

# Tabot Festival of Bengkulu and Local Wisdoms

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**Abstract:** *Tabot is a series of rituals to commemorate the martyrdom of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib who died in an unbalance war against the army of Yazid bin Muawiyah in The Battle of Karbala. At first, Tabot Festival was a religious ritual affiliated to Shia. It was first brought by Sheikh Burhanuddin known as Imam Senggolo in 1685. There are many similarities between Tabot in Bengkulu and Ta'ziyeh ritual celebrated by the followers of Shia in Persia and other countries that have many adherents of Shia. However, their relationship was limited to common history and the execution time only, while in terms of politics and religion, there is no connection between the two. Over time, there is a shift in the meaning of Tabot, from religious ritual became a cultural festival in Bengkulu. There are some people who question the authenticity of Tabot and consider that it deviates the teachings of religion. However, the study found that the Tabot Festival is no longer belong to a particular individual or group, but it has become a common property of Bengkulu society. It has become a cultural heritage that must be preserved.*

**Keywords:** *tabot, Bengkulu, local wisdom*

## Introduction

In a pluralistic society, the differences in point of view toward phenomena and events are something that cannot be avoided, especially when they are related to individual sentiment or group interests. It also happens regarding the Tabot ritual. Apart from the phenomenon that Tabot is a tourism icon of Bengkulu, some people describe it as a heresy that must be removed, while others say that it is a cultural heritage that should be preserved.

Heresy is embedded in this activity because of the element of deviation from the teachings of Islam during the ongoing process of Tabot procession. On the other hand, those who want to continue performing

this ritual believe that Tabot implies goodness that must be submitted as cultural heritage that deserves to be maintained.

From those facts described above, questions arise: How is the Tabot ritual carried out so that it evokes different perceptions among the society of Bengkulu? What is the basic foundation and legal basis of the implementation of Tabot which is carried out every year and how to behave toward it?

This study is aimed to explore the history of the emergence of Tabot in Bengkulu and also to identify where this tradition was originated. The enthusiastic acceptance from Bengkulu people who are mostly Sunni toward Tabot tradition raises a big question. It seems that the sense of belonging of Bengkulu community toward Tabot make the cultural nuances in Tabot Festival thicker than the religious one.

### **The History of Tabot**

The word Tabot is derived from Arabic word (تابوت) which means: A chest to store the goods, or a box made of stone or wood which is used as a place to store the deceased.<sup>1</sup> This meaning is in line with the meaning of Tabot found in the Qur'an, as Allah says: "Place him (Moses) in a chest, then throw it into the river (Nile), then surely it took him to the edge of the river".<sup>2</sup>

Tabot in the understanding of Bengkulu society is a religious ceremony performed by some Muslims in Bengkulu as an effort to remember and commemorate the death or the martyrdom of Sayyidina Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib in the battle of Karbala, Iraq at the beginning of Muharram month in 61 Hijriyah (681 AD). This ceremony encompasses a series of events held for ten days, started from 1<sup>st</sup> Muharram and ended on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the same month.<sup>3</sup>

The entire series of events in Tabot are believed as a form of love for the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib, who

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<sup>1</sup>Ibrahim Mustofa, *al-Mu'jam al-Wasith*, (Istanbul : Al-Maktabah Al-Islamiyyah), p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Qur'an, QS 20:39.

<sup>3</sup> Badrul Munir Hamidy (Ed.) dkk, *Upacara Tradisional Bengkulu; Upacara Tabot di Kodya Bengkulu*, (Bagian Proyek dan Inventarisasi dan Perkembangan Nilai-Nilai Budaya Daerah Bengkulu; Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1992.

was killed in the battle of Karbala. It is also believed as a symbol of hostility against the Umayyads in general and Yazid bin Muawiyah in particular as well as the Governor Ubeidillah bin Ziyad who ordered the attack on Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib and his family.

There is no certain evidence that indicates the beginning of Tabot ceremony held by Bengkulu citizens, but many believe the ceremony has become popular in Bengkulu during the construction of the fort Malborough, in which the workers from Madras and Bengali, South India were imported by the British to build the fort approximately in 1714 to 1719.<sup>4</sup> Although in the end the workers mostly returned to their homes after the construction of fort Malborough, most of them had settled in Bengkulu and married with the locals.

This opinion is contrary to the successor family's opinions who insist that the celebration of Tabot had been implemented long before the construction of the fort Malborough. They believe that Tabot was brought directly by the Indian Punjab in the year 1336 AD. They oppose the idea that it was brought by the British workers when they built Fort Malborough. Their opinion is based on the belief that Bengkulu is a region that is very similar to the condition of Persia. Bengkulu has many hills that are regarded as a representation of Karbala territory in Iraq.<sup>5</sup>

The majority opinions also believe that Tabot celebration in Bengkulu was first held by Sheikh Burhanuddin known as Imam Senggolo in 1685. Sheikh Burhanuddin (Imam Senggolo) came from Bengal India. Then, he settled in Bengkulu and married a local woman who later got offspring. His tomb is still preserved so that it is considered sacred by some residents nowadays.

From the facts explained above that show contrary, it can be concluded that the early commencement of Tabot ceremony held in Bengkulu was started in 1336 AD, brought by the Punjab India. As time goes by, this ceremony was not performed anymore by the next generation. Later, around 1685 AD, Sheikh Burhanuddin known as Imam Senggolo revived that long-abandoned ceremony. In the construction of

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<sup>4</sup> Rizki Handayani, *Dinamika Kultural Tabot Bengkulu* (Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah), p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> Masudi, *Tabut dan Shi'ah: Studi Relevansi Antara Upacara Tabut dan Paham Shi'ah*, Tesis (Surabaya : IAIN Sunan Ampel), p. 55.

Fort Malborough, the Indian workers brought by the British actively participated in the process of Tabot ceremony to release their longing to the customs in their village that was also held each year and similar to Tabot.

### **Time and Procedures of Tabot**

The Tabot ceremony is a long series of events conducted from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram. Every day, there are interrelated special events. It begins by taking soil on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Muharram in a place considered sacred and ends with Tabot disposal on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram. The details are as follows:<sup>6</sup>

#### **1. Soil Taking**

Soil taking is held on the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> Dzulhijjah, exactly at 22.00 until 00.00 or night in the 1<sup>st</sup> Muharram every year. Because the Tabot ceremony has sacred values, then the soil must be taken from a sacred place too. There are some lands in Bengkulu that are considered having a high degree of sanctity. However, the Tabot families choose the lands with the highest levels of sanctity according to them. The lands that are considered to have the highest levels of sanctity are:

- a. Tanah Paderi. A location near Pantai Panjang which has a steep slope. The location is adjacent to Fort Malborough in Bengkulu.
- b. Tebek. It is located close to public cemeteries Tebek Market which is located in Nala Beach.

The soil taking is aimed to remind humans that they come from the soil and they will return there, so that people are aware of the meaning of life and do not be arrogant or conduct despicable acts in life. The soil is taken two handfuls, then it is shaped like a puppet assumed as Hussein's body, wrapped in a white cloth which is then placed in *Gerga*.<sup>7</sup> The soil taking is carried out by the chairman of Tabot, shaman, and Tabot figures, followed by Tabot family members and the people who participate to see the event.

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<sup>6</sup> See the details in: Masudi, *Tabot dan Shi'ah: Studi Relevansi Antara Upacara Tabot dan Paham Shi'ah*, Tesis (Surabaya : IAIN Sunan Ampel), p. 57-68.

<sup>7</sup> A small building which size approximately 2x2 meters, 2 or 3 meters high, and built permanently. Gerga is made as a symbolic headquarters of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib and his troops.

## 2. *Duduk Penja*

*Penja* is an object made in pairs which is shaped like human hands complete with the fingers. Each Tabot group at least has a pair of *penja*. The size of *penja* varies from the size of adult's palm to children's palm. *Penja* is usually made of copper, silver or brass. Although the original *penja* was made of gold, but because of the cost of manufacture, the *penja* made of these materials is adequate enough. These objects are stored above the ceiling of the house for one year. When Muharram comes, those things are brought down on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of Muharram at 15:30 to be washed with lime water and rinsed with milk and sandalwood that are equipped with the offering. After being washed, the *penja* is seated and wrapped in cloth and stored in *gerga*. This series of events is called *Duduk Penja*. *Penja* that is shaped like a human hand is associated with the pair of hands of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib and his followers that were found to be scattered and needed to be paired again.

## 3. *Menjara*

It means attack. In Tabot ceremony, *menjara* is expressed by traveling at night to stay in touch with other fellow Tabot; younger Tabot visits the older and the next day older Tabot visits the younger. *Menjara* is performed on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of Muharram after evening prayers until 22:00. This event was accompanied with musical accompaniment of *dol*,<sup>8</sup> thus it attracts people to come see it. Beating *dol* repeatedly is associated with what happened when there was fighting between the troops of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib with Mu'awiya bin Yazid's army.

## 4. *Meradai*

It is a fund raising event done by the chairman of the Tabot to community voluntarily. The Tabot chief delegates several young teenagers for citation. The teens on duty are called *jola*. In performing their duty, the *jola* walk into houses, accompanied by the sounds of *tassa*.<sup>9</sup> *Meradai* is held on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Muharram.

## 5. *Arak Penja*

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<sup>8</sup> A kind of musical instrument made of palm trunk that has been hollowed out and covered with buffalo leather; this instrument is similar to the *bedug* (a kind of drum).

<sup>9</sup> A kind of musical instrument shaped like a small *rebana* (tambourine), rung by smashing it with a small *rotan* (cane).

It means the parade of *penja* or fingers that is carried on the 7<sup>th</sup> Muharram after Maghrib prayer until 21.00. The event starts from *gerga* in which the *penja* (fingers) are stored respectively. After being opened with a series of rituals, The *penja* are strung on double-edged spear and paraded to Merdeka hall which route has been determined by the respective chairman of Tabot. Arriving at Merdeka hall, all Tabot groups form a line of rows in which all banners and *penja* are juxtaposed until 21.00 or 22.00. After the event, the *penja* and banners are taken home and stored in *gerga* respectively. This event is associated with the efforts of a notice to the public that the fingers of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib have been found, so that people are no longer confused and try to look for it.

#### 6. *Arak Seroban*

It is quite similar to *Arak Penja*, but in *seroban* the procession will be followed by *tabot coki*, the *penja* which has been shrouded in a white cloth and placed in *tabot coki*. The top of the *penja* is covered with *seroban* (turban) and then paraded in accordance with the prescribed route. *Arak Seroban* is held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of Muharram after Maghrib prayer until 21.00 or 22.00. This event is followed by a variety of folk art with many attractions and offering dances. *Arak Seroban* is intended for notification to the public that the turban worn by Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib when fighting in Karbala has been found.

#### 7. *Gam*

It means a day of mourning. The event was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Muharram from 06.00 am until 14.00 o'clock. On this day, all the Tabot activities are stopped, there is no sound of *dol* and *tassa*. On this day, all the Tabot family wail and cry to show deep sorrow over the killing of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib in the battle of Karbala.

#### 8. *Arak Gedang*

It means parading all the Tabot toward a predetermined place, namely Merdeka hall. *Arak Gedang* is held on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Muharram. Before the Tabot is paraded, around 14:00 in the afternoon, it is held an event in which the piece of top the the Tabot and the bottom (*gedang*) Tabot are spliced into one piece. This session is called *Tabot naik pangkeh*. During the execution of the event, the entire *dol* and *tassa* are rung back as a sign

that the manufacturing of Tabot has been completed entirely. After Asr prayer, Tabot is taken to the *gerga* place for *soja*.<sup>10</sup> At night, around 19:00 to 22:00, Tabot is paraded around the city of Bengkulu. The Tabots are decorated with beautiful colorful flowers and decorative lights. Arriving at the Merdeka hall, those Tabots are juxtaposed and given ratings to determine the best Tabot.

#### 9. *Tabot Terbuang*

It is the culmination of the long series of Tabot ceremony as a commemoration of the death of Hussein in the battle of Karbala, so this event is conducted in Karabela, a public cemetery in Bengkulu city. It is done by disposing Tabot to the burial site. This event takes place on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram at 12.00 at noon. Before the Tabot is discarded, the whole Tabot is paraded around the city to the Merdeka hall. Each Tabot must pay homage to Imam Tabot and Ward. On the way to the Karabela public cemetery, the parade is accompanied by the sound of *dol* dan *tassa* as well as the oceans of masses who follow the Tabot event. The ceremony is associated as the last delivery ceremony to Husein's body which was buried in Karbala and as a reminder for mankind that the fighting between Hussein and Yazid bin Mu'awiya resulted not only a small number of casualties, with the hope that those such things can be avoided and not repeated again.

### **The Correlation between Tabot and Ta'ziyeh**

Ta'ziyeh means entertaining and making stronger.<sup>11</sup> In Persian community, Ta'ziyeh means: a memorial ceremony on every 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram on the death of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib in the unbalanced battle of Karbala between the troops of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib and the Umayyad forces headed by Ubeidillah. Persian people who were Shia followers regard the death of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib as an event that should be mourned and regretted by the followers of Shia. That is the reason why they held this ceremony as a form of sympathy over the death

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<sup>10</sup> Is a salute to the Tabot

<sup>11</sup>Ibrahim Mustofa, *al-Mu'jam al-Wasith*, (Istanbul : Al-Maktabah Al-Islamiyyah), p. 598.

of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib and expressed their regret at their inability to help Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib from enemy attack.

This commemoration is celebrated not only in Persia (Iran) alone, but also in countries where there are many Shia followers, such as Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and others. Even in some countries the death commemoration of Husein bin Ali bin Abi Talib is celebrated with an extreme way, such as shouting Hayya Husein Hayya Husein accompanied by banging the chest and wounding head with sharp objects in order to feel the pain that Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib felt when he was killed in the incident.

The whole series of Tabot in Bengkulu is also always associated with the death of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib. The rituals of *soil taking*, *duduk Penja*, *Menjara* and so on are all associated with events that happened to Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib. The correlation of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib in every ceremony held in Tabot procession is certainly interesting to be studied more deeply.

In history of Islam, there is not a group that seeks to highlight the figure of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib as powerful as Shia faction. Shia is a group who believes that Ali bin Abi Talib and his descendants are the holders of the caliphate after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Shia dominates the Persian and make it as a base movement

In the Shia culture, the killing of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib is used as a symbol of the struggle in demanding the rights of those who are oppressed. The death of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib in Karbala is commemorated in a large scale as a sign of their deep love. The entire Shia communities feel sorrow and profound sadness.<sup>12</sup>

At first, the death anniversary of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib was carried out by a minority of Shia and yet neatly organized. They only did that in groups. However, after seeing that the death anniversary of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib has a potential to foster an outstanding sense of emotional among Shia followers, some Shia leaders took the initiative to organize this memorial. The first person who took the opportunity was Al-Mukhtar who claimed to be Imam of Shia and said he

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<sup>12</sup> Syalabi, *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam*, terj. Muhkhtar Yahya dan Sanusi Latief (Jakarta : al-Husna 1995) p. 268.



had a chair decorated with various ornaments which he claimed as the chair of Ali bin Abi Talib. One day, when al-Mukhtar led a war, he brought the chair to the battlefield and put it in front row. Masudi called the Al-Mukhtar chair as Tabot.<sup>13</sup>

The death of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib really drain emotions and sentiments among Shia followers. So, it is not surprising that this tragedy was commemorated with various forms of ceremony in many countries where there are many followers of Shia. For example, in Pakistan there is a replica of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib grave made of wood and adorned with various ornaments, called the *Rawza*. There are also other forms such as a beautiful house regarded as Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib grave in which it is believed that the pilgrimage to the tomb is considered as a substitute for the pilgrimage to the holy land. Some even made a wood decorated with colorful paper that will be discharged into the sea or buried every year.<sup>14</sup>

After analyzing the series of Tabot commemoration held in Bengkulu with its various rituals and comparing Ta'ziyeh commemoration carried out by Shia followers in various countries, we could conclude that there is a relationship between both of these commemoration although only in its history and execution. Still, the relationship between the two in terms of politics and religion can not be proved because the Tabot family who is the descendants of Indian cannot be indicated as Shia followers. Rizqi Handayani even said firmly that Tabot is another version of Ta'ziyeh tradition celebrated by Shia followers in South India.<sup>15</sup>

The relevances of both commemoration are illustrated by the following matters:

1. The purpose of both Tabot and Ta'ziyeh are similar: to commemorate the death of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib in the battle of Karbala.
2. The routine of the execution of these commemorations is also similar: they both are held every year on the month of Muharram.

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<sup>13</sup> Masudi, *Tabot dan Shi'ah: Studi Relevansi Antara Upacara Tabot dan Paham Shi'ah*, p. 88.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> Rizqi Handayani, *Dinamika Kultural Tabot Bengkulu* (Jakarta :UIN Syarif Hidayatullah), p.148

Even Tabot family in Bengkulu believes if the Tabot commemoration is not implemented, there will be a disaster.

3. The attributes used in Tabot and Ta'zīyeh ceremonies also have the same philosophy: carrying the casket coffin as a symbol of Husein bin Ali bin Abi Talib who was killed in the battle of Karbala.

### **Local Wisdom in Tabot Festival**

Local Wisdom is all forms of knowledge, belief, understanding or insight as well as custom or ethics that guide human behavior in ecological community life. Local Wisdom can be a truth that has become a tradition in an area or customs that grow and develop in the life of a community.<sup>16</sup>

Local wisdom can also be interpreted as the ideas of values (culture) of local wise, full of wisdom, rated both embedded and followed by the members of the community. Local wisdom in anthropological term is recognized as the local genius.<sup>17</sup> Moendardjito in Ayatrohaedi says that a cultural element of an area has potential to be a local genius because it has proven its ability to survive.<sup>18</sup> In this case, Tabot can be interpreted as a regional culture with the potential to survive because it is followed by members of the community.

Understanding Tabot Festival as a cultural treasure of the nation that need to be inherited, a tradition worth goodness that needs to be passed, is a manifestation of Islam as a religion of rahmatan lil'alamin (that bring mercy to the universe). The eternal virtue will always accompany the journey of human life until the end of the life in the world. Kindness will always considered good by anyone at any time as long as no individual or group interests shadows. Advice from wise people is needed to help us think that in life we need to look at things with a positive outlook and distance ourselves from negative views because it can also put ourselves in a positive order of life.

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<sup>16</sup> Gorys Keraf, *Linguistik Bandingan Historis*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2010), p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> Ayatrohaedi, *Kepribadian Budaya Bangsa*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1986), p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 41.

In recent years, there are some parties that disturb the existence of Tabot and question the authenticity of deeds in performing Tabot festival. They assume that there are elements that deviate from Islamic teachings. They think that the deeds that lead to polytheism and bring out the perpetrators from Islam, or the individual cult that is forbidden in Islam, or Tabot celebration itself are the part of the propaganda of certain groups which threaten the faith of Bengkulu residents.

Such views certainly need to be reorganized in order to understand the nature of things with a positive outlook. For now, the Tabot Festival already does not belong to a particular individual, a particular family or group, or a particular school anymore. Currently, the Tabot Festival belongs to entire communities of Bengkulu city because all societies are involved in this celebration. The society gathers to see the festival, small traders contribute to increase the splendor atmosphere, and the local government of Bengkulu also supports Tabot festival to be a major attraction that can attract tourists, both local and foreign.

There are several reasons why we should consider Tabot Festival as a cultural heritage that should be preserved and not as a digression of religion from certain groups that must be discarded.<sup>19</sup> Here are some of those reasons:

1. The tabot Festival is closely related to the existence of Ta'ziyeh ceremony held by Shia followers in several countries. The ceremony was supposed to have relation with Shia. However, after investigation, it is found that the Tabot families are not identified as Shia followers.
2. The possible reason for the implementation of Tabot Tradition in Bengkulu by workers of fort Marlborough originating from South India is as a boost to maintain customs and traditions of the family from their village, not as a mission to develop the teachings of their religion.
3. Interesting fact that we need to consider is the public widespread acceptance of the Tabot Festival in Bengkulu as a culture, not as a

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<sup>19</sup>See also the review of the adjacency of Tabot Festival to the culture versus religious ritual in: Endang Rochmiatun, *Tradisi Tabot Pada Bulan Muharram di Bengkulu : Paradigma Dekonstruksi*, p. 54 dan Rizki Handayani, *Dinamika Kultural Tabot Bengkulu* (Jakarta :UIN Syarif Hidayatullah), p. 148.

religious ritual. Although it was likely that they know the origin of religious and ritual elements in it as well as the symbols used during the ceremony. On the Facebook page of Bengkulu people, many of them invite people to participate in this Festival. It was a remarkable welcome for this festival. One of public figures in Bengkulu provides special message for the public to understand the Tabot festival more wisely so it does not raise controversies regarding religious properties

4. The support from Bengkulu provincial government to the Tabot festival, both morally and materially, and their action to make it a featured travel icon for the city of Bengkulu indicate which direction the Tabot festival will be taken. From this side, the Tabot festival is made as an attraction that are expected to attract the attention of local and foreign tourists. Local and foreign tourist arrivals will certainly improve the welfare of most citizens in Bengkulu. In this case, traditional figures, Zaharuddin and HM. Iskak argue that the presence of tourists in large numbers certainly boosts business and income of traders, transportation providers, hotel and lodging, culinary sector, handicrafts and unique souvenirs of Bengkulu.<sup>20</sup> However, its main purpose is to preserve the Tabot culture itself as the statement submitted by the Head of Tourism and Culture, Rudy Perdana.
5. Several public figures of Bengkulu also act positively on the sustainability of Tabot festival, where the public openly and enthusiastically participate in this annual festival. The chairman of Regional Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (PWNU) Bengkulu, Prof. Dr. H. Sirajuddin, expressed support for Tabot as a cultural festival in the city of Bengkulu. Dr. Syaifullah, the chairman of Muhammadiyah Regional Board of Bengkulu and several other leaders have no objection to the Tabot Festival in Bengkulu as long as it does not lead to acts of idolatry. In fact, they add that we can take important lessons from this festival, which are the spirit

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<sup>20</sup> Harapandi Dahri, *Titik Temu Sunny dan Syi'i : Kajian Tradisi Tabot Bengkulu*(Jakarta : Penamadani, 2008), h. 83.

of unity, hard work, and mutual help of the people of Bengkulu in preparing and celebrating this Tabot Festival.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

Tabot Festival that became a travel icon of Bengkulu city is rooted in Shia culture brought by the workers of fort Marlborough originating from South India. Imam Senggola (sheikh Burhanuddin) is believed to be the first to bring the Tabot tradition to Bengkulu. In the beginning, this tradition was introduced to expand the Shia proselytizing in Bengkulu City, as well as the expression of Sipai people to treat their homesickness for their customs and habits. Over times, Shia proselytizing was not received by Bengkulu citizens whose majority embrace Sunni. So, Tabot was essentially just a traditional ceremony performed by the Sipai, although the elements of ritual that defense Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib was also not lost.

The outstanding public acceptance and support from Bengkulu provincial government reinforce the cultural side of Tabot that must be preserved. The development of the cultural side of Tabot makes it free from the bonds of individual or communal as well as makes it the common property of Bengkulu society.

Most groups who dispute the authenticity of Tabot in terms of religion do not reduce the substantiality of Bengkulu leaders to continue supporting and maintain the Tabot Festival as a tourist icon of the city of Bengkulu. In fact, they hope that the people of Bengkulu can take positive values exemplified by the parties involved in preparing Tabot Festival, especially the spirit of unity, hard work and cooperation.

As a tourism icon of the city of Bengkulu, we hope that the Tabot Festival quality can always be upgraded so it is able to attract tourists to come to the city of Bengkulu to enjoy Tabot festival. Along with the increasing number of tourists who come to Bengkulu, the public welfare in Bengkulu will also increase. *Wallahu A'lam* (Allah knows best).

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<sup>21</sup> Rizki Handayani, *Dinamika Kultural Tabot Bengkulu* (Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah), p. 146.

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