

# Sacred Space in Community settlement of Kudus Kulon, Central Java, Indonesia

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**Abstract.** The sacred space becomes an important part of the spatial layout of Javanese society, as well as in most houses of the archipelago. This space is related to religious activities, highly respected and usually located in the main place. Kudus Kulon community is a part of Javanese culture in the northern coastal area of Java. Known as a devout Muslim society, sacred space in Kudus Kulon community house becomes an important thing to understand the culture of living in society. The research was conducted by looking at the religious activities of the community and how the space of activity is realized. The research was conducted by qualitative research method. In the Kudus Kulon community, sacred spaces are available in the house itself, in the community group of houses, and around Kudus Kulon area. In every house, the sacred space can be found in Gedongan and extends to Dalem. In the community group of houses, the sacred space can be found in the neighbourhood praying area, while in Kudus Kulon area, it can be found in Mosque complex and Tower tomb. Physically sacred space is realized by raising the floor height of the space around it. In architectural view, the sacred space is seen on the elevation of the roof or roof angle. Spatially the sacred space occupies a central position and visually represented by a vertical orientation.

**Keywords :** Sacred Space, Settlement, Kudus Kulon Community

## 1. Introduction

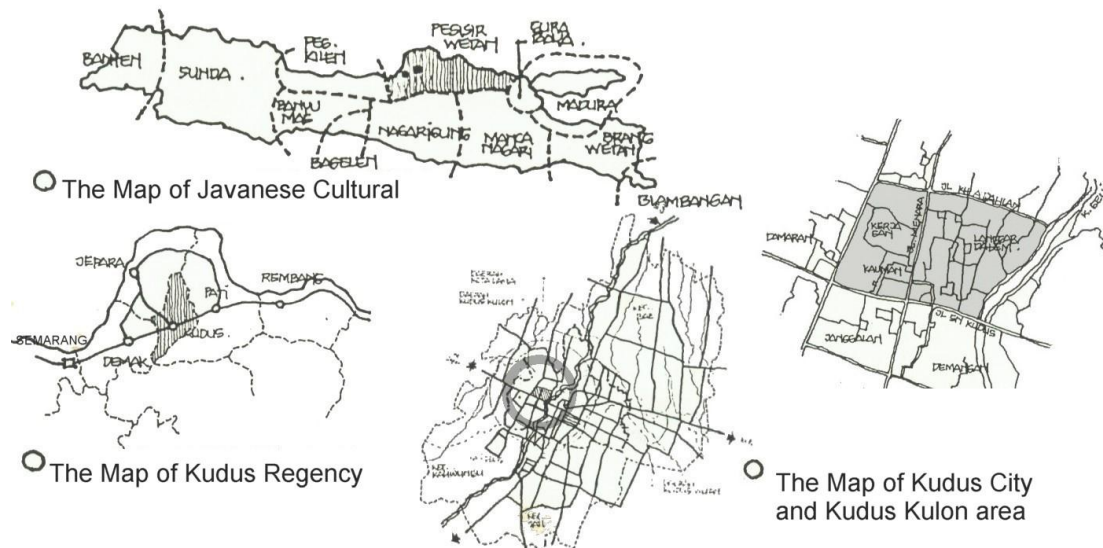
The archipelago's culture stretches, covering thousands of islands scattered between two continents and two oceans. This natural condition is one of the reasons for the diversity of local culture in Nusantara. Each culture develops and shapes its distinctive character. Intercultural local interact each other. The diversity of local culture enrich the Indonesian character that needs to be explored, known and maintained. The values of local culture as a form of adaptation of community life for a long time can be a role model and updated again to face the challenges of life in the present and future (Oliver, 2006).

Generally the form of culture can be divided into three kinds started from the most abstract of the cultural system that includes the values and views of society. The abstract values are then manifested in the social system that includes patterns of society daily life activities. From the activities of the community that took place, the space of activity as a container of the veiled event is a concrete manifestation of culture, in the form of building architecture (Koentjaraningrat, 1984; Rapoport, 1983). Pangarsa (2007) stated that although the object of worship may vary, one of the same characters in the archipelago's local cultures is the religious life itself. In Javanese culture, one of the important values of life is the balance of human life (Bawono Alit) with a larger world order (Bawono Ageng) (Tjahjono, 1989, Santosa, 1997). Thus one way of discovering the cultural character of society is to look at its religious life. The space for organizing religious activities is a sacred space for the inhabitants.



## 2. Kudus Community

Kudus City is the capital of Kudus District. It is located about 60 kilometers Northwest from Semarang. Kudus District the smallest area in Central Java, but has the highest Regional Original Income, mainly supported by industry and trade. Kudus culture is part of Javanese sub-culture called Coastal culture. Namely Javanese culture that developed in cities along the north coast of Central Java and East Java (Thohir, 2006). Two important things in Coastal culture character are trading and Islam.



**Figure 1.** Map of Kudus Kulon

The history of the Kudus community cannot be separated from religious figures named Ja'far Shodiq or better known by the name of Sunan Kudus. Sunan Kudus is members of Wali Songo, nine Islam propagators in Java. Sunan Kudus withdrew from the kingdom of Demak because of political feud, then established a city that would be called the Kudus City. The early establishment of the city is marked by the building of Al Manaar mosque, located in the west of Gelis River. This environment quickly developed as the center of Islamic trade and development. In the colonial period, the government moved the city center to the east of Gelis (Castles, 1982). Currently the central development of the old city of Kudus is known as Kudus kulon or Tower area.

The Kudus Community, especially Kudus Kulon, is a society that has strong character. They are known as the Society of Merchant Traders. Their daily life is dominated by two activities that support each other, namely religious activities and trade activities. They are known as ethical and relatively puritan Islamic adherents, while in the economic aspect they are known as resilient, graceful and independent traders. They assume that prosperity must be gained by hard work in the in the field of trade and by worshiping as well (Sardjono, 1997). Strong faith and community self-reliance are believed to be imitated by Sunan Kudus during his lifetime.

The community success in trading raised many wealthy merchants in Kudus kulon area. Its economic strength is reflected individually by the look of the houses, while in community scale it can be seen by the large number of community mosques built (Bonnet, 1969).

The order of houses in Kudus kulon is quite crowded. There are still many traditional houses, beside colonial house and modern house. Most of them are high-row fenced, called kilungan, and some others are no a fence at all. The traditional houses of Kudus are oriented to the South, lined east of the East. The open space is the central courtyard of the Kilungan fenced house. At the open house, the central yard forms a short cut. At almost of home groups found Langgar or small mosque in which daily religious life held (Sardjono, 2016)

### 3. Religious Life

Religious activities of Kudus Kulon society dominate daily life includes daily, weekly, and annual activities. Women often held their daily worship activity in their homes. Although not a necessity, it is more commonly done in the Dalem room, the main and deepest chamber of the traditional Kudus house, while the men took a pray in congregation in Langgar (small mosque) in addition to the greater virtue and also the opportunity to meet neighbors and surrounding communities. Religious atmosphere in Langgar is felt especially during the Shubuh, Maghrib and Isha. Shalat is continued with dhikr or reading the Qur'an. At certain moments also held berjanjen (journey). People who come to langgar are not only the men surrounding but also santri (Islamic boarding school students).



**Figure 2.** Religious Activities in Kudus Kulon

Daily worship activities increased on Thursday night until Friday afternoon, during jumatan. Jumatan is not held in Langgar, but in big mosque. In Kudus kulon Jumatan is centered in Menara mosque. Friday is a day off for the Kudus community, so people starts to prepare jumatan since morning. Jema'ah jumatan are not only come from people around the Menara mosque but also from the other area, including from Kudus wetan (East Kudus area). Within a year, the religious activity is rapidly increased in the period closed to the end of Ramadan. In the holy month the enthusiasm of people undergoing a variety of worship is higher than usual, includes Dandangan event, a market opened since a week before Ramadan until the official announcement of Ramadhan coming. It also visited the family and ancestral tomb to pray and clean it up. Implementation of Ramadhan prayer activities in the tower mosque includes the activities of reciting after Asyar prayer while waiting Maghrib, giving takjil for breakfasting in the mosque. Continued with shalat Magrib, Isya, Tarawih, Witir and religious lectures. After Subuh, there is communal quran reading held by Kudus charismatic kiai. Religious events were also held in Langgarlanggar, although not as large and intensive as the events at the Menara mosque. Ramadhan festivities reach the peak on the day of Lebaran, as well as closing the series of activities of Ramadhan. In the morning people go to Menara mosque for shalat Iedul Fitri, then proceed with visiting neighbours and relatives, including the deceased parents and ancestors.

Another annual religious activity in Kudus Kulon community is Bukak Luwur on every 10 Dulhijjah (Muharam) held in Sunan Kudus tomb complex behind the Menara mosque. This event is basically Haul event, which is respect and pray for the soul of leader or community leader who has passed away. Luwur Sunan Kudus Proof is a series of honor programs on Sunan Kudus by replacing the mosquito net on the cupola cemetery of Sunan Kudus. The event is begun by cleaning up the Sunan Kudus relics continued with the reading of the Qur'an to finish. In the evening a recitation and recall of the Sunan Kudus history are held. On the third day of the 10th day Duhijjah the replacement ceremony of Netting is done. The ceremony distributed blessing food to the community, namely rice with buffalo meat curry. Thousands of people who come from different regions queue up the distribution of jumbo rice along the narrow alleys around the Menara mosque.



**Figure 3.** Religious Activities in Kudus Kulon

#### 4. The Sacred Space

Sacred space is a place for activities related to belief or religion. It is a respected space and a high-valued space. Shalat activities at home are usually done in Gedongan, which is a closed space in the middle of Dalem (main building in Kudus traditional house). Gedongan is specifically used as a praying space and a place to store the house property. It is noticed that this space is also used as a space for the first night for newly married couples. Currently, in general, Gedongan is used by the parents to sleep and is used as the praying room as well, which is generally done by women. Physically the Gedongan is located in the middle of Dalem, rather shifted to the end. Gedongan room floor slightly elevated to Dalem. This space is a privileged and closed space.

Dalem itself is part of Kudus traditional buildings somewhat closed to other space, namely Pawon on the side and Jogosatru in front of it. Dalem is a passive family activity room, for sleeping or resting and sometimes used for praying or selamatan. Pawon is the living room of the family while Jogosatru is a space to receive guests. The Dalem floor is elevated far from the floors of Pawon and Jogosatru so as to reach it is used a ladder called Bancik.

Within the house cluster, joint religious activities are held in Langgar so that the langgar is the center of the activities of the surrounding community groups, including pesantren and madrasah huts that often use Langgar for praying and Ngaji (reading quran) activities. Besides, some Langgar also held social and educational activities such as PAUD, skill counseling and health activities. Worship activities in Langgar is usually done on the main building inside with expansion when the congregation is a lot, while other activities that are not directly related to worship are held in the porch as well as in the court of the mosque. The main room floor is usually higher than the porch and separated by a wall. There is no wall between the porch and the open courtyard or only walled with a large bang. The porch floor itself is higher than the mosque's courtyard. At times between shalat and ngaji, the main room door is usually closed. Some Langgar have a grave around. These tombs are the tombs of predecessors who are respected by the people. This tomb is often visited, both by direct descendants and surrounding communities. They recite and pretend the spirit of the predecessor while asking for the blessing of salvation. This grave is often visited at the beginning of the Ramadan (nyadran) and after shalat Iedul Fitri. Likewise on certain days or months of a particular month

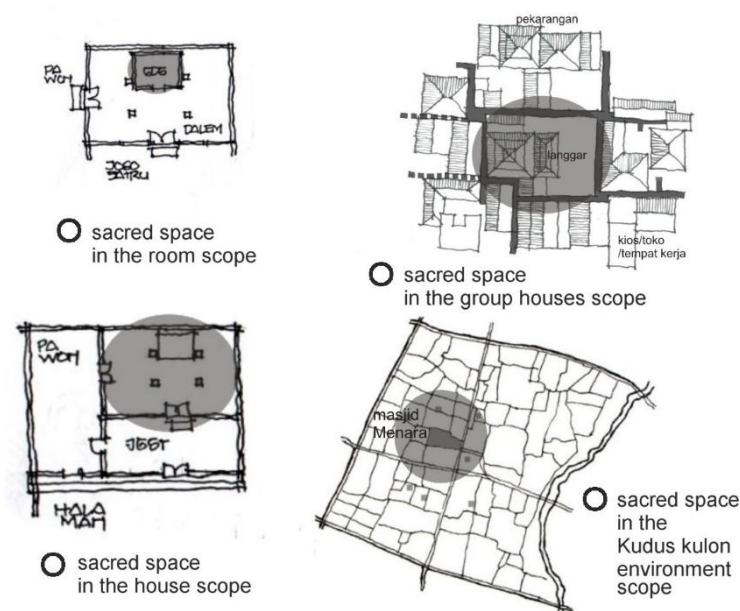
In Kudus area, the cultivation of large religious activities is centralized in the Menara mosque. For example, Jum'atan and shalat Idul Fitri and Idul Qurban. The mosque is also the center of the region's highly respected activities of Kudus kulon. Activities that are held are more diverse and more intensive. Praying activities are done in the main room and can extend to the porch. This space is usually closed and opened just before praying. The teachings and tadarus are usually held in the foyer of the mosque and can extend to the mosque's courtyard. The floor of the mosque's main hall is slightly higher than the porch, but the porch floor is high enough against the courtyard so there is a stair to reach it. Behind the mosque there is a complex of Sunan Kudus tomb. The complex is separated from the mosque and its surroundings with a high enough massive fence. The tomb of Sunan Kudus itself is facedown, has a porch and is separated by another tomb with a fence. Every day hundreds of pilgrims come to visit the tomb of Sunan Kudus, they dhikr in the porch cupola. The cungkup (tomb) itself is usually closed and only opened at certain moments, such as Bukak Luwur



ceremony. Activities in the mosque and in the tomb are separate activities, although sometimes carried out continuously. Pilgrims do shalat in the Menara mosque and then dhikr and pray in the porch of the tomb. At the time of the ceremony Bukak Luwur, most of the activities took place in the tomb complex, while recitation activities are conducted in the porch of the mosque. The distribution of blessing food takes place along the Menara road and on the alleys of the settlements around the Menara mosque. The participation of Kudus Kulon community is huge. The men helped organize and secure the ceremony, and the mothers cooked the blessing food to be distributed. The event of Khol or Bukit Luwur Sunan Kudus is the largest rite and started the implementation of khol community leaders in the Sunan Kudus area. Bukak Luwur is then followed by a similar event on the tomb by community leaders with smaller the intensity and scope.

## 5. Discussion

The existence of sacred spaces in Kudus community is indicated by the existence of worship activities and activities that have to do with trust. This activity is a dominant daily activity of the society besides the economic activities. Sacred space in the traditional Javanese house (Krobongan) inside of Dalem describes transcendental vertical relationship (Tjahjono, 1989; Santosa, 1997). The same pattern is also shown in the traditional house of Kudus, but Gedongan is not intended for offerings to Dewi Sri as in the traditional Javanese house Krobongan. It is used for shalat by the house residents. The sacred space is manifested by the pattern of space placement in the center, the nature of the relatively closed space and the elevated floor surface of the space around it. Boundary element becomes an important element, in addition to protect the sacred space as well as to separate it with more profane activities. It is in line with the opinion of Supriadi (2010) who stated that in the house of Java, a boundary plays a crucial role.



**Figure 4.** Sacred space in Kudus Kulon Environment scope

Even in the teachings of Islam, boundary have an important role as the separator of two different things (O'meara, 2007). Boundary separation in the form of buildings can be a thick wall and high fence (Kilungan) or separator lever on Jogosatru space that separates male and female guests. Sacred space as a place of religious worship is in the space Gedongan, Dalem, Langgar and Menara

Mosque. The sacred space also embodies the more important activities of belief and tradition in the tomb (Thohir, 2006). The sacred space in Kudus kulon also shows a tiered pattern. In the Dalem room, the sacred space is in the Gedongan room. Dalem is a sacred and the most important space in a room. In the group of houses, the sacred space is in Langgar and the grave of the precursor. Although not always in the middle, but the closure, the schedule of activities as well as the center of religious activities or beliefs show the space.

In Kudus kulon, sacred space is in the complex of Menara mosque and the tomb of Sunan Kudus. It is the center that binds and arranges the pattern of space activity around it. The existence of sacred space tiered from room, house, and environment of Kudus kulon area.

## 6. Conclusion

The existence of sacred space creates a strong character in Kudus Kulon area. The existence of sacred space is a form and a container of religious worship activities and traditions of belief. The influence of the teachings of the religion of Islam is enormous in realizing the sacred space, as well as the remnants of Javanese traditions and beliefs that nevertheless still exist in the life of society. The container of these activities forms the character of a sacred space that is centered, relatively closed and vertically transcendental-oriented. In relation to its environment, sacred space is manifested in stages.

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