

# ***DHAMMONG: A RAIN RITUAL IN MADURA (A STUDY ON ITS HISTORY, FUNCTION, AND SIMBOLIC MEANING)***

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**Abstract:** This article attempted to trace the existence of *Dhâmmong* tradition in the following scopes, namely: (1) Madurese perception against *Dhâmmong*, (2) the function and symbolic meaning of *Dhâmmong* in human life, and (3) the efforts of the Madurese community to preserve the *Dhâmmong* tradition. Through a descriptive phenomenological analysis, this study revealed that *Dhâmmong* is a hereditary tradition carried out by the Madurese community, it is urged by the community's anxiety caused by the long dry season (*némor lanjheng*). *Dhâmmong* functions as a means for *salametan*, paying respect for the ancestors, strengthening human relations (*silaturrahim*), *Bhek Rembhek*, and *nguri berkah* (the fertility of the earth). The offerings and mouth-music by imitating the sounds of animals represent a strong desire and wish of the community for the immediate rainfall that could pour out blessings for the community. Hence, the community's efforts to preserve *Dhâmmong* are: (1) introducing and involving the younger generation in the ritual, and (2) setting and changing the time sequence of *Dhâmmong* implementation from night to daytime.

**Keywords:** dhâmmong, function, symbolic meaning, madura local tradition.

**Abstrak:** Tulisan ini mencoba menelusuri keberadaan tradisi *Dhâmmong* dalam lingkup sebagai berikut, yaitu: (1) Persepsi masyarakat Madura terhadap *Dhâmmong*, (2) fungsi dan makna simbolik *Dhâmmong* dalam kehidupan manusia, dan (3) upaya masyarakat Madura untuk melestarikan tradisi *Dhâmmong*. Melalui analisis fenomenologi deskriptif, penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa *Dhâmmong* merupakan tradisi turun-temurun yang dilakukan oleh masyarakat Madura, didorong oleh kecemasan masyarakat akibat kemarau panjang (*némor lanjheng*). *Dhâmmong* berfungsi

sebagai sarana salametan, menghormati leluhur, mempererat hubungan antar manusia (*silatullahim*), Bhék Rembhek, dan nguri berkah (kesuburan bumi). Sesaji dan musik mulut dengan meniru suara binatang mewakili keinginan dan keinginan yang kuat dari masyarakat agar segera turun hujan yang dapat mencurahkan keberkahan bagi masyarakat. Oleh karena itu, upaya masyarakat untuk melestarikan *dhâmmong* adalah: (1) memperkenalkan dan melibatkan generasi muda dalam ritual, dan (2) mengatur dan mengubah urutan waktu pelaksanaan *dhâmmong* dari malam ke siang hari.

**Kata Kunci:** *dhâmmong*, fungsi, makna simbolik, tradisi lokal Madura.

## A. INTRODUCTION

Tradition (Said, 1993: 12) is a treasure of community's wealth that has been maintained from time to time. The study of tradition or ritual, especially the relationship between Islamic tradition and local wisdom, is very interesting. Besides, there is only a few study that discussed it as compared with other scientific disciplinary research. As an invaluable treasure of people's wealth, tradition is always expected to remain sustainable, either through inheritance (*invited*) or construction in the form of a series of action to instill values and norms through repetition against young generation as an important element in the inheritance of tradition (Jainuri, 2004: 59-60). If it is lost, then the tradition will also be lost, swallowed up and crushed by time.

The tradition *Dhâmmong* is one of the local wisdoms of the Madurese community that is still maintained. In some villages in Madura, this tradition has different functions and beliefs. As in Gapura village, Sumenep, *Dhâmmong* is intended as well as rain ritual and "*slametan desa*", while in Dungkek village, *Dhâmmong* becomes a ritual to beg for rain.

Furthermore, *Dhâmmong* can be interpreted as *nguri-nguri barokah* which means almsgiving (*nyadran*) as one of the traditional ceremonies to express gratitude to the Creator for the sustenance that has been given through the earth (land) in the form of various kinds of earth (nature) products (Bayu-adhy, 2015: 82). When *Dhâmmong* is alike seen as awareness, generally, there is a common view of life for the Madurese and Javanese people about their relationship with nature (Mulyana, 1979: 25), as affirmed by Mulder that the Javanese community's view of life places great emphasis on inner tranquility,

harmony and balance, as well as an attitude of acceptance of all events by placing individuals under society and society under nature (Mulder, 1982: 65). Thus, individuals have responsibilities in the form of rights and obligations towards society, and that society has obligations to nature.

This study investigates some focuses, namely: (1) the history of *Dhâmmong* in the perspective of Madurese; (2) Madurese understanding on the function of *Dhâmmong* against life; (3) the philosophical meaning of the symbols of offerings and music in *Dhâmmong*; and (4) the efforts of Madurese to preserve *Dhâmmong* tradition.

## B. PREVIOUS STUDIES

The study of *Dhâmmong* and the tradition of begging (*pojjan*) for rain, have been written by experts in the form of books, researches, articles and other free-writings. There are two writings which directly inspire researchers to study this topic, namely the writings of Helene Bouvier and Mohammad Hefni whose researches took place in Madura.

*First*, Helene Bouvier in her book entitled “*Lébur: Seni Musik dan Pertunjukan dalam Masyarakat Madura* (Bouvier, 2002: 180-186). In here book, Bouvier provided a discussion space about *Dhâmmong Ghere’dem* and obtained a conclusion that *Dhâmmong* is a ritual to beg for rain and its implementation is a combination of *mamaca* and *ghardem* elements.

*Second*, Mohammad Hefni’s research on *Dhâmmong Ghârâ’dem* in Talango Sumenep. His study on social construction has resulted the same as Bouvir’s writings that *Dhâmmong* is a ritual for rain, and in its implementation is a combination of *mamaca* and *ghardem* elements. This tradition is believed by the local community as a sacred ceremony and carried out every long dry season. This ritual lasts for seven full nights, even though it has rained, because if it is not continued (local belief), it will bring reinforcements (*bala’*) (Hefni, 2008: 67).

Both of these writings greatly examine *Dhâmmong* in the same perspective beyond the function of *Dhâmmong* as a ritual for rain. Thus, their writings have provided an opportunity for this research to complete it. Apart from examining the symbolic meaning of *Dhâmmong* as a ritual for rain, this study is encouraged to investigate whether *Dhâmmong* (in other villages) is actually the same as *Nyadran* ritual that functions to thank for the God’s

blessings or not. Both writings do not discuss in detail on the philosophical meaning of the offering symbols and mouth music that imitates the sounds of animals as symbols of rain. On the other hand, this study will examine the historical roots of the emergence of the ritual that has not been recognized by the owner of the ritual until the present time. Thus, as viewed in the perspective of literature especially related to the historical context of *Dhâmmong*, this study is relatively novel.

### **C. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A rigid separation between culture and religion in the real life of the Muslim community is an activity that blows and stimulate energy, thoughts, and conflicts in the lives of the Muslims in Indonesia. Because it requires a compromistic attitude, so an association of culture and religion has taken place.

There are many elements of culture as a routine seen as “sacred” and compound with religion. For example, the slogan *Adat Basandi Syara', Syara' Basandi Kitabullah* (Shari'at-based customs and Shari'ah-denoted Book of Allah the Almighty) as mottos for Minangkabau community<sup>1</sup> as well as other Indonesian communities, such as Gorontalo (Arwildayanto, 2013: 301-307). Even KH. Hasyim Muzadi (2019) stated firmly that Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat is a tangible manifestation of a blend of religion, country, and culture and this blend is the result of the struggle (*mujahadah*) of the saints of God who spread Islam into Indonesia. This is what distinguishes Indonesia from 32 countries in the Middle East, but one culture spreading from Saudi Arabia to Libya is the same. As for Indonesia, a country with many sub-cultures, and each sub-culture does not have the same customs.

For most of Indonesian, the local culture that is in line with religion is still maintained, except for those who have experienced purification movements, like movements purifying religion as pure as they are (Susanto, 2018) who greatly try to eliminate the customs that develop in society and destroy

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<sup>1</sup>When visiting Padang, West Sumatra, we will find such a thick Islamic nuance. The Minangkabau region is also a producer of Nusantara scholars, because the people are actively implementing an Islamic life as combining it with local customs. The order which is held tightly as the basis of customary and religious relations is an expression of *Adat Basandi Syara' Syara' basandi Kitabullah*.

it. For these circles, custom is really positioned at the uncommon and meaningless position.

The Indonesian, especially the Madurese are those who highly and mostly entitled to Nahdhatul Ulama that respects Islamic culture and tradition, so that the relationship between religion and tradition is placed in a compromise accommodationalistic position (complementary to one another), not positioned in confrontational (bipolaristic confrontation). In this context, the coming of the dry and rainy season is a routine in climatology in the archipelago positioned as two complementary seasonal entities. These seasons have created variety of traditions in the Indonesian community with some different procedures in it.

*Dhâmmong* is a local wisdom of the Madurese who are believed to be able to bring benefits in accordance with their intention. This ritual appeared before Islam spreads in the land of Madura. With its development in Madura, *Dhâmmong* has experienced an acculturation in the process of celebration (local wisdom and Islamic values). However, the meaning of this tradition was still called as *Slametan*.

In the celebration process, *Dhâmmong* involved many parties ranging from the perpetrators of *Dhâmmong*, *Tandha'* and *Mamaca* elements by not using musical instruments and only special readings (*mantra*) in Madurese language, and sometimes mixed with Arabic. These voices form a compact sound that unifies with the reading of *mantra* by the leader of the ritual. Sometimes, they also form a group of lyrical voice by sound suppression and musical instrument imitation.

*Dhâmmong* as a tradition will position itself in a space and time (Bouvier, 2002). This tradition can be understood by a historical approach. Other aspects in its celebration are reading and movement with different meaning. To understand the meaning of the reading and the movement, binoculars phenomenology of religion is required.

The phenomenology of religion is basically trying to capture and interpret every type of human encounter with the the Almighty and the Holy. The basic assumption of this approach is that the outer form of human expression has a regular pattern or configuration of life (Dhafaemony, 1995: 42). Therefore, the followers of the phenomenology of religion use comparison as the primary means of interpretation to understand the meaning of religious

expressions. Practically, they try to investigate the dominant characteristics of religion in the historical-cultural context.

Basically, the readings and movements in *Dhâmmong* are dialogues and encounters between subject objects, namely between humans and God through praise and prayer (Purwadaksi, 2004: 18). Humans have an intentional awareness directed from the subject to the object. Humans pray as requests and wishes that are actually intentionality, while the God as *Khaliq* grants their requests. This process produces intersubjective communication.

## **D. DHÂMMONG IN MADURA ISLAND: BEGGING FOR RAIN**

### **1. The History of *Dhâmmong* in Madura**

When tracing the history or origin of *Dhâmmong*, we will find its own difficulties, because there is not enough definitive data (written documents) where the validity can be accepted but only speech that is inherited generatively to the owner of this tradition. Certainly, *Dhâmmong* is a tradition carried out by local people for generations, even though in certain communities this tradition has begun to be abandoned. This tradition is carried out every time before the delayed planting season for farmers due to unavailability of rain. However, when farmers start planting and the rain no longer falls in a long sequence of time, the plants become wither (Madurese language: *élop*).

Almost all villages involved in this study do not have a definite historical record of *Dhâmmong*. There are only speeches from generation to generation that are “assumed and believed to be true” by the owner of this tradition. This tradition is believed to be the original tradition of the local community, even before Islam has spread in Madura Island, this tradition had been traced (celebrated). The celebration of this tradition is motivated by the condition of the villager’s anxiety over the long dry season (*némor lanjêhang/némor kara*) that results in a lack of water as the primary need of the community, not only for farming but also for daily needs like bathing, cooking, washing and so on.

In the midst of the confusion and unrest of the community, there was an elder (community leader) who was highly respected. In his sleep-time, he was visited by unseen voices as ordering himself to carry out *Dhâmmong* tradition in a ritual. Respecting his unseen voice in his sleep, he invited the public to perform the tradition (Hasan dan Susanto, t.t.). The public’s invitation was

agreed by the community. For Madurese (particularly ancient Madurese (*konah*), *dawuh* (the command/speech) of a public figure (*Kyai*) is an unwritten law that must be obeyed, because he is included in four elements that must be respected and honored (*Bhuppa'*, *Bhabhu*, *Guruh* and *Ratoh*, *Father*, *Mother*, *Teacher* and *King or Government*).

Starting from the experience and the incident, the trust of the local community against *Dhâmmong* has began to increase. They performed the ritual as performed by the magic hermit who was believed to be a ritual to beg for rainy. The result was that rain fell in a few of time. Based on that reality, these beliefs began to ingrain in the local community. With full of confidence, they carried out the ritual routinely during the *némor lanjâng* season (long dry season), especially during the rain did not fall for several weeks in the rainy season, while the community was farming.

The historical uncertainty of *Dhâmmong* also occurs in other villages. There are no written records about the origin of this tradition, but remains only speech from the word to word (*deri enca'en ka enca'en*) of some generations. In this case, *Dhâmmong* can be classified as folklore; a part of the collective culture that has been spread and passed down traditionally in different versions in oral form and accompanied by gestures (*nemonic devise*) (Dananjaya, 2013: 161). The educational process through the speech and actual practice of the celebration of this ritual has taken place generatively without any notes or documents. The temporary assumption that this tradition has occurred before the Dutch's arrival, even it can possibly be assumed that it has emerged since the ancient time of Hindu-Buddhist or before the arrival of Islam. Like the community in Aéng Mérah as narrated by Bouvier (2002), has assumed that this tradition has been well recognized before the emergence of metal coin/money (*pessé konéngan*) and silver coin/money (*salaka*). The Bouvier's opinion was strengthened by several informants in several villages that the researchers met.

In some villages, the name of *Dhâmmong* is also different, such as *Dhâmmong Ghârdhâm*, *Thâmbuk*, and *Ghardhâm*, but these have the same purpose; that is to beg for rain. In Aéng Mérah and Kolpoh village, the local people call it as *Dhâmmong Ghârdhâm*. They held this tradition on various occasions, usually at crossroad (*pa dâng dâng*). The goal is to get rid of negative influences (*rokat dâng dâng*) or called as *ruwatan persimpangan*. The



celebration of this *ruwatan* in ten villages is still used to keep them filled with water. This *Ruwatan* is known as *rokat somor* as its purpose to invoke rain (*rokat ojhan*). On the other hand, there are also some villagers carrying out this celebration in *Bhuju'*, as people in Kolpo and Tangedan district (Bouvier, 2002: 182). This celebration is intended as an act of honor against the village elders (*bengetoah*). In the village of East Gapura, the village community does it not only in the village, but also in places that are considered haunted or even in the market as a source of fortune (interview with Kiai Rahmat, Taufik and others, April 28, 2019).

The procession of *Dhâmmong* ritual was begun by reading *al-fatihah* for some people with *karomah* as the referee of receiving the prayers; that is the desired intent. The reading were for Prophet Muhammad, Noah, Ilyas, Sulaiman and Hidir, as well as to the spirits of local figures who had historical traces in the village. The next process was reading the initial *mantra* led by a figure or a role model. The *mantra* likes the following text.

“Bede deng-deng... bede manu’,  
manu’ mandi rinnoooo rinnooooooo.  
Nur cahya nabi muhammad,  
Nur cahya nabi kangsirullah kangsirullah,  
Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh Muhammadur Rasûlu Allâh,  
Lâ Ilâha Illâ Allâh Muhammadun syukkuru Allâh.  
Allahumma shalli ‘alâ Muhammad,  
*Allahumma shalli ‘alâ sayyidina Muhammad wa ‘alâ alihi, wadurriyatihî  
wa ashabi Muhammad*”.

(explanation of Kiai Muhammad, April 28, 2019)

The *mantra* was then followed by voicing *ta’Thâmbuk Hi, tak thâmbuk hi, tak thâmbuk hi*. There were some people whom were appointed to imitate animal sounds, such as:

1. Frog “tattat” that voiced taaaaat taaaaatt taaattt
2. Frog “tak tak” katak katak kaktak
3. *Anggey* (Madurese language) that voiced rehe’ rehe’ rese’ rese’



The recitation of the *mantra* and the animal's sounds mutually blend into one as if forming a natural music sound dominated by animal sounds. Such conditions resemble the conditions during the rainy season at night, where the nature is colored by animal music throughout the night, especially the animal sounds mentioned above that have dominated it. On the sidelines of the reading of the ritual, there are one-two people who voiced “*ta' dhâmmong padhâm pahê*” and sometimes followed by saying “*Allâhu, Allâhu, Allâhu Akbar*”.<sup>2</sup>

This ritual is carried out while walking around the village. During the celebration, many residents gave treats to those who carried out this ritual, as a form of their concern while participating in praising or praying for rain soon. The treats consist of various types of food, like fried foods, bananas, porridge, rice and others. There is a special dish that must be given in this ritual, namely *Lémbur* and other wet treats. *Lémbur* is a drink made from boiling water mixed with brown sugar, *serré* and grated coconut (an explanation of Kiai Sulahe, June 16, 2019). This drink also increases the vitality of the energy to dig wells, and as a symbol of *lebbhur* (a large and long-lasting water source despite the long dry season).

There are several things that must be avoided or may not be done during the procession of this ritual, namely: a) eating dry foods, such as crackers, chips and other similar types, except after drinking *lémbur*, b) doing any damage and burn during procession.

Usually, *Dhâmmong* is held at night around 7.00 pm until late at night around 1.00 am. Even until the dawn rises in the place of *pa dâng dâng* (a title for intersection that is not perpendicular). *Pa dâng dâng* is believed by the community as a haunted place where *patoghunah* (its inhabitants) consists of the rulers of spirits, so it needs to be routed not to disturb humans.

In its practice: some offerings were prepared and placed on the side of the *pa dâng dâng*; the location where local people gathered in a circle with one person in the middle (*hadi*). The circular person then read “*Ta' Dhâmmong Garjem*” aloud while accompanied by applause and turning around (Hasan, 2018). Meanwhile, people in the middle position beg God for rain's fall by

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<sup>2</sup> Indirect observation and document analysis on *Dhâmmong* in GILI Raja village, Sumenep Regency.

dancing and reading poems in the form of prayers (random) in a tone like the rhythm of music (*kerawetan*).

The series of *Dhâmmong* rituals was ended by the recitation of prayer. Based on the information from some informants who used to carry out *thâmbu'* or *Dhâmmong*, that if their prayers were accepted by Allah the Almighty after carrying out these activities, it would immediately rain in at least one or two days after the ritual.

## **2. The Function of *Dhâmmong* for the Community**

*Dhâmmong* is a tradition or precisely a ritual that has sacred values, so that it has its own functions for the community, especially for the culprit. These functions include:

### **a. *Dhâmmong* as *Salametan***

Basically, *Dhâmmong* ritual is *pojhan*; an ancient form of ritual performed only at certain times to beg for salvation, peace, and other things that are more positively valueable for the sake of better conditions. This ritual is generally performed during the long dry season (*némor lanjheng*). Thus, the core of this ritual is to ask for the safety (*Slamet*) of all villagers from every dangers. Likewise other villages that are still faithful in carrying out this tradition, this tradition also follows *lalaman pangaseppo* (the habit of *peni senuh*) which has long been carried out and believed to be a powerful medium for the fulfillment of *hajat* (rain).

*Slametan* is a spiritual means with its ability to overcome all forms of crises that hit and bring blessings to those who carry it out. *Slametan* is a food alms ceremony and joint prayer aimed at pleading for safety and peace for the organizing family expert (Astiyanto, 2012: 3). The object used as a means of worship in *slametan* is the spirit of the ancestors who considerably have magical powers. *Slametan* is also a means of glorifying, respecting, and commemorating the spirits of the ancestors (Kamajaya, 1995: 247). Geertz views that *slametan* in Javanese culture symbolizes mystical and social unity (Purwadi, 2005: 22). Mystical unity in this religious ceremony is symbolized by the involvement of local spirits, while the social element is the involvement of relatives, neighbors and colleagues. From this, Geertz concludes that Javanese Islam was Islam of arthritis.

*Slametan* involves two elements in a different world, namely the element

of spirit for those who die and the element of prayer from those who are still alive. This means that the two different on a certain side still have connection and entity of communication, even though conceptually separated and the status in the whole syncretic context is different. It is a rite for the living, while *ngirim dhuwa* or *sadeka* (*Sadaqah*) is dedicated for those who died (Khalil, 2008: 279).

This is similar to Mark's theory. While rejecting Geertz's concept of claiming Javanese Islam as syncretic Islam, Woodward precisely states that the religious practices carried out by the Javanese Muslim community are Islamic practices influenced by the teachings of metaphysics and *Sufi* mystics, and Islam which is contextual and culturally processed, not Islam with animistic and syncretic. Hence, there is an interplay between Islam and local culture (Woodward, 1999).

A similar refutation of Geertz's theory is stated by Pranowo (1998), that Geertz declares Islam as a state of being is not quite true; it is more appropriate to say that Islam as a state of becoming, because it experiences a dynamic development that is not static. This can be seen how the Javanese people experience dynamism from *abangan* to *santri* along with the knowledge process they have.

Generally, the purpose of *Slametan* is to create a state of prosperity, security and freedom from interference; both real and subtle beings. A salvation ceremony is an alternative where people who feel the vibrations of sacred emotions, especially when determining the holding of the salvation, includes when the ceremony is running. The decision to make a salvation is sometimes made based on a pure religious belief, and there is a worry about things that are not desirable or the present of disaster (Koetjaraningrat, 1984: 347). In this case, *Dhâmmong* is also celebrated to overcome the anxiety of the people due to the absence of rain for a long time (*némor lanjhang*) that can cause the delay of cropping for economical benefit. Besides, it is also celebrated, because the main needs of life (e.g. drinking, cooking, washing, etc) are not met.

### **b. *Dhâmmong* as a Respect for Ancestors**

*Dhâmmong* ritual is carried out generatively by the Madurese community and it cannot be denied that this ritual is a legacy of their ancestors as it is a combination of Hindu-Buddhist element. It is construed that one of its characteristics is human trust in spirits and supernatural powers to control things by

using religious means indicating that humans cannot overcome their anxiety in other ways (Koentjaraningrat, 1984: 237).

Furthermore, *Dhâmmong* procession is begun with the recitation of *al-Fatihah* (e.g. *tawassul*) for the ancestors who have served the community. The opening of *Dhâmmong* with *tawassul* for these ancestors indicates that *Dhâmmong* is actually a tribute to their ancestors. Another indicator is the implementation of *Dhâmmong* which is carried out by the Madurese community; if it is not started with *tawassul*, it will certainly end at the tomb of *bhujuk*.<sup>3</sup> It indicates that there is still a relationship between the community and the souls of their ancestors (*pangaseppo*) who are always guarded (at least) through certain moments, like the *Dhâmmong* ritual.

For certain communities in Madura, apart from celebrating *Dhâmmong* with the opening reading of *al-Fatihah* as *tawassul* to the spirit of *pangaseppo*, it also ends at the tomb of *bhujuk*; tombs that are considered sacred, while they bring food as *bancaa'an* to eat together that symbolizes the sticking of solidarity. In this connection, the *Dhâmmong* also functions the same as *Nyadran* (Java) or *nyadher* (e.g. Sumenep terminology) (Hasan, 2018); one of which is a tribute to the ancestors.

### **c. *Dhâmmong* as a Carrier of Grace and Earth Fertility**

Generally, the Madurese are people with an agrarian land, and people who depend on agriculture for their needs. In the case of agriculture, they are still very traditional. The farming, cultivating land and the equipment used still uses a lot of traditional systems, such as plowing and leveling the land as agricultural land, cow power (traditional plow) still plays an important role. People rarely use modern tools such as tractors, except for those with large tracts of land and have sufficient economic capacity. Similarly, the cropping processes for agricultural products, extracts (harvester) and sickle can not be abandoned.

Agricultural communities who are still dependent on agricultural products and the simple mindset assume that they cannot be separated from the natural environment. Such this community (includes the community perpe-

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<sup>3</sup>The term *bhujuk* refers to the sacred tomb. Usually, he was the first person to cut down the village, or the person who was firstly buried at the burial site. Commonly, the Madurese called *bhujukasa* person who has mostly contributed to the village.

trators of *dhâmmong*) strongly believe in supernatural forces that affect the environment. Thus, it is natural that they crave the fertility of the earth, the fertility of agriculture and the tranquility of the environment by carrying out rituals that are believed to bring and create these kindness. For the Sumenep community, the implementation of *dhâmmong* is believed to be able to bring rain as a medium to nourish the earth.

The fertility symbols like begging for rain is a prerequisite that must be fulfilled in carrying out *dhâmmong* ritual. These symbols have a very deep philosophical meaning as the following descriptions.

#### ***d. Dhâmmongas Media of Bhâk Rembhâk***

The Madurese is a united society. One of the characteristics of a united community is togetherness in starting and deciding on some of their life's problems. *Dhâmmong* is a medium to unify people with their busy-time and have difficulty to interact with their respective homes, but they are willing to spend their wealth, such as a will to take a piece of their time for the success of *dhâmmong* ritual which will have positive implications for their homes and their life.

Before the ritual begins, the community (particularly the perpetrators of this ritual) are gathered, have some jokes and laugh, relieved fatigue, and relaxed talk. The cheerful atmosphere colored by cigarette smoke only dispels drowsiness, as if they are releasing the longing between them due to their respective business that cause them have a difficulty to meet, until a *hadi* comes as a sign that *dhâmmong* ritual will begin.

*Dhâmmong* also becomes a media for counseling, deliberation (Madurese language: *bhek rembhek*) for the villager. This media is used to share experiences, exchange information and even asking for solutions to personal problems that are sometimes difficult to find a way out. Equally important is also a discussion about matters that relate to common (social) interests. In this ritual, they have found a mutual agreement among people, so they participate themselves in the ritual and take a longer time after the implementation of this tradition ends. They no longer care about coughing, fatigue and even hunger after carrying out the ritual in a long sequence of time (interview with Taufik and Lora Rahmat, June 29, 2019). They enjoy the conditions and they do not go straight home. Some of them are still chatting, laughing, and sharing their experiences.

### 3. The Meaning of Music and Offering in *Dhâmmong*

#### a. Music

The implementation of *dhâmmong* (apart from requiring certain offerings), also followed by mouth-music (like the Beatbox and A Capella). This musical form that consists of animal noises, such as frog, *anggey* (a type of cricket), *gir pak-pak* (the sound of a dove being married) can mean that human should face his God with a strong feeling (*sahwat*) like a dove lusting on its partner), and *peyek* (the sound of chicks with no mother). Thus, these are not the same as the musical instruments. The sounds of the animals are shared with *dhâmmong* performers. The combination of animal sounds into natural and crisp music resembles the sounds of animals in the rainy season at night. The sounds symbolize that not only humans, but also animals that expect rain to fall (interview with Taufik, June 30, 2019).

Besides, in East Gapurana village, the sounds of animals is also followed by other sounds that are shared together with each participant of *dhâmmong*, include: *Ta' Jemmong* (anything that can be nurtured, nursed, and educated), *gurjhem* (name of a teak which means that as small as anything, it will be influential, so that it needs to be nurtured and educated), *he' pahe', pahe' paho'* (human certainly feel a bad side of life), *jehi' jedung*, *li alilli moli* (in his survival, human will return home. For the local community, as far as human can live, he certainly be back home to his hometown), *jengge' jenggi'* (a title for an arrogant person with no superiority. Hence, human is not supposed to be an arrogant individual), *jegeh jheggur* (the arrogant person should arise from his existence and lower down like a rice plant), *je' jeje'* (a motivation to arise for human's prosperity of life).

The voices are recited after the *korbhiyen* (person designated as *hadi*) reads the prayer in poetic form and chanted like a *kerawetan*. The person who coiled around the *korbhiyen* read "*Tha' Dhammong Garjem*" aloud. The values contained therein are compactness, togetherness, and spiritual values that included the presence of *dhâmmongghârjem* sound and accompanied by musical applause by an expectation that the focus in the middle position (*korbhiyen*) united with the God. The point is that there is a great value to Allah the Almighty.

### ***b. The Offering***

One of elements in the procession of *dhâmmong* is offerings' equipment. There is a single similarity in the implementation of *dhâmmong* against *Nyadran*, namely the offerings that have been provided. In the period of Walisongo, any offering in *dhâmmong* and *Nyadran* were not removed, but only the intention and designation were changed. The offerings that were originally given to nature are now given to humans, especially the devotee poor regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or class (Slamet DS., 1984). Even this tradition is used to broadcast and spread the faith on the religion of God.

In each village, the offering equipment in *dhâmmong* is different. The followings are some of the offerings prepared at *dhâmmong*, where the information is obtained from informants:

a) The Four-kind of Rice. This four-color rice symbolizes the ruler of the four directions of the compass point: *South, East, North, and West*. The rice is placed in one container, namely "*takir*". *Takir* is a place of rice made from banana leaves. The shape is the same as the cube with the top being opened. The opened top is a sign of togetherness, harmony and tolerance in life as the popular proverb for Madurese "*Song Osong Lomhung*" that signifies community's harmony and cohesiveness.

b) Fluid of Blossom. The fluid of a blossom is one of the conditions that must be presented within the procession of *Dhâmmong*. Various kinds of colorful blossom are placed in one container along with the water, so that the fragrance blushes freshly. The selection for water material symbolizes the main goal of *dhâmmong* procession, while the blossom is a symbol of blessing as it is expected that the rain will bring the fragrance and cohesiveness for the community, particularly for local community, and it can be a path that leads to happiness as to avoid havoc, such as flood that results losses and a strong dangerous winds.

c) *Lémbur*. *Lémbur* is a drink made from boiling water mixed with brown sugar, *serre* and grated coconut. *Lémbur* is a special treat in *Dhâmmong* ritual. This drink is usually served when digging wells. This drink causes melting (releasing a lot of water). This drink signifies that a great rain will be able to water the plantations that become the main source for society's income. With a great rain falls, it will also bring tangible benefits; that is abundant crops. Besides, it also symbolizes that wells that have dried up will bring up the



source again as to meet the needs of community's life, including a source of water and irrigation in planting. Hence, this phenomena indicates the importance of water for human life.

d) *Dhupah (keményan)*. *Dhupah* or incense within *dhâmmong* ritual is burned in the *beginning* of the ritual. The burn of *keményan* or *dhupah* signifies that the ritual will begin. On the other hand, it is the same philosophy as blossom as expected that the ritual will give fragrance to the local community. In the belief of traditional society, burning *dhupah* can mean expelling spirits and respecting the spirits of the ancestors who present during the ritual.

In reality, some Madurese people burn *dhupah* or *keményan* routinely on Thursday afternoon (Friday night), because they have a faith that the spirits of their ancestors will come, so they need to be welcomed with a fragrance.

e) *Ketupat* and *Leppet*. *Ketupat* or *kupat* is a form of food made from rice and wrapped in coconut milk. In Javanese tradition, *ketupat* has a meaning of confessing, namely admitting mistakes. This form of recognition is expressed in the form of *sungkeman* on *Eid al-Fitr* or *Eid al-Adha*. *Sungkeman* illustrates and teaches the importance of respecting parents, asking for blessing, sincerity and forgiveness from parents.

Meanwhile, the palm leaf as a diamond wrapper has its own philosophy. *Nyiur* is an absorption of the Arabic word "*Jâa Nûr*" which means "the light comes". *Kupat* is usually in the form of a rectangle with raw materials derived from white rice and has a meaning of white heart, while *Rhombus* in the shape of a square resembles human's heart. When people are claimed guilty, their heart resembles a split *kupat*; it must be white, clean, without being jealous as it is wrapped in a light.

For *dhâmmong* tradition practitioners, to start this ritual, it is imperative that they start from self-cleansing, no envy, jealousy and bad presumed (*su'dhon*) against fellow and Allah the Almighty. Therefore, in the development of this tradition, everyone should begin intentionally with respect to Allah the Almighty through the implementation of prayer and asking forgiveness from Him through reading *istighfar* and remembering (*dhikr*) Him.

*Leppet* is a dish such as *ketupat*. The raw material is made from black and white sticky rice, but usually the white sticky rice is mixed with grated coconut and long beans (*otok*). *Leppet* (Javanese: *Leppet*) means the cross is really neat (covering a dense mistake). The mistakes are human nature (Arabic: *al*

*Insān mahallu al khathā'i wa al nisyāni*). *Leppat* raises an awareness that humans are imperfect creatures and they have the potential for mistakes, so that they should be aware of it and apologize for mistakes to the God and his creatures. An awareness of mistakes, *ngaku lepat* and cover up mistakes that have been forgiven to not repeating the mistakes anymore, so that the fraternity and kinship are getting stickier as sticky rice and grated coconut wrapped in palm leaves. It was at *dhāmmong* ritual that this was their chance to mutually introspect (*muhasabah*), self-evaluation, and forgiving one another over the slowness.

Meanwhile, in terms of taste, *lappet* tastes not tasteless and not salty (Madure: *seddhek*). For Madurese, taste is a symbol of the subtlety of temperament in *strengthening* the kinship by not hurting one another (salty) and avoiding the nature of not caring (bargaining). This means that the brotherhood of the Madurese is sticky, caring, and firm.

f) *Tumpeng* Rice (*nasé' konéng*). It is a rice shaped like a cone, mountain, or pyramid, and decorated with vegetables and side dishes in the middle or on its side (KBBI 6th). It is usually served for *selamatan*. *Tumpeng* has the meaning of “*yen metu kudu mēmpeng*” which means that human beings must be born in a spirit, confident, focused and not easily discouraged. *Tumpeng* is equipped with seven kinds of side dishes, and for Javanese, it signifies “*pitu*” that means help (*pitulungan*).

The shape of the cone symbolizes the hope that life will always be prosperous, symbolizing the close hand to always worship to the God and as a symbol of hope that welfare will be more successful. The yellow rice (*tumpeng* rice) symbolizes prosperity, wealth and abundant fortune.

g) *Tajin Etem* (black sticky rice porridge). When viewed from the texture, the black sticky rice will feel sticky and blend with one another. It indicates that when we gather closer, we get closer and better. On the other hand, the black color symbolizes discarding feelings or bad behavior that originates in the deepest of oneself as a prerequisite for creating a harmonious, peaceful and prosperous life. Therefore, in the implementation of any activity like *kenduren* or *ruwatan* in Madura, the black sticky rice is always juxtaposed with white, such as *tettel* and white rice (porridge) that symbolizes humble heart (interview with Mr. Surahwi, June 15, 2019).

h) *Jhejhen Ghennak*. *Jhejhen Ghennak* (familiar known as *jhejhen Pasar*) has always been a prerequisite in rituals or *ruwatan*, includes *dhâmmong* ritual. None of the informants gave a real explanation on the meaning of *Jhejhen ghennak*. They only interpreted it as a symbol of people's economy (small people), because *Jhejhen ghennak* is mostly consumed by the middle and lower classes. In the context of *dhâmmong*, it symbolizes the rise of the economy of the small community that starts from the fertility of the earth which produces raw material from *Jhejhen ghennak*. Therefore, in certain villages such as Gapura village, *dhâmmong* is implemented in one of the economic centers in the market.

i) *Apem*. *Apem* is taken from word "afwun" (Arabic) which means "forgive". It symbolizes that basically the implementation of *dhâmmong* must be started with an apology by multiplying reading *istighfar* to Allah the Almighty as a form of awareness of the servants with mistakes. Besides, it also symbolizes that people should forgive one another. An awareness on mistakes is the starting point to get closer to the Creator (*Khaliq*). The awareness of the mistakes and faults will also arouse a sense of optimism of the perpetrators of *dhâmmong*, where the intention and prayer will be granted.

j) *Sarabih*. *Sarabih* is a dish that almost resembles *apem*, the same raw material from flour, and the flour is mixed with grated coconut. For traditional Madurese, this cuisine is usually served at a seven-day of *tahlilan* for families of deceased, or special dishes that are served on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> night of *ramadlan*, and on events like *rokat*, *ruwatan* and *pondhebe*.

In addition, *Sarabih* has meaning; "sâ": one, "rabhi": *robbi* or God (one God). It means that the *dhâmmong* actors have the same conviction that is their testimony to Allah the Almighty. Therefore, they surrender their life and all problems to God. In this case, *dhâmmong* is an expression of society for *taqarrub* (get closer) as a form of theological awareness to God.

k) *Kocor*. *Kocor* is a snack or cake made from flour mixed with sugar. Sometimes, everyone mixes palm sugar in it. *Kocor* has its own uniqueness with a rounded model and curved edges, and only some people can make this cake.

To this research, none of the information from the informants about the philosophical meaning of this cake. For researchers, that *Kocor* symbolizes pouring, *ngalocor* (in Madurese language) which indicates water that falls from

the sky with swift. The meaning of *ngalocor* is spills by itself and gushing out (interview with informan, June 15, 2019). It resembles rain falling, pouring from the sky with a great rain that cools, grows plants and a sense of beauty and fertility for the earth that certainly provides benefits for human life.

#### 4. Efforts to Preserve *Dhâmmong*

*Dhâmmong* is one of the traditions in the form of local wisdom for Madurese. The local wisdom of indigenous peoples regarding knowledge, understanding, and customs about human, nature and the unseen, includes good relations among humans are actually lived, practiced, taught, and passed down from one generation to other generation that also forms the patterns of daily human behaviour (Keraf, 2002: 253-255). This tradition has become a treasure of Madurese wealth which until now (in certain villages have been preserved and at the same time in other villages almost extinct) is still maintained, and passed down generatively.

In certain villages in Madura, this tradition and many other ancient traditions have become the forms of local wisdom, and almost experienced murder due to some factors. *First*, lack of regeneration; in this case, not everyone can get permission from elders to master the ritual's spell. *Second*, many elders know that these ritual *mantras* have been extinct due to unavailability of re-generation. *Third*, the young generation views *dhâmmong* as an old (*konah*) tradition, unattractive, no longer reasonable, and less of Islamic tradition, even though in its development there has been an acculturation between local and Islamic tradition, and the Islamic values highly dominated *dhâmmong* tradition (interview with Taufik, K. Sumatwi and Kiai Muhammad, June 30, 2019) in terms of Islamic accomodative, not Islamic syncretic as pointed out by Geertz.

Any effort to preserve a perception of *konah* (ancient, old) tradition has been carried out by the community, either through inherited or constructed learning. The way that people maintain their traditions for its survival of existence is carried out through inheritance and construction. In the inheritance, any construction is also given in the form of a series of actions aimed at instilling values and norms through repetition. Tradition automatically refers to the continuity with the past (Pranowo, 2001: 9). An important element of tradition is transmission from one generation to the next generation.

In addition, any effort to preserve *dhâmmong* as a wealth (treasury) of the

Madurese have been carried out in various ways. *First*, introducing and involving young people in *dhâmmong* celebration. This has been done by the East Gapura community through *kobhung* community association by presenting and performing several traditions include *dhâmmong*. *Second*, setting and modifying the time of *dhâmmong* implementation from night to daytime. The changes of the time have been carried out in the last three years, but they are still less interested, because they considered *dhâmmong* as out-dated or ancient (*konah*), especially the mellinial generation. Both of these efforts have taken place because of the involvement of the local village head.

## E. CONCLUSION

The implementation of this tradition is motivated by the community's anxiety due to the occurrence of a long dry season (*némor lanjheng*) which causes drought and decreases the source of springs as the main necessities of life. In practice, this tradition involves various elements of society, as well as several important facilities that must be prepared. In each village, the offering (*Sasajen*) is a prerequisite that must be met varies, but in general these requirements include *ketupat*, rice cone, black porridge, *apem*, *sarabih*, *lappet*, *kocor*, *dhupa*, and *lémbur*. Besides, there is also music that accompanies the implementation of *Dhâmmong*. The activities within the ritual *Dhâmmong* that consists of reading and movement elements along with some prepared offerings, are actually a set of dialogue between subject objects (between human and God) through praise and prayer. Hence, the intersubjective communication takes place, that human encounters with the Most Holy (Dhafamony, 1995: 42). Indeed, human prays as request and wish that are actually intentional, while the God as *Khaliq* grants their request. To be granted, it should begin with a clear intention and heart, no jealousy, and no bad presuming to others, especially to Allah the Almighty. These things symbolize the offerings.

As tradition, *Dhâmmong* presents many values (spiritual and social), but the meaning is not all understood by the owner of the tradition, especially the younger generation. At present, *dhâmmong* has undergone a process of extinction. For the sake of preserving the essence of this tradition, there needs a serious effort from the owner of the tradition. *First*, explore the philosophical and contextual meaning of the tradition, so that the tradition truly provides benefits to their life. *Second*, introduce and inherit the tradition to the next

generation through persuading, inheriting, or constructing. *Third*, another supporting element is the government that involves the Head of Village to always pay attention to the continuation of local traditions, particularly *Dhâmmong* as the noble cultural heritage of the ancestors.

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