




Research Article

Living Theology of the *Punggahan* Tradition in the Javanese Ethnic of Paya Lombang Tebing Tinggi

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Abstract. This study entitled "Living Theology in the *Punggahan* Tradition among the Javanese Ethnic Community in Paya Lombang, Tebing Tinggi" aims to analyze the *Punggahan* tradition as both a socio-cultural-religious phenomenon and a manifestation of living theology. This research employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method through observation, interviews, and documentation involving religious leaders, community figures, and members of the Javanese ethnic group. The findings indicate that the *Punggahan* tradition serves not only as a ritual for welcoming Ramadan but also as a space for integrating social, cultural, and religious values in everyday life. From a socio-cultural-religious perspective, this tradition plays an important role in strengthening social

solidarity, togetherness, and harmonious relationships within the community through activities such as communal prayers, grave visits, shared meals, flower bathing rituals, and mutual forgiveness. From the perspective of living theology, the *Punggahan* tradition demonstrates how Islamic theological values such as gratitude, monotheism (tawhid), Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah), self-purification, charity, and prayer are lived and practiced in a concrete and contextual way. These values are not only understood conceptually but are embodied in daily communal practices passed down from generation to generation. Thus, it can be concluded that the *Punggahan* tradition represents a form of harmony between religion and culture, serving not only a social function but also standing as a real manifestation of living theology in the life of the Javanese community.

Keywords: Living Theology, Religion, Culture

INTRODUCTION

Theology is essentially a reflection of humans in maintaining harmonious relationships with God, humans and nature.¹ However, in contemporary developments, theology is no longer understood merely as a conceptual discourse embodied in texts and doctrines, but rather as a living reality within society. This understanding is known as living theology, namely theology embodied in everyday social practices, rituals, and religious traditions. Theology does not stop at a transcendent dimension, but rather is grounded and connected to the social, cultural, and traditional realities that develop within the community. This is what has become known as the concept of living theology, namely theology that is alive, real, and embodied in the behavior and cultural expressions of society.

Javanese communities across Indonesia are known for their unique and value-rich religious traditions, with local culture playing a crucial role in welcoming the month of Ramadan.² For Muslims worldwide, Ramadan is a very special time, as every act of worship and good deed is believed to be multiplied.³ During this month, Muslims fast, improve their devotions, and strengthen their spiritual connection with God. These traditions highlight local cultural values while also showing how religion and culture are closely connected and continuously interact with one another.

Among these customs, the *Punggahan* tradition is carried out as a form of preparation that takes place prior to the arrival of Ramadan. Generally, *Punggahan* is interpreted as a form of gratitude and self-purification before entering Ramadan. This tradition also functions as a way of teaching individuals how to act and relate to others in everyday social life. *Punggahan* is a Javanese tradition held before Ramadan, It requires readiness in both body and spirit as part of a process of cleansing oneself. *Punggahan* acts as a period for introspection and self-evaluation, encouraging self-improvement, repentance, and welcoming the holy month with a pure heart. *Punggahan* is usually carried out before the arrival of the month of Ramadan by

¹ Amsal Bakthiar, *Filsafat Agama Wisata Pemikiran Dan Kepercayaan Manusia*, ed. Raja Grafindo Persada (Jakarta, 2007).

² Royanulloh Komari, "Bulan Ramadan Dan Kebahagiaan Seorang Muslim," *Jurnal Psikologi Islam Dan Budaya* 2 (2019).

³ Devi S. Yuliyani, "Mengenal Tradisi Menyambut Bulan Ramadhan (Studi Tentang Tradisi *Punggahan* Dan Pudukan)," *Sosial Budaya* 19, no. 1 (2022): 39-47.

holding a feast, praying together, and sharing food with neighbors and relatives as a symbol of gratitude and togetherness.

The presence of the *Punggahan* tradition demonstrates the dialectic between religion and culture. Islam, as a transcendent teaching, was accepted by the Javanese community in Tebing Tinggi village through local cultural media, resulting in a distinctive form of diversity. This phenomenon demonstrates the wisdom of Javanese culture in maintaining a harmonious relationship between God, humans, and nature.⁴ The *Punggahan* ritual reflects Islamic principles that highlight the significance of cleansing oneself before beginning the fast. Islam has been able to blend with local cultures that existed long before, giving rise to a process of acculturation that harmonizes Islamic values and community traditions.⁵ Through this tradition, it is apparent that religion can blend with local culture to build a harmonious life full of spiritual meaning.

Ultimately, the *punggahan* tradition is not merely a custom, but also a reflection of the deep beliefs of the Javanese people of Paya Lombang, Tebing Tinggi District. This practice shows that local customs can act as a link for understanding and internalizing religious values, forming a harmonious relationship between belief and cultural tradition. Therefore, researchers are interested in further exploring the Javanese ethnic community's understanding of living theology within the *punggahan* tradition, specifically in Paya Lombang Village, Tebing Tinggi District, Sumatra Utara.

Several previous studies and writings are relevant to the research topic and are related to the study that will be conducted. The following are some sources that are relevant to the discussion being examined. 1) The research conducted by Erika Widiyatmaya from Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Salatiga (2023), entitled "Religious Philosophical Values in the *Punggahan* Tradition on the Eve of the First of Ramadan in Wiru Village, Bringin District, Semarang Regency", discusses the implementation of the *Punggahan* tradition before Ramadan in Wiru Village. The difference with the present study lies in the focus on living theology in the *Punggahan* tradition, while the previous study only examined religious and philosophical values;⁶ 2) The undergraduate thesis by Sri Wahdina Syahfitri Harahap from Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan (2019), entitled "The Marpangir Tradition in Welcoming Ramadan Reviewed from Islamic Creed in Kota Pinang Subdistrict, South Labuhan Batu Regency", explains marpangir as a purification ritual using natural ingredients before Ramadan. In contrast, the present study examines the *Punggahan* tradition among the Javanese community, which includes grave visitation, flower bathing, installing pintan, and prayers, as well as being conducted in a different

⁴ Bakthiar, *Filsafat Agama Wisata Pemikiran Dan Kepercayaan Manusia*.

⁵ Muhammad Taufik, "Harmoni Islam Dan Budaya Lokal," *Ilmu Ushuluddin* 12, no. 2 (2013): 255–71.

⁶ Erika Widiyatmaya, 'Nilai-Nilai Filosofis Relegius Dalam Tradisi *Punggahan* Malam Atu Ramadhan Di Desa Wiru Kecamatan Bringin Kabupaten Semarang', *AT-TAWASSUTH: Jurnal Ekonomi Islam*, VIII.I (2023), pp. 1–19.

research location;⁷ 3) The research by Imam Fauzi from UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya (2022), entitled “The Megengan Tradition in Welcoming the Holy Month of Ramadan (A Living Qur’an Study in Pacar Kembang Langgar, Surabaya)”, discusses megengan as a series of activities such as sending prayers to ancestors, expressing gratitude for Ramadan, reciting khotmil Qur’an, grave visitation, and recitation of juz 30 and tahlil. The study focuses on the Living Qur’an approach, while the present research examines the *Punggahan* tradition from the perspective of living theology;⁸ 4) The research by Fatma Fazira, entitled “The Balaho Tradition in Welcoming the Month of Ramadan”, explains the origin and meaning of the Balaho tradition, which is a form of grave visitation practiced by the community in Nagari Saok Laweh every month of Sha’ban to welcome Ramadan. The difference lies in the tradition itself. Although both studies discuss the welcoming of Ramadan, they involve different rituals, where *Punggahan* is a tradition of the Javanese community, while Balaho is a tradition of the Minangkabau community in West Sumatra.⁹

This research is important because it offers a new perspective in understanding the relationship between religion and culture, particularly in the context of the Javanese community in Paya Lombang Village, Tebing Tinggi District, Sumatra Utara. The *punggahan* tradition is not merely a celebration or social ritual, but rather a form of religious practice that embodies Islamic theological values such as gratitude, almsgiving, kinship, and self-purification. Through the study of living theology, this research seeks to uncover how local traditions can become a space for experiencing Islamic teachings in a real and meaningful way in community life.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to explore the meaning and lived experiences of the *punggahan* tradition within the community. The primary data were obtained directly from the field through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, while secondary data were gathered from relevant literature such as academic books, scholarly journals, and previous theses discussing *punggahan* during Ramadan. All collected information is used to support a comprehensive understanding of the research focus.

The data analysis process began with a thorough examination of all field materials, including interview transcripts and observation notes. These data were then organized, interpreted, and refined through a phenomenological reduction process to identify essential meanings. In this study, the analysis is directed toward uncovering and interpreting the theological values embedded in the *punggahan* tradition as practiced by the Javanese community in Paya Lombang, Tebing Tinggi District, North Sumatra.

⁷ Sri Wahdina Syahfitri Harahap, “Tradisi Marpangir Dalam Menyambut Ramadhan Ditinjau Dari Aqidah Islam Di Kelurahan Kotopang Kabupaten Labuan”, Skripsi, 2019.

⁸ Imam Fauzi, *Tradisi Megengan Menyambut Bulan Suci Ramadhan: Studi Living Quran Di Pacar Kembang Langgar Surabaya*, 2022.

⁹ Fatma Fazira and Yurisman, “Tradisi Balaho Dalam Menyambut Bulan Ramadhan,” *Journal Of Education Cultural And Politics* 3, no. 2 (2023): 332–344.

To obtain a contextual understanding, this study begins by explaining the definition of *Punggahan* as a Javanese tradition in welcoming the month of Ramadan. It then describes how this tradition is not only understood as a cultural practice, but also as a socio-cultural and religious phenomenon that exists within society, reflecting values of togetherness, spirituality, and respect for ancestors. Furthermore, this study examines *Punggahan* as a form of living theology, namely how theological values are present and practiced in everyday life through various rituals performed. The study is then concluded with a final summary that presents the overall findings.

RESULTS DISCUSSION

A. Definition of *Punggahan*

Punggahan is a Javanese tradition performed before the month of Ramadan. *Punggahan* is considered a moment to remember and welcome the arrival of Ramadan.¹⁰ Literally, "*punggahan*" comes from the word "*pungguh*", which means to purify or cleanse. The meaning is that in welcoming the month of Ramadan, faith and piety need to be strengthened.¹¹ This tradition involves a series of rituals and activities aimed at preparing physically and mentally for the holy month. The *punggahan* tradition involves sending prayers to ancestors as a form of respect and welcoming Ramadan, which has passed away, and social activities involving family members and the community.¹² This tradition combines religious and cultural values, commonly practiced by Muslim communities in various regions, especially in North Sumatra and Java, as a symbol of preparation for welcoming the holy month.

Punggahan should not be seen only as a tradition inherited from earlier generations, but also contains profound philosophical values, namely preparing oneself physically and spiritually for the arrival of this blessed month. This tradition symbolizes the effort to unite religious practices with socio-cultural dynamics, while also emphasizing the relevance of religious teachings to everyday social life. Our ancestors have developed a strong self-concept and religious interpretation, which are embedded in the collective memory of the community. *Punggahan* is understood as a form of gratitude for the opportunity to once again enter the month of Ramadan. It is typically marked by gathering with family, offering prayers together, and visiting the graves of ancestors.¹³ The purpose is to prepare the inner self, enhance devotion in fasting, and seek blessings from Allah.

In the Indonesian community, the tradition of *punggahan* is understood as a cultural entrenched deeply rooted in socio-religious life. This tradition not only serves to preserve cultural values but also has a theological dimension related to spiritual preparation for the holy month of Ramadan. For educated people and religious

¹⁰ Saripuddin Daulay, *Biografi Dan Jejak Malim Kampung Di Asahan*, ed. Umsu Press (Medan, 2024).

¹¹ A. Kolonial Prodjosantoso, Dkk, *Etnokimia Dalam Budaya Nusantara*, ed. Kanisius, Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta, 2024).

¹² Yuliyani, "Mengenal Tradisi Menyambut Bulan Ramadhan (Studi Tentang Tradisi Punggahan Dan Pudunan)."

¹³ Yuhana, "Tradisi Bulan Ramadhan Dan Kearifan Budaya Komunitas Jawa Di Desa Tanah Datar Kecamatan Rengat Barat Kabupaten Indragiri Hulu," *Jom FISIP* 3, no. 1 (2016): 1-15.

leaders, *punggahan* is understood as a means to strengthen faith, renew intentions, and prepare spiritually for the month of forgiveness. Meanwhile, among the general public, *punggahan* is often understood simply as a communal activity characterized by a shared meal and an expression of gratitude for the opportunity to meet Ramadan again.

This demonstrates the diverse interpretations of the *punggahan* tradition, depending on the community's level of understanding and social background. *Punggahan* is viewed as a preparatory phase for welcoming Ramadan, expressed through several religious and social practices. Acts such as collective prayer, sharing meals within families, visiting the graves of ancestors, and asking forgiveness from one another reflect a process of inner cleansing and spiritual renewal. Through these activities, communities strive to build spiritual readiness while strengthening social bonds. This tradition reflects the desire to enter Ramadan with a pure heart, so that worship can be carried out more devoutly and meaningfully.

B. The *Punggahan* Tradition and Religious Socio-Cultural Phenomena

The *punggahan* tradition is a Javanese cultural practice steeped in religious and social significance, particularly in welcoming the month of Ramadan. From a socio-cultural and religious perspective, *punggahan* is not simply a communal meal, but a concrete manifestation of the intersection of religious values and local culture.

1. Ritual Practices Preceding the *Punggahan* Tradition

Before the *punggahan* tradition is performed, the Javanese community in Paya Lombang typically holds a number of traditional rituals, one of which is a grave pilgrimage. This activity aims to pray for the spirits of deceased ancestors and serves as a reminder to humans of the reality of death.

According to Mr. Ponidi:

"The *punggahan* tradition is marked by large numbers of people visiting graves. The cemetery area is filled with pilgrims sprinkling flowers and water on the graves, creating a fragrant aroma that can be smelled like flowers. This phenomenon is a sign that the *punggahan* tradition is near".¹⁴

Visiting graves is an activity that aims to pray for the spirits of those who have died and learn lessons from the events of death.¹⁵ This practice functions as a way for the community to commemorate the deceased and offer prayers for their ancestors. It is commonly believed that through visiting graves, people can reinforce their spiritual bond with those who have passed away and seek forgiveness on their behalf. In essence, visiting graves is a form of spiritual reflection, reflecting on death and remembering the afterlife. Through this activity, humans are reminded that life on earth is temporary and that every living creature will eventually face death.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ponidi, (Tokoh Masyarakat Dusun XI) Paya Lombang Dusun XI, Kecamatan Tebing Tinggi Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai, Wawancara, Kamis, 13 Februari 2025

¹⁵ Jamaluddin, "Tradisi Ziarah Kubur Dalam Masyarakat Melayu Kuantan," *Sosial Budaya: Media Komunikasi Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Dan Budaya* 11, no. 2 (2014): 251–69.

¹⁶ Ahmad Rodli, "Fenomena Ziarah : Antara Kesalehan, Identitas Keislaman Dan Dimensi Komersial," *An Nur* 5, no. 2 (2013): 19.

2. The Rituals of Flower Bath

Before *punggahan* begins, people usually carry out a flower bathing practice as a preparatory step. Although not mandatory, this tradition has symbolic meaning as a form of self-purification, both physically and mentally.¹⁷ The tradition of bathing in flowers, or what can also be called bathing in flowers, has become a hereditary custom carried out by the community every year before Ramadan as a form of gratitude for the opportunity to meet again with this holy month. This ritual describes the process of self-purification, which is not only physical but also spiritual. The main meaning of flower bathing is as a symbol of one's readiness to welcome Ramadan with a clean heart, so that fasting can be carried out with full awareness and sincerity.

This tradition involves cleansing the body with water that has been infused with fragrant blossoms such as jasmine, roses, ylang-ylang, and kaffir lime leaves, among others. It is interpreted as a sign of spiritual cleanliness and inner serenity.¹⁸ While it is not derived from Islamic teachings, the practice continues to be upheld as a cultural inheritance from previous generations, carrying symbolic meaning in the preparation for Ramadan.

Modernization has had a significant impact on its implementation, both in the form of simplifying ritual stages, shifting roles of traditional figures, and changing spiritual meanings in modern society. However, modernization has also provided new opportunities for preserving traditions through digital documentation and social media, reintroducing cultural values to the younger generation. Therefore, the main challenge facing Javanese society today is maintaining a balance between preserving noble traditional values and adapting to changing times, so that the siraman ceremony remains a living, meaningful, and relevant cultural heritage in the modern era.¹⁹

3. The Ritual of *Pintan*

Before the *punggahan* takes place, the community performs the installation of *pintan* as a gesture of honoring and praying for ancestors who have passed away.²⁰ *Pintan* is another term used by the Javanese people to refer to offerings. *Pintan* is a traditional ritual in Javanese society that involves giving offerings in the form of food, drinks, or objects to the spirits of deceased ancestors. Offerings are considered an element that must be present in every activity by people who still strongly adhere to Javanese customs.²¹ In most cases, the *pintan* installation is undertaken by senior

¹⁷ Muhammad Sholikhin, *Misteri Bulan Suro Perspektif Islam Jawa*, Narasi (Yogyakarta, 2019).

¹⁸ Suwardi Endraswara, *Agama Jawa: Ajaran, Amalan, Dan Asal-Usul Kejawen*, ed. Narasi (Yogyakarta, 2017).

¹⁹ Cahya Amilia Putri, "MAKNA DAN SIMBOLIK DALAM PROSESI SIRAMAN ADAT JAWA," *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora (JSHU)* 2026, no. April (2026): 122–29.

²⁰ Nurjannah and Siti Haziza, "Makna Pemasangan *Pintan* (Sajen) Dalam Menyambut Dan Mengakhiri Bulan Ramadhan Pada Etnis Jawa Di Dusun VII Desa Laut Dendang," *Jurnal Antropologi atera* 20, no. 1 (2023): 16, <https://doi.org/10.24114/jas.v20i1.43921>.

Sum

²¹ Wiranoto, *Cok Bakal Sesaji Jawa*, ed. Jakad Publis (Surabaya, 2018).

community members or by parents.²² Although this practice is not carried out by all Javanese ethnic groups, there are still some individuals who maintain it as part of their ancestral traditions.

Mr. Sukono opinion on *pintan* is as follows:

"*Pintan* is actually a legacy from our ancestors before the arrival of Islam. Initially, the *pintan* ritual was performed to honor the spirits of our ancestors. However, many have now replaced it with *tahlilan* (religious remembrance) and communal prayers. The *pintan* ritual is still performed, but its practice has been slightly modified to align with Islamic teachings. *Pintan* is simply a symbol of preserved cultural heritage; the food offered to the departed is the prayer itself".²³

The *punggahan* tradition is held at a specific time that is mutually agreed upon by the local community. In 2025, it is scheduled for February 26, based on both cultural and religious considerations. The event takes place at the mosque in Hamlet XI, Paya Lombang Village, Tebing Tinggi District, North Sumatra.

4. The Social Significance of *Punggahan*

Socially, *punggahan* serves as a medium for strengthening relationships between individuals in society. Communities gather, offer forgiveness, and strengthen solidarity. *Punggahan* serves as a means of social reconciliation, resolving conflicts, repairing relationships, and rebuilding a sense of togetherness before entering the holy month.

When the *pintan* installation ceremony ends in the afternoon, the men then join together for the *Maghrib* prayer at the mosque. The *punggahan* event is carried out in the mosque hall after the *Isya* prayer. This practice is held as a *kenduri*, involving communal prayer and the distribution of food prepared beforehand.²⁴ On the eve of *punggahan*, men are responsible for bringing dishes prepared at home to the mosque. The food they bring is typically very varied, ranging from rice and side dishes to a variety of cakes, also known as *jajan pasar* (market snacks).

Once at the mosque, the congregation gathers to perform a collective prayer led by religious leaders. The *punggahan* event is concluded with prayer, asking Allah SWT for protection, good health, and for everything to go smoothly in observing fasting and carrying out other acts of worship during Ramadan.

Once the collective prayer procession is finished, the community engages in exchanging food as a customary practice. This reflects harmony and social cohesion among members. Afterwards, everyone gathers to eat together in the mosque, expressing gratitude and unity.

Mr. Gunarto, head of the neighborhood association (RT) in Hamlet XI, stated:

"In the *punggahan* tradition, the local community holds a communal meal involving family, relatives, and neighbors. Each family typically brings food from their

²² Bella Pertiwi and Ilham Mirzaya Putra, "Fenomena Sosial Keagamaan (Memasang Pintan Pada Tradisi Jawa) Dalam Menyambut Dan Mengakhiri Bulan Ramadhan," *Masyarakat Madani* 7, no. 2 (2022): 65-76.

²³ Sukono, (Tokoh Masyarakat Dusun XI), Paya Lombang Dusun XI, Kecamatan Tebing Tinggi Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai, Kamis, 13 Februari 2025

²⁴ Devi Sri Yuliyani, "Mengenal Tradisi Menyambut Bulan Ramadhan (Studi Tentang Tradisi Punggahan Dan Pudunan)," *Sosial B* 19, no. 1 (2022): 40-47.

homes, which is then gathered and enjoyed together. This concept reflects the values of mutual cooperation and togetherness, which are strongly emphasized in Javanese and Islamic culture. Not only the wealthy, but the entire community, including those less fortunate, can experience joy through the food shared at this event".²⁵

Moreover, the food distributed during the gathering is enjoyed together and also taken home to be shared with family members. This custom strengthens community bonds and reflects the principles of cooperation and unity in social life. As a result, the *punggahan* tradition is not merely a religious ritual, but also a space for nurturing brotherhood and maintaining cultural heritage.

Culturally, *punggahan* is an ancestral heritage that continues to be preserved. Although not explicitly taught in religious texts, this tradition developed as a form of adaptation by Javanese society to express Islamic values. Here, an acculturation between local culture and religious teachings is evident, resulting in distinctive and contextual religious practices.

Meanwhile, from a religious perspective (living theology), *punggahan* reflects how Islamic teachings are understood and practiced in everyday life. This means that theology doesn't stop at concepts but "lives" in social practices.

As a socio-cultural religious phenomenon, *punggahan* demonstrates that religion and culture are not always in conflict, but can instead reinforce each other. This tradition demonstrates that communities are capable of integrating religious teachings into social life in meaningful, relevant ways, while maintaining their cultural identity.

C. Living Theology in the *Punggahan* Tradition

The tradition of *punggahan* practiced by the Javanese ethnic in Paya Lembang Village, is not merely a cultural activity passed down through generations, but also maintains a concrete means of expressing Islamic teachings in everyday life. In this regard, theology does not stop at the conceptual or doctrinal level, but exists as a living theology that is lived, internalized, and practiced in the social and cultural life of the community.

This form of living theology is evident in the dimensions of community life, both through rituals, social behavior, and the spiritual values that accompany the implementation of the *punggahan* tradition. This interaction affirms the presence of Allah SWT in everyday life and highlights the crucial importance of following His guidance. The Quran invites humanity to reflect on and understand the teachings conveyed by the prophets.²⁶ *Punggahan* becomes a space where religious values are internalized and realized, not just through formal teaching. The *punggahan* tradition contains meanings that align with the values of Islamic teachings, especially in aspects of faith, sharia, and morals. In its implementation, *punggahan* reflects the

²⁵ Gunarto, (Tokoh Masyarakat, Ketua RT Dusun XI Paya Lembang), Wawancara, Jum'at, 14 Februari, 2025

²⁶ Mahardhika Sastra Nasution, "Dimensi Vertikal Komunikasi Ilahi: Studi Pola Interaksi Manusia Dengan Allah SWT Dalam Al-Qur'an," *Pratyaksa: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan, Sosial Dan Humaniora* 1, no. 1 (2025): 42-53.

relationship between humans with God (*hablum minallah*), with fellow humans (*hablum minannas*), and with the surrounding environment.²⁷

Mr. Untung statement:

"In our daily lives, people often make mistakes and engage in conflict with others, both consciously and unintentionally. Therefore, through this tradition, people consciously forgive and ask for forgiveness before entering the holy month, thus bringing peace of mind to their worship".²⁸

Through joint prayer activities as a manifestation of monotheism, holding joint prayers before a meal or feast is a form of community awareness of their dependence on Allah SWT.²⁹ Prayer symbolizes the recognition that everything originates from and returns to God. This activity reflects the theological aspect of *tauhid rububiyah*, the belief that only God provides sustenance and blessings. The community believes that without God's permission and will, they will not be able to meet again in the month of Ramadan. This demonstrates that theological values are not merely understood verbally but are embodied in collective actions imbued with spiritual meaning.

Kenduri and Eating Together as a Form of Gratitude and Brotherhood, the activity of eating together after prayer illustrates the value of Islamic theology in the form of gratitude and brotherhood.³⁰ The food brought by each family, then collected and eaten together is a symbol of sharing God's blessings. The community believes that sharing food will increase blessings and strengthen social relations between them. This is in line with Islamic teachings about the importance of maintaining brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*) and sharing sustenance as a form of social worship (*ibadah ghair mahdhah*). With the bond of brotherhood, a large building will be formed that feels mutual belonging and needs each other, so that unity, justice, harmony, and prosperity will emerge.³¹ Through this activity, it is clear that theology is not only memorized, but is brought to life through real actions in community life.

Furthermore, one of the traditional practices of *punggahan* (pilgrimage) that is still maintained is the pilgrimage to ancestral graves. For the Javanese people of Paya Lembang, this activity is not a form of worship, but rather an expression of prayer and respect for those who have gone before. The pilgrimage involves reciting prayers and *tahlil* (religious recitation) together, demonstrating the theological awareness that humans are mortal and will return to God. The theological value embodied in

²⁷ Firdaus, "Syukur Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Ta'wiluna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an, Tafsir Dan Pemikiran Islam* 4, no. 2 (2023): 293–308, <https://doi.org/10.58401/takwiluna.v4i2.1090>.

²⁸ Untung, (Tokoh Agama), Paya Lembang Dusun XI, Kecamatan Tebing Tinggi Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai, Wawancara, Jum'at, 14 Februari 2025

²⁹ Mucholit Watku Rohman, Andri Nirwana AN, and Yeti Dahliana, "Konsep Meningkatkan Taqwa Dalam Implementasi Kehidupan Perpektif Hamka Dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Tafaqquh: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kajian Keislaman* 12, no. 1 (2014): 1–14.

³⁰ Eva Iryani and Friscilla Wulan Tersta, "Ukhuwah Islamiyah Dan Perananan Masyarakat Islam Dalam Mewujudkan Perdamaian: Studi Literatur," *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi* 19, no. 2 (2019): 401, <https://doi.org/10.33087/jiubj.v19i2.688>.

³¹ Herwani, "Ukhuwah Islamiyah Dalam Pandangan Al-Qur'an," *Cross-Border* 3, no. 2 (2020): 294–301.

this practice is eschatological awareness, namely the belief in life after death and the importance of doing good deeds during life on earth.³²

Approaching Ramadan, people usually carry out flower bathing activities. This action is interpreted as a step to purify the heart before entering the holy month which symbolizes physical and spiritual cleansing as a form of spiritual preparation before fasting.³³ Self-purification is a process of restoring the human soul to its original pure nature, a state that is free from sin, uncontrolled desires, and negative influences that cloud the heart. This journey begins with self-awareness and a willingness to correct one's mistakes, accompanied by sincere repentance and continuous efforts to practice self-discipline and cultivate good habits.³⁴ By removing negative traits such as envy, arrogance, and showing off, and replacing them with sincerity, patience, and gratitude, a person gradually regains inner clarity. In the end, self-purification becomes a path toward returning to a pure state of being, allowing one to live with greater peace, purpose, and closeness to Allah.

Self-purification is not only concerned with the vertical relationship between humans and God, but also includes a horizontal dimension that emphasizes harmonious and respectful interactions among people. Moreover, self-purification is not limited to the improvement of the heart and mind alone, but must also be reflected in real changes in behavior toward a better and more positive way of living. Through this tradition, the Islamic theological values of self-purification and social peace are lived out in the community, making *punggahan* not only a social activity but also a practical manifestation of Islamic teachings.

The *punggahan* tradition also serves as a medium for faith education for the younger generation. Children are invited to participate in activities, listen to prayers, and understand the meaning of togetherness. Thus, theological values are not only understood cognitively but also passed down culturally from one generation to the next.

Religion can serve as a powerful source of identity and provide meaning for individuals and communities. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine the influence of religion on social life from a sociological perspective.³⁵

From the various forms above, it can be concluded that the living theology of the Javanese ethnic community in Paya Lombang village is reflected through the integration of Islamic teachings with local cultural values. The community interprets religious teachings not merely as ritual obligations, but as life values that shape social, spiritual, and cultural behavior. This is a transgenerational form of living theology, a theology that does not stop at texts but continues to live through the traditions and

³² Rodli, "Fenomena Ziarah : Antara Kesalehan, Identitas Keislaman Dan Dimensi Komersial."

³³ Lita Fauzi Hanafani and Radea Yuli A. Hambali, "Hakikat Penyucian Jiwa (Takiyat An-Nafs) Dalam Perspektif Al-Ghazali," *Gunung Djati Conference Series* 19 (2013): 533.

³⁴ Siti Mutholingah, "Metode Penyucian Jiwa (Tazkiyah Al-Nafs) Dan Implikasinya Bagi Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Journal TALIMUNA* 10, no. 1 (2021): 69-83, <https://doi.org/10.32478/talimuna.v10i1.662>.

³⁵ Theresiani Bheka and Teresia Noiman Derung, "Pengaruh Agama Terhadap Hidup Sosial Masyarakat Dalam Perspektif Sosiologi," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Dan Teologi Indonesia* 1, no. 2 (2024): 197-222, <https://doi.org/10.24246/sami.voli2pp197-222>.

customs of the community. Thus, the tradition of *punggahan* becomes a space where Islamic theology lives and operates, not only understood but also felt and practiced in their daily lives.

CONCLUSION

Based on the two main discussions, namely the *Punggahan* tradition as a socio-cultural-religious phenomenon and the phenomenon of living theology within the tradition, it can be concluded that *Punggahan* is a cultural practice of the Javanese community that functions not only as a ritual for welcoming Ramadan, but also as a space for integrating social, cultural, and religious values in everyday life.

1. From a socio-cultural-religious perspective, the *Punggahan* tradition plays an important role in strengthening social solidarity, togetherness, and relationships among community members. Activities such as communal prayers, grave visits, shared meals, flower bathing rituals, and mutual forgiveness show that this tradition serves as a medium for forming interconnected social and spiritual values, thereby maintaining harmony within the community.
2. From the perspective of living theology, the *Punggahan* tradition demonstrates how Islamic theological values are lived and practiced within a local cultural context. Values such as gratitude, monotheism (*tawhid*), Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*), self-purification, charity, and communal prayer are manifested in real actions through traditions passed down from generation to generation. This shows that theology is not abstract, but is concretely present in the social and spiritual life of the community.

Thus, it can be concluded that the *Punggahan* tradition represents a form of harmony between religion and culture that not only serves a social function but also stands as a real representation of living theology in the life of the Javanese community.

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