

# Building Local Cultural Literacy in Kudus District Through the Bulusan Cultural Tradition of Hadipolo Village

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**Abstract:** This study aims to determine the values contained in Bulusan folklore and the potential of the Bulusan tradition as a medium for local cultural literacy. This research focuses on the history of Bulusan, the form of Bulusan tradition and the special potential of Bulusan tradition in building local cultural literacy. The research location chosen in this research is Dukuh Sumber, Hadipolo Village, Jekulo District, Kudus Regency. Data sources consist of interviews, photo documentation, and literature studies. The research method used is a qualitative method with a narrative approach. The data analysis technique consists of: data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing/verification. The results showed that the historical story of Bulusan contained moral and religious values that could be used as examples for the surrounding community. The implementation of the Bulusan tradition every 8th day in the month of Shawwal is also enlivened by various local art performances and diverse traders. This proves that the Bulusan tradition has special potential in various aspects, such as: economic aspects, socio-cultural aspects, and religious aspects.

**Keywords:** Local culture, literacy, Bulusan

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is a multicultural country because it has various ethnicities, races, religions and tribes. This diversity makes Indonesia have an abundant cultural heritage. Cultural heritage grows and develops according to the culture of the community, so that each tribe in Indonesia has its own cultural characteristics. One of them is in the Kudus Regency area. Tradition and culture in Kudus Regency are closely related to the walisongo. This is because in Kudus Regency there are two guardians, namely Sheikh Jafar Sodik (Sunan Kudus) and Raden Umar Said (Sunan Muria) who focus on spreading the teachings of Islam in Kudus Regency through preaching (Sari et al., 2023).

The da'wah that was carried out succeeded in changing people who initially embraced Hinduism or Buddhism, then converted to Islam. Indirectly, many traditions and cultures have given rise to an event/story in the community that is still related to the preaching of Sunan Kudus and Sunan Muria (Salma et al., 2022).

Folklore is a form of culture that grows in the community. Folklore circulates in society orally from generation to generation. Usually, folklore is not known for certain who the author is (anonymous) and is not bound by time and space. Folklore has the power to maintain cultural values and contains educational values for the community (Rohmadi, 2016).

Each region has a variety of folklore, both oral and non-oral. One of the legendary folktales of Kudus City is the Bulusan folktale, which has been passed down from generation to generation and is still believed to be true today. Bulusan folklore is a tradition of the local community that is commemorated every eighth day of the month of Shawwal, exactly seven days after Eid al-Fitr. The celebration consists of various series of activities and is enlivened by all residents of Sumber and its surroundings (Alifah et al., 2023).

The celebration of the Bulusan tradition is also enlivened by the presence of various game rides, local art exhibitions such as *ketoprak*, *barongan*, *wayang kulit*, and other art performances. Despite being an annual tradition, the Bulusan story has begun to be eroded by the times, it is evident that the children of Dukuh Sumber are more interested in games on smartphones and animated shows containing stories of neighboring countries. Therefore, it is necessary to reintroduce local culture to children and the wider community. Introducing local culture and wisdom needs to be done early because it is feared that children will no longer recognize Indonesian local culture. One way that can be done is through cultural literacy activities based on local traditions and wisdom. Theoretically, local wisdom is a manifestation of cultural

teachings that are still maintained by local communities. Until now, local wisdom has been preserved through innovations in accordance with the times (Wahyudi et al., 2021).

The cultural literacy movement has not been developed much in some regions. Cultural literacy is the ability to understand and behave towards Indonesian culture as a national identity, mix and match goods, places, which contain cultural elements. This activity aims to culturally enrich readers' knowledge about the various types of wealth that exist in Indonesia (Sari et al., 2021).

The cultural literacy movement in Kudus Regency can be carried out through the Bulusan tradition. The celebration of the Bulusan tradition has the potential to become a forum for introducing the culture and local wisdom of Kudus Regency to the wider community because when this tradition is held, it is attended by many people from various circles. In addition, this tradition often carries the theme of loving local culture so that it can spread information about local arts, culture and traditions (Faizah et al., 2022).

Based on the background description above, the author seeks to elaborate on "Building Local Cultural Literacy of Kudus Regency through the Bulusan Cultural Tradition of Hadipolo Village" so that it is expected to be one of the movements to maintain, preserve and introduce the local wisdom of Kudus.

## 2. Literature Review

Maintaining local knowledge is essential to preserving both the environment and human well-being. Local wisdom can be classified as concrete or immaterial based on its form. Local knowledge can be classified into several types: belief, technology, educational procedures, human resources, agriculture, food production technology, local wisdom in health, and arts and talents (Nelisa, 2020). The preservation of local knowledge, which attempts to uphold the customs and traditions of the local community, is strongly linked to the study of local wisdom.

Folk tales are ingrained in a region's culture and based on experiences and feelings that the locals have firsthand. Folklore typically describes an incident that occurred there or the location's beginnings. Often, folklore characters take the shape of humans, animals, or gods. Folklore serves as a role model in addition to being entertaining, particularly when it carries morally instructive themes (Gumono et al., 2022). Folklore can be utilized as a communication tool to impart life lessons to the community because it is full of moral lessons and local knowledge.

In the end, social ties formed from the idea of folklore in everyday life serve as a powerful means of communication. This effectiveness can be observed from the knowledge of the people of Kudus Regency, who still know the stories of their ancestors. This pertains to Bulusan folklore, which is still known from generation to generation. Previous generations know of remnants of life carried from Sumber Hamlet in Hadipolo Village, Mejubo District, Kudus Regency. This folklore was introduced with the help of an annual celebration centred around the customs and religion that the people of Sumber Hamlet adhere to (Ocbian et al., 2015). There are still customs honouring the mythical turtle (turtle), although it is rarely encountered in the region. In actuality, the local hamlet's residents still adhere to the prohibitions and directives their forefathers prescribed since the tales originated in the area are still taken seriously (Kanzunudin, 2016).

We can examine in detail the themes found in Bulusan folklore that originated in Kudus Regency, particularly the significance of cultural literacy as a value that is unique to Kudus. At this point, we can bring this up to help the general public learn more about, develop, and maintain Bulusan folklore. The Bulusan tradition, in the meantime, has three important purposes: it preserves the culture that already exists; it increases devotion to Allah (with this origin, it is hoped that we can get closer to Allah SWT); and it has sociological value because the people of Sumber Hamlet will cooperate to make this tradition successful and can fortify friendships (Sari et al., 2023).

Establishing cultural literacy aims to facilitate the community's understanding of Bulusan folk stories they will read or hear, especially for elementary school students (Segal, 2015). The capacity to comprehend and act in a way that reflects Indonesian culture as a national identity and mix and match items and locations that incorporate cultural components is known as cultural literacy.

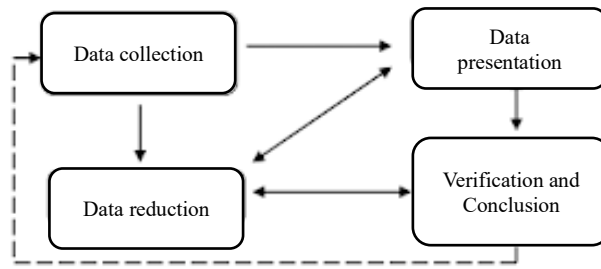
## 3. Methodology

The research method used in this research is the narrative qualitative method. This method was chosen because it adjusts the data collection techniques and data analysis techniques carried out. The narrative approach is a research method aimed at texts used in the context of qualitative research (Chase et al., 2005). Narrative qualitative research method as a method means the study of stories that explain an event based on time sequence (Ginsburg et al., 2017). The data used in qualitative research are in the form of words, images and not numbers (Kelly & Bailey, 2021).

The research location chosen in this study is Hadipolo Village, Jekulo District, Kudus Regency. The focus of this research is on the history of Bulusan, the form of Bulusan tradition and the special potential of Bulusan tradition in building local cultural literacy. The data sources in this research consist of: primary data sources and secondary data sources.

Primary data sources in this study are the results of interviews and documentation in the form of photographs. Interviews were conducted with the caretaker of the Bulusan mound (Mrs. Sudasih) and the local community. Meanwhile, secondary data sources are books and scientific journals.

The data collection technique in this research is through interviews, observations, and literature studies. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using the Miles & Huberman (1994) and Akinyode & Khan (2018) data analysis technique model which consists of: data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing/verification.



**Figure 1.** Miles & Huberman data analysis technique chart

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Overview of Hadipolo Village, Jekulo Subdistrict, Kudus Regency The name Hadipolo Village has been used since 1921, Hadipolo Village used to be called Bareng Village which comes from the Javanese word "Bebarengan". With the agreement of the community elders and village officials, the name of Bareng Village was replaced with "Hadipolo" which means: "Hadi/Adi" which means "linuwih". This is because many of the inhabitants have more talent. "Polo" means "fruit (woh) or abundant crops". This is because the people in Hadipolo Village have high cultivation/culture.

The Hadipolo Village Government in the form of a Village Hall was built in Bareng Gunung hamlet and stands on Argopura, which was once the home of Sunan Muria. The people of Hadipolo believe that Argopuro means the gate (Gapuro) to the Sunanate of Muria on Mount Muria. A picture of Hadipolo village hall can be seen in Fig. 2.



**Figure 2.** Hadipolo village hall (source: personal documentation)

Hadipolo Village is quite large with a village size of approximately 516,764 hectares with a land elevation of 12 m above sea level. The location of Hadipolo Village is quite strategic because it is close to the Pantura highway and only 9 km from the center of the Kudus Regency square. According to the government structure, Hadipolo Village belongs to Jekulo Subdistrict, Kudus Regency. Hadipolo village has seven hamlets, namely: Bareng Gunung hamlet, Bareng Cempling hamlet, Dau hamlet, Bareng Bodro hamlet, Ngampon hamlet, Ngawang ngawang hamlet, and Sumber hamlet. The boundaries of Hadipolo Village are as follows:

- a) North bordering Honggosoco Village
- b) East is bordered by Tangjungrejo Village, and Jekulo Village
- c) South bordering Hadiworno Village
- d) West bordered by Tenggeles Village and part of Ngembalrejo Village

The total population in Hadipolo Village is approximately 11,034 people. In terms of education, Hadipolo Village has sufficient educational facilities. This can be seen from the number of elementary schools in Hadipolo Village, which reaches 7 elementary schools and 1 madrasah (Islamic school). Many people in Hadipolo Village have also received education up to bachelor degree (S1) and master degree (S2). In terms of traditions, like other communities in general,

Hadipolo Village also has various traditions that still exist today. Local traditions that still exist are: the muludan tradition (commemorating the maulid of the Prophet Muhammad SAW), the Hajj slametan tradition (Hajj thanksgiving), and the Bulusan tradition in Dukuh Sumber. The tradition that is the focus of this research is the Bulusan tradition

#### 4.1 History of Bulusan Tradition

Based on an interview with a key person in Bulusan, he said that the history of Bulusan is closely related to Sunan Muria.

*"A long time ago, Mbah Dudo had students, Kumara and Kumari. In spreading Islam, Mbah Dudo built a mushola. In that place, he and his students lived and farmed. Kumara and Kumari were Mbah Dudo's students who were very diligent and worked diligently in their fields. One day in the fasting month, and coinciding with the commemoration of Nuzulul Qur'an, Sunan Muria came to Mbah Dudo's residence to stay in touch and read the Qur'an together. However, on the way to Mbah Dudo's house, Sunan Muria heard the sound "Krbyuk - Krbyuk". Hearing this sound, Sunan Muria stopped for a moment and said "You see, this is the night of Nuzulul Qur'an, why don't you read the Qur'an instead you are still in the rice fields soaking in water like a bulus". It turned out that the "Krbyuk - Krbyuk" sound came from Kumara and Kumari who were still ndaut (taking grass) that grew between the rice plants in their rice fields. As a result of Sunan Muria's words, Kumara and Kumari turned into Bulus.*

*Seeing his two students become bulus, Mbah Dudo went to Sunan Muria to apologize for the mistake of his two students and begged to be returned to humanity. However, the rice had already become porridge, Kumara and Kumari had already become bulus and it was impossible to turn back into humans.*

*The incident took place in Dukuh Sumber. It was named Dukuh Sumber because a spring or source came out of the stick that Sunan Muria stuck in the ground he stepped on. There is also a tree named "Tombo ati Tree" (heart medicine), the tree is believed to be the stick Sunan Muria stuck".*

The folklore of the origin of the Bulusan tradition is told orally and believed by the surrounding community. Regardless of whether the story is true or not, there are locality values that can be taken from the story. Locality is a value or rule that comes from the (local) culture or beliefs of the local community that is used as a guide to life. Locality is a form of ancestral heritage that we must protect (Sari et al, 2023). In addition, the values contained are expected to be used as an example (Susilo & Irwansyah, 2019). The locality values of the Bulusan folklore are.

#### 4.2 Moral Values

Moral values are values related to good and bad actions that form the basis of human life in society. If moral values are ignored, it will cause harm (Nieuważny et al., 2021). Indicators of moral values consist of: honesty, courtesy, diligence, caring, obeying rules and responsibility (Serramia et al., 2018). The moral values contained in the Bulusan story are reflected in the story sentence:

*"Seeing that his two students became bulus, Mbah Dudo went to Sunan Muria to apologize for the mistakes of his two students and asked to be returned to humanity."*

The story sentence shows the moral value of Mbah Dudo's concern for his two students. Another moral value of Bulusan folklore is reflected in the story sentence:

*"It turned out that the sound of "Krbyuk - Krbyuk" came from Kumara and Kumari who were still ndaut (taking grass) that grew between the rice plants in their rice fields."*

The story sentence above shows the moral value of diligence and obedience. Kumara and Kumari are Mbah Dudo's students who are diligent in working on their rice fields. It is said that they worked on their rice fields at night because of Mbah Dudo's advice because during the day they fasted. This shows the moral value of obedience from students to their teachers.

#### 4.3 Religious Values

Religious values are values related to the concept of religious life. Religious values contain rules or obligations that must be carried out by people who believe in them (Saleh, 2022). Indicators of religious values consist of the dimension of belief, the dimension of religious practice, the dimension of appreciation and the dimension of consequences and practice (Arofah et al., 2021). The religious value contained in the Bulusan story is reflected in the story sentence:

*"One day in the fasting month, and coinciding with the commemoration of Nuzulul Qur'an, Sunan Muria came to Mbah Dudo's residence to stay in touch and read the Qur'an together. However, on the way to Mbah Dudo's house, Sunan Muria heard the sound "Krbyuk - Krbyuk". Hearing this sound, Sunan Muria stopped for a moment and*

said "You see, this is the night of Nuzulul Qur'an, why don't you read the Qur'an instead you are still in the rice fields soaking in water like a bulus".

Based on the sentence of the story, it shows the religious value of the dimension of adherence to beliefs, the dimension of religious practice, and practice. This is shown when Sunan Muria and other Muslims believe that the night of Nuzulul Qur'an should be used to recite the Koran and not used for work.

#### 4.4 Form of Bulusan Tradition

The Bulusan tradition is performed every 7th day of the month of Shawwal. The caretaker of Bulusan explained that after the incident of Kumara and Kumari turning into bulus, Sunan Muria advised Mbah Dudo that "Tomorrow your children and grandchildren will honor you every week of Shawwal, precisely at the time of bodo Kupat (Kupatan)".

Therefore, until now every time bodo kupat (kupatan) arrives, many people make a pilgrimage to the grave of Mbah Dudo and around Dukuh Sumber the Bulusan Tradition is held.

The tradition begins with the holding of a carnival by carrying mountains of food in the form of crops and kupat lepet. The gunungan of food is then paraded by the surrounding community down the village road to the tomb complex (Punden) of Mbah Dudo. The tradition then continues in the form of a ritual of feeding *ketupat* and *lepet* to the *bulus* carried out by the caretaker of Mbah Dudo's tomb. The Bulusan tradition is also enlivened by art performances such as: a puppet shows all night long.

When the Bulusan tradition is held, the Dukuh Sumber road area is also enlivened with a variety of game rides and diverse sellers ranging from traditional food sellers, clothing sellers, toy sellers. The organization of the tradition also brings special potential in various aspects such as:

a) Social-cultural Aspects

Socio-cultural aspects are aspects of the social and cultural life of a society. Socio-cultural aspects are related to the way of life, values, norms and customs, traditions, and social interactions that occur in a community group (Kistanto, 2008). The implementation of the Bulusan tradition cannot be separated from the mutual assistance and cooperation activities of the residents of the source hamlet. This shows that the residents of Sumber hamlet still uphold a culture of mutual cooperation and cooperation. When the Bulusan tradition was held, it was also enlivened by various local art performances of Kudus Regency such as: puppet shows in the south of pasarehan for 24 hours and barongan. This puppet show means to be used as a guide and spectacle. These puppet and art performances can be used as a medium to introduce local culture to the wider community, especially from children who visit the Bulusan tradition performance. An overview of the Bulusan tradition performance can be seen in Fig. 3.



**Figure 3.** The performance of the procession in the Bulusan tradition (Source: personal documentation)

b) Economics Aspects

Economic aspects are aspects related to the fulfillment of life needs or related to money (Daud et al., 2018). The Bulusan tradition which is held annually also brings special potential in the economic field. This is because the celebration of the Bulusan tradition is also enlivened by various sellers such as: food sellers, book sellers, toy sellers (toys from pottery, cars, dolls, and so on), accessories sellers, beverage sellers, clothing sellers, and household furniture sellers. In addition, there are also various game rides and art exhibitions. The excitement can be seen in Fig. 4.



**Figure 4.** Festivities at the Bulusan tradition (Source: personal documentation)

Residents who own houses around the location also take the opportunity at this moment by providing parking services. Based on this, it can be concluded that the celebration of the Bulusan tradition contributes to building the economy of the surrounding community.

c) Religious Aspects

Religious aspects are part of human life. Religious aspects are understood as the implementation of religious teachings. This aspect is the relationship between humans and their thoughts with God (Gunada et al., 2023). The Bulusan tradition also contains religious values. This is reflected in the activities before the carnival of gunungan food in the morning, usually in the evening a tahlilan is held which is attended by the village, kupatan committee, caretaker of Mbah Dudo's grave, and local residents. This tahlilan activity is a form of religious practice, namely Islam, with the aim of asking for the blessing of Allah SWT so that the event to be held in the morning runs smoothly.

#### 4.5 Bulusan Tradition as Cultural Literacy Media

Bulusan folklore and Bulusan traditions are usually told orally by parents to their children. However, lately there are many children who are more interested in the stories and culture of foreign countries shown through movies and cartoons than local Indonesian stories and culture. Based on the results of an interview with (MR), a child in Hadipolo Village admitted that he did not know the origin story of the Bulusan tradition, but he was fluent in the stories of children from neighboring countries which were usually aired through cartoons. This certainly raises concerns about the loss of Indonesian local culture. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the Bulusan tradition as a medium of cultural literacy for the community. Literacy needs in the context of one community with another are clearly different so that they need to be adjusted to the characteristics of the community (Rohana, 2022). The concept of Bulusan tradition as a literacy medium actually refers to the concept of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is an idea that learning does not take place in formal educational institutions, but anywhere and anytime. This learning concept needs to be organized with a flexible system, meaning that the learning process is adjusted to the social, economic and educational conditions of the community (Melani, 2016). Cultural literacy in the Bulusan tradition can be done in various ways, for example: 1) during the puppet show, the story displayed can be taken from the folklore of the origin of Bulusan, 2) during the art performance, it can involve local residents and children by performing the story of the origin of Bulusan, and 3) the implementation of the Bulusan tradition is expected to involve village youth, and when the tradition takes place it can be documented and uploaded on various social media platforms as a form of cultural literacy digitization movement. With these steps, it is hoped that the Bulusan tradition can still be preserved and recognized by the wider community as a form of heritage and wealth of the Indonesian nation.

#### 5. Conclusion

Bulusan is a tradition that is held every eighth day of the month of Shawwal, exactly seven days after the celebration of Eid al-Fitr. This tradition is held in Dukuh Sumber, Hadipolo Village, Kudus Regency. Behind the Bulusan tradition, there is a folklore of the origin of Bulusan. The story of the origin of Bulusan is closely related to Sunan Muria. Based on the results of the research that has been done, it is concluded that the Bulusan story contains values such as moral values and religious values that can be used as role models for the community. In addition, the implementation of Bulusan also has special potential in various aspects, such as: economic aspects, socio-cultural aspects, and religious aspects. The implementation of Bulusan can also be used as a medium to introduce the local culture of Kudus district because during the traditional performance, various arts performances are also enlivened

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