

## From Religious Understanding to Tradition: The Role of *Tuan Gurus* in the *Fidyah* Practice within the Sasak Muslim Community

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| Received: 18-07-2024

| Revised: 10-11-2024

| Accepted: 27-11-2024

**Abstract:** This study examines the tradition of *fidyah* payments—compensation for missed prayers (*salāt*) on behalf of the deceased—within the Sasak Muslim community in Central Lombok, Indonesia. Although this practice diverges from the mainstream Shāfi‘ī school of law (*madhab*), which the community primarily follows, it endures as a deeply ingrained tradition. Based on fieldwork and interviews with *tuan gurus* (local religious leaders) and deceased family members, the research finds that *fidyah* is commonly paid using rice, money, or gold from the deceased's estate, distributed as alms to the poor. The community views *fidyah* as a means of atoning for missed prayers, offering peace to the family. *Tuan gurus* legitimize this practice by citing specific Islamic juristic opinions, particularly those of Imām al-Subkī and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Over generations, the Sasak community has internalized *fidyah* as a communal obligation, with non-compliance regarded as a family dishonor. This study demonstrates how *tuan gurus*' teachings shape and institutionalize religious practices, transforming them into essential cultural traditions.

**Keywords:** Cultural Traditions; *Fidyah* for Missed Prayers; Religious Understanding; Sasak Muslim Community; *Tuan Guru*.

### Introduction

**D**eath marks the end of all worldly rights and obligations for a Muslim; however, this does not conclude responsibilities for the family left behind (Salma, 2021). The bereaved family is obliged to perform various religious rituals, including the burial, *tahlilan* (a six-night prayer ritual intended to aid the deceased in entering paradise), and *selamatan* (a religiously oriented communal meal provided by a villager for male neighbors and associates during significant life events) (Nasir, 2019; Seise, 2021; Sirait, 2016). These rituals follow religious principles shaped by the unique cultural patterns of each community (Jahangir & Hamid, 2022). Despite regional differences in religious practice, a community's adherence to these rituals reflects a harmony between religious teachings and local culture (Manan et al., 2024). On the one hand, these rituals represent Muslims' efforts to maintain a relationship with the deceased, seeking atonement for any sins committed during their lifetime (Manan et al., 2024; Zengin, 2022). On the other hand, Islamic reformers have criticized these traditional practices as inappropriate innovations, questioning the ability and propriety of the deceased's family to fulfill them (Barsukova, 2022; Becker, 2009). These critiques also highlight broader issues concerning religious authority, the formation of Muslim identity, and the negotiation of this identity in daily life (Sahrul et al., 2024).

The interplay between religious authority and Muslim identity is also evident in the tradition of paying *fidyah*—a fine or compensation—for the deceased's missed prayers (*salāt*) within the Sasak Muslim community in Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. This tradition entails the family paying *fidyah* in the form of rice, money, or gold as compensation for the prayers the deceased missed during their

lifetime. *Fidyah* is drawn from the deceased's estate and distributed to the poor. Although the legality of *fidyah* for missed prayers remains a debated issue (*khilāfiyah*) among Islamic jurists (Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1983, p. 85), the Sasak Muslim community treats it as a necessity, with social sanctions imposed on those who neglect it (IS, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 27, 2023). This practice diverges from the widely accepted opinion (*mashhūr*) within the Shāfi'i school of law (*madhhab*), which asserts that missed prayers of the deceased cannot be compensated through *fidyah* or *qadā'* (replacement) (Al-Maliabari, 1995, p. 276). Most Muslims in Indonesia follow the Shāfi'i *madhhab* for guidance on daily religious practices (Hakim & Nasution, 2022, p. 291; Daneshgar, 2023; Jakfar et al., 2023; Huda et al., 2023).

The practice of paying *fidyah* as compensation for missed obligatory fasting (*sawm*) and prayers in Indonesian Muslim communities has been explored in various studies. Ataillah et al. (2021) and Hulaify et al. (2017) argue that this tradition is rooted in Islamic teachings – specifically *hadith* and Islamic juristic opinions – and has been practiced and transmitted through generations. According to Sofwan (2018), local communities view *fidyah* for missed prayers and fasting as a precautionary act (*ihtiyāt*) to address unfulfilled religious obligations of the deceased. Although Islamic jurists differ on the legality of using *fidyah* to compensate for missed prayers, Hakim and Long (2021) suggest that this tradition has contributed to a more lenient approach towards prayer obligations in the Muslim community. Manan et al. (2024) found that religious elites strongly endorse this practice, and families of the deceased consider paying *fidyah* an act of devotion. Additionally, this practice is thought to serve as an expiation for unfulfilled religious duties of the deceased (Hayati & Khitam, 2018), while also bringing comfort to the family (Abubakar, 2011).

Building on previous studies, this article examines the tradition of paying *fidyah* as a substitute for missed prayers of the deceased and analyzes the Islamic legal reasoning employed by *tuan gurus* (local religious leaders) in conveying these teachings to the Sasak Muslim community in Central Lombok. Contrary to Manan et al. (2024), who argue that religious elites merely support this practice, this article finds that the tradition of *fidyah* payments originates from these elites' religious interpretations, which have been externalized to the local Muslim community. The community has objectified and internalized the *tuan guru*'s religious understanding, becoming a long-standing tradition passed down through generations. Therefore, the authors argue that the tradition of paying *fidyah* as a substitute for missed prayers of the deceased has been socially constructed and institutionalized as a communal obligation by the Sasak Muslim community, deriving from the religious authority and understanding of the *tuan guru*, who legitimizes the practice.

## Literature Review

### *Fidyah* as Compensation for Fasting and Prayer: Perspectives of Islamic Jurists

*Fidyah* is derived from the Arabic root *afḍā'*, meaning, in its *maṣdar* (noun) form, a ransom, payment, atonement, or something given in place of the person being atoned for (Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1983, p. 135; Ma'luf, n.d., p. 572). Thus, *fidyah* is closely associated with *kaffarah* (expiation or fine) (Al-Sabuni, n.d., p. 75). In religious terms, *fidyah* refers to a gift or offering, often in the form of property, given as compensation for the inability to perform a religious obligation. Accordingly, *fidyah* can be understood as a means for a Muslim to make amends for unmet religious duties (Manan et al., 2024).

The obligation to pay *fidyah* for missed fasting is well established (Al-Zuhailī, 1985, p. 687). This requirement is based on Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 184: "And for those who can fast but with difficulty, they must feed a poor person as *fidyah*." This verse, along with supportive *hadiths*, provides the foundation for the obligation. For instance, a *hadith* narrated by Ibn Umar states that if someone dies without fulfilling their obligatory fasts, *fidyah* must be given to the poor on their behalf (Ataillah et al., 2021, p. 34). Similarly, a narration from Ibn Abbas holds that if a person is sick and cannot fast, their family should pay *fidyah* instead of making up missed prayers (Dawud, 1969, p. 235). Based on such textual evidence, Islamic jurists agree that *fidyah* is obligatory for certain groups: those unable to fast due to chronic illness, pregnant or

breastfeeding women concerned for their child's welfare, and the elderly. Most jurists concur that *fidyah* should be paid in the form of one *mudd* (a measure of volume) of staple food per day missed (Rahman et al., 2017). However, in the Hanafi *madhhab*, *fidyah* may also be half a *ṣā’* (a traditional Islamic unit) of wheat or its monetary equivalent, distributed to any of the eight eligible categories of *mustaḥiq zakāt* (zakāt recipients) (Al-Zuhailī, 1985, pp. 134–135). Thus, any Muslim unable to fast during Ramadan must fulfill this obligation through *fidyah*.

In contrast, Islamic jurists differ on whether *fidyah* can compensate for missed prayers on behalf of the deceased. The predominant view in the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab* is that missed prayers cannot be substituted with *fidyah* or performed vicariously. Nonetheless, some jurists support the practice. Imām al-Subkī endorsed *fidyah* and reportedly implemented it for relatives (Al-Maliabari, 1995, p. 276). Imām al-Baghawi, another Shāfi‘ī scholar, opined that missed prayers may be compensated by donating one *mudd* of food per missed prayer (Al-Nawawi, 1997, p. 372). A *ḥadīth* narrated by Ibn Abbas supports this more permissive view: “One cannot pray on behalf of another, nor fast for another, but one may feed in substitution for missed prayers or fasts, with one mudd of wheat per day.” This *hadīth*, transmitted by al-Nasa’ī, is classified as *mauqūf* (a non-prophetic narration) (Al-Nasa’ī, 1991, p. 145). Beyond the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab*, the Hanafi *madhhab* permits *fidyah* payments for missed prayers only if the deceased made a will (*waṣiyyah*) specifying this arrangement. Without such a will, *fidyah* is generally not considered valid. However, another Hanafi scholar, Muhammad ibn Hasan permits *fidyah* for missed prayers even without a prior will (Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu’ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1983, p. 85).

Both the Shāfi‘ī and Hanafi *madhhab*s provide specific guidelines regarding the amount and form of *fidyah* paid by the deceased’s family. According to the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab*, each missed prayer requires giving one *mudd* (approximately 0.6 kilograms or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a liter) of staple food to the poor. Conversely, the Hanafi *madhhab* mandates half a *ṣā’* (about 1.9 kilograms) of wheat or flour, or one *ṣā’* (approximately 3.8 kilograms) of dates or raisins for each missed prayer. This same quantity applies to missed fasts and *ṣalāt al-witr* (prayers of an odd number outside the five daily obligations) (Al-Zuhailī, 1985, pp. 134–135). Families may also fulfill *fidyah* by paying the monetary equivalent of these food amounts. Generally, adherents are advised to follow their *madhhab* rulings to avoid combining rulings across schools (*talfīq*) (Abidin, 2019).

Fundamentally, paying *fidyah* for missed prayers is the deceased’s responsibility, drawn from their estate. According to Al-Zuhailī, (1985, pp. 134–135), it is impermissible for someone still alive, even if gravely ill, to pay *fidyah* for missed prayers, as *fidyah* for prayer differs from that for fasting. If a person died having missed prayers without a valid excuse (*‘udhr shar‘i*) and had the opportunity to make them up, *fidyah* is not required. However, if they had a valid reason for the missed prayers, *fidyah* may be paid in a minimal amount, in alignment with the *ḥadīth* asserting that Allah accepts valid excuses when an obligation cannot be fulfilled. Consequently, paying *fidyah* for missed prayers cannot be easily justified in scholarly or legal discourse, as prayer is viewed as an individual act of worship that cannot be substituted by *fidyah*.

## Method

This study is based on field research using a socio-legal approach. Fieldwork was conducted during two periods, April to August 2023 and April to May 2024, in Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The authors conducted in-depth interviews with eight *tuan gurus* and nine relatives of deceased individuals who practice the tradition of paying *fidyah* to compensate for missed prayers. To ensure confidentiality, the identities of all seventeen key informants were anonymized. The collected data were then analyzed descriptively and qualitatively using the social construction theory proposed by Berger and Luckmann (1991). This theoretical framework was applied to examine how the *tuan gurus* interpret the legality of *fidyah* as compensation for missed prayers and how the Sasak Muslim community in Central Lombok has internalized and implemented this understanding.

## Results and Discussion

### ***Fidyah* Prayer Practices among the Sasak Muslim Community in Central Lombok**

Central Lombok is a district in West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia (Haerozi et al., 2023), located on the island of Lombok, bordering West Lombok to the west, East Lombok to the east, the Indian Ocean to the south, and the Lombok Strait to the north (Pratama et al., 2023). In 2023, Central Lombok's population was approximately 1.2 million ("Jumlah Penduduk Kabupaten Lombok Tengah," 2023), distributed across 139 villages and sub-districts within twelve administrative areas (Sutangga et al., 2023). The majority of the population adheres to Islam (99.68%), with a minority practicing Hinduism and Christianity (Amrillah, 2021). Islamic Sasak traditions shape the socio-religious structure of the region, underscored by numerous mosques, madrasahs, and the prominent roles of *tuan gurus* and traditional figures in community life (Aziz, 2009).

Due to this strong Muslim presence, many Islamic teachings in Central Lombok have evolved into entrenched traditions, including the practice of paying *fidyah* as compensation for missed prayers on behalf of the deceased (R, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, August 19, 2023). This practice involves transferring assets from the deceased's estate (Hakim, 2023, p. 66), often rice, money, or gold, as a means of atoning for prayers missed due to illness or incapacity (IU and NS, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, April 11 and 24, 2024). These offerings are typically contributed by the family and, in some cases, by neighbors or relatives in a custom known as "*beras pe-langar*" (SS, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 20, 2023). The *fidyah* is usually paid two to nine days after the burial (HM, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 26, 2023). IS, a family member of the deceased, explained:

"Our family pays *fidyah* on behalf of our deceased relatives based on the teachings of the *tuan gurus*, who instructed us to settle the deceased's debt of missed prayers to Allah. The *fidyah* is carried out according to their guidance by donating one *mudd* of rice to the poor and needy." (IS, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 27, 2023).

In the Sasak Muslim community, the tradition of paying *fidyah* for missed prayers is considered essential. Families feel burdened if this duty is unfulfilled, perceiving it as a debt owed to the deceased (AW and J, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 5-6, 2023). According to *Tuan Guru* IU, paying *fidyah* from the deceased's estate is a means of addressing obligations left incomplete (IU, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, April 11, 2024). Neglecting this practice can result in social disapproval (Fakhyadi & Samsudin, 2024), with families labeled as irresponsible (NS, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, April 24, 2024) and suffering a loss of honor within the community (SM, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, July 21, 2023). *Tuan Guru* R elaborated:

"In our community, *fidyah* is considered obligatory. If it is not done, families feel indebted and cannot bear the thought of their deceased relative having unresolved burdens. It is through this *fidyah* that the families left behind find reassurance." (R, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, August 19, 2023)

There is variation within the Sasak Muslim community regarding how *fidyah* is calculated and the assets used (AH, AHKN, and SM, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, May 9, 2024, June 9 and July 21, 2023). For most, five daily obligatory prayers are accounted for—*fajr* (dawn), *zuhr* (midday), *'asr* (afternoon), *maghrib* (sunset), and *ishā'* (night) (DA and DS, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, April 20-21, 2023). A smaller group includes *ṣalāt al-witr* as a sixth prayer (DA and DS, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, April 20-21, 2023). The responsibility for estimating missed prayers generally falls on the family member who last cared for the deceased (J, M, and S, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 5-20, 2023). AW explained:

"We prepare rice corresponding to the number of missed prayers the deceased leaves. If one day of prayers is missed, we multiply one *mudd* of rice by five obligatory prayers. Some communities,

however, add a sixth, *ṣalāt al-witr*." (AW, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 5, 2023).

Variations also exist in the form of *fidyah* itself (SM, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, July 21, 2023). Most families use one *mudd* of rice per missed prayer, approximately 2/3 kg. At the same time, some replace missed prayers with larger quantities or with money or gold (AHKN, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, June 9, 2023). The *fidyah* is distributed to the poor as alms (*ṣadaqah*) and, in some cases, may be returned to the deceased's family as part of the *pe-langar* mourning tradition, in which mourners bring rice as a gesture of condolence (SM, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, July 21, 2023). This practice, rooted in Sasak culture, has been maintained for generations (DA and DS, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, April 20-21, 2023) and mirrors similar customs in Western Turkey aimed at supporting the bereaved (Bahar et al., 2012).

While many in the Sasak Muslim community consider paying *fidyah* for missed prayers essential (AW, IS, and J, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 5-27, 2023), not all families adhere to the tradition (DA and DS, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, April 20-21, 2023), this variation in practice stems from differing religious interpretations of the obligation of *fidyah* for missed prayers (Sofwan, 2020b). Some believe that paying *fidyah* as compensation for missed prayers is not required in Islam. Instead, these families perform *qadā'*, either individually (*munfarid*) or collectively (*jama'ah*), to make up for the missed prayers. When a large number of prayers are involved, they may invite others to help complete the *qadā'*. A few families neither pay *fidyah* nor perform *qadā'* (SM, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, July 21, 2023), reflecting diverse religious interpretations and the adaptive nature of Islamic law in local cultural contexts (Sofwan, 2020b; Hakim & Long, 2021).

The practice of paying *fidyah* for missed prayers is not exclusive to the Sasak community but is observed across Indonesia. In Aceh, the practice, called *tulak breuh*, involves offering rice, money, or gold in a special ritual (Hakim & Long, 2021; Manan et al., 2024). In Indramayu, *fidyah* is paid for missed prayers and fasts (Sofwan, 2020a). Among the Banjar people in Banjarmasin, the tradition is known as *bahilah* (Hafidzi et al., 2018; Hayati & Khitam, 2018), and in Jorong Petok, West Sumatra, it is called *ma ayun bareh* (Ilhanifah, 2022). These diverse practices demonstrate how religious rituals evolve under local cultural influences unique to each region (Jahangir & Hamid, 2022).

### ***Fidyah as Compensation for the Prayers of the Deceased: Tuan Guru's Islamic Legal Reasoning***

The tradition of paying *fidyah* as compensation for the prayers missed by the deceased is deeply connected to the religious understanding and reasoning provided by *tuan gurus*, who legitimize it through Islamic legal principles. *Tuan guru* is a title given to religious figures with profound Islamic knowledge who have historically played a crucial role in spreading Islam on the island of Lombok (Sainun et al., 2024). On the island of Java, these figures are known as *kiai*s (clerics) (Oktaviani & Sugitanata, 2020; Pribadi, 2013; Baihaqi et al., 2024; Taufiq et al., 2024). They engage in various religious and social activities, including Qur'anic recitation, commemorating Islamic holidays, and leading other community events. Among the Sasak Muslim community in Central Lombok, *tuan gurus* are esteemed as religious authorities with deep knowledge of Islam and as influential figures in daily community life (Fitriani, 2016). Their charisma, wisdom, and contributions to maintaining local religious and cultural values earn them the community's respect and trust (Sulhan & Lessy, 2022). As such, they serve as primary references for the public on matters of socio-religious life, including education, conflict resolution, and local customs (Tahir, 2008; Munisah et al., 2023).

Based on interviews with *tuan gurus* in Central Lombok, they concur that paying *fidyah* to compensate for a deceased person's missed prayers is permissible (*mubah*). This view is grounded in their understanding of scholarly opinions in classical Islamic texts, commonly called the *kitab kuning* (yellow books). Within the tradition of the Lembaga Bahtsul Masail or LBM (official forums for religious discussion) of Nahdlatul Ulama, using scholarly opinions to address legal issues is known as the *qauli* (textual) method (Hakim et al., 2023; Riza, 2011; Syafi'i et al., 2023; Hannan et al., 2024). *Tuan Guru SM* explained:

"The legal basis underlying this practice is derived from the opinions of scholars as recorded in classical Islamic texts, such as *Fath al-Mu'in*. This text presents various scholarly opinions, including that of Imām al-Subkī, who permits either making up missed prayers or paying *fidyah* on behalf of a deceased person." (SM, Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah, personal communication, July 21, 2023)

They cite several Qur'anic verses and *hadīth* to justify the permissibility of paying *fidyah* for missed prayers, even though neither of these sources explicitly addresses this practice, unlike *fidyah* payments for missed fasts. While the *tuan gurus* generally agree on the permissibility of paying *fidyah* for missed prayers, some refrain from making it obligatory, acknowledging ongoing scholarly disagreement among Islamic jurists (MA, Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah, personal communication, May 17, 2024).

The Islamic jurists cited by the *tuan gurus* to support *fidyah* payments for missed prayers come from the Shāfi'i and Ḥanafī *madhhabs*. The *tuan gurus* recognize that the dominant opinion within the Shāfi'i *madhab* does not permit *fidyah* payments for missed prayers during a person's lifetime (Al-Maliabari, 1995, p. 276). However, they refer to a minority opinion within the Shāfi'i *madhab*, represented by Imām al-Subkī, who allows *fidyah* payments for missed prayers if the deceased made a will requesting it (MA and NS, Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah, personal communication, May 17, 2024 and April 24, 2024). Imām al-Subkī permitted *fidyah* payments to alleviate the deceased's burden in the afterlife, a practice he applied within his own family. The *tuan gurus* referenced Imām al-Subkī's opinion from *Fath al-Mu'in*, authored by Al-Maliabari (1995, p. 276). Additionally, some *tuan gurus* refer to the opinion of Imām Abū Ḥanifah (MA, Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah, personal communication, May 17, 2024). According to the Ḥanafī *madhab*, missed prayers can be compensated by paying *fidyah* if the deceased left a will. If no will was made, only Muhammad ibn Hasan allowed *fidyah* payments (Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1983, p. 85). However, the specific text cited by the *tuan gurus* is unclear, as they did not name the exact scholar or text, they relied upon to justify the permissibility of *fidyah* payments for missed prayers.

Despite agreeing on the permissibility of paying *fidyah* for missed prayers, the *tuan gurus* differ on what form the *fidyah* should take and how it should be distributed. This variance arises from the diversity of opinions within the different *madhhabs*. According to the Shāfi'i *madhab*, one *mud* of staple food should be given to the poor for each missed obligatory prayer (*fajr*, *zuhr*, *'aṣr*, *maghrib*, and *ishā'*). In contrast, the Ḥanafī *madhab* allows *fidyah* payments in the form of either half a *sha'* of wheat or flour, one *sha'* of dates or grapes, or a monetary equivalent (Al-Zuhaili, 1985, pp. 134–135). These differing *fidyah* forms are also reflected in the practices of the Sasak Muslim community. The deceased's family makes *fidyah* payments as alms to the poor (IU, Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah, personal communication, April 11, 2024). *Tuan Guru NS* stated:

"*Fidyah* payments instead of missed prayers can be analogized (*qiyās*) to *fidyah* payments for missed fasts, and their distribution may follow the principles of *zakāt* (almsgiving)." (NS, Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah, personal communication, April 24, 2024).

Unlike *fidyah* payments for missed fasts, the *tuan gurus* do not find any explicit Qur'anic verses or *hadīth* that explicitly legitimize *fidyah* payments for missed prayers. Nevertheless, they believe that the opinions of the Islamic jurists they reference can be followed and practiced. *Tuan Guru IU* argues that the Islamic jurists who permit *fidyah* payments for missed prayers arrived at their conclusions through earnest individual legal reasoning (*ijtihād fardī*) to draw closer to Allah (IU, Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah, personal communication, April 11, 2024). The *tuan gurus* have no issue with Muslim families who do not pay *fidyah* and instead choose to make up the missed prayers, as both practices are supported by legitimate scholarly opinions recognized for their expertise (MA, Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah, personal communication, May 17, 2024). They emphasize that the performance of religious acts is unacceptable without clear legal arguments or adherence to the opinions of recognized Islamic jurists (AH, Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah, personal communication, May 9, 2024).

Unlike *fidyah* payments for missed fasts, the *tuan gurus* do not find explicit Qur'anic verses or *hadīth* that directly endorse *fidyah* payments for missed prayers. Nonetheless, they believe that the opinions of the Islamic jurists they reference are legitimate and can be practiced. *Tuan Guru IU* argues that the jurists who

permit *fidyah* payments for missed prayers reached their conclusions through sincere individual legal reasoning (*ijtihād fārdi*) to draw closer to Allah (IU, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, April 11, 2024). The *tuan gurus* respect the decision of Muslim families who choose not to pay *fidyah* and instead prefer to make up the missed prayers, as both practices are supported by legitimate scholarly opinions (MA, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, May 17, 2024). They emphasize that religious acts should be based on clear legal arguments or adherence to the rulings of recognized Islamic jurists (AH, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, May 9, 2024).

### From Understanding Islamic Teachings to Tradition: The *Tuan Guru's Authority*

The *tuan gurus* hold a significant position within the socio-religious structure of the Sasak Muslim community on Lombok Island (Udin & Hakim, 2020). Beyond serving as spiritual advisors, they act as guardians of local traditions and wisdom (Mahardika & Khatami, 2023), guiding the community on the importance of living in accordance with Islamic principles in all aspects of life (Fogg, 2019). As custodians of cultural wisdom, *tuan gurus* shape the identity and characteristics of the Sasak community. The community's respect for these teachers derives not only from their religious knowledge and spiritual insight but also from their role in shaping the morals and character of individuals (Nurdin et al., 2023). In this context, *tuan gurus* are esteemed not only as spiritual guides but also as social figures who preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage of the Sasak community (Udin & Harwati, 2019; Sugitanata & Hakim, 2023; Mustafid et al., 2024).

The *tuan gurus'* authority has influenced many Islamic practices followed by the Sasak Muslim community for generations (Sulhan & Lessy, 2022), including the tradition of paying *fidyah* as compensation for the prayers missed by the deceased (Hakim & Long, 2021; Sofwan, 2020b). This tradition arises from the *tuan gurus'* religious understanding of *fidyah* payments as a legitimate substitute for missed prayers, despite being a debated issue within Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The community, guided by the teachings of the *tuan gurus*, considers this practice a necessity, with social sanctions imposed on those who neglect it (AW, IS, and J, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 5-27, 2023). Thus, the religious understanding that legitimizes *fidyah* payments for missed prayers has been essential in preserving this tradition across generations.

The legality of paying *fidyah* for the prayers missed by the deceased is based on the *tuan gurus'* religious understanding, which is informed by various scholarly opinions. Although most Islamic jurists from different *madhhabs* do not endorse this practice, the *tuan gurus* refer to minority opinions within the Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanafi *madhhabs*. For instance, they cite Imām al-Subkī and a recognized opinion within the Ḥanafi *madhab* that allows *fidyah* payments for missed prayers by the deceased (Al-Maliabari, 1995, p. 276). Nonetheless, the *tuan gurus* do not criticize those who choose not to pay *fidyah*, as making up missed prayers or refraining from both practices is also considered valid in Islamic teachings (AH and IU, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, May 9 and April 11, 2024).

The *tuan gurus* convey their religious understanding to the Sasak Muslim community through personal consultations and religious lectures at rituals and gatherings, such as funerals and public recitations. Families concerned about the religious obligations left unfulfilled by deceased relatives consult local *tuan gurus* on these matters (DA, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, April 20, 2023). Some also inquire about *fidyah* during public recitations at *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) (AR, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, June 26, 2023). This guidance is subsequently internalized and practiced by the community.

The Sasak Muslim community views adherence to Islamic teachings as obligatory (AW, IS, and J, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 5-27, 2023). Although the *tuan gurus* acknowledge that *fidyah* for missed prayers is a matter of *khilāfiyah*, families feel a responsibility to pay it, fearing a sense of indebtedness to the deceased if they neglect this duty. By fulfilling this practice, they find peace, believing they have settled the spiritual debt left by the deceased (IU, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, April 11, 2024). The payment of *fidyah* usually occurs within nine days after the funeral. SS described the practice:

"We, as a family, pay the *fidyah* for our deceased relatives based on the teachings of our *tuan gurus*, who instructed us to settle the debt the deceased owed to Allah." (SS, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 20, 2023)

While the *tuan gurus* allow families to choose whether to observe this tradition, those who do not may face social repercussions (AW, IS, and J, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, August 5-27, 2023). Families who forgo this practice are often regarded as neglectful or irresponsible toward their deceased relatives, leading to social stigma (SM, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, August 5, 2023). Even delaying *fidyah* payments can subject families to neighborhood gossip (NS, *Tuan Guru in Lombok Tengah*, personal communication, April 24, 2024).

The tradition of paying *fidyah* for missed prayers, rooted in Islamic teachings, underscores the authority and influence of the *tuan gurus*. This authority is reflected in local expressions that convey the community's respect for them, such as "*pokon arak taukte begantung*" (there is a place for us to lean on), "*pokon arak yak te turut*" (there is a legal basis we follow), and "*mule iye peninggalan olek denga toak te*" (indeed, it is the legacy of our ancestors) (MR, S, and SS, personal communication, February 8 and August 20, 2023). These expressions indicate the community's strong trust in their spiritual leaders (DS, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, April 21, 2023). As a result, the teachings of the *tuan gurus* are regarded as truths that community members feel obligated to follow (DA, *Deceased's Family Members*, personal communication, April 20, 2023).

The transformation of Islamic teachings into tradition within the Sasak Muslim community is a gradual process shaped by the *tuan gurus'* dual roles as spiritual guides and custodians of local customs. Initially grounded in religious instruction, *fidyah* payments for missed prayers gain legitimacy through the *tuan gurus'* interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence. Over time, the community internalizes these practices, incorporating them into significant life events like funerals. As the practice becomes embedded in daily life, its social importance grows, with non-compliance often leading to social sanctions. This dynamic shifts *fidyah* payments from a religious duty to a deeply ingrained cultural tradition, where social expectations reinforce adherence as much as spiritual beliefs. As Berger (2011) notes, religious practices can evolve into enduring social norms through societal expectations and religious devotion (Aminah & Suhastini, 2021; Azmi, 2022; Fakihuddin, 2018). The *tuan gurus* play a pivotal role in this evolution, utilizing their authority to shape and sustain these practices as part of daily life (Fitriani, 2016; Sainun et al., 2024; Sulhan & Lessy, 2022), illustrating the complex relationship between religious guidance and cultural continuity.

## Conclusion

The *tuan gurus* hold significant authority in preserving and perpetuating the practice of paying *fidyah* for missed prayers of the deceased within the Sasak Muslim community in Central Lombok. This tradition, involving the distribution of rice, money, or gold equivalent to the missed obligatory prayers and *salāt al-witr*, is viewed by the community as a means to seek forgiveness for the deceased. At the same time, it brings relief to the family members who fulfill this duty. The *tuan gurus* serve not only as spiritual guides but also as custodians of traditions integral to Sasak identity. They play a crucial role in internalizing the legitimacy of *fidyah* payments within the community, even though many Sunnī Islamic jurists do not endorse this practice. Thus, this tradition represents both a religious obligation and a manifestation of the *tuan gurus'* authority in shaping the Sasak community's religious and social life. The findings highlight the importance of contextual understanding in analyzing religious practices. Despite differing opinions among Sunnī Islamic jurists, the Sasak Muslim community continues to view *fidyah* payments as integral to their religious and communal identity, shaped significantly by the teachings of the *tuan gurus*. However, this study has limitations. First, its focus on the Sasak Muslim community in Central Lombok necessitates caution in generalizing the findings to other Muslim communities. Second, the diversity in *tuan gurus'* religious understanding of *fidyah* payments reflects the complexity of applying Islamic law in varied local contexts.

## Conflict of Interest

This authors declares no conflicts of interest.

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