

# CULTURAL ACCULTURATION AND *WASATHIYYAH* ISLAMIC VALUES IN CELEBRATING THE *RUWATAN* CEREMONY IN KELUD MOUNTAIN

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to identify the *Wasathiyah* Islamic values that appear in the practice of *ruwatan* ceremonies and how these values influence the behaviour of the community, especially in Mount Kelud. *Ruwatan* ceremony is a tradition aimed at cleansing oneself from negative influences that people believe in eliminating diseases, bad luck and even natural disasters. This research uses qualitative research with cultural anthropology and theological approaches that can be understood in the context of Islamic teachings. Data collection techniques through interviews, observation and documentation using triangulation analysis and data presentation. *Ruwatan* is not just a tradition but also a place to implement the teachings of Islam in a *wasathiyah* manner, which emphasises moderation and balance between communities on Mount Kelud.

**Keywords:** Cultural Acculturation, *Ruwatan*, *Wasathiyah* Islam.

## A. Introduction

In Indonesia, there are various races, tribes, languages, cultures, religions and beliefs. The motto “*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*” is an appropriate expression to explain the reality as well as the hopes of this nation (Setiawan et al., 2022). Considering the history of Indonesian Islam, it can be seen that Islam entered and spread to Indonesia almost without tension and conflict. Islam was easily accepted by the community as a religion that brings peace, even though, at that time, the community already had its

belief system, either in the form of animism or Hindu-Buddhist religion (Al-Amri & Haramain, 2017).

Acculturation is a social process that arises when a human group with a certain culture is faced with elements of a foreign culture in such a way that elements of foreign culture can gradually be accepted and processed into its own culture without causing the loss of its own culture. Local culture, without eliminating one of them, giving rise to mixing or syncretism, is often also called the cultural acculturation (Wibawa, 2013). The social process that arises when a human group with one culture is confronted with elements of a foreign culture. So that they can be accepted and processed in their own culture without causing the loss of their original culture (Roszi & Mutia, 2018).

Religious moderation is understood as a perspective, attitude, and action that does not take an extreme or discriminatory path when believers express their religion (Sinaga, 2022). Religious moderation is needed because extreme attitudes toward religion are not by the essence of the teachings of religion itself. Extreme behaviour in the name of religion very often causes conflict, hatred, intolerance, and even prolonged wars that can destroy civilisation. Such attitudes need to be moderated. Religious teachings teach kindness, mutual respect and appreciation, and are not hostile to others who are different from us (Nisa et al., 2021).

Religious moderation is an effort to restore the understanding and practice of religion by its essence, which is to maintain human dignity and civilisation, not the other way around. Religion certainly should not be used for something that can damage civilisation because, since it was revealed, religion is essentially intended to build civilisation itself. The teaching of moderation is not only embraced by certain religions but it is also found in several traditions, religions and civilisations of the world. Fairness and balance are upheld by all religious teachings because there is not a single religious teaching that advocates injustice. *Wasathiyah* is a religious teaching that has three meanings, namely: *First*, it means the middle; *Second*, it means fair; and *Third*, it means the best.

Therefore, the process of Islamization in Indonesia did not go in one direction but in many directions through various doors. These doors included art, puppetry, marriage, education, trade, mysticism and Sufism. Like any other society, Javanese society is very rich in cultural experiences, both visible and conceptual. Javanese culture that has taken root in people's lives becomes a guide and life experience that is always transmitted to the next generation (Wulandari, 2022).

The Indonesian homeland, which consists of islands, tribes, and regional languages, has various customs that are then organised and

arranged by the supporting community according to the goals and expectations it desires. In Javanese society, for example, the customs that are still maintained, preserved, believed and developed can influence the attitudes, views and thought patterns of the people who adhere to them. Javanese customs are very interesting as a material for cultural studies because they contain unique things (Darmoko, 2002). Javanese customs contain a system of values, norms, views and rules of community life, which are now still recognised and obeyed by Javanese people who still want to preserve it as a cultural heritage that is considered noble and great. To preserve customs, Javanese people carry out traditional ceremonies as a form of planning, action, and action of a neatly organised value system.

The system of values, norms, views and rules that are reflected and embodied in traditional ceremonies is essentially an embodiment of the Javanese community's way of life that always wants to be more careful so that in every word, attitude, and behaviour, it gets safety, happiness, and well-being both physically and spiritually. The traditional ceremonial system that is still obeyed and recognised and grows and develops amid Javanese society is, in principle, a cycle that always follows in their lives from the time a person is born until death (Darmoko, 2002).

In terms of its history, Javanese customs have grown and developed for a long time, both within the palace and outside the palace. Javanese customs contain a system of values, norms, views and rules of community life, which are now still loved and obeyed by Javanese people who still want to preserve them as a cultural heritage that is considered noble and great. To preserve the customs, the Javanese people carry out traditional ceremonies as a form of planning, action, and action of the value system that has been neatly organised. The system of values, norms, views and rules that emanate and are realised in traditional ceremonies is essentially an embodiment of the Javanese community's way of life, which always wants to be more careful so that in every word, attitude and behaviour it gets safety, happiness and well-being both physically and spiritually (Darmoko, 2002).

Each stage of the Javanese life cycle is marked by rituals and celebrations that are rich in symbols that reflect the philosophy and certain goals to be achieved by performing the ritual in question. One of the processes in the human life cycle that is interesting to study is the *ruwatan* ceremony. One of the life cycle ceremonies that are still carried out by the Javanese community is *ruwatan*. This ceremony is carried out as a means to escape the disasters that will be carried during his life. In the *ruwatan* ceremony, it is clear that there are sacred situations and conditions, such

as the reading of mantras by the *dalang*, as the leader of the ceremony, accompanied by offerings and burning incense, as well as sounds from the gamelan that allows the emergence of magic power. The implementation of the *ruwatan* ceremony is an attempt to establish contact with the supernatural world, the invisible world, so that its inhabitants, namely subtle spirits, can be summoned for certain purposes and objectives (Rukiyah, 2008).

Through *ruwatan*, people feel protected by the power of salvation, so there is a desire to ask the local ancestors. In *ruwatan*, there are also several supporting media such as offerings, tumbal, mantras, and food to bridge between humans and the desired saving power. The community hopes that after performing the *ruwatan* ceremony, the nature around them is safe, secure and safe from threats. This ceremony is carried out to anticipate so as not to be hit by disaster again. Therefore, the *ruwatan* ceremony is never missed every year (Umaya et al., 2019).

*Ruwatan* is one of the Javanese traditional ceremonies that are interesting to study related to the concept underlying its implementation and the procedure for its implementation. This paper reveals the basic concept of the *ruwatan* ceremony, which must be *ruwat*, what elements must be present in the *ruwatan* ceremony, and how the *ruwatan* procedure is related to cultural acculturation and *Wasathiyah* Islam or religious moderation in the Kelud mountain community.

## B. Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach that aims to identify Wasathiyah Islamic values that appear in the practice of ruwatan ceremonies and how these values affect the behaviour of the community, especially on Mount Kelud. To obtain data sources related to the topic under study, there are two data sources, namely primary data obtained directly and secondary data obtained from various sources, books and journals.

Data collection methods are observation, interview and documentation. Observations were made by making direct observations related to the implementation of the ruwatan ceremony on Mount Kelud. The informants interviewed were government leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, youth leaders and the local community. This research uses several kinds of research approaches, namely religious (Islamic), sociological, historical and anthropological approaches. Finally, through documentation, which involves data collection in the form of written documents, recordings and photographs. For data analysis techniques

using interactive models by Miles and Huberman, such as data reduction, data presentation, data verification and conclusion drawing.

## C. Results and Discussion

### 1. Cultural acculturation in the Ruwatan ceremony on Mount Kelud

Acculturation, or cultural contact, is becoming increasingly popular through the quest for knowledge through communication. The desire for the realisation of cultural communication, which is currently carried out by many practitioners, usually stems from the results of research on “cultural memory”. According to Foster, the acculturation process usually starts with people living in urban areas. In fact, in urban societies, traditional culture will quickly disappear, extended families will be divided, and individualistic cultural values will grow. From several definitions, it is clear that the process of acculturation is a phenomenon that occurs in a group of people who have different cultures and have a certain amount of direct communication, resulting in a change in the perspective of the culture (Putri & Ediyono, 2023).

Furthermore, Dadan and Winni define culture etymologically, namely as the root word of culture, which comes from the root word “*Bodhaya*” (Sanskrit), which means mind and intellect. Whereas in terminology, culture can be interpreted as a whole symbol, meaning, depiction, structure of rules, habits, values, information processing and transfer of patterns of agreement of thoughts, words, deeds or actions that occur in a community group.

Culture influences communication in many ways: it determines the timing and schedule of interpersonal events, the places to talk about certain topics, the physical distance that separates one speaker from another, and the tone of voice that is appropriate for certain conversations. Culture, in this case, describes the degree and type of physical contact demanded by custom and the intensity of emotion that accompanies it. Culture and communication are inseparable because it is culture that humans communicate. This happens because there is a good communication pattern between individuals or groups (Nursolehah et al., 2022).

One of the traditional ceremonies that are still adhered to, obeyed, believed and carried out by the Javanese community is the ruwatan ceremony. *Ruwatan* comes from the word “*ruwat*”, which experiences metathesis language symptoms from the word “*luwar*”,

which means free or released. The purpose of holding this *ruwatan* ceremony is so that someone who is “*dirumat*” can be freed or released from the threat of danger (*mala petaka*) that surrounds him. A person who, for some reason, is considered to be affected by *sukerta* / disgrace (*kelesa* = Javanese *Kuno*) must be cleaned (Lelono, 2015).

In general, Javanese people recognise *ruwatan* ceremonies as clean villages or hamlets to release all forms of bad deeds, disasters or dirty things by making offerings to the Almighty as well as a sign of gratitude for all the life and peace that has been given. *Ruwatan* ceremonies are also often held in the Kelud mountain area, which is located in the Ngancar District of Kediri Regency. The majority of the Kelud mountain community embraces Islam, although, in reality, the community is also still obedient to carry out the tradition of honouring the spirits of ancestors or ancestors by performing certain ceremonies.

In the Kelud mountain community, *ruwatan* is divided into two, namely:

a. *Ruwatan* of the universe or earth

This ritual is intended for the safety and fertility of the earth where people live, especially in the Kelud Mountain area.

b. Human rituals

This ritual is intended for the human self or individual, group or group, community and nation.

In some community traditions, especially on Mount Kelud, a clean village or *ruwatan* is a ceremony that must be carried out once a year involving the entire community concerned. *Ruwatan* ceremonies are usually held in sacred places such as *punden*, cemeteries or at intersections. In *ruwatan* ceremonies, puppet shows are often performed. *Wayang* is a form of traditional performance presented by a puppeteer using puppets or the like as a performance tool. In this *wayang* performance, a special *wayang* play is presented. The puppet plays presented as a means of this *ruwatan* ceremony are usually *Murwakala* and *Sudamala*.

*Wayang* contains the very essence of life. An important aspect of the nature of *wayang* is that Javanese people often relate the events that occur in the world of *wayang* to the real world. The nature of *wayang* is a shadow of the real world, in which there are creatures created by God, such as humans, plants, animals, and even the world around them. The shadow contains a picture of human life, especially about the nature of glory and evil. Here's a picture of a *wayang* event to celebrate the *ruwatan* ceremony in the Kelud mountain area:



Figure 1.1 *Wayang* performance to clean the village or *ruwatan*

In *wayang*, the visualisation of *Batara Kala* is that of a tall, large, creepy and frightening giant-faced god. *Kala* means time, which implies to a person that if he does not make the best use of time, he will become a fool because he will be crushed by the time controlled by *Batara Kala*, the God of Time. These assumptions, over time, become firm beliefs in the hearts of the people of the Kelud mountain area. To avoid the threat of *Batara Kala*, they held a *ruwatan* ceremony using a puppet show with a special play, namely *Murwakala* or *Sudamala*.

The *Murwakala* play itself is very popular in the community, especially among the puppeteers. Etymologically, *murwakala* comes from the words “*murwa*” and “*kala*”. “*Murwa*” is formed from the word “*purwa*”, which means beginning, origin, beginning or cause. While “*kala*” means time. *Murwakala* means tracing the beginning of *kala*. *Kala* is a god or *batara*, the husband of *Batari Durga*. This play tells the story of the beginning, origins, causes or beginnings of the character *Batara Kala*. *Murwakala* is a play that today is said to be the most effective for warding off magical harm. C.C. Berg says that this play tells the story of *Batara Kala*, a giant god who incarnates as a result of the evil lust of *Batara Guru* and then seeks humans as prey, but at a *wayang* performance, is destroyed by the puppeteer with *jampi-jampi*, and this play is considered so great in its magical power that it is not performed without taking various protective measures.

In the *ruwatan* ceremony, apart from the offerings, the puppeteer is also very decisive in the sense that he is the one who functions as a link between the real world (*proven*) and the *supernatural* world (*supernatural*). In turn, people have the belief that what exists in the real

world is influenced by the supernatural world, as well as the universe (*jagad raya*), which is a neatly organised structure that moves according to its rotation and revolution. If one element of the cosmos deviates from these provisions, the cosmos will experience a shock. Therefore, the elements with one another in the cosmos are a neatly organised, harmonious system. The notion that the universe, which consists of the big and small worlds, is a harmonious whole, inseparable from one another and always connected, is a cosmic concept.

The people of the Kelud volcano area think that events that occur in the small universe are influenced by the big universe, or vice versa, which causes turmoil. This concept is called magical. In Javanese society, it is also clear that there is a well-organized order of life and clarity about the function and position of humans with other humans, the universe and God. All of this is also related to the view that the universe is, in principle, well-organized, harmonious and harmonious, in line and harmony with human life in society. This third concept is called categorical classification. The three concepts are an integral and interrelated whole. The order of humanity and the cosmos is coordinated; it is part of a whole, and when the parts strive towards unity and balance, life will be enjoyable and peaceful.

## 2. The value of *Wasathiyah* Islam in the *Ruwatan* ceremony on Mount Kelud

In the Islamic world, the word moderate is aligned with the word *wasathiyah*. Wasathiyah Islam is moderate Islam. Being aligned does not mean that the words moderate and *wasathiyah* have the same meaning. Moderation refers to the two meanings above, while *wasathiyah* refers to honesty, justice, compassion, tolerance and mutual support. Moderation includes three aspects, namely, moderation of thought, moderation of action, and moderation in movement. Moderation in thought is the ability to connect dogma with reality and between text and context. Moderation in action includes active moderation (moderation that forms a preexistent attitude) and passive moderation (moderate attitudes that form a preexistent attitude). And finally, moderation in the movement relates to a common attitude in which moderation has the permanent legal force to be realised. This requires a transparent political foundation.

Religious moderation or *Wasathiyah* can be understood by the attitude, perspective or behaviour of always taking the middle, always acting fairly and not being extreme in religion. On the contrary, extremism means that the perspective, attitude and behaviour exceed



the limits of moderation in religious understanding and practice (Shodiq et al., 2022). The local cultural approach can be the key to building a paradigm and attitude of religious moderation. The issue of moderation is not just a matter of individuals but groups and people, communities and countries, especially when currently various extreme groups have shown their faces under the pretext of religious interpretations that are very far from the essence of Islam.

In its application, in the community of Gunung Kelud, religious moderation is maintained, there has never been a conflict between tribes or religions. The creation of religious moderation with the existence of inter-ethnic and religious harmony in the community of Gunung Kelud certainly cannot be separated from the role of religious leaders, customs, youth and local government, with the approach of local community wisdom, both in the fields of religion, social and culture.

In addition to Islam, people in the Kelud mountain area are also Christian and Hindu. The *ruwatan* event at the intersection is also carried out by bringing food that is placed on banana fronds or debok in the form of a box and coated with pring and banana leaves called Lengkong. In the *ruwatan* event, there is not only a puppet show but also prayers and eating together at the village intersection. All those of different religions also participate in the event. This attitude of mutual respect is what causes hereditary traditions to be carried out. In the *ruwatan* ceremony, there is also a structure that is followed, including *Dadabut*, *Ngadinkeun Ijab Kabul (Meuncit Munding)*, *Ngalarawar*, and puppet shows.

#### D. Conclusion

Javanese customs are still alive, believed, and developed by the supporting community. Thus, the dominant aspect of *wayang* as a means of *ruwatan* ceremonies in cultural acculturation, the mantras uttered by Ki Dalang in *ruwatan* are intended to keep away and dispel *durga*, *kama salah*, or *kala* and place them in their proper place or their nature after the puppeteer relates to nature (fire, wind, water, soil) which he considers as brothers. The cosmic, magical, and classificatory concepts in Javanese society can be explained by the fact that Javanese people always try to maintain balance, harmony, and harmony in the universe because Javanese people believe that the order of humans and the cosmos is coordinated.

In its application, the people of Mount Kelud are in religious moderation, and there has never been a conflict between tribes, let alone

religiions. The creation of religious moderation with the existence of inter-ethnic and religious harmony in the community of Mount Kelud certainly cannot be separated from the role of religious leaders, customs, youth and local government, with the approach of local wisdom of the local community, both in the fields of religion, social and culture.

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