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Ruwahan Tradition, Spiritual Balance, and Religious Expression of Javanese People

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Abstract

Islam and Javanese culture can communicate harmoniously without conflict. The presence of acculturation can be seen in rural traditions and rural Sufism, such as the Ruwahan/Nyadran tradition. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul village still maintain the ruwahan tradition as a form of Islamic da'wah. This article aims to analyze the ruwahan tradition that shapes the balance between spirituality and the expression of diversity in rural communities. The research utilizes a qualitative descriptive method, with data collection through engaged observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation.

The ruwahan or nyadran tradition practiced by the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village is a slametan ceremony held every year during the month of Ramadan, specifically in the month of Ruwah/Sya'ban, to honor the spirits of ancestors who have passed away. For those who follow this tradition, the ceremony serves as a means to learn to get closer to Allah and even feel His presence in daily activities. The moral values embedded in this tradition shape the individual's character and build a unique society amidst modernity while preserving customs inherited from their predecessors. The purpose of this tradition is to encourage a religious pattern within the community based on noble morals, ultimately aiming to achieve al-insan al-kamil by emphasizing the principle of takhalluq bi al-akhlaiqillah and placing tawhid (the oneness of Allah) as the core value, thus establishing good relationships between humans, Allah, others, and nature.

The ruwahan tradition becomes a space for expressing religious devotion within the community, with the intention of reminding humans of their origins, known as sangkang paraning dumadi, through activities such as nyekar (visiting graves), kenduri/slametan (communal feast), megengan (self-purification), punggaban (ritual procession), and padusan (ritual

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bathing). The enhancement of spirituality and piety through this tradition represents the implementation of faith that fosters the strengthening of diversity within society.

Keywords: *Ruwahan Tradition, Spirituality Balance, Religious Expression, Javanese People.*

Introduction

The influence of Islam on the lives of the people at Bangunrejo Kidul can be seen in all aspects of tradition and culture. This way of life is rooting in their ancient tradition on knowing of Allah. The inhabitants of Bangunrejo Kidul village do not consider religion and culture as enemies, as they are compatible in terms of harmonious development and their impact on the community. Religion serves as the spirit while culture serves as the framework. Religion becomes an aspect that strengthens self-esteem, while culture becomes the means used, resulting in the growth of religious and tolerant attitudes. Religion and culture influence every social interaction and the daily activities of the community, leading to the proportional placement of religion and culture. Religion and culture are closely related as an approach to cultural dissemination. The interaction of religion, humanity, and culture in society occurs dialectically. The individual was shaped by the social structure and does not have a role in the formation of the social structure (Berger, 1969). In shaping the character of the people at Bangunrejo Kidul, they can modify the socio-cultural structure so that they can be influenced and form social institutions, including the *ruwahan* tradition

Traditions, culture, and religion were playing a significant role in unifying the community of Bangunrejo Kidul Village and fostering social harmony based on their shared values. One tradition that encompasses religious and cultural elements is the *ruwahan/nyadran* tradition, where the community cultivates piety rooted in Javanese cultural values. Religious individuals are conscious of acknowledging and practicing their faith in their daily lives. This worldview shapes the way of life for the community, aiming to attain inner tranquility, life balance, and happiness in the afterlife. Despite the evolving nature of the *ruwahan* tradition in response to changing times, it has not caused the local community to lose their identity or become disconnected from their cultural roots.

As the foundation for their daily activities, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village prioritize religion as an example of religious behavior. In certain social interactions and behaviors, religion becomes a manifestation of the values of a belief system (Connolly, 2002). Religion is connecting to the human experience, both as individuals and as a group, so that every behavior aligns with the adopted belief system. Individual and social behaviors are influenced by internal motivations based on the internalization of religious values. These values are reflected in the *ruwahan* tradition practiced by the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village as an effort to "ngirim donga" (send prayers) to Allah for the spirits of their ancestors. To achieve social harmony that fosters religious awareness in the community of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, the *ruwahan* tradition can serve as an

effective social capital. By inheriting religious traditions from their ancestors, this tradition becomes a cultural mechanism that plays a significant role. The presence of such cultural mechanisms is crucial as a means to reduce conflicts and promote productivity (Liliweri, 2003).

Javanese culture in the community of Bangunrejo Kidul Village are inclusive and syncretic, prioritizing the principles of *momong* (nurture), *momor* (blending), and *momot* (accommodating), where religion is accepted with an open attitude. Javanese culture itself consists of two parts: first, the content component, which consists of seven universal elements including religion, art, language, technological systems, economic systems, social organizations, and science. Second, the component of existence, which consists of three aspects: the cultural system involving ideas and concepts, the social system involving behavior and actions, and the physical culture in the form of material creations. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village view culture as the entirety of life encompassing customs, morals, laws, knowledge, beliefs, arts, abilities, and habits acquired by humans as members of society. Culture is acquired and passed down through symbols that shape the distinctive characteristics of human groups, including their embodiment in the form of material objects (Khalil, 2008).

The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, as part of the Javanese community, have knowledge of the *ngirim donga* tradition (praying for ancestral spirits), which is held once a year in the month of Ruwah to honor the spirits of ancestors. This tradition involves the burial and cleaning of ancestral graves. In Bangunrejo Kidul Village, this tradition is known as Nyadran, usually observed after the 15th day of Ruwah, particularly between the 20th and the day before fasting begins. During this time, the community starts cleaning the graves and repainting the small houses within the graves called *cungkup*. The month of Ruwah is a cultural heritage from ancestors that has been passed down as a tradition from generation to generation until the present day (Purwanti, 2014). The culture of the nyadran tradition is characterized by syncretic religious influences, blending elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. This syncretism is evident during the *tablilan* ceremony, which begins with the recitation of prayers in both Arabic and Javanese (Koenjaraningrat, 1970). It can also be observed in the belongings carried by each family that has ancestors. In everyday life, human thoughts shape a behavioral code known as the cultural value system in the field of Anthropology. The cultural value system consists of a series of abstract concepts that exist in the minds of community members, determining what is considered important and valuable in life (Koenjaraningrat, 1970).

In the community of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, cultural values have a function as a system of behavior and social guidelines such as customary law, rules of manners, and customs. In everyday life, it affects behavior and the way of society with culture that dominates interaction patterns. Tradition as a community culture cannot be separated from religious social capital strengthening the custom itself with cultural patterns prevailing in it. The ruwahan tradition is the result of communication between the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. *Nyadran* as a tradition of the

month of Ruwah when people go to the tomb, because ruwah is a *sasi kang kawolu, mangsane wong ngirim menyang kuburan* (the eighth month, it's time to go to the tomb to pray for the spirits of the ancestors). The term ruwahan is interpreted as slametan ing sasi ruwah, a tradition preserved by the next generation (Poerwodarminto, 1939). Departing from the background above, this article discusses the ruwahan or nyadran tradition of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village Kedunggalar Ngawi.

Research Methods

The study conducted on the *ruwahan* tradition at Bangunrejo Kidul Kedunggalar Ngawi Village is a qualitative descriptive research. The aim of this study is to uncover the meaning behind the thoughts and actions of the research subject (Strauss, 2007). It adopts a sociological approach to religion, considering religion as a social action and a tangible, observable phenomenon that influences human behavior (Sodik, 2006). Religion is viewed as a belief system manifested in specific social behaviors (Connolly, 2002). The research on the ruwahan tradition is carried out at Bangunrejo Kidul Kedunggalar Village, Ngawi, East Java, chosen as the research site due to the continued practice and preservation of this tradition by the community. The sociological approach to religion examines the social aspects of religion (Suprayogo, 2003). Data collection is conducted through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of the ruwahan tradition at Bangunrejo Kidul Kedunggalar Village. The data analysis employs an interactive analysis model that includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The validity of the conclusions is tested through data triangulation and informant reviews.

Findings and Discussion

Javanese Ruwahan Tradition: Value Synthesis

Bangunrejo Kidul Village is located at Kedunggalar Subdistrict, Ngawi. The majority of the village's residents work as farmers. The majority of the people at Bangunrejo Kidul Village follow Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which leads them to continue carrying out routine religious activities such as *dzikir* (remembrance of God), *tablil* (recitation of prayers for the deceased), *khataman* (completion of reciting the entire Quran), *manaqib al-barzanji* (a poem praising the Prophet Muhammad), *muludan* (celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday), *rejeban* (commemoration of the Islamic month of Rejeb), and *ruwahan* (ancestral pilgrimage) with all its aspects, including *megengan* (applying turmeric paste), *apeman* (performing traditional body treatments), *tiduran* (striking the bedug drum), *padusan* (ritual cleansing by soaking in water), and *punggahan* (welcoming the fasting month). This tradition has been passed down since the time of the ancestors and continues to be practiced to this day. From a religious perspective, this reflects the community's awareness in practicing their religion. From a cultural standpoint, the *ruwahan* tradition serves as a means of social communication among communities, contributing to a sense of togetherness. The *ruwahan* tradition involves the activity of ngirim donga or ancestral

pilgrimage to plant flowers and clean graves. The types of flowers used for burials include *telasih*, *rose*, *kenanga*, *jasmine*, and *kanthil*. Additionally, during the month of *ruwah*, the community also holds *slametan/kendhuri* (communal meals) and collective *tablilan* activities (Faishol, et al., 2014).

Etymologically, the ruwahan of the word "*ruwah*" is the eighth month and coincides with the month of Sha'ban of the hijri year. The word "*ruwah*" itself has the root word "spirit" which means spirit. From the meaning of the word spirit, the moon is used as a month to commemorate deceased ancestors. *Ruwahan* is held ten days before the fasting month (Ramadan), the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village call "*maleman*" for example *malem siji* (night one), *telu* (night three), *limo* (night five), *pitu* (night seven), and *songo* (night nine). In this tradition, a number of rites are held according to the traditions and customs of each region or support. The event starts from the *nisfu syaban*, *nyekar*, cleaning the grave, *ater-ater/munjung* (delivering food to relatives), and *kenduren* for *nyadran* until it ends at the *padusan* event as a symbol of *tazkiyatun nafs* (sanctifying oneself) at the end of the day before fasting. This tradition describes the sanctity and joy of entering fasting which is a form of individual and collective piety faith. This *ruwahan* tradition in which there is *slametan/kendhuri* intended to mark the entry of the month of Ramadan (Faishol, et al., 2014). For the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, the series of *ruwahan* traditions actually begins with the reverence for the month of Rajab, namely the celebration of Rejeban on the 27th of Rajab to commemorate the Isra Mi'raj of Prophet Muhammad SAW. The *Rejeban* celebration is typically carried out through a *kenduri/slametan* where offerings are brought to the mosque for prayer and recitation of blessings (salawat) as an expression of love for Prophet Muhammad SAW and the hope for his intercession on the Day of Judgment.

The local people here are familiar with the tradition of *mapak tanggal* (welcoming the day), making events at *nisfu sya'ban* on the 15th night of the month of *sya'ban* together in mosques or mosques such as Mandep Mantep, Miftahul Huda, Nurul Hidayah, Babus Salam, and others with *tablilan* ending *bancakan ambengan* (eat together). This tradition is intended as gratitude to Allah Swt as well as a form of self-purification (*tazkiyatun nafs*) before entering the holy month of Ramadan. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village clean tombs, *slametan*, *apeman*, *punggaban*, and *megengan* or *ater-ater* food as a practice of sending prayers for all families including their surviving relatives by staying in touch, forgiving each other and helping to enter the fast with a holy and joyful taste.

Usually, the *megengan* tradition in the community of Bangunrejo Kidul Village does not leave three food servings, namely glutinous rice, compote, and *apem* (food made from steamed flour dough). The meaning of the three foods is sticky glutinous rice has the meaning of a symbol of tightening the rope of friendship; a sweet compote means to invite brotherhood to be closer and *barokah* affectionate; And *apem* means that if something goes wrong it can forgive each other. The *ruwahan* or *nyadran* tradition does not look at economic status and class and establishes friendship between citizens. From a religious perspective, this tradition serves as an expression of gratitude towards Allah SWT, a reminder of mortality, and a means of offering prayers for the souls of ancestors.

From a socio-cultural standpoint, the observance of the *nyadran* tradition aims to safeguard Javanese Islamic culture (Maeyulisari, 2020).

According to Darweni (2018), in the *ruwahan* tradition there are three moral values, namely: first, moral value towards God; second, moral values towards others or the environment; and third, moral values towards oneself. Religion is an institutionalized system of symbols, beliefs, values, and behaviors that all stem from problems that are lived as the ultimate meaning (Glock, et al., 1968). From this sense gives rise to religiosity, something related to faith that can be seen through the activities and behaviors of individuals concerned with the religious faith and beliefs professed. Religiosity is defined as the knowledge of how solid the beliefs are, the practice of worship and creeds, as well as the passion for the religion and beliefs adopted. Religiosity is synonymous with diversity.

The month of *Ruwah* are also familiar with the *prepekan* tradition where the market is crowded one week before fasting, they buy necessities during the beginning of the week in the fasting month, especially for *megengan/punggaban* events. In addition, in the month of *Ruwah*, many villagers go home to burrow usually after *dubur* on odd dates of the month of *Ruwah* such as 21, 23, 25, 27, and 29. Homecoming is also used for *ater-ater/munjung* finished food such as rice, eggs, fried chicken, fried chili sauce, chicken, noodles, *tempe*, and *tabu* to older siblings. The tradition of *ater-ater* is now shifting, no longer ready-to-eat food but raw foodstuffs such as sugar, cooking oil, noodles, eggs, chicken meat, and potatoes. The *ruwahan* tradition has three main values, namely: first, prospering the mosque and improving the quality of gratitude to Allah Swt. Second, *ruwahan* traditions such as *slametan/kenduri*, *megengan*, and *ater-ater* encourage the economic development of the community; and third, the tradition of *ruwahan* being a medium to strengthen the sense of brotherhood between villagers.

The *ruwahan* tradition is a *slametan* ceremony to honor the spirits of ancestors who have passed away is carried out regularly every year before entering the month of Ramadan, precisely the month of *Ruwah/Sya'ban* (Santoso, 2012). The *ruwahan* tradition also aims to remind humans of their origins, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village call *sangkang paraning dumadi* (the origin of life, where it came from, where it went, and where it was going back). The *ruwahan* or *nyadran* tradition in Bangunrejo Kidul Village begins with cleaning the tomb from the grass, reciting the Koran, especially *Yassin* and *tahlil* praying to God so that the ancestors who have passed away always get the forgiveness and mercy of Allah Swt (Sumarsono, 2007). This tradition shows that people are able to take the substance of the existence of the month of *Ruwah*, namely the letter 'ra' for *rahmah*, *wann* for *wushlatan*; and 'ha' for *hidayatan*. Istilah *nyadran* itself is still under debate, some say from the word *sradha* tradition that began with Ratu Tribuana Tungadewi, the third king of Majapahit praying to his mother Ratu Gayatri and the spirits of his ancestors who had been interred in Jobo Temple. For the event, various dishes were prepared to be donated to the deity. After Queen Tribuana, this tradition was continued by Prabu Hayam Wuruk.

Some argue that *nyadran* from the word *shadrun* means *dada* (chest), it is hoped that people can wash their chests to purify themselves ahead of the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan. The use of Arabic is carried out by Walisongo to spread Islam, the tradition was adopted into a *nyadran* ceremony because it aims to pray for ancestors who have been *nyuwarga* (being in the afterlife). This is taken from the hadith, when the house of Adam passed away all good deeds in the world were cut off except for three things: *jariyah* charity, useful knowledge, and prayers of *sholeh* children. This became a religious foundation for the villagers to pray for the spirits of their deceased ancestors. The people refer to the deceased in two terms, namely *jennate* meaning *jannah* or heaven; and *sumwargi* means heaven. This term becomes a hope in the subconscious that society continues to practice to pray for those who are gone.

Javanese culture, which values respect for those who have passed away, holds the *ruwahan* tradition in high regard. The tradition is characterized by prayers and serves as a spiritual foundation for individuals, fostering inner peace and societal harmony. As Said Aqil stated, "*nabnu ash-habul haqq, haqqudini wal haqqul ijtima'i*" (we are a true group, right in religion and right in state society). The *ruwahan* tradition aligns with the broader Islamic current in the archipelago, emphasizing the principles of "*al-amnu qobla iman*" (creating harmony before teaching faith) and "*al-mua'asjaratu qabla 'aqidah*" (building communication before introducing creed) (Siraj, 2013).

The *ruwahan* tradition has an important meaning to build a balance of religiosity of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, both horizontally and vertically. In this regard, Glock and Stark say there are five dimensions of human religiosity: first, the ritualistic dimension sees one practicing religious teachings; Second, the ideological dimension concerns the matter of a person receiving something related to his religious dogma. Third, the intellectual dimension is related to a person knowing the teachings and activities of his religious teachings. Fourth, the experiential dimension relates to aspects of religious feelings and experiences that feel like being disturbed if committing sinful acts. Fifth, the consequential dimension looks at the extent to which a person is motivated by his religious teachings in life (Glock, 1968). The *ruwahan* tradition, as an integral part of the NU Islamic tradition, holds a significant place in a deeply rooted society. It serves as valuable social capital for the community of Bangunrejo Kidul village. This tradition is characterized by its dynamic, progressive, and accommodating nature in embracing the essence of archipelago Islam, where Islam harmoniously coexists with local culture. This approach ensures that religion maintains its humanistic essence (Mibtadin, 2020).

The *ruwahan* tradition is a significant aspect of Islam Nusantara, which offers a new typology and perspective for a deeper understanding of Islam. According to Bulliet, there is a fresh approach in studying Islamic history known as "the view from the edge," which stands in contrast to "the view of the center." This edge perspective holds great importance as it eventually shapes the center (Bulliet, 1994). Through the *nguri-nguri* (Being in the afterlife) aspect of the *ruwahan* tradition, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village contribute to the development of Nusantara

Islam as a discourse, religious practice, and a reference for a harmonious Islam, serving as an inspiration for Muslims worldwide.

The Meaning of Ruwahan Tradition: Building Personal Piety and Humanitarian Spirituality

The residents of Bangunrejo Kidul Village recognize the significance of each month in the Islamic calendar. *Rajab* is considered the month for planting, *Sya'ban* or *Rumab* is dedicated to irrigation, and *Puasa/Pasa* is the time for harvesting. The community actively engages in various religious activities during the *ruwahan* tradition, including *nyekar* (visiting graves), *slametan* (communal feast), *ater-ater* (prayer gathering), *megengan/punggahan* (traditional welcoming of the fasting month), and *padusan* (ritual cleansing). The *ruwahan* tradition serves as a means of preserving the religious practices passed down by previous scholars. It holds a crucial role in revitalizing the spiritual potential of NU residents, contributing to the betterment of national life. As an embodiment of rural Sufism, *ruwahan* is just a fraction of NU's rich religious traditions that mobilize civilization (*asy-syubud al-hadhari*) and promote the intellectual consciousness of society (*asy-syubud ats-tsaqafi*) in fostering harmony and moral values within the nation. According to Said Aqil, NU's strength lies in three fundamental aspects: first, the Aswaja understanding that fosters a moderate Islamic discourse; second, the cultural values, traditions, and institutions such as pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) and thariqat networks; and third, the network structures that serve as organizational infrastructure spread throughout the archipelago (Siraj, 2013).

For the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, the month of *Rumab* is the right time to do *jamas sesuci*, cleansing themselves from physical and mental impurities. Javanese society places humans in two spaces, namely the microcosm and the macrocosm. As a microcosm because humans are a reflection of the small world, every view of the real world as a picture of human life with its environment. In balancing human life properly and correctly, it all depends on the adequacy of his mind and soul (Maeyulisari, 2020). In the microcosm, there is a macrocosm because in man there is an element of the universe. To understand the universe man must be able to understand what is within himself. Human beings have the nature of being rulers by building harmony and good relations with nature. Javanese people assess the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm through interaction so as to give birth to cosmos balance. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village believe in every behavior within the power of *Gusti Kang Murbeng Dumadi* (God). To describe that belief, it is not realized overtly but through symbols in which there is an implied intention (Pratiwindya, 2017).

Man as a macrocosm being has such closeness to God that he can read the sign of His power in heart and nature. Man and nature have a spirit of mutualism that is to harmonize and maintain cosmological relationships (Yusof, 2016). Nature has an order that is governed by supernatural forces so as to create harmonious relationships. The *ruwahan* tradition is aimed at maintaining good relations with forces outside of itself. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village believe that

the entire process of their lives has always been associated with the power of *Adi Kumoso* (God). This belief guides the mindset of people always associating events in their lives with supernatural events in nature. Against this power man is weak and has no power whatsoever, he hangs himself in that power, *ora ono doyo pikuwatan sangko manungso, kejoba hamung soko pitulunganing Gusti* (man has no power except from Allah Swt).

The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village have a belief that there are lives that live, move, and run. Something that man experiences is God's destiny. This view gives the strength and spirit of life of the people all deeds in the world are sought as a means of achieving God's blessings. For this reason, it takes kindness when living in the world as the *laku utomo* (main practice) and abandoning *laku nistha* (bad behavior). This will aimed at achieving the *manunggaling kawulo lan Gusti* (the unity of existence, the unity of man and God) is symbolically understood as the return of a person to his origin, namely the *sangkan paraning dumadi*. Javanese society symbolizes that unity as *warangka* (dagger scabbard) and suspicious (Endraswara, 2006). This animates all aspects of the life of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village both related to religious awareness and other aspects. . In a condition that could not be overcome by the act of birth they returned everything to God destiny as a *pasrah marang purbaning Gusti* (surrender to God's destiny).

The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village as part of Javanese culture can accept the conditions that befell themselves based on a complete belief in God's destiny with the soul of *narimo ing pandum* (accepting God's gift). All the destinies in his life according to His will are *urip iku namung sakdermo mampir ngombe, kabeh wis kawengku ing purbaning Gustii* (Life is just stopping by for a drink, everything is determined by God's destiny). Life is only a short time and must continue the long journey to God as a process of *sangkan paraning dumadi*. The *rumahan* tradition is the beginning of the *sangkan paraning dumadi* by cleansing the heart and mind as a form of cleansing the dimensions of the small universe, namely the human person includes elements of *wadag* (body) and *alus* (spirit), body and soul. Not only microcosm-level cleaning such as cleaning the environment, tombs, and yards of houses. This holy tradition ends with *padusan*, the tradition of the Javanese people to purify themselves, cleanse the soul and body to welcome the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan. This tradition is carried out for generations by soaking and springs. The *padusan* tradition aims that when Ramadan comes, you can worship in a sacred state of birth and mind.

The *rumahan* tradition is a medium of learning to find a way for a Muslim to get close to God and even feel His presence in every daily activity. When the people of Bangunrejo Kidul are close to God, they are ashamed when they do deeds that are not in accordance with religious norms and stay away from excessive attitudes in religion (*ghulum*). The influence of Islam makes the meaning of the *rumahan/nyadran* tradition shift from just praying to God to rural sufism as a tribute to the month of *Sha'ban*. The *rumahan* tradition implies faith in God so that man remembers his origin, so as to increase personal piety and strengthen the spirituality of humanity. Through the

philosophy of *sangkan paraning dumadi* remembers three things: the origin of man, the purpose of human life, and where to return.

Slametan/kenduri is one of the traditions of *ruwaban* as gratitude to God and building social piety. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul make rice thanks to food, glutinous rice, *apem*, and *tumpeng* then gather at the village head's house to pray, *tablilan*, and eat together. Some were taken directly to the tomb and held prayers together there. Now that *kenduri ruwaban* is done in the mosque, they bring *ambengan* such as *sego wuduk* (rice that gets a prayer), Javanese chicken *ingkung*, *pecel* sauce, *kobis*, cucumber, *gereh*, *peyek*, and *sarahan* (money wrapped using banana leaves). *Gedhang sanggan setangkaep*, glutinous rice, compote, and *apem*. *Ambengan* consists of Javanese and group *sego*, noodles, fried *tempe*, fried *sambel*, *tempe krecek*, sliced *endog* (egg), *sego gurih* (savory rice), *suwiran iwak* (shredded fish), *kobis*, cucumber, *pindhang*, *peyek gereh*, peanuts, and *krupuk*. This tradition, in addition to gratitude to God, also strengthens social ties among citizens.

The Bangunrejo Kidul community also preserves another *ruwaban* tradition, namely *megengan*, which means to hold or be big. *Megengan* is done in conjunction with *punggaban*, from the word *upload* it means up. These two traditions have the same meaning, a commemoration and preparation for the holy month of Ramadan in which Muslims are obliged to fast to withhold (*megeng*) from things that can damage worship. The tradition of *megengan* falling in the month of *Ruwah* takes place one week before fasting, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul commemorate by giving and receiving food to each other to cultivate social piety. This tradition is known as *ater-ater/munjung* performed by children and gets *fitrah* (pocket). The contents of the delivery consist of three servings of food, namely glutinous rice, compote, and *apem*. Glutinous rice from the term *khotan* means error. *Ketan* hinted at the family who came to *Nyadran* apologizing for the mistakes of his ancestors. Glutinous rice has a sticky nature is a symbol that strengthens the cord.

Kolak from the word *khaliq*, means that the perpetrator of *nyadran* is brought closer to the *Khaliq*, Allah Swt. Compotes are usually sweet and have a purpose in inviting more mature brotherhood and sweetness *barokah*. Meanwhile, *apem* from the word '*afwan* means an apology both for oneself and for the family of the deceased asking God for protection and forgiveness. The practice of meditating and puploading on mental preparation before fasting to share and draw closer to God strengthens individual and social faith as beings of the microcosm and macrocosm. This tradition teaches almsgiving, strengthens *silaturrahim*, embodies harmony in life, and social harmony. Meanwhile, in the month of *Ruwah* by sowing flowers for fragrance, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul always remember the beautiful and good things of the ancestors who have passed away so that they become *pitudub* (instructions and advice), *pitungkas* (a message that means something), *pitulungan* (help), and *pituwab* (the teaching of kindness in the form of advice, morality and values, for the multitude, and is used as a foothold and one of the guidelines in living life). *Nyekar* means to encourage the living to do good.

The *ruwahan* tradition features a balanced religion between the microcosm and the macrocosm. This balance is an effort to build community character through strengthening faith as a form of person of mature faith. This is done with the principles of *tawassuth*, *tawazun*, and *tasamub* eventually encouraging people to be out of the box not boxed with religious ideological reasoning. This principle encourages religious society to be balanced between vertical (*habl min Allah*) and horizontal (*habl min nas*), glorifying God by glorifying man as a manifestation of the core value of faith, namely the value of brotherhood and tolerance. That principle embodies the spirituality of humanity that drives the seed of moderate Muslims as well as the development of civic culture. The values of *tawassuth*, *tawazun* and *tasamub* in this *ruwahan* tradition encourage Islam to play in the realm of civil society as moral reasoning for the development of society. Islam actively participates in solving humanitarian and societal problems without having to discriminate against other religions or different social groups.

The tradition of *ruwahan* becoming spirituality beyond symbols rests on his Islamic notion of *rahmatan lil'alam*. The universal, tolerant and friendly value of Islam developed by the *ruwahan* tradition is the content of Islamic teachings that teach concern for moral and humanitarian issues. With the foundation of sincerity and honesty of the Bangunrejo Kidul community, this tradition has "life force" in various living spaces. The *ruwahan* tradition wants Islam not to display its symbolic face but to integrate its activities in the activities of life as a whole (Wahid, 1999). *Ruwahan* can be practiced in a more tangible context as a humanitarian theology for empowerment and improvement of the quality of life as an effort to transform socio-religious in society.

The *ruwahan* tradition as a spirituality of village community search aims to develop friendly religious understanding and moderate behavior. The *ruwahan* tradition is a struggle between Islam and values outside of itself, Javanese culture. This is intended so that Islam continues to exist respecting the culture and values of the locality and upholding the *fitrah* of humanity. The *ruwahan* tradition features a friendly and moderate Islamic discourse as an effort to find an Islamic identity with a distinctive Indonesian flavor image. Religious understanding is moderate, not rigid, and openness in understanding the religious texts of the Koran and Hadith so that Islam with the impression of Arabism disappears by itself. On the contrary, Islam appears in the tradition of Islamic *ruwahan* with a pattern of acculturation with local traditions that are relevant to the development of the times (*al-Islam as-ṣāliḥ li-kulī zaman wa makan*) such as the packaging model of the *ruwahan*, *sadranan*, *megengan*, *punggahan*, *nyekar*, *ater-ater*, *genduri*, and *padusan* traditions.

Ruwahan Tradition, Rural Sufism, and Religious Expressions of Javanese People

A shift in a culture becomes natural. All cultures undergo transformation to adapt social conditions as one way of life (Koentjoroningrat, 1987). Before the entry of Islam, this tradition became a medium for worshipping ancestral spirits in order to bless and support the descendants and villagers. After Islam entered Java, this tradition changed based on religious values in order

to maintain its Islamic creed (Sholikin, 2010). Today, this tradition becomes a movement of rural sufism and a spiritual space to send prayers for ancestors. In humanitarian theology, the ruwahan tradition constructed into rituals socially brings the benefit of strengthening brotherhood based on *ar-rub al-Islamiyah*, *ar-rub ar-wathoniyah*, *ar-rub al-insaniyah*, and *ar-rub at-ta'adudiyah*. This tradition is also a space for community reflection that in the end all must die, with grave pilgrimages being able to get closer to God by living His commandments and staying away from His prohibitions.

The *ruwahan* tradition promotes harmony among the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village by providing a framework for their relationship with God, others, and nature. Two key elements contribute to this social ethics and the creation of harmony (Mibtadin, 2020). Firstly, Islam is regarded as the foundation and moral guide. Traditionally, Islam has often been seen merely as a preserver of morality, resulting in passivity and suppressing individual initiative and creativity. However, Islam is a dynamic religion capable of actively engaging in the struggle of human life through culture. This tradition also serves as a space for collective reflection, reminding everyone of the inevitability of death. By undertaking pilgrimages to graves, individuals can draw closer to God by following His commandments and avoiding His prohibitions.

The ruwahan tradition fosters harmony in the lives of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village in shaping their relationship with God, others, and nature. This harmony is achieved because Islam is placed as a social ethic that prioritizes two things (Mibtadin, 2020). Firstly, as a source and vision of morality, Islam is often perceived as a source of fear, conflict, and solely as a guardian of morality, which ultimately hinders the initiative and creativity of the community itself. However, Islam plays an active role in the struggle of human life through culture, making it a dynamic religion. Secondly, as a bringer of peace, Islam has an important function in supporting the process of human civilization. The measure of global harmony is the sense of peace that arises from the relationship with God, the religious truth expressed through values that can be accessed through culture, as seen in the ruwahan tradition. This approach is useful for encouraging religious communities to be open to each other and learn from one another, so that Islam becomes a religion that provides meaning to communal life (Mibtadin, 2018).

As a means of spiritual transformation in religious traditions, Islam is positioned as a social ethic that prioritizes local values as the foundation for building a peaceful, tolerant, and civilized society (Mibtadin, 2021a). Traditional Islam, such as NU, holds a legitimate position deeply rooted in the lives of rural communities. The ruwahan tradition serves as a social capital that contributes to shaping the character of the Bangunrejo Kidul community. It is not surprising that this tradition embodies a dynamic, progressive, and inclusive nature in the realization of Islam Nusantara, which embraces local culture. This ensures that religion does not lose its humane essence (Mibtadin, 2020). Through the *ruwahan* tradition, the community strives to manifest their faith in accordance with their innate human values (*fitrah*), which promotes a message of peace and the realization of universal humanity. Through this value, society cultivates positive humanitarian

attitudes and actions, as it becomes a source of meaning and guidance. The *ruwahan* tradition, influenced by the teachings of Walisongo and earlier Islamic scholars, instills Islam in a community of believers, empowering them to engage in civilized humanitarian endeavors.

Islam encompasses cultural patterns, such as the *ruwahan* tradition, which serve as adaptations to the changing times and give rise to a distinct identity and habitus. The perspective of the community in Bangunrejo Kidul Village is that they embrace Islam while incorporating local cultural flavors, both in their methods of da'wah and in their daily lives. This amalgamation of Islam and local culture manifests through various values, including: first, religious teachings that influence local Islamic customs and impact local traditions; second, the concept of populist Islam that goes beyond modernization, emphasizing the flexible application of Islam within the bounds of Sharia; third, it is important to differentiate populist Islam from a "populist" approach or majority rule; and fourth, populist Islam highlights the empowerment of the community through the resurgence of Islam (Waintrub, 2011). The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village adhere to NU traditions as they successfully harmonize religion and culture, thus establishing their own unique "identity politics."

The ruwahan tradition holds significant importance for the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village as it serves as a stronghold of tradition in preserving the integrity of Islamic culture and emphasizing the role of religious morality as the foundation for social life, promoting harmony. Islam assumes the role of a social ethic, emphasizing the importance of moral values to create social well-being and realize social harmony. The *ruwahan* tradition serves as a platform for religious leaders, such as kyai (local religious leaders), and *santri kampung* (village students), to engage with the wider public, conveying a culturally respectful message of Islamic conversion. Regardless of the means and methods employed, the *ruwahan* tradition represents a form of local wisdom that is essential for spreading the message of faith to the community. It encompasses cultural proselytization, not only imparting religious knowledge but also integrating the esteemed Javanese cultural traditions, known as *kabudayaan Jawi kang adi luhung*. Through the rural sufism movement, the ruwahan tradition aims to cultivate religious consciousness, seeking the implementation of Islam as a religion of *rahmatan lil'alam* (mercy to all creation). Islam is not placed at the forefront; instead, it assumes the role of a guiding spirit in fostering respect for *al-hijrah al-tsaqofah wa al-hadlarah al-Jawiyah* (preserving Javanese culture and civilization).

The ruwahan tradition emphasizes the role of Islam in a manner that considers its function as a worldview prioritizing the well-being of both Islamic and non-Islamic societies (Wahid, 1999). This perspective aligns with the paradigm of Islamic cosmopolitanism universalism, which places a focus on promoting elements such as pluralism that are essential to humanity (Wahid, 1994). As a part of humanitarian spirituality, the ruwahan tradition fosters prosperity in human life, in line with the concept of al-maqashid al-sharia. Its significance lies in providing an ideological foundation for the construction of a tolerant community in Bangunrejo Kidul Village, rooted in

the respect for universal human values. The renewed formulation of spirituality is firmly grounded in a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings, aiming to cultivate tolerance and foster social harmony (Barton, 1999). The *ruwaban* tradition's encouragement of Islam is not confined to matters of belief alone, but rather emphasizes its practical application for the betterment of humanity as a whole.

The *ruwaban* tradition plays an indirect role in shaping moral values and fostering a unique community (*liyundzjiru qaumahum*) in Bangunrejo Kidul Village, which, amidst modernity, still preserves customs that have been practiced for centuries. As stated by Said Aqil, NU faces two social challenges. The first challenge involves the formation of character through spiritual and intellectual development, emphasizing the responsibility of individuals and the community towards God, fellow humans, and nature. The second challenge pertains to nation-building by nurturing love for the homeland (Siraj, 2014). The *ruwaban* tradition promotes public awareness and encourages openness by mobilizing civic culture. Moreover, it positions Islam as a social ethic that manifests itself through social harmony.

The *ruwaban* tradition promotes religious practices rooted in noble morals, aiming to cultivate personal goodness or *al-insan al-kamil*. In Sufism, this is referred to as *takhalluq bi al-akhlaqillah*, aligning our morals with His morals, with tawhid (the oneness of God) as the core value. Through this tradition, concepts like *tepo sliro* (tolerance), *ngajeni* (appreciation), and *nguwongke uwong* (respecting human dignity) are realized. The *ruwaban* tradition serves as a means to shape the character of the people in Bangunrejo Kidul Village, acting as a medium to achieve *al-insan al-kamil*, who emulates the nature of Allah SWT and applies it in their daily lives. *Al-insan al-kamil* represents a perfect human being who promotes civilization based on good manners, thereby fostering peace and tranquility in society. The *ruwaban* tradition, as part of NU's religious practices, aims to subtly impart lessons to the community, utilizing gentle advice, inviting without forcing, and delivering words unintentionally to instill habitual behavior. It holds significant meaning as a guiding force, encompassing moral values, nurturing positive religious experiences, promoting humanitarian spirituality, and offering religious criticism against the confrontational positioning of religion and culture within Islamism.

The *ruwaban* tradition has emerged as a cultural movement and symbol that resists Islamist activism, which promotes violent ideologies and attempts to suppress local traditions that are not inherently against Islam. Cultural practices such as *slametan*, *haul*, *talqin*, *tablilan*, *yasinan*, *manaqib al-barzanji*, *maulud Nabi*, *diba'*, grave pilgrimage, and others are considered integral to the comprehensive religious tradition. Through *ruwaban*, traditional Islam demonstrates its friendly and inclusive nature, as it embraces and harmonizes with local culture, reflecting its cosmopolitan and *rahmatan li'alam* (merciful to all creations) essence. The *ruwaban* tradition represents the practice of Islam Nusantara, seeking the appropriate formula to contextualize normative Islam within the framework of local culture, without compromising its core identity. As part of rural

sufism, the *rumaban* tradition aims to fortify Islam Nusantara based on the principle of *al-mukhafadhab 'ala qadim as-shalih wa al-abdu bi jadid al-ashlah* (preserving the good from the past and harmonizing it with the best of the present). The teachings passed down by the Walisongo and continued by NU hold significant vitality within the community. The *rumaban* tradition exemplifies the spiritual intelligence of NU preachers, grounding Islamic teachings within the Bangunrejo Kidul Village community and ensuring their continuous practice.

In Bangunrejo Kidul Village, the *rumaban* tradition holds significance as a spiritual realm for strengthening faith and nurturing a universal religious mindset that embraces local values. Faith encompasses various dimensions and entails activities that generate meaning (Fowler, 1981). It is a relational aspect that fosters connections between oneself, others, and shared centers of value and influence. Through the *rumaban* tradition, individuals outwardly express their faith by adopting an open disposition that aims to cultivate respect and dialogue with others. This worldview cultivates an open mindset, characterized by a willingness to embrace truths that originate externally. The *rumaban* tradition serves as a conduit for instilling *dredevil*, which represents God's guidance and invokes a sense of religious unity or "a sense of oneness."

The *Ruwahan* tradition in Bangunrejo Kidul village serves as a means to enhance spirituality and religious devotion, fostering unity and empowering the diverse community. According to Fowler, faith is not static but a vibrant belief (*lebensglaube*) that dynamically seeks the highest values as a path to God. It is an ongoing process that permeates daily activities (Fowler, 1981). The *rumaban* tradition represents the continual quest for spiritual connection with God through a dynamic way of life. It serves as a platform for the cultivation of individuals who possess mature faith and can interpret the world, shaping a dynamic worldview (*mabda al-bayah*). Through the practice of *rumaban*, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village exemplify Islam in accordance with its *fitrah*, presenting it as a religion that embodies love and harmony for all of humanity. This pursuit aims to realize *memayu hayuning jagad memulya titah ngarcopodo*, which translates to achieving world peace and the welfare of mankind.

Conclusion

The *rumaban* tradition, also known as *nyadran*, is a slametan ceremony observed by the residents of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. It takes place annually before the start of Ramadan, specifically during the month of *Ruwah/Sya'ban*, and serves as a means to pay tribute to ancestral spirits. This cherished tradition provides individuals with a pathway to seek proximity to God and experience His presence in their daily lives. The moral significance of this practice shapes the character of individuals and fosters the development of a distinctive community that upholds the customs passed down by their predecessors, even amidst the influence of modernity. The tradition plays a pivotal role in promoting public awareness, facilitating an inclusive approach to religion by mobilizing civil culture, and emphasizing Islam as a social ethic, thus contributing to the realization of social harmony. Its purpose lies in cultivating religious behaviors rooted in noble

morals, which aim to foster the growth of *al-insan al-kamil*, a complete human being. This ideal underscores the importance of aligning oneself with the morals of Allah (*takhalluq bi al-akhlāqillah*) and placing tawhid, the oneness of God, as the core values that govern one's relationships with God, others, and nature.

The ruwahan tradition serves as a sacred space where the community expresses their religious devotion and reconnects with their origins, known as *sangkan paraning dumadi*, through various practices such as *nyekar*, *kenduri/slametan*, *megengan*, *punggaban*, and *padusan*. These activities aim to enhance spirituality and piety, allowing individuals to embody their faith and contribute to the strength and diversity of society. The tradition also symbolizes the celebration of diversity, promoting a universal religious attitude that values and respects local customs. In Bangunrejo Kidul Village, *ruwahan* holds a significant place as a bastion of tradition, preserving the rich Javanese Islamic culture and emphasizing religious morality as the cornerstone of social life. This commitment to harmony and well-being aligns with the principle of al-maqashid al-sharia, which seeks to promote the greater good and benefit in life.

Conflict in Interest: *There is no Conflict in Interest*

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