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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Internalization of Islamic Educational Values in The Ruwahan Tradition among The Javanese Muslim Community

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the internalization process of Islamic educational values within the Ruwahan tradition among Javanese Muslim communities and to identify its implications for shaping religious and social character. Using a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with religious leaders, community leaders, and youth, as well as documentation. Data analysis employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman with source and technique triangulation for validity. The findings reveal that the Ruwahan tradition serves as an effective cultural medium for internalizing Islamic educational values through three stages: (1) value transformation, where religious leaders convey faith and moral teachings through tahlil, communal prayers, and religious lectures (tausiyah); (2) value transaction, involving active community participation in mutual cooperation (gotong royong), grave visitation (nyekar), and food charity (berkat), creating a dialogical space for value exchange; and (3) value trans-internalization, where Islamic values become embedded in community personality, manifesting in solidarity, worship discipline, and respect for ancestors. This research contributes to the discourse on cultural-based Islamic education, demonstrating that local traditions can serve as strategic media for character formation amidst modernization challenges. The study recommends strengthening educational aspects of the Ruwahan tradition and increasing youth involvement to ensure its sustainability as a medium for Islamic value internalization.

Keywords: Islamic Educational Values, Ruwahan Tradition, Javanese Muslim Community, Cultural Education.



ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis proses internalisasi nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam dalam tradisi Ruwahan di kalangan masyarakat Muslim Jawa dan mengidentifikasi implikasinya terhadap pembentukan karakter religius dan sosial. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain etnografi, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh agama, tokoh masyarakat, dan pemuda, serta dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman dengan triangulasi sumber dan teknik untuk validitas. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa tradisi Ruwahan berfungsi sebagai media budaya yang efektif untuk menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam melalui tiga tahap: (1) transformasi nilai, di mana tokoh agama menyampaikan ajaran akidah dan akhlak melalui tahlil, doa bersama, dan tausiyah; (2) transaksi nilai, melibatkan partisipasi aktif masyarakat dalam gotong royong, ziarah kubur (nyekar), dan sedekah makanan (berkat), menciptakan ruang dialogis untuk pertukaran nilai; dan (3) transinternalisasi nilai, di mana nilai-nilai Islam tertanam dalam kepribadian masyarakat, terwujud dalam solidaritas, disiplin ibadah, dan penghormatan kepada leluhur. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada wacana pendidikan Islam berbasis budaya, menunjukkan bahwa tradisi lokal dapat menjadi media strategis untuk pembentukan karakter di tengah tantangan modernisasi. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penguatan aspek edukatif tradisi Ruwahan dan peningkatan keterlibatan pemuda untuk memastikan keberlanjutannya sebagai media internalisasi nilai Islam.

Kata Kunci: Nilai Pendidikan Islam, Tradisi Ruwahan, Masyarakat Muslim Jawa, Pendidikan Kultural.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education does not occur solely within formal institutions such as schools and madrasahs but also within the daily lives of communities through socio-religious customs that serve as the backdrop for learning Islamic principles. Principles of faith, worship, morality, and social values are instilled not only through formal curricula but also through traditional and cultural activities infused with religious values that become part of community social life (Maghfiroh & Aisyah, 2023). This demonstrates how Islamic teachings are comprehensive and can be assimilated through various socio-cultural experiences, such as local customs (Alnashr et al., 2022).

One form of socio-religious tradition is the *Ruwahan* tradition, a cultural practice of Javanese Muslim communities preceding the month of Ramadan, where communities gather to pray, share food, and strengthen brotherhood (Ismail & Al Amin, 2023). This tradition is not merely a ritual but also contains Islamic educational values such as social solidarity, togetherness, mutual cooperation, and increased religiosity, which informally become a medium for internalizing Islamic educational values to the younger generation (Suwardin, 2022).

The *Ruwahan* tradition remains alive and preserved among Javanese Muslim communities, particularly in Java and among Muslims of non-Javanese descent who practice this tradition under different names. Specifically, in Sumber Agung Village, which is the research location, every Sya'ban month, communities collectively perform various series of activities including grave visitation (*Nyekar*), *tahlilan*, communal feasts (*kenduri*), and food charity (Rahmawati et al., 2023). This tradition is understood not only as inherited cultural heritage but also believed to have

strong religious dimensions, especially as a means of praying for ancestral souls and preparing for the month of Ramadan (Pakpahan & Amalia, 2025).

However, behind its preservation, the *Ruwahan* tradition contains several issues that warrant deeper study. A fundamental question is whether communities that practice this tradition truly understand and internalize the Islamic educational values contained within it, or whether they merely perform it as a cultural routine (Dwinanda et al., 2022). In practice, many community members participate in *Ruwahan* activities due to habit, social pressure, or simply preserving ancestral traditions without a complete understanding of their religious meaning. Some groups also do not participate due to various reasons such as busyness or considering it merely a tradition without understanding its deep meaning (Anwar & Muhsin, 2025).

On the other hand, the *Ruwahan* tradition possesses significant potential as a medium for internalizing Islamic educational values, such as faith, social awareness, togetherness, and respect for parents and ancestors (Nuzula et al., 2024). This internalization process ideally occurs through social interaction, habituation, and active community involvement in every series of activities. However, the extent to which these values are genuinely internalized in community daily life remains a question that needs to be answered through scientific research (Shalehah et al., 2023).

Furthermore, changing times and shifts in community mindsets also open the possibility of meaning shifts in the implementation of the *Ruwahan* tradition. Traditions once rich in religious and spiritual values are potentially reduced to mere ceremonial or symbolic cultural activities (Fitria, 2021). This shift can be observed in the tendency of some communities to emphasize social and cultural aspects over educational and Islamic spiritual aspects. Therefore, it is important to examine how the process of internalizing Islamic educational values in the *Ruwahan* tradition actually takes place among Javanese Muslim communities, and how this tradition is interpreted amidst the dynamics of modern life (Munir, 2023).

The *Ruwahan* tradition has been passed down through generations in Sumber Agung Village and has become an integral part of community life, functioning as cultural education that transforms Islamic educational values into daily behavioral patterns. The process of reception, habituation, and meaning-making of religious values in this tradition demonstrates the internalization of Islamic educational values occurring integrally within the village's socio-cultural structure (Alfero et al., 2022). This tradition has long undergone changes from initially using offerings for old trees and honoring deceased ancestors to now undergoing Islamization embedded within the *Ruwahan* tradition (Pakpahan & Amalia, 2025).

A unique aspect of this tradition is the strong social dimension. *Ruwahan* not only focuses on the relationship between humans and God but also strengthens relationships among community members. Activities such as communal feasts become means of strengthening social solidarity, strengthening brotherhood, and building a sense of togetherness rarely found in individual worship practices (Nugroho & Sulanjari, 2025). *Ruwahan* is also unique because it contains culturally rich symbolism, such as traditional foods (apem cake, bananas, and coconut srundeng) symbolizing requests for forgiveness, hopes for mercy, and togetherness. These symbols become a distinctive way for Javanese communities to convey spiritual values through concrete and easily understood forms (Shofi et al., 2020).

The uniqueness of *Ruwahan* also lies in its adaptability to changing times. Although an old tradition, its practice continues to adapt to community social conditions. Here emerges an interesting dynamic: between maintaining deep religious values and the potential for meaning shift into mere ceremonial tradition. This dynamic makes *Ruwahan* relevant for study, especially in the context of internalizing Islamic educational values in Javanese Muslim communities. The internalization of Islamic educational values in *Ruwahan* becomes an important sociological issue to research. This tradition still thrives in rural areas, such as Sumber Agung Village, Muara Sungkai District, North Lampung Regency, where 80% of the population are Javanese Muslims according to census data. This is part of the local cultural identity that needs to be explored by researchers (Anwar & Muhsin, 2025).

Islamic education in its most effective form does not stop at transfer of knowledge but must reach the stage of transfer of value. Theoretically, internalization is a deep process where individuals accept and make religious values part of their personality structure (Muhaimin, 2020). In the context of Javanese Muslim communities in Sumber Agung Village, this internalization process does not occur in a vacuum but pulses through the *Ruwahan* tradition. The unique phenomenon found in Sumber Agung Village compared to other regions is the community's steadfastness in maintaining collective rites that balance theocentric (relationship with God) and anthropocentric (relationships among humans) aspects amidst the onslaught of plantation modernization and socio-economic changes. The *Ruwahan* tradition in this village is not merely an annual ceremony but becomes a cultural filtration instrument ensuring moral and faith values remain internalized in the younger generation through mutual cooperation mechanisms and local symbols not yet distorted by external cultures.

This research aims to analyze the transformation process of Islamic educational values, describe the forms of value transactions between Islamic teachings and local culture, and analyze the trans-internalization process in shaping community character. Thus, the research questions are: (1) How does the transformation process of Islamic educational values occur in the *Ruwahan* tradition? (2) How are value transactions between Islamic teachings and local culture negotiated? (3) How are Islamic educational values trans-internalized through the *Ruwahan* tradition?

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it aims to explore and understand in depth the process of internalizing Islamic educational values in the *Ruwahan* tradition within its natural setting without variable manipulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethnography was selected as it allows researchers to understand the life patterns, values, beliefs, and cultural practices of a community group through direct involvement in the field (Taruna et al., 2025). This approach is suitable for this research because the focus lies on the *Ruwahan* tradition as a living cultural practice within Javanese Muslim communities.

The research was conducted in Sumber Agung Village, Muara Sungkai District, North Lampung Regency, from January to June 2026. Location selection was based on consideration that the community actively and consistently preserves the *Ruwahan* tradition as part of religious and social life, with unique characteristics in interpreting the tradition. The village population is

predominantly Javanese Muslims (80%), and the tradition is still practiced with relatively intact series of activities including grave visitation, *tahlil*, communal prayer, and food charity.

Table 1. Research Informants

No	Informant Category	Number	Selection Criteria
1	Religious Leaders	3 persons	Have deep understanding of <i>Ruwahan</i> tradition and Islamic teachings
2	Community Leaders (Village Head)	1 person	Have policy and socio-cultural knowledge regarding the tradition
3	Youth/Young Community Members	5 persons	Represent younger generation perspective and involvement
4	General Community Members	5 persons	Represent general community participation in <i>Ruwahan</i> tradition

Research subjects were determined through purposive sampling, including: (1) religious leaders as key informants with deep understanding of the tradition and Islamic teachings, (2) the village head representing community leader perspective and policy support, (3) youth/young community members representing the younger generation's perspective, and (4) general community members representing broader participation. Data collection techniques used participatory observation where researchers directly observed and participated in *Ruwahan* activities; semi-structured in-depth interviews with flexible question guides exploring meanings, values, and internalization processes; and documentation of village profiles, demographic data, photographs, and relevant archival materials.

Data analysis employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (2014), encompassing: (a) data reduction through selection and focusing of raw data; (b) data display in descriptive narratives and tables; and (c) conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation (comparing information between informants), technique triangulation (comparing observational, interview, and documentation data), and member checks to ensure alignment of researcher interpretation with informants' intent (Sugiyono, 2023).

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

General Overview of *Ruwahan* Tradition Implementation

Based on field observations, the *Ruwahan* tradition in Sumber Agung Village is implemented at the end of Sya'ban, specifically on dates 20-29 Sya'ban each year. The tradition takes place at several locations including the Public Cemetery (TPU), mosques, and residents' homes, involving all community levels from religious leaders, community leaders, to local residents, particularly heads of families. The series of activities includes grave visitation (*Nyekar*) to family or ancestral graves, beginning with religious lectures, recitation of Yasin and *tahlil*, dhikr and communal prayer, followed by cleaning individual family graves.

Table 2. *Ruwahan* Tradition Activity Series

No	Activity	Location	Meaning
1	Grave Visitation (<i>Nyekar</i>)	Public Cemetery	Respecting ancestors, remembering death, prayer for the deceased
2	Yasin and <i>Tahlil</i> Recitation	Residents' Homes	Prayer and forgiveness for the deceased
3	Communal Prayer	Residents' Homes	Seeking safety, health, and blessings
4	Food Charity (<i>Berkat</i>)	Residents' Homes	Expressing gratitude, sharing with others
5	Community Mutual Cooperation	Village Environment	Strengthening social bonds and cleanliness

Subsequently, the community performs Yasin and *tahlil* recitation together at residents' homes on a rotating basis, led by religious leaders. The core activity of *Ruwahan* is communal prayer directed to ancestral souls while seeking safety, health, and blessings for the living. After the communal feast concludes, the community distributes charity food or dishes (*Berkat*), where community members voluntarily bring food prepared by the host of the rotating gathering.

The term *Berkat* in the *Ruwahan* tradition originates from the Arabic word *barakah* (بركة) meaning blessing. Food distributed in this activity is called *Berkat* because it has been prayed over through *tahlil*, Yasin, and communal prayer, believed to contain blessed value. *Berkat* is not merely ordinary food but manifests gratitude to Allah SWT and charity to others. It also holds symbolic meaning as a prayer "carried home" by participants, hoping for goodness and blessings for both givers and receivers (Rosyid & Kushidayati, 2025).

The peak of *Ruwahan* is held at village mosques in each neighborhood unit, consisting of congregational Isha prayer, dhikr recitation, communal prayer, and listening to religious lectures from religious leaders. This tradition is followed by various groups, from the elderly to the younger generation, including religious leaders and community leaders (village head), reflecting collective community participation.

Cultural Elements in the *Ruwahan* Tradition

Grave Visitation (*Nyekar*): Grave visitation is one of the core activities in the *Ruwahan* tradition. Community members in groups visit ancestral graves to clean them, scatter flowers, and pray for the deceased. This practice teaches the value of *birrul walidain* (devotion to deceased parents), increases awareness of life's transience, and reminds Muslims of the importance of praying for the deceased. This tradition serves as a medium for internalizing Islamic values that strengthen spiritual relationships with ancestors and eschatological awareness.

Yasin and *Tahlil* Recitation and Communal Prayer: Recitation of Yasin and *tahlil*, along with communal prayer, constitutes the peak of *Ruwahan* activities. This activity involves all residents praying together, seeking forgiveness, and praying for the safety of the community. This tradition instills the value of congregational worship, strengthens *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), and increases *dhikrullah* (remembering Allah). Thus, communal prayer in *Ruwahan* becomes an effective medium for strengthening vertical relationships with Allah and horizontal relationships with fellow Muslims.

Food Charity (*Berkat*): Based on observations, one prominent cultural element is the provision of food brought by each family to be shared with the community. Food is typically placed in simple containers such as *takir* or *Berkat* containers containing rice, side dishes, and traditional snacks such as *apem* cake and bananas. *Apem* cake is nearly always present in the *Ruwahan* tradition and symbolically relates to seeking forgiveness from Allah SWT. The word *apem* is believed to derive from Arabic *afwan* or *afuwwun* meaning forgiveness. Bananas, on the other hand, symbolize that human life is temporary and will end in death, analogized to banana trees that bear fruit only once in their lifetime.

Based on interviews with religious leaders, the *Ruwahan* tradition is viewed as a means of praying for ancestral souls while reminding the community of death and the afterlife. Islamic educational values contained in *Ruwahan* include faith values (*akidah*) through strengthening belief in Allah, worship values (*ibadah*) through *tahlil* and prayer recitation, and moral values (*akhlak*) through charity and togetherness practices. Religious leaders also emphasized that this tradition has been adapted to Islamic teachings so it does not contradict sharia but rather becomes an effective medium of da'wah in the community.

One religious leader stated: "The *Ruwahan* tradition originates from the word 'Ruwah,' the month name in the Javanese calendar corresponding to Sya'ban in the Hijri calendar. The word *Ruwah* itself is believed to derive from the Arabic 'arwah' meaning souls. Thus, the *Ruwahan* tradition is associated with activities of praying for the souls of ancestors or deceased family members through grave visitation, *tahlil*, communal prayer, and food charity as a form of respect and reminder of the afterlife."

Interviews with the Village Head showed that the village government fully supports the implementation of the *Ruwahan* tradition as it is considered capable of strengthening social relationships among residents. According to him, this tradition has not only religious value but also serves as a means of strengthening solidarity and mutual cooperation. The Village Head also conveyed that the involvement of village officials in these activities constitutes support for preserving culture aligned with community religious values. He explained that the history of the tradition originates from Javanese customs of respecting ancestors through prayers and rituals; when Islam began to develop, religious leaders carried out da'wah by adapting Islamic teachings to existing local culture, replacing old rituals with *tahlil*, prayer, and food charity activities.

Interviews with several young community members revealed that they understand *Ruwahan* as an inherited tradition containing values of prayer and togetherness. Most youth are involved in activity preparation, such as helping arrange venues and event equipment. They acknowledge that through these activities, they learn about respecting parents, maintaining brotherhood, and strengthening faith. However, there is also recognition that young people's understanding of the tradition's philosophical meaning still needs to be strengthened through more intensive guidance from religious leaders and parents.

One youth representative stated: "According to me, the *Ruwahan* tradition is an activity that is highly preserved by the community, performed before Ramadan with activities such as communal prayer, *dhikr*, and sharing food as a form of respect and praying for ancestors through charity, as well as strengthening community togetherness. From this tradition, young people can learn about

the importance of togetherness, mutual cooperation, sharing, and respecting parents and ancestors. *Ruwahan* also positively impacts understanding of Islam because through communal prayer, dhikr, and religious lectures, youth can learn more about religious values and increase awareness of practicing Islamic teachings in daily life".

4. DISCUSSION

The stage of value transformation in the *Ruwahan* tradition represents the initial process of conveying Islamic values to the community. At this stage, religious and community leaders act as transformation agents conveying Islamic teachings related to faith, worship, and morality through various religious activities within the *Ruwahan* tradition. This value delivery occurs through lectures, communal prayers, *tahlil* recitation, and explanations of the spiritual meaning of each activity series. This transformation process becomes a fundamental phase because religious values are directly introduced to the community as an initial foundation in building spiritual and social understanding.

The research findings show that the *Ruwahan* tradition in Sumber Agung Village has undergone Islamization from its pre-Islamic form. Previously, the tradition contained elements of Javanese beliefs with offerings to sacred trees and certain graves. Through a persuasive and cultural da'wah approach, religious leaders gradually provided advice and Islamic teachings, so that old practices were replaced with *tahlil*, prayer, and food charity activities more aligned with Islamic teachings. This transformation process was carried out without coercion, allowing the community to understand and accept Islamic values while maintaining their cultural identity.

From an anthropological perspective, this process demonstrates cultural-religious transformation where local traditions previously containing elements of old beliefs underwent adaptation with Islamic values. This reflects cultural acculturation: the blending of local culture with religious teachings without eliminating the community's original identity. The most fundamental Islamic educational value is faith, manifested not only in intention but also explicitly in *tahlil* prayers, particularly in the sentence 'Laa ilaha illallah', affirming the principle of monotheism (tauhid) that all forms of respect to ancestors ultimately return to recognizing the oneness of Allah SWT.

The value transaction stage represents the phase where the community not only passively receives values but is also actively involved in interaction and dialogue processes. In the *Ruwahan* tradition context, this process is evident from community involvement in various activities such as communal *tahlil*, communal prayer, grave visitation, and mutual cooperation in preparing the tradition. Through these activities, community members not only follow the event series formally but also discuss, share understanding, and strengthen the spiritual meaning contained in the *Ruwahan* tradition.

The social interaction that occurs builds dialogical space between religious leaders, community leaders, and residents, allowing Islamic educational values to be understood collectively and contextually. Communal activities such as mutual cooperation in preparing food, cleaning cemetery environments, and preparing *tahlil* venues reflect social learning processes that strengthen values of togetherness, solidarity, and *ukhuwah Islamiyah*. As the Village Head stated:

"The Ruwahan tradition is not just customary activity but also becomes a means for the community to gather, discuss, and remind each other about religious values. Through this activity, the community learns togetherness, mutual respect, and strengthens brotherhood among residents."

From an anthropological perspective, the *Ruwahan* tradition also functions as a social system that strengthens community cohesion. The interaction occurring in these activities shows that tradition serves not only as religious ritual but also as social integration media that maintains solidarity and harmony in community life. This aligns with constructivist learning theory where knowledge is built actively through social interaction, and cultural traditions like *Ruwahan* provide rich contexts for this process.

The value trans-internalization stage represents the phase where values introduced and understood become deeply embedded within individuals, manifested in attitudes, behaviors, and daily life patterns. At this stage, values are no longer at the level of knowledge but have become part of individual personality that influences thinking, attitudes, and actions. In the context of Javanese Muslim communities in Sumber Agung Village, this process is evident through the practice of Islamic values such as awareness of worship importance, tolerance, social solidarity, and mutual respect.

Based on interviews with youth, involvement in the *Ruwahan* tradition is understood not merely as cultural activity but also as a means of learning religious and social values. Through *Ruwahan* activities, they learn about praying for ancestors, maintaining togetherness, and respecting traditions inherited from previous generations. Their involvement in mutual cooperation, event preparation, and communal prayer fosters social responsibility and strengthens brotherhood among community members. Thus, the *Ruwahan* tradition serves not only as cultural activity but also as a medium for continuous Islamic value internalization.

This condition aligns with the concept of Islamic educational value internalization emphasizing that values that have been internalized will be reflected in individual attitudes and real actions in social life. Values contained in the tradition gradually become embedded in individual consciousness and serve as behavioral guidelines. This shows that local traditions can be effective means of forming religious and social character while strengthening religious identity in daily life. From an anthropological perspective, this condition indicates that Islamic values contained in the *Ruwahan* tradition have become part of the community's cultural system, passed down through generations as part of the collective identity of Javanese Muslim communities.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the *Ruwahan* tradition in Sumber Agung Village serves as an effective medium for internalizing Islamic educational values through three distinct yet interconnected stages:

First, the value transformation stage occurs when religious leaders convey faith, worship, and moral teachings through cultural media such as *tahlil*, communal prayers, and religious lectures. Values are no longer viewed as rigid dogma but as teachings integrated with local wisdom. The

most fundamental value is faith (akidah), explicitly manifested in *tahlil* prayers affirming the principle of monotheism (tauhid). Second, the value transaction stage involves active and dialogical interaction between Islamic teachings and Javanese local culture. Values such as charity and brotherhood undergo meaning transaction processes through mutual cooperation practices and provision of *Berkat*. Religious leaders act as filters ensuring cultural practices remain within sharia boundaries. This interaction builds dialogical space allowing Islamic educational values to be understood collectively and contextually. Third, the value trans-internalization stage successfully transforms Islamic values into community identity and character. This is evidenced by the emergence of collective consciousness in the form of social solidarity (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*) and worship discipline reflected in daily behavior, not only during rituals. Values contained in the tradition become gradually embedded in individual consciousness and serve as behavioral guidelines, showing that local traditions can be effective means of forming religious and social character while strengthening religious identity in daily life.

The implications of this research include: (1) theoretical contribution to the discourse on cultural-based Islamic education demonstrating that local traditions can serve as strategic media for value internalization; (2) practical recommendation for communities to continue preserving the *Ruwahan* tradition as a valuable cultural heritage with religious and educational significance; (3) recommendation for religious leaders to provide deeper understanding of the tradition's Islamic meaning to prevent misunderstanding; (4) recommendation for youth to actively participate in the tradition as a means of character formation; and (5) recommendation for further research on the *Ruwahan* tradition from perspectives of religious moderation, social change, or character education of the younger generation.

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