

ISLAMIC VALUES AND LOCAL WISDOM: *RUWAHAN* TRADITION AS A MEDIUM FOR NURTURING HARMONY AND TOLERANCE

Khozainul Ulum

Universitas Islam Lamongan (UNISLA)

averroz@gmail.com

Dini Amalia

Institut Agama Islam Tarbiyatut Tholabah Lamongan

nadineamalia22@gmail.com

Abstract: *This research explores the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom within Ruwahan tradition in Lamongan, a communal ritual held in the month of Sha'ban to honor ancestors and prepare spiritually for Ramadan. Through this tradition, Islamic teachings of compassion, respect, and communal solidarity are seamlessly intertwined with Javanese cultural customs, forming a harmonious blend of religious devotion and local heritage. By examining this integration, the research highlights the pivotal role of local wisdom in promoting peaceful coexistence and reinforcing Islamic values within diverse communities. Using an ethnographic approach, this qualitative research provides an in-depth understanding of Ruwahan ritual, its representation of Islamic values, and how it serves and functions as a platform for nurturing social harmony and tolerance. The findings reveal the tradition's significance and critical role in strengthening harmonious social bonds, alleviating tensions, and fostering mutual respect, tolerance, and hospitality across religious and cultural lines. They also underscore the importance of preserving and revitalizing local traditions like Ruwahan as essential vehicles for promoting Islamic values and cultivating harmony and tolerance in an increasingly pluralistic society.*

Keywords: *islamic values, local wisdom, ruwahan tradition, harmony, tolerance.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a nation rich in cultural heritage and diversity, encompassing thousands of islands, hundreds of ethnic groups, and a range of religious and cultural traditions. This immense diversity positions Indonesia as a country with one of the richest cultural heritages in the world, blending indigenous practices with the influences of major global religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. The diversity of Indonesia's



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Jl. A. Yani 117 Surabaya

Hotel Santika Premiere Gubeng
Jl. Raya Gubeng No.54, Surabaya,

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population, its geography, and its historical interactions with other civilizations have created a vibrant society that is both culturally unique and adaptable to change.

Despite modernization and globalization, many traditional practices remain central to Indonesian life, serving as a testament to the country's commitment to preserving its cultural roots (Suwito & Priyono, 2022). Geographically, Indonesia's position as an archipelago has facilitated extensive contact with different cultures throughout history. The islands were part of the ancient maritime trade routes that connected the Far East with the Indian subcontinent, the Arabian Peninsula, and beyond. As a result, Indonesia's cultural identity has been shaped by the migration of peoples and the exchange of religious and cultural ideas over centuries.

As Indonesia is renowned for its rich cultural diversity and the harmonious blending of various religious and cultural traditions as well as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia's distinctive feature is the syncretism of Islamic values with the local customs and wisdoms that predate the arrival of Islam. The spread of Islam beginning in the 13th century marked a new wave of cultural synthesis, where Islamic practices merged with local customs. This process of cultural blending remains a hallmark of Indonesia's social fabric, with traditional rituals, art forms, and local wisdom continuing to reflect a harmonious integration of external influences and indigenous values (Wirawan & Setyawan, 2023). One of the most vivid examples of this cultural synthesis is *Ruwahan* tradition, which is practiced predominantly in Java. This ritual, observed in the Islamic month of Sha'ban, is a prime illustration of how Islamic values can blend seamlessly with local customs to create a unique cultural expression.

Ruwahan holds great significance in Javanese society, where it serves not only as a religious practice but also as a communal event that strengthens social bonds. Traditionally, this ritual is conducted as a way to honor deceased ancestors and ask for blessings before the fasting month of *Ramadan*. The tradition involves communal prayers, offerings, and the distribution of food during a communal feast. While deeply rooted in Islamic practices, *Ruwahan* also retains strong elements of Javanese local wisdom, reflecting a seamless integration of spiritual and cultural values. This tradition, therefore, plays a pivotal role in fostering social harmony and tolerance in the diverse and multi-religious communities of Java.

The integration of Islamic values and local wisdom is one of the defining characteristics of Indonesia's approach to Islam. Islam in Java, in particular, has historically taken on a more inclusive and tolerant form, as it blended with local customs, rather than displacing them. Suryanto (2021) in his book, *Islam dan Kearifan Lokal di Jawa*, emphasizes the significance of preserving local wisdom as it enriches cultural identity and fosters community cohesion. The local wisdom can harmonize with Islamic values, promoting a sustainable way of life. In this case, *Ruwahan* tradition is an excellent example of this cultural adaptation, where the universal values of Islam—such as remembrance of the deceased, communal prayers, and charity—are woven into the fabric of local culture. The combination of Islamic practices with Javanese ancestral customs demonstrates a deep cultural synthesis, wherein religious devotion coexists with respect for heritage and local customs.



In contemporary Indonesian society, where rapid modernization and globalization are testing the resilience of local traditions, *Ruwahan* remains a vital cultural practice. Despite concerns about the preservation of local customs in the face of religious conservatism and external influences, *Ruwahan* continues to be practiced by many Javanese communities as a reflection of their identity. This tradition not only reinforces Islamic values of faith, charity, and social cohesion but also helps sustain the cultural heritage of Java. By participating in *Ruwahan*, communities come together to reaffirm their cultural roots and religious convictions, fostering a sense of belonging that transcends religious boundaries.

Moreover, *Ruwahan* serves as a medium for promoting tolerance in a pluralistic society like Indonesia. The communal nature of the tradition fosters social harmony by bringing together people from different backgrounds to participate in a shared cultural practice. In Javanese villages, the preparation and distribution of food often involves the participation of neighbors. This inclusive practice helps to bridge religious and social divides, promoting a sense of unity and mutual respect among diverse communities. In this way, *Ruwahan* plays a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion, particularly in regions where cultural and religious diversity is prevalent.

Hence, this research aims to explore how the *Ruwahan* tradition functions as a medium for nurturing social harmony and religious tolerance in Javanese society, particularly in Lamongan, East Java. By examining the cultural and religious elements of *Ruwahan*, this study seeks to understand how local wisdom and Islamic values are integrated in ways that promote mutual respect and coexistence. The paper also investigates the broader significance of *Ruwahan* in contemporary Indonesia, particularly its role in fostering social cohesion in a rapidly modernizing and pluralistic society.

Since Indonesia's cultural heritage is one of the richest and most diverse in the world, it is shaped by centuries of interaction between indigenous traditions and external religious influences. This diversity, while presenting challenges, offers a unique model for cultural preservation in a modern, globalized world. Traditions like *Ruwahan* demonstrate Indonesia's ability to blend Islamic values with local wisdom, fostering social harmony and tolerance. As Indonesia continues to modernize, it is essential that efforts to preserve and promote its cultural heritage remain a priority, ensuring that the country's unique cultural diversity continues to thrive for future generations.

Regarding those key significances beyond the perseverance of local wisdom, this study argues that the *Ruwahan* tradition serves as an important cultural and religious practice that promotes social harmony and tolerance in Javanese society of Lamongan. By blending Islamic values with local wisdom, *Ruwahan* provides a unique example of how traditional rituals can contribute to peace and coexistence in a pluralistic society. This study will highlight the enduring relevance of *Ruwahan* in diverse society, particularly in its role as a bridge between different cultural and religious communities. Through its exploration of *Ruwahan* tradition, this paper hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of the ways in which local traditions can serve as mediums for nurturing harmony and tolerance in a diverse and rapidly changing world.



RUWAHAN TRADITION AND ITS RITUALS

The Ruwahan tradition has deep roots in Javanese society in Lamongan, predating the arrival of Islam. It was originally a form of ancestral worship, where Javanese people would perform rituals to honor their deceased relatives and seek blessings for the living. However, with the gradual spread of Islam in Java, these practices were reinterpreted and adapted to fit within the framework of Islamic teachings. This process of acculturation allowed the Javanese to retain their cultural identity while embracing the new religious teachings brought by Muslim missionaries.

Since its tradition is deeply rooted in Javanese society, *Ruwahan* thoroughly reflects the rich historical and cultural evolution of Java's spiritual and social landscape. As a syncretic ritual, it blends elements of pre-Islamic Javanese culture with Islamic teachings, making it a unique example of the acculturation process that took place during the spread of Islam in Java. To fully understand the *Ruwahan* tradition in Lamongan, it is essential to explore its historical origins, the process of Islamization in Lamongan, and how the tradition has evolved to incorporate Islamic elements such as grave visits (*ziyarah*) and communal prayers (*tahlil*). This historical background reveals the dynamic interplay between local wisdom and Islamic values, shaping the cultural identity of Javanese society today.

Origins of Ruwahan in Javanese Culture

The Ruwahan tradition can be traced back to pre-Islamic Javanese religious beliefs and practices, which were heavily influenced by animism, ancestor worship, and Hindu-Buddhist cosmology. Before the arrival of Islam, the society believed in the power of ancestral spirits and the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with the spiritual world. This belief system was reflected in rituals and ceremonies aimed at honoring deceased ancestors, seeking their blessings, and ensuring their protection over the living community. Ancestor veneration was central to maintaining social order and harmony within Javanese villages (Hasan, 2021).

In pre-Islamic Java, rituals for honoring the dead involved elaborate offerings, prayers, and communal feasts. Food offerings to deceased ancestors were a key component of these ceremonies, as it was believed that the spirits of the departed could continue to influence the lives of their descendants. The communal aspect of these rituals, where families and communities gathered to pay respects to their ancestors, reinforced social bonds and helped maintain a collective identity among Javanese people (Wirawan & Setyawan, 2023). The practice of ancestor veneration, particularly through communal feasts and offerings, would later influence the development of the Ruwahan tradition.

The Process of Islamization and Acculturation in Lamongan

The process of Islamization in Java, which began in the 13th century, marked a significant transformation in the religious and cultural practices of the region. Islam arrived in Java through trade routes established by Muslim merchants from India, Persia, and the Arabian Peninsula. Over time, Islam spread among the local population, particularly in coastal areas, where it gradually gained influence. However, the adoption of Islam in Java was not a sudden or uniform process; rather, it occurred gradually and involved significant

interaction with the existing religious and cultural traditions of the Javanese people (Suwito & Priyono, 2022).

One of the most distinctive features of Islamization in Java was its syncretic nature. Unlike other regions where Islam may have replaced pre-existing belief systems, in Java, Islamic teachings were adapted to coexist with local customs, particularly those related to ancestor worship and communal rituals. This process of acculturation allowed Islam to be accepted more easily by the Javanese people, as it did not require them to completely abandon their traditional practices. Instead, Islamic values were incorporated into the existing framework of Javanese spirituality, creating a unique blend of religious and cultural practices (Yusuf, 2020).

The Wali Songo, a group of nine Islamic saints who played a pivotal role in spreading Islam in Java, were instrumental in promoting this syncretic approach. They recognized the importance of integrating Islamic teachings with local customs to facilitate the acceptance of Islam among the Javanese population. By encouraging the preservation of certain pre-Islamic rituals, such as ancestor veneration, while infusing them with Islamic elements, the Wali Songo helped create a form of Islam that resonated with Javanese cultural sensibilities. This process of syncretism is evident in the *Ruwahan* tradition, where pre-Islamic practices of honoring ancestors were combined with Islamic prayers and rituals (Wirawan & Setyawan, 2023).

Evolution of *Ruwahan*: Incorporation of Islamic Practices

As Islam became more established in Java, the *Ruwahan* tradition evolved to incorporate key Islamic practices. *Ruwahan*, which is traditionally observed in the month of Sha'ban (the eighth month of the Islamic calendar), is centered around the remembrance of deceased ancestors and the preparation for the holy month of Ramadan. In line with Islamic teachings, this period is seen as an opportunity for reflection, prayer, and seeking forgiveness for both the living and the dead (Hasan, 2021).

The practice of *ziyarah*, or visiting the graves of deceased relatives, is a key component of *Ruwahan* that aligns with Islamic beliefs about honoring and praying for the dead. During *ziyarah*, Javanese Muslims visit family graves to clean and maintain them, offer prayers, and recite verses from the Quran. This practice serves both a spiritual purpose, as a means of seeking blessings and forgiveness for the deceased, and a cultural one, as a way of maintaining family bonds and ancestral connections. The inclusion of *ziyarah* in *Ruwahan* reflects how Javanese Muslims have merged Islamic concepts of death and the afterlife with their own traditions of ancestor veneration (Suwito & Priyono, 2022).

Another significant element of *Ruwahan* is the communal prayer ritual known as *tahlil*, where prayers are recited for the deceased in a group setting. This Islamic practice, which involves the recitation of *tahlil* (praises and supplications) and verses from the Quran, has been integrated into the broader framework of Javanese communal rituals. During *Ruwahan*, families and neighbors gather to offer prayers for their deceased relatives, often followed by the sharing of food in a *kenduri* (communal feast). The *tahlil* prayers serve to reinforce the Islamic belief in the importance of praying for the souls of



the dead, while the kenduri reflects the Javanese emphasis on communal cooperation and mutual support (Yusuf, 2020).

However, the integration of Islamic elements into the Ruwahan tradition is evident in the recitation of tahlil—a prayer for the deceased that includes verses from the Qur'an and praises to God. This shift from animist practices to Islamic rituals is reflective of the broader process of Islamization in Java, where local customs were not completely abandoned but rather transformed to align with Islamic values.

Over time, the Ruwahan tradition has become a deeply embedded cultural and religious practice. Its ability to combine Islamic teachings with local wisdom has ensured its continued relevance in the lives of Javanese Muslims. By blending pre-Islamic practices of ancestor veneration with Islamic concepts of piety and charity, Ruwahan serves as a powerful example of how cultural traditions can adapt to new religious influences while maintaining their core values. In contemporary Indonesia, Ruwahan continues to play an important role in promoting social harmony and fostering a sense of community among diverse religious and cultural groups (Kartika & Lestari, 2024).

The historical background of the Ruwahan tradition highlights the complex interplay between local wisdom and Islamic values that has shaped Javanese cultural identity. Originating in pre-Islamic Javanese practices of ancestor worship, Ruwahan evolved through the process of Islamization and acculturation to incorporate Islamic elements such as *ziyarah* and *tahlil*. This blending of cultural and religious practices reflects the broader syncretic nature of Islam in Java, where local customs have been preserved and adapted to align with Islamic teachings. Today, Ruwahan continues to serve as a medium for nurturing social harmony and religious tolerance, exemplifying the enduring strength of cultural traditions in promoting unity in diversity.

The Rituals of Ruwahan in Lamongan

There are certain rituals and cultural tradition held during *Ruwahan*, the local wisdom in Lamongan:

1. *Aurad Nishfu Sya'ban*

Aurad Nishfu Sya'ban refers to a set of special prayers and rituals performed by Muslims during the night of *Nishfu Sya'ban*, which occurs on the 15th of the Islamic month of *Sha'ban*. This night is regarded as significant in various Islamic traditions, particularly among certain Sunni Muslim communities, as a time for seeking forgiveness, mercy, and blessings from Allah.

2. Communal Prayer (*Tahlilan*)

The communal prayer (*tahlilan*) is a key religious and cultural practice performed to honor the souls of deceased family members and ancestors. This communal prayer, also known as *tahlilan*, is an important part of *Ruwahan*, a ritual that takes place in the month leading up to Ramadan, specifically around *Nishfu Sya'ban* (the 15th night of *Sha'ban*).



3. *Sego Langgi*

A unique and symbolic culinary tradition that plays a central role in the Nishfu Sya'ban celebrations, which are part of Ruwahan tradition. This tradition revolves around the preparation and communal sharing of *sego langgi*, a dish made of rice and various vegetables, symbolizing both spiritual and cultural values. The amount of vegetables is greater than the rice, so the dish appears as rice wrapped in green vegetables.

The tradition calls for using seven types of leaves in the preparation of the dish, which carries symbolic meaning. In Javanese, the word for "seven" is "pitu," which is associated with the concept of "pitulung," meaning help or divine assistance. According to local interpretation, using seven types of leaves represents a prayer for divine help from Allah SWT. This reflects a deeply spiritual element, where the dish is not just a meal but a medium for seeking blessings and protection.

The tradition of *sego langgi* is believed to have been passed down since the time of Sunan Sendang (Raden Nur Rahmat), a revered figure in the spread of Islam in the area. This dish has become a symbol of local identity and spirituality, connecting the community to their Islamic roots and heritage. The annual preparation and sharing of *sego langgi* during Nishfu Sya'ban is a way of honoring this legacy.

On the night of Nishfu Sya'ban, the people of Sendangduwur gather to eat *sego langgi* together. They sit in circles around large platters (*talam*) filled with the dish, sharing the food as a symbol of unity and community. This communal meal fosters social bonds and strengthens the sense of togetherness among the villagers and visitors from other areas who come to take part in the celebrations.

4. *Ater-ater Berkat*

Ater-ater berkat is a key tradition in the Ruwahan celebrations in Sendangduwur, Lamongan. *Ater-ater* refers to the act of sending or delivering something, often as a gesture of goodwill and sharing. This practice involves the distribution of food, known as *berkat*, to neighbors, relatives, and members of the community. It is part of the broader spiritual and social customs that take place during the Ruwahan period, which serves as a preparation for Ramadan and a time to honor the deceased.

Berkat is the term used for the blessed food that is shared during religious and cultural events. It signifies blessings (from the word "barakah" in Arabic) and is considered a way to spread blessings among the community. It is a form of charitable giving and community bonding. It is believed to bring blessings both to those who give and those who receive. The food shared in this tradition is often seen as a means of seeking Allah's favor, especially in preparation for the holy month of Ramadan.

By distributing *berkat* to neighbors and relatives, families in Sendangduwur uphold the spirit of mutual care, reinforcing social ties and expressing gratitude. It is also seen



as an offering on behalf of deceased family members, hoping that the act of kindness will benefit their souls in the afterlife.

5. Village Cleansing (*Bersih-bersih Desa*)

The village cleansing tradition, known locally as *bersih desa*, is an important ritual that takes place as part of the Ruwahan celebrations in Sendangduwur, Lamongan. This ritual is a symbolic act of purifying the village in preparation for the holy month of Ramadan. It blends Javanese cultural practices with Islamic spirituality, reflecting the community's desire for physical, spiritual, and social renewal.

The village cleansing involves cleaning not only homes but also public areas such as roads, markets, mosques, and the village square. Particular attention is given to sacred sites like the Masjid Raden Noer Rahmat (Sunan Sendang's mosque), local graveyards, and wells that are considered to have historical and spiritual significance. These places are swept, scrubbed, and tidied to ensure they are in their best condition for the upcoming rituals and celebrations.

The act of cleaning the village is seen as more than just a physical activity; it represents the spiritual purification of the community. In the Javanese Islamic tradition, physical cleanliness is closely linked to spiritual purity. By purifying the village environment, the community seeks Allah's blessings, hoping for protection, health, and well-being for the upcoming year. The ritual also reflects the principle of *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification) in Islam, where individuals are encouraged to cleanse their hearts from sin in preparation for Ramadan.

The village cleansing is a communal activity involving the entire community. Men, women, and even children participate in cleaning their homes, public spaces, and sacred sites. This collective effort, often referred to as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), strengthens social ties and emphasizes the values of unity and cooperation. The act of working together for the common good is seen as a way to foster harmony and mutual respect within the village.

6. *Haul Sunan Sendang*

An annual event held to commemorate the death of Sunan Sendang (Raden Nur Rahmat), a prominent Islamic figure in the spread of Islam in Sendangduwur, Paciran, Lamongan, East Java. This event reflects the Javanese tradition of honoring deceased religious figures, with a focus on remembering their contributions and seeking blessings (*barakah*) through prayers and rituals.

7. *Ziyarah*

This ritual involves visiting the graves of deceased family members, friends, and other important figures in the community, such as local scholars and religious leaders. It serves both as a means of honoring the dead and as a form of spiritual reflection and renewal for the living.



The primary purpose of *ziyarah* is to pay respects to the deceased. This act is rooted in Islamic teachings, which encourage believers to remember their loved ones and pray for their souls. During the *Ruwahan* period, especially on *Nishfu Sya'ban*, the community focuses on seeking forgiveness for the departed and expressing gratitude for their contributions to the family and society.

During *ziyarah*, individuals or families typically go to the graves of their relatives and friends. They may clean the graves, offer flowers, or lay out offerings such as rice, fruits, or other traditional foods.

After the act of cleaning or decorating the graves, participants recite prayers (*do'a*) for the deceased, which often includes reading *Surah Al-Fatihah* and other selected chapters from the Quran, such as *Surah Yasin*. This recitation is done collectively or individually, with the intention of seeking Allah's mercy and forgiveness for the souls of the departed.

8. Culture Carnival

A unique cultural event that often takes place is a culture carnival. This carnival is a vibrant expression of the local community's traditions, blending spiritual elements with artistic performances that showcase the rich heritage of the region.

The culture carnival during *Ruwahan* in *Sendangduwur* serves as more than just an artistic festival; it is a means of reinforcing cultural identity, promoting social cohesion, and passing on traditions to younger generations. It exemplifies how Islamic rituals like *Nishfu Sya'ban* can coexist with local cultural celebrations, making the event both spiritually significant and culturally enriching for the participants. It is a joyful celebration that captures the essence of community, faith, and tradition, making it an important annual event for the people of Lamongan and surrounding areas.

THE REPRESENTATION OF ISLAMIC VALUES WITHIN THE TRADITION

The *Ruwahan* tradition, practiced primarily in Lamongan, serves as a compelling example of how Islamic values can be interwoven with local customs and cultural expressions. Over time, the blending of pre-Islamic and Islamic elements in *Ruwahan* has become a powerful vehicle for expressing key Islamic principles, including faith, prayer, charity, and community. This syncretic practice reflects a rich process of religious adaptation and acculturation, allowing Islamic values to be represented in ways that resonate with local cultural identities.

The following section explores how Islamic values are reflected in the *Ruwahan* tradition by examining several key practices, including ancestor veneration, communal prayers (*tahlil*), grave visits (*ziyarah*), and charitable acts. Each of these practices, while rooted in Islamic teachings, has been integrated into Javanese society's cultural framework, creating a distinctive representation of Islamic values that is unique to Java.



Faith and Devotion: The Core of Islamic Belief in Ruwahan

At the heart of the Ruwahan tradition is the expression of iman (faith), a central tenet of Islamic practice. The ritual of Ruwahan occurs in the month of Sha’ban, just before the holy month of Ramadan, making it an important time for spiritual reflection and devotion. In this period, Javanese Muslims focus on deepening their relationship with God through prayer, repentance, and preparation for Ramadan. This is consistent with the broader Islamic emphasis on preparing spiritually for significant religious events, such as fasting during Ramadan. The Ruwahan tradition aligns with this value by encouraging individuals to engage in acts of worship and remembrance, particularly through prayers offered for the deceased.

Praying for the dead, an essential practice in Islam, reflects the Islamic belief in the afterlife and the continuous relationship between the living and the deceased. The tahlil recitations conducted during Ruwahan are prayers specifically intended for the benefit of deceased family members, asking Allah for mercy and forgiveness for their souls. These prayers are not only a demonstration of faith in Allah’s power to grant forgiveness but also a reflection of the deeply held Islamic belief in the importance of supporting one another spiritually, even after death (Yusuf, 2020). By incorporating Islamic concepts of the afterlife into the pre-Islamic practice of ancestor veneration, the Ruwahan tradition exemplifies how faith and devotion are represented in this unique cultural context.

A Reflection of Islamic Brotherhood, Respect, and Communal Solidarity

One of the most prominent Islamic practices embedded within the Ruwahan tradition is the communal prayer known as tahlil. This prayer gathering, which takes place at family homes or gravesites, involves the recitation of specific phrases praising Allah and seeking blessings for the deceased. The recitation of tahlil is a practice rooted in Islamic tradition, often associated with funerals and commemorations. In the context of Ruwahan, it serves as a means of reinforcing Islamic beliefs about the importance of prayer for the dead and the living alike.

The communal aspect of tahlil is particularly significant as it embodies the Islamic value of ukhuwah (brotherhood). Islam teaches the importance of unity and solidarity among believers, and tahlil gatherings during Ruwahan provide an opportunity for community members to come together in prayer, reflecting the spirit of brotherhood that is central to Islamic teachings (Suwito & Priyono, 2022). These gatherings foster social cohesion, as they are attended by family members, neighbors, and friends, who unite to pray for the deceased and support one another spiritually.

In Javanese society, tahlil prayers during Ruwahan often extend beyond immediate family members, involving entire communities. This communal participation highlights the social and religious bonds that link individuals in Javanese villages. It also represents the inclusive nature of Islam in Java, where religious practices are often conducted in a way that involves the wider community, rather than being limited to private, individual acts of devotion (Kartika & Lestari, 2024). By emphasizing the collective nature of worship, Ruwahan reflects the broader Islamic value of jama’ah (congregational worship) and the importance of communal support in the practice of faith.



There are also other rituals in *Ruwahan* tradition involving social cohesion and community gathering, such as *Sego Langgi*, Village cleansing, *Haul*, *Aurad Nishfu Sya'ban*, and the carnival.

Honoring the Dead in Islamic Tradition

Another important Islamic value represented within the *Ruwahan* tradition is the practice of *ziyarah*, or visiting graves. In Islamic teachings, *ziyarah* is encouraged as a way to remind the living of their mortality and to pray for the deceased. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have recommended visiting graves as a means of spiritual reflection, as it reminds believers of the transient nature of life and the importance of preparing for the hereafter. In *Ruwahan*, this Islamic practice is central, as families visit the graves of their ancestors to clean the sites, offer prayers, and recite Quranic verses.

Ziyarah during *Ruwahan* is not only an act of devotion but also a reflection of the deep respect for the deceased that is a core element of Javanese culture. While grave visits were a common feature of Javanese ancestor veneration long before the arrival of Islam, the inclusion of Quranic recitations and Islamic prayers has transformed *ziyarah* into a distinctly Islamic practice. The act of cleaning graves and offering prayers serves both a spiritual purpose and a cultural one, reinforcing family bonds and preserving ancestral ties (Hasan, 2021).

Moreover, the practice of *ziyarah* reflects the Islamic values of humility and remembrance of death. By visiting graves, Javanese Muslims are reminded of the fleeting nature of worldly life and are encouraged to live in accordance with Islamic principles of piety and righteousness. This practice also aligns with the Islamic concept of *silaturahmi*, or maintaining ties of kinship, which is highly emphasized in Islam. Visiting the graves of ancestors during *Ruwahan* is an extension of this principle, as it strengthens familial relationships and preserves a sense of continuity between generations.

Charity (*Sedekah*): An Expression of Generosity and Social Responsibility

Charitable acts, or *sedekah*, are a significant component of the *Ruwahan* tradition, reflecting the Islamic value of generosity. Islam places a strong emphasis on giving to those in need, and charity is considered one of the highest forms of worship. The distribution of food during the communal feast is a key feature of *Ruwahan*, and this practice serves as an expression of *sedekah*. Families prepare and share food with their neighbors and community members, regardless of their religious or social background. This act of sharing food not only fosters social cohesion but also reflects the Islamic principle of caring for others, particularly those who are less fortunate (Wirawan & Setyawan, 2023).

The charitable nature of *ater-ater berkat* and *Sego Langgi* during *Ruwahan* aligns with the broader Islamic value of *zakat* (almsgiving) and *infaq* (voluntary charity). Both *zakat* and *infaq* are central to the Islamic belief in social responsibility and the importance of supporting those in need. While *Ruwahan* does not necessarily involve the formal payment of *zakat*, the spirit of generosity embodied in the sharing of food and resources during *kenduri* reflects the same underlying principles of charity and social welfare. The inclusive nature of *kenduri*, where people of all backgrounds are invited to partake in the feast, also demonstrates the Islamic value of *rahmatan lil alamin*—the idea that Islam is a mercy for all of creation, promoting peace and goodwill among all people (Hasan, 2021).



In this way, Ruwahan serves as a vehicle for expressing the Islamic value of sedekah in a culturally resonant manner. By sharing food and resources with others, Javanese Muslims not only fulfill their religious obligation to give to the needy but also strengthen communal bonds and promote social harmony. The act of charity during Ruwahan is a powerful reminder of the interconnectedness of religious and social responsibilities in Islam.

Inclusivity and Tolerance: The Broader Social Impact of Ruwahan

The Ruwahan tradition also represents the Islamic values of inclusivity and tolerance, particularly in the way it fosters social harmony among diverse religious and cultural communities. While Ruwahan is a Muslim practice, its inclusive nature means that it is often attended by individuals from different religious backgrounds, especially in Javanese villages. The communal gatherings and feasts during Ruwahan create opportunities for interfaith dialogue and cooperation, promoting mutual respect and understanding among different religious groups (Wirawan & Setyawan, 2023).

This inclusivity reflects the Islamic principle of *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), which encourages cooperation and solidarity among people, regardless of their faith. The ability of Ruwahan to bring together people from diverse backgrounds is a testament to the spirit of tolerance and pluralism that characterizes Islam in Java. By engaging in shared cultural practices that transcend religious boundaries, Javanese Muslims embody the Islamic teaching that emphasizes the importance of living in peace with others and showing respect for different religious traditions (Yusuf, 2020).

In the context of Indonesia's diverse and pluralistic society, Ruwahan plays a crucial role in promoting religious tolerance and social cohesion. It demonstrates how Islamic values can be expressed in ways that are inclusive and adaptable to local cultural contexts, fostering a sense of unity in diversity. This adaptability is a key feature of Islam in Indonesia, where religious practices are often integrated with local customs to create a harmonious balance between faith and culture (Kartika & Lestari, 2024).

According to recent research, the inclusive nature of such traditions helps mitigate religious tensions, providing a foundation for peaceful coexistence (Azizah, 2022). The *Ruwahan* tradition in Javanese society in Lamongan offers a rich representation of Islamic values, blending pre-Islamic customs with Islamic principles to create a unique cultural expression of faith. Through practices such as ancestor veneration, communal prayers, grave visits, and charitable acts, Ruwahan embodies key Islamic values of faith, community, charity, and inclusivity. By adapting Islamic teachings to fit the cultural framework of Javanese society, Ruwahan serves as a powerful example of how religious and cultural traditions can coexist and reinforce one another, promoting social harmony and religious tolerance in the process.

The Integration of Islamic Values and *Ruwahan* Tradition to Cultivate Tolerance and Harmony

In Indonesia, the rich tapestry of cultural diversity has led to the development of unique practices that blend religious and traditional elements. One such practice is the Ruwahan tradition, which has been shaped by centuries of interaction between pre-



Islamic Javanese culture and Islamic teachings. The integration of Islamic values into the *Ruwahan* tradition not only reinforces Islamic principles but also fosters tolerance and harmony within a pluralistic society. By blending local wisdom with Islamic values, *Ruwahan* has become a cultural and religious practice that promotes peaceful coexistence among different communities, contributing to the social fabric of Indonesia. Through the integration of Islamic values into *Ruwahan* tradition as local wisdom, it has potentially cultivated tolerance and harmony within society, analyzing the ways in which religious and cultural elements interact, as well as the broader impact on social cohesion and cultural tradition preservation.

The Cultural and Religious Context of *Ruwahan*

The *Ruwahan* tradition is primarily observed in Java, Indonesia's most populous island, where Islam was introduced in the 13th century by traders and missionaries. Prior to the arrival of Islam, Java had a rich spiritual tradition rooted in Hindu-Buddhist cosmology and local animistic beliefs. Rituals and practices honoring ancestors and natural forces were central to Javanese culture, and these pre-Islamic traditions continue to influence the cultural practices of Javanese society today (Hasan, 2021).

Ruwahan is a month-long tradition observed in the Islamic month of Sha'ban, the eighth month of the Islamic calendar, which precedes the holy month of Ramadan. During *Ruwahan*, families pay homage to their ancestors by visiting graves, offering prayers, and performing communal rituals. Although ancestor veneration has pre-Islamic roots, Islamic values have become deeply integrated into *Ruwahan* over time, as Javanese society embraced Islam and adapted its practices to local customs.

Islamic Principles in *Ruwahan*: Fostering Mutual Respect, Tolerance, Hospitality, and Harmony

The *Ruwahan* tradition reflects several core Islamic principles, including the importance of faith, charity, and community, which are key to fostering tolerance and harmony within society. As local wisdom, *Ruwahan* intertwines with Islamic practices to enhance community resilience, cultural identity, and social harmony (Ma'ruf & Bakhtiar, 2022). Islamic teachings on compassion, mutual respect, and social responsibility are interwoven with the pre-existing Javanese cultural emphasis on familial and communal relationships. This integration of Islamic values into a local tradition creates a space for dialogue, cooperation, and understanding, which are essential for promoting social cohesion in a pluralistic society.

a. Communal Participation, Mutual Respect, and Brotherhood (*Ukhuwah*)

One of the key Islamic values represented in *Ruwahan* is *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), which emphasizes the importance of solidarity and mutual support among individuals. In Islamic teachings, *ukhuwah* is a core value that fosters strong bonds among members of the Muslim community, encouraging them to support and care for one another. In the context of *Ruwahan*, this principle is reflected in the communal prayers and feasts that bring families, neighbors, and community members together (Kartika & Lestari, 2024).



These gatherings serve as an opportunity for individuals to reinforce social bonds, share blessings, and demonstrate mutual respect, regardless of their religious or social background.

In many Javanese villages, Ruwahan is not limited to Muslims, everyone can participate in the communal aspects of the tradition. This inclusivity is a reflection of the Islamic principle of tolerance (*tasamuh*), which encourages Muslims to coexist peacefully with people of other faiths and to respect their beliefs and practices. The shared participation in Ruwahan helps to bridge religious divides, fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding that is vital for social harmony in a pluralistic society (Wirawan & Setyawan, 2023).

The communal nature of Ruwahan also reflects the broader Islamic value of *jama'ah* (congregational worship), which emphasizes the importance of collective religious observance. By participating in communal prayers (*tahlil*) and rituals, Javanese Muslims not only strengthen their faith but also reinforce the bonds of brotherhood and unity within the community. This collective expression of faith serves as a powerful tool for promoting social harmony, as it encourages individuals to come together in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity, transcending religious and cultural differences.

b. Charity (Sedekah) and Social Responsibility

Charity, or *sedekah*, is a fundamental aspect of Islamic teachings, and it plays a central role in the Ruwahan tradition. In Islam, charity is not only an obligation but also a means of purifying one's wealth and fostering social justice. The act of giving to those in need is seen as a way to fulfill one's duty to Allah while promoting the well-being of the community.

During Ruwahan, the spirit of *sedekah* is expressed through the sharing of food and resources with neighbors and community members. Families prepare food, known as *kenduri*, which is distributed to others as an act of charity. This practice reflects the Islamic principle of generosity and the importance of caring for the less fortunate, as well as fostering a sense of social responsibility (Suwito & Priyono, 2022).

The distribution of food during Ruwahan also serves as a way to promote social cohesion, as it reinforces the bonds between individuals and communities. By sharing their blessings with others, Javanese Muslims demonstrate their commitment to the welfare of the community, contributing to the creation of a more inclusive and harmonious society. This act of charity not only reflects Islamic values but also resonates with the Javanese cultural emphasis on mutual aid and cooperation, further strengthening the integration of religious and cultural values in Ruwahan (Wirawan & Setyawan, 2023).

Moreover, the inclusive nature of *sedekah* during Ruwahan allows people from different religious backgrounds to participate in the tradition, further promoting interfaith harmony. The act of giving transcends religious boundaries, creating a space for dialogue and cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslims. This shared commitment to charity and social responsibility fosters an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding, which is essential for maintaining social harmony in a diverse society like Indonesia (Yusuf, 2020).

c. The Cultivation of Compassion

Ziyarah (grave visits) is another key aspect of the *Ruwahan* tradition that reflects the integration of Islamic values with local customs. In Islam, ziyarah is encouraged as a way to honor the deceased and to reflect on the transient nature of life. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) recommended visiting graves as a reminder of death and the afterlife, encouraging believers to live righteous lives and to seek forgiveness for their sins.

In *Ruwahan*, ziyarah is a central practice, as families visit the graves of their ancestors to clean the gravesites, offer prayers, and recite Quranic verses. This practice reflects the Islamic values of compassion, humility, and respect for the deceased, while also preserving the Javanese cultural tradition of honoring one's ancestors (Hasan, 2021). The act of praying for the dead is seen as a way of supporting the deceased in the afterlife, demonstrating the deep sense of compassion and responsibility that Javanese Muslims feel towards their ancestors.

The communal nature of ziyarah during *Ruwahan* also contributes to the cultivation of social harmony, as it brings families and communities together in a shared act of remembrance. By visiting graves and offering prayers for the deceased, Javanese Muslims not only fulfill their religious obligations but also reinforce the bonds of kinship and solidarity within the community. This shared act of devotion serves as a powerful reminder of the interconnectedness of life and death, fostering a sense of unity and compassion that transcends individual and communal differences (Suwito & Priyono, 2022).

Moreover, the inclusive nature of ziyarah during *Ruwahan* allows people of different religious backgrounds to participate in the tradition, further promoting interfaith harmony. In many Javanese villages, non-Muslims are often invited to join in the ziyarah rituals, reflecting the inclusive and tolerant nature of the tradition. This shared participation in a religious practice that honors the deceased fosters mutual respect and understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims, contributing to the overall harmony of the community (Yusuf, 2020).

All the rituals in the *Ruwahan* tradition in Sendangduwur, Lamongan, such as *Aurad Nishfu Sya'ban*, *Sego Langgi*, *Haul*, Village Cleansing, *Ater-ater Berkat*, Communal Prayer, and the *Carnival* aim to foster togetherness and mutual respect. At the same time, Islamic values are sharpened and enhanced, which also strengthens the bonds of kinship and preserves valuable cultural heritage.

The Role of *Ruwahan* in Promoting Pluralism and Tolerance

The integration of Islamic values into the *Ruwahan* tradition plays a crucial role in promoting pluralism and tolerance within Indonesian society. As a practice that blends religious and cultural elements, *Ruwahan* reflects the adaptability of Islam in Indonesia and its ability to coexist with local traditions. This flexibility allows *Ruwahan* to serve as a bridge between different religious and cultural communities, fostering dialogue and cooperation in a way that promotes social harmony.



In the context of modern Indonesian society, the role of traditions like Ruwahan is crucial for strengthening interfaith dialogue and maintaining peace. Recent studies emphasize the importance of such rituals in fostering national unity, particularly as Indonesia faces increasing challenges of religious diversity and the influence of global cultures (Wahyudi, 2023; Sari & Asmara, 2021). These findings suggest that Ruwahan, through its focus on inclusivity and shared community values, remains relevant in promoting social harmony across different ethnic and religious groups in Indonesia (Rachman & Kusuma, 2023).

In a diverse society like Indonesia, where people of different religions and ethnicities live side by side, the promotion of pluralism and tolerance is essential for maintaining peace and stability. Ruwahan contributes to this goal by creating a space for interfaith interaction and mutual respect. The inclusive nature of the tradition allows people from different religious backgrounds to participate in communal rituals and celebrations, fostering a sense of shared identity and belonging (Kartika & Lestari, 2024).

Moreover, the emphasis on communal participation, charity, and compassion in Ruwahan reinforces the Islamic values of tolerance and respect for others. By integrating these values into a local cultural practice, Ruwahan helps to cultivate a spirit of acceptance and understanding that is essential for promoting social harmony in a pluralistic society (Wirawan & Setyawan, 2023).

The integration of Islamic values into the Ruwahan tradition has created a unique cultural and religious practice that promotes tolerance and harmony within Indonesian society. By blending local wisdom with Islamic principles, Ruwahan serves as a powerful tool for fostering social cohesion and interfaith cooperation. Through communal participation, charity, and acts of compassion, Ruwahan embodies the Islamic values of brotherhood, generosity, and respect for others, contributing to the overall harmony of the community. In a diverse and pluralistic society like Indonesia, the Ruwahan tradition offers a model for how religious and cultural practices can coexist and reinforce one another, promoting peace and understanding in the process.

The dynamic nature of Ruwahan, with its ability to adapt to Islamic teachings while preserving local customs, highlights the flexible and syncretic nature of religious practice in Indonesia (Suryani, 2024). Scholars have noted that this adaptability is vital for Indonesia's unique model of religious pluralism, where respect for cultural diversity is balanced with the core tenets of Islam (Maulana, 2023). In an increasingly globalized world, this blend of faith and tradition offers a model for other countries grappling with religious diversity.

CONCLUSION

Ruwahan tradition in Javanese society in Lamongan exemplifies a harmonious blend of Islamic values and local wisdom, offering a profound medium for cultivating social harmony and religious tolerance. This integration not only preserves the Javanese cultural identity but also reinforces key Islamic principles of faith, community, charity, and inclusivity.



These rituals promote a spirit of togetherness, mutual respect, and cooperation, which are fundamental principles in Islam. They highlight the importance of remembering the deceased, sharing blessings, and purifying both physical and spiritual spaces in preparation for significant religious observances like Ramadan. The emphasis on community involvement and collective action strengthens relationships among families and fosters a sense of solidarity, reflecting the values of gotong royong and social harmony.

As an essential element of Javanese culture, *Ruwahan* transcends religious boundaries, involving participants from diverse communities and fostering a spirit of mutual respect and understanding. The emphasis on communal gatherings, brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), and shared rituals creates a space where people of diverse backgrounds come together in unity, contributing to the promotion of pluralism and peaceful coexistence. The tradition serves as a practical example of how Islamic values of tolerance (*tasamuh*), compassion, and social responsibility can be seamlessly woven into local customs, enhancing social cohesion in a pluralistic society like Indonesia.

In addition to promoting religious tolerance, *Ruwahan* strengthens intergenerational connections, honors ancestors, and emphasizes the importance of caring for the less fortunate. By fostering these values, *Ruwahan* not only reinforces the moral and spiritual fabric of the community but also plays a crucial role in sustaining social harmony in Indonesia's multicultural landscape.

In conclusion, the *Ruwahan* tradition reflects the adaptability of Islam in Indonesia, where religious practices are integrated with local customs to create a unique cultural expression that promotes social unity and tolerance. In an increasingly globalized world, the preservation and understanding of such traditions are essential for maintaining cultural diversity and fostering interfaith dialogue, contributing to a more peaceful and harmonious society.

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