the philosophy of the *Tabot Tebuang ritual* is to eliminate the disgraceful nature of humans. The *Tabo Tebuang* ritual usually contains a procession of statues of animals, giants, and so on, which are manifestations of human vices that must be disposed of. The nine stages of the Tabot ritual reflect a deep intertwining of Islamic values and local wisdom, emphasizing humility, purification, courage, and community support. Each stage, from *Mengambik Tanah* to *Tabot Tebuang*, serves as a reminder of fundamental human truths and moral lessons. For instance, *Mengambik Tanah* underscores the transient nature of life and the importance of humility, while *Duduk Penja* encourages self-purification. Other rituals promote community solidarity and collective memory, highlighting the necessity of learning from history. This structure not only reinforces individual moral conduct but also fosters a sense of communal identity rooted in shared beliefs and values, ultimately contributing to the broader discourse on religious moderation and coexistence in a diverse society.

Through this analysis, it is evident that the Tabot ritual embodies principles that can guide societal interactions, encouraging unity and mutual respect amidst diversity. Each ritual stage acts as a cultural expression of broader religious teachings, showcasing how traditions can be adapted to foster a more harmonious and tolerant community.

Tabot Ritual Practices in Islamic Law

Since Islam entered the archipelago, there has been acculturation between Islam and local culture (Bahari & Sivana, 2022). This acculturation presents an impressive variety of cultures. Generally, some forms of acculturation are closely related to the spread of Islam in the country. One of the many cultural acculturations is the traditional Tabot ceremony. Tabot is a traditional ceremony of the Bengkulu community to commemorate the heroism and death of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib, in battle with Ubaidillah bin Zaid's troops in the fields of Karbala, Iraq, on 10 Muharram 61 Hijriyah or 681 AD.

The practice of Tabot rituals in Bengkulu society has nine series of events, which researchers will then describe from each event from an Islamic legal perspective. The first series of events begins at the time of land acquisition, known as *Mengambik Tanah* in the local language (Putra, 2019). The process of *mengambik tanah* is accompanied by the reading of mantras and verses of the Quran and reminds humans of the origin of their creation and will return to the land again. The practice of reciting mantras and verses from the Quran during the *mengambik tanah* procession presents a unique interplay of Islamic law and cultural elements. On the one hand, the recitation of Quranic verses reflects an alignment with Islamic teachings, signifying the intention to invoke blessings and divine protection. On the other hand, the use of mantras—if these include phrases or practices that are not rooted in Islamic theology—can lead to perceptions of inconsistency with the principles of *tawhīd* (the oneness of God).

Instead of framing such practices as conflicting outright, they can be understood as a reflection of local expressions of faith that blend Islamic values with longstanding cultural traditions. It becomes essential to evaluate such practices in light of the objectives of Islamic law, which emphasize preserving faith, intellect, lineage, life, and property. Practices like these can often be seen as attempts by the community to harmonize their religious beliefs with their cultural heritage rather than as a deliberate deviation from Islamic principles. To nurture religious practices that avoid judgmental attitudes, it is essential to foster dialogue and understanding between Islamic scholars and local communities. Scholars can provide guidance

on ensuring that such practices align with Islamic teachings while respecting cultural contexts. This approach promotes inclusivity and appreciation for diversity within the broader Islamic framework. Still, this ritual has been acculturated properly by incorporating Islamic elements in the form of reading verses. This Tabot ritual becomes a local tradition with Islamic characteristics and Islam with regional characteristics.

The second series of events is *Duduk Penja* or washing fingers. Philosophically, the *duduk penja* procession can be understood as a manifestation of the deep search for purity and harmony in life, both individually and socially. This tradition represents the symbolism of self-purification, aligning with the Islamic concept of *tazkiyyah al-nafs*, the process of cleansing the soul to draw closer to the Creator. In a cultural context, *duduk penja* reflects human efforts to harmonize local values with spiritual teachings, creating a space for reflection on one's relationship with God, others, and the universe. Thus, this tradition is not merely a ritual but serves as a medium of contemplation that connects spirituality with daily life as long as it remains within the framework of Islamic values.

The third series of Tabot events is *Menjara*. *Menjara* means a long journey at night and visiting other communities. The legal phenomenon of *Menjara*, can be understood as a tradition rooted in social and Islamic legal values, where its core purpose is to strengthen social bonds through meaningful interactions. The event serves as an expression of faith, cultural heritage, and the importance of community bonds. Through these gatherings, participants reaffirm their shared values and strengthen their social fabric, contributing to a more profound sense of belonging and mutual understanding among members. The practice can also be seen as a form of collective remembrance and reflection, encouraging participants to uphold positive behavior and foster harmonious relationships within the community. This tradition aligns with the concept of *silaturahmi* in Islam, which emphasizes the importance of promoting and maintaining good relationships with others as an embodiment of the values of brotherhood and compassion in communal life.

Menjara reflects an effort to realize social harmony, which is one of the primary objectives of sharia (ensuring order and harmony in society). By strengthening human connections, this tradition contributes to the creation of unity and solidarity, which are essential foundations for communal living. Beyond being a social activity, *Menjara* can be interpreted as an expression of practicing Islamic teachings that place interpersonal relationships as a form of worship and devotion to Allah (Sativa et al., 2023).

The fourth series of events is *Meradai*, or taking funds, carried out by *Jola* (people in charge of taking funds for community activities, usually consisting of children aged ten to twelve years). This *Meradai* event is held in the month of Muharram. *Meradai* reflects the values of togetherness, care, and social empowerment, by strengthening social bonds and encouraging collective participation in fulfilling communal needs. Moreover, the involvement of children in this procession can be seen as a form of social education that instils values of independence, responsibility, and empathy from an early age. Thus, *Meradai* is not merely a traditional practice but also carries profound educational and spiritual dimensions, provided it adheres to the framework of sharia and Islamic ethics (Fahimah & Jafar, 2020).

The fifth series of Tabot events is *Arak Penja*. *Penja*, in this event, is placed inside the Tabot and paraded through the main streets of Bengkulu City. *Arak Penja* can be understood as a form of cultural expression that does not contain elements contrary to the principles of the Islamic creed, particularly regarding the prohibition of *shirk* (polytheism). As long as this procession does not involve beliefs or practices that deviate from *tawhīd*, it can be regarded as part of a social activity with historical and educational dimensions for the community. *Arak Penja* also serves as a collective reminder of traditional values that align with the spirit of unity

and the preservation of religious culture. The procession through the main streets of Bengkulu city is only a symbol of festivity and not something mystical. The sixth stage of the Tabot event is *Arak Serban*, which is the procession of the *penja*, added with a white turban and placed on a small Tabot, *Arak Serban* reflects the values of cultural identity, community solidarity, and the preservation of tradition. The procession, in which the *penja* is adorned with a white turban and placed on a small Tabot, symbolizes the community's respect for their heritage and the religious significance they attribute to the event. The use of the white turban itself can carry meanings of purity, faith, and a connection to spiritual ideals, reflecting the philosophical emphasis on *tazkiyyah* (spiritual purification) and the importance of maintaining a sense of piety.

The seventh series of events is *Gam*, or calm and mourning, which means no activities are carried out. *Gam* echoes the principles of respect, reflection, and empathy within a community. This stage of the event, where no activities are carried out, embodies the values of *ṣabr* (patience) and *taqwā* (piety), encouraging individuals to pause and engage in contemplation and solemnity. Islamic law places great emphasis on maintaining balance in life, acknowledging moments of joy and moments of solemnity. The practice of *Gam* can be seen as a manifestation of this balance, where the community collectively observes a time of quiet and introspection. This pause can be a time for individuals to strengthen their spiritual connection with Allah, reflect on their actions, and express empathy for those who are grieving or facing hardship. Philosophically, it aligns with the concept of *tazkiyyah* (spiritual purification), as it promotes an environment that allows for personal growth, emotional healing, and renewal of faith.

Furthermore, the observance of *Gam* demonstrates that Islam recognizes the human need for moments of solemnity and mourning as part of a holistic approach to life that includes both spiritual and social dimensions. It emphasizes the importance of community unity and shared experiences, reinforcing the values of compassion, mutual support, and respect for the emotional and spiritual well-being of individuals. The eighth Tabot event is held on the 9th of Muḥarram and is called *Arak Gedang*. *Arak Gedang* embodies values such as gratitude (thankfulness to Allah), togetherness, and social solidarity, which are highly valued in Islam. This celebration serves to strengthen social unity, promote shared joy, and deepen the bonds among community members, which are essential for building a harmonious society. In Islam, the values of *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) and *ta'āwun* (cooperation) are emphasized as part of fostering a supportive and caring community. *Arak Gedang* can also be seen as an expression of gratitude and appreciation for cultural heritage, as well as an opportunity to celebrate togetherness. By prioritizing the values of togetherness, warmth, and happiness, this event contributes to the formation of more robust social bonds within the community. It supports the creation of a peaceful and blessed environment, as encouraged by Islamic teachings.

The final series of the *Tabot* ceremonies is *Tabot Tebuang*, held on the 10th of Muḥarram. This event involves a symbolic act where the Tabot is disposed of, marking the conclusion of the series of rituals. From a descriptive standpoint, the procession of *Tabot Tebuang* involves community participation, often with a sense of solemnity and shared purpose. The practice of *Tabot Tebuang* can embody deeper moral and spiritual values within the community. The act of removing the Tabot symbolizes a collective act of self-evaluation and purification, resonating with the Islamic concept of *tazkiyyah* (purification of the soul). This ritual reflects the aspiration to let go of negative traits such as arrogance and to strive for personal and communal growth. The ceremony emphasizes the importance of self-reflection and the shedding of behaviors that may be detrimental to individual and social harmony. In this sense, *Tabot Tebuang* transcends a mere ceremonial practice and becomes a metaphor for renewal, encouraging participants to engage in introspection and foster a mindset oriented

towards betterment and spiritual purification. By promoting these values, the event contributes to a sense of community cohesion and the strengthening of the moral fabric, aligning with the broader ideals of mutual support, humility, and positive transformation, which are core to the teachings of Islam (Rochmiatun, 2015).

Although a local tradition, the series of Tabot events in Bengkulu embodies profound Islamic values and philosophies. The first event, *Mengambik Tanah*, serves as a reminder of the origin of human beings and the cycle of life returning to the earth. This aligns with the principle of *tawhīd*, which emphasizes Allah's sovereignty over all creation. The recitation of Quranic verses during this procession reflects spiritual awareness and acknowledgment of God's authority. While the use of mantras may be seen as a local element, it can be viewed as an effort to integrate religious teachings with cultural practices, creating harmony between faith and tradition. The next event, *Duduk Penja*, symbolizes self-purification and the pursuit of purity, aligning with the Islamic concept of *tazkiyyah al-nafs*, cleansing the soul. This process represents the individual and communal effort to draw closer to Allah and underscores the importance of maintaining inner purity. The philosophy behind this event highlights the significance of the relationship between humans, the Creator, and the universe, creating a space for reflection to improve oneself in daily life. This is in line with Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of good relationships (*ukhuwwah*) and acts of kindness.

Menjara, a night journey visiting other communities, strengthens social bonds, an essential principle in Islam. This tradition reflects the importance of *silah al-raḥim*, an act of worship and a way to show care for one another. By fostering interactions among communities, *Menjara* contributes to unity and solidarity, which are vital foundations for communal living following the objectives of Sharia to create harmony in society. This practice shows that building and maintaining good relationships is a noble value that should be nurtured and promoted. The *Meradai* and *Arak Penja* events embody values of togetherness, community empowerment, and social education. *Meradai*, which involves children's participation, teaches them responsibility and empathy from a young age, aligning with Islamic principles of nurturing and education. *Arak Penja*, the parade procession, symbolizes unity and the collective celebration of cultural heritage while still upholding the core belief in *tawhīd*. These events demonstrate an integration of Islamic values such as gratitude, solidarity, and spiritual purification, encouraging the community to live harmoniously, support one another, and remain mindful of religious principles in all aspects of life.

Conclusion

The critical finding in this research is that the Tabot ritual reflects profound Islamic philosophical values rooted in both spiritual and ethical dimensions. The philosophy of the *Mengambik Tanah* ritual emphasizes the origins of human creation, reminding people of their humble beginnings on the earth and their eventual return to it. *Duduk Penja* symbolizes the constant need for soul and self-purification. *Menjara* conveys the value of courage grounded in truth, while *Meradai* embodies social sensitivity and mutual assistance. The *Arak Penja* and *Arak Surban* stages represent *Ibaroh* (lessons from history), encouraging reflection on past events to guide present actions. *Gam* teaches that the struggle to uphold truth demands extraordinary sacrifices. *Arak Gedang* illustrates the balance of life's joys and sorrows, emphasizing gratitude for divine blessings. Finally, *Tabot Tebuang* represents the elimination of human vices, encouraging moral refinement and spiritual elevation. The Tabot ritual, deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, serves as a medium for transmitting values such as cooperation, mutual help, and ethical living, which align with Islamic jurisprudence. It highlights the importance of fostering unity and living following divine principles, demonstrating how rituals

can be harmonized with Islamic law and philosophy. From an Islamic legal perspective, the Tabot ritual exemplifies the harmonious integration of cultural practices with Islamic law principles, emphasizing respect, unity, and coexistence. The Tabot ritual demonstrates how Islamic jurisprudence accommodates cultural diversity while fostering unity and ethical values within the Muslim community.

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