

The Relationship Between Islam and Local Traditions at Pondok Buntet Pesantren, Cirebon, West Java

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between Islamic teachings and local traditions as practiced at Pondok Buntet Pesantren, one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Cirebon, West Java. The study aims to explore how this pesantren integrates Islamic values with local wisdom that has long been embedded in the cultural life of the Cirebonese community. A qualitative approach is employed, utilizing observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis as the primary methods of data collection. The findings indicate that Pondok Buntet Pesantren implements a strategy of cultural acculturation by accommodating local traditions such as customary rituals and traditional arts within Islamic teachings without compromising the fundamental principles of Islamic law. This approach not only strengthens the Islamic identity of the community but also preserves local traditions as an integral part of the nation's cultural heritage. The article underscores the importance of an inclusive approach to Islamic da'wah in fostering harmony between religion and local culture, particularly in regions with a long history of cultural pluralism such as Cirebon.

INTRODUCTION

Islam and local traditions have a complex relationship, particularly in the Indonesian context, which is characterized by rich cultural diversity. As the majority religion in Indonesia, Islam did not emerge in a cultural vacuum; rather, it interacted with pre-existing local cultures and traditions. This process of acculturation has often produced distinctive religious practices that combine Islamic values with local wisdom embedded in the social life of local communities (Baso, 2015). However, in the course of modern developments, these traditions have encountered challenges. Some Islamic groups with puritan tendencies regard local traditions as religious practices that are incompatible with their understanding of the purity of Islamic teachings. Conversely, other groups view such traditions as expressions of contextual and culturally responsive Islam. This debate reflects the complexity of the relationship between Islam and local traditions, particularly within the pesantren environment (Dhofier, 2011). One tangible example of this dynamic can

be observed in the traditions practiced at Pondok Buntet Pesantren in Cirebon, West Java.

Pondok Buntet Pesantren is located in eastern Cirebon, in the village of Kedung Malang, Buntet Village, Astanajapura District. It was founded in 1750 CE by Kiai Muqoyyim bin Kiai Abdul Hadi, commonly known among the Buntet community as Mbah Muqoyyim, a descendant of the Cirebon Sultanate nobility. The pesantren continues to exist today and accommodates hundreds of students (*santri*) pursuing religious education. Pondok Buntet Pesantren is a traditional pesantren that focuses on the study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), including *Safīnat al-Najāh*, *Sulam al-Tawfīq*, *Sulam al-Munājah*, *Fath al-Qarīb*, *Kifāyat al-Akhyār*, *Fath al-Mu'īn*, and other similar works. In addition, students study Arabic linguistic sciences (*ʿulūm al-ālah*), such as *Nahw* and *Ṣarf*, through texts like *al-Jurumiyyah*, *al-Amrīṭī*, and *Alfiyyah*. The pesantren also offers instruction in Islamic theology (*ʿaqīdah*), drawing on works such as those by Ibn al-Bājūrī, *Qaṣṣ al-Ghayth*, *Tījān al-Darārī*, *ʿAqīdat al-ʿAwām*, and other theological texts. Qurʾanic studies also constitute an important component of the curriculum at Pondok Buntet Pesantren.

Pondok Buntet Pesantren does not limit its educational focus solely to religious sciences but also emphasizes general knowledge. Religious sciences are taught within the pesantren system, while general sciences are delivered through formal educational institutions affiliated with the pesantren. Thus, Pondok Buntet Pesantren does not reject general sciences. The *kiai* and religious scholars of Buntet Pesantren emphasize that both religious and general knowledge are equally important, as the study of general sciences serves to broaden the intellectual horizons of the students and introduce them to fundamental principles across various disciplines (Baso, 2015). These fields include natural sciences, social sciences, economics, political science, and other areas of general knowledge, enabling students to avoid intellectual isolation from contemporary developments. This educational philosophy also seeks to demonstrate the close relationship between religious knowledge and general sciences, as many foundational disciplines such as science, economics, medicine, and mathematics were historically developed by Muslim scholars. Figures such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Kathīr, and others did not distinguish between religious and general knowledge, viewing both as integral components of human understanding. At Pondok Buntet Pesantren, this perspective is reflected in the serious attention given to formal educational institutions at various levels.

Pondok Buntet Pesantren is recognized as one of the oldest pesantren in Indonesia, having been established in the eighteenth century. It functions not only as a center of Islamic education but also as an institution dedicated to preserving the local traditions of the Cirebonese community (*Situs Resmi Pondok Buntet Pesantren*, n.d.). Various traditions, such as *haul* commemorations, *tahlilan*, and

celebrations of the Prophet's Birthday (*Maulid Nabi*), serve as concrete examples of how Islamic values are integrated into local cultural practices. These traditions function not only as acts of worship but also as social mechanisms that strengthen communal solidarity. One notable example is the *haul* ceremony at Pondok Buntet Pesantren. Unlike *haul* commemorations in many pesantren that focus exclusively on deceased *kiai* and religious leaders, the *haul* at Pondok Buntet Pesantren also commemorates members of the surrounding community. Thus, prayers are offered not only for the pesantren's religious figures but also collectively for the broader Buntet community (*Situs Resmi Pondok Buntet Pesantren*, n.d.).

Traditions such as *haul*, *tahlilan*, and *Maulid Nabi* are often understood as forms of integration between Islamic teachings and local culture rooted in Nusantara wisdom. This approach aligns with the character of *Islam Nusantara*, which emphasizes moderation and respect for local cultural expressions. (Azra, 2004) Nevertheless, the relationship between Islam and local traditions is not without tension. Some groups perceive local traditions as contradictory to what they define as pure Islam, while others regard them as expressions of contextual and culturally sensitive Islamic da'wah. Consequently, it is essential to examine more closely how Islam and local traditions interact at Pondok Buntet Pesantren in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its model of religious practice.

According to Clifford Geertz (Geertz, 1960) as cited by Nur Syam, culture consists of two fundamental elements: culture as a cognitive system and system of meaning, and culture as a system of values. Geertz illustrates that religious rituals performed by a community function as cognitive systems and systems of meaning, while the value system consists of beliefs regarded as true and authoritative foundations for performing such rituals. Geertz further explains that local traditions emerge from an inductive paradigm rooted in ancestral heritage. When Islam entered Java, including Cirebon, these two paradigms encountered one another: Islam carried a missionary motive, while local traditions sought to preserve ancestral heritage, (Geertz, 1960) Their interaction resulted in acculturative and syncretic processes, understood as the blending of diverse religious understandings and belief systems. When the deductive paradigm of the sacred text (the Qur'an) becomes dominant, local traditions tend to shift into the realm of cultural heritage. Conversely, when the inductive paradigm of ancestral tradition prevails, local traditions persist as forms of local spiritual culture.

The study of the relationship between Islam and local traditions at Pondok Buntet Pesantren is therefore essential for understanding how Islam adapts to local contexts without losing its core principles. This analysis is also relevant in supporting the vision of *Islam Nusantara*, which emphasizes moderation and diversity as defining features of Indonesian Islam. By examining these interactions,

it becomes evident that Islamic teachings and local traditions can complement one another in fostering social harmony.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach (Pals, 2011), with a descriptive-analytical method. This approach was chosen to describe and analyze the relationship between Islamic values and local traditions that have developed at Pondok Buntet Pesantren, Cirebon. The research was conducted through several stages, namely:

Research Approach

The qualitative approach aims to gain an in-depth understanding of social and cultural phenomena involving the interaction between Islam and local traditions (Suprayogo & Tobroni, 2003). Data analysis techniques were carried out inductively to explore meanings from the perspectives of the research subjects.

Research Location

The research was conducted at Pondok Buntet Pesantren, Cirebon, West Java. This pesantren was selected because it is known as one of the oldest Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, with a strong richness of local traditions and a significant Islamic influence.

Data Sources

- a. Primary Data: Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with kiai, senior santri, community leaders, and pesantren administrators. Direct observation of pesantren activities was also conducted, particularly those related to local traditions, such as the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday (Maulid Nabi), *Haul*, and the *tahlilan* tradition.
- b. Secondary Data: Secondary data were obtained from written documents, including books, journals, and pesantren archives that discuss the history and activities of Pondok Buntet Pesantren, as well as literature on the relationship between Islam and local traditions. (Chamami, 2016)

Data Collection Techniques

- a. Interviews:
Semi-structured interviews were employed to obtain in-depth information regarding perspectives on the relationship between Islam and local traditions.
- b. Observation:
The researcher conducted direct observations of the implementation of local traditions in the pesantren, such as customary ceremonies that integrate Islamic values
- c. Documentation Study:
Documents, *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts), and other relevant literature were examined to gain historical and theological insights into traditional practices within the pesantren.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using a descriptive-analytical approach through the following steps:

- a. Data Reduction: Organizing and simplifying the collected data.
- b. Data Presentation: Arranging the data in the form of thematic narratives. (Moleong, 2017)
- c. Conclusion Drawing: Interpreting the relationship between Islam and local traditions at Pondok Buntet Pesantren based on the research findings.

Data Validity

Source and method triangulation were employed to ensure data validity. This approach involved comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and written documents to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As is widely known, the majority of Indonesian Muslims adhere to the Shāfi'ī school of thought, which derives legal rulings by referring to the Qur'an, the Sunnah, *ijmā'*, and *qiyās* when addressing legal issues that arise within society. Likewise, the scholars of Pondok Buntet Pesantren in Cirebon frequently refer to the opinions of earlier scholars from the Shāfi'ī school, as documented in classical fiqh texts. In addition to relying on these classical jurisprudential sources, the scholars of Pondok Buntet Pesantren also consider *maṣlaḥah* (benefit) and *mafsadah* (harm) as important factors in determining legal rulings

The Basic Thinking of The Scholars of The Buntet Pesantren Cirebon

Buntet Pesantren, one of the oldest Islamic boarding schools in Cirebon, West Java, is recognized as a center of Islamic education that has made significant contributions to the development of Islamic scholarship and the formation of community character. This pesantren functions not only as an educational institution but also as a center for the study of Islamic values that are contextualized within local culture. The scholars of Buntet Pesantren possess a distinctive intellectual foundation, namely a combination of classical texts (*kitab kuning*) and approaches that are responsive to the needs of society. (*Situs Resmi Pondok Buntet Pesantren*, n.d.)

In the context of Indonesian Islam, the thought of the scholars of Buntet often emphasizes the principles of moderation (*wasathiyah*), diversity, and local wisdom. These principles enable Islam to be practiced in an inclusive and sustainable manner, in accordance with the socio-cultural conditions of the local community. This paper examines the intellectual foundations of the scholars of Buntet Pesantren, encompassing theological, social, and cultural dimensions.

1. Theological Aspect

The theological foundation of the scholars of Buntet Pesantren is grounded in the understanding of Islam according to *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* (Aswaja). The scholars at this pesantren emphasize the importance of religious moderation by referring to three main pillars: *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance), *tawāzun* (balance), and *i'tidāl* (justice). These principles are applied to prevent extremism, whether in the form of liberalism or radicalism. Classical texts, such as the works of Imam al-Ghazālī, Imam al-Shāfi'ī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, serve as the primary references in teaching at the pesantren..(Al-Farisi, 2024) This strong textual approach is then combined with contextual interpretation to address the challenges of modern society. For example, the scholars of Buntet frequently relate Islamic legal rulings to local values in order to make them more acceptable to the community.

2. Social Aspect

The social thought of the scholars of Buntet Pesantren focuses on community empowerment and the formation of social harmony. One of its distinctive characteristics is an inclusive approach to *da'wah*, namely conveying Islamic teachings while respecting local cultures and traditions. Practices such as *tahlilan*, *haul*, and the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday (*Maulid Nabi*) are maintained because they are considered compatible with Islamic teachings and serve important social functions. According to KH. Abdul Chalim, (Al-Farisi, 2024) one of the prominent scholars of Buntet Pesantren, these traditions are not merely religious rituals but also serve as a means to strengthen social solidarity. Accordingly, the scholars of Buntet view tradition as an effective medium of *da'wah* for bringing Islam closer to the community.

3. Cultural Aspect

Local culture constitutes an integral part of the intellectual framework of the scholars of Buntet Pesantren. The scholars understand that Islam does not exist in a cultural vacuum, but rather interacts with local traditions. They utilize local culture as a medium of *da'wah* without compromising the fundamental values of Islam. This attitude is reflected in their efforts to harmonize Islam with Cirebonese culture, such as the *Nadran* tradition (sea thanksgiving), which is infused with Islamic prayers. This approach demonstrates how the scholars of Buntet are able to preserve the essence of Islam while simultaneously maintaining local wisdom (Ridwan, 2024).

Local Traditions Shaping Religious Practices at Pondok Buntet Pesantren, Cirebon

Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) play a significant role in preserving local culture and traditions in Indonesia. One compelling example is Pondok Buntet

Pesantren in Cirebon, West Java. This pesantren functions not only as a center for Islamic religious education but also as an institution that upholds local traditions harmoniously integrated with Islamic teachings. This subsection examines how local traditions influence and enrich religious practices at Pondok Buntet Pesantren, Cirebon.

Several local traditions that are still practiced and continue to develop as both cultural assets and local heritage at Pondok Buntet Pesantren include the following:

1. Ngupati Tradition (Four Months of Pregnancy)

The *Ngupati* tradition is a form of thanksgiving ritual held for an unborn baby when the pregnancy reaches four months. This practice is rooted in the community's belief that when a pregnancy reaches four months, Allah bestows the *rūḥ* (soul) upon the fetus. At this stage, the unborn child is believed to begin living and developing into a complete human being who will eventually be born into the world. Typically, the expectant mother at four months of pregnancy is prayed for, and selected verses of the Qur'an are recited, often completing one full *khatm al-Qur'an*, sometimes performed through memorization (Sholikhin, 2012).

This ritual is performed with the intention of supplicating to Allah so that the unborn child may be born safely and grow into a person of good moral character who is able to memorize the Qur'an. Families who hold a *Ngupati* ceremony usually invite an *ustadz* or *santri* who have memorized all 30 *juz* of the Qur'an to recite it continuously over the course of one day and one night. A distinctive feature of this tradition is the preparation of *ketupat*, which symbolically represents the number four. (Syam, 2007) Families who hold the ceremony prepare *ketupat* and other traditional foods to be distributed to their neighbors, both nearby and distant, as well as to invited guests who attend, whether they actively participate in the prayers or simply come to observe. This tradition is carried out solely as an expression of gratitude for the bestowal of the *rūḥ* by Allah upon the unborn child.

2. Nujuh Bulan Tradition (Seven Months of Pregnancy)

The *Nujuh Bulan* tradition is also a form of thanksgiving ritual and supplication to the Almighty for an expectant mother whose pregnancy has reached seven months, seeking an easy delivery without complications. It is also intended to pray for the unborn child to be born safely and in a state of good health (*salāmah* and *ʿāfiyah*). In this ritual, the expectant mother is bathed seven times using water infused with seven kinds of flowers. The bathing is performed alternately by several individuals who are religiously permitted to do so, namely those who are *maḥram* (lawfully related). (Pals, 2011) Before the bathing ritual begins, a series of communal prayers is conducted, including the recitation of *tahlil*. Supplications

are offered for the unborn child and the expectant mother, led by a *kiai* or a community leader from Pondok Buntet Pesantren. Those who participate in bathing the expectant mother typically include her biological mother, mother-in-law, elders or respected community figures, and her husband. The bathing is carried out alternately, one person at a time, until it is completed seven times, accompanied by the recitation of prayers. The bathing usually takes place using a *gentong* (a clay water container) filled with water, seven kinds of flowers, and several coins (Sholikhin, 2012).

The bathing area is surrounded by a bamboo fence that is elaborately decorated with various ornaments, such as *ilir* (a bamboo hand fan), money, *klebet* (flag-like decorations), clothing, balloons, and other items, each prepared in sets of seven. After the bathing ritual is completed, local residents eagerly collect the money and items attached to the decorated bamboo fence to take home. The *gentong* containing coins is then broken by the husband of the expectant mother, prompting the community to rush forward to collect the scattered coins.

3. Ngrujaki Tradition (Preparing Fruit Salad)

The *Ngrujaki* tradition is a thanksgiving ritual that forms part of the *Nujuh Bulan* ceremony and symbolizes safety and happiness. It involves preparing *rujak tumbuk*, a traditional fruit salad made from fresh fruits, which is then distributed to relatives and neighbors, both near and distant. (Syam, 2007) This tradition takes place concurrently with the *Nujuh Bulan* ceremony, with the only difference being the timing of its implementation. Some community members state that it is conducted before the bathing ritual begins, while others suggest that it takes place after the bathing ceremony has been completed.

Based on these accounts, in practice this tradition is generally performed before the *Nujuh Bulan* bathing ritual. Accordingly, the host family first prepares the mashed fruit *rujak*, which is intended to be distributed and combined with *berkat* (food packages) for the participants. (Asy'ari, 1925) After the *ngrujaki* process is completed, the *Nujuh Bulan* bathing ritual begins, preceded by a series of *tahlil* recitations and communal prayers. The invited guests who attend then return home carrying *berkat* (food packages) provided by the host family.

4. Ngelengahi Tradition (Applying Oil to the Pregnant Woman's Abdomen)

The *Ngelengahi* tradition involves applying oil to the abdomen of a woman who is nine months pregnant. In this ritual, the oil is gently applied to the abdominal area while prayers are recited. The prayers include the recitation of *Sūrat al-Qadr*, followed by *ṣalawāt* upon the Prophet, which are then softly blown onto the expectant mother's abdomen. (Chamami, 2016) The purpose of this ritual is similar to the preceding traditions, namely to facilitate a smooth and easy

childbirth and to pray that the child to be born will grow into an intelligent individual who is devoted to both parents.

5. Puputan Tradition (Detachment of the Umbilical Cord)

The *Puputan* tradition is a thanksgiving ceremony held when the umbilical cord of a newborn baby has detached. The ritual involves the recitation of prayers and *marhabanan* (chanting *ṣalawāt* upon the Prophet). During this ceremony, the baby is carried and gently passed around among the guests attending the *marhabanan*. Each guest then recites a prayer and *Sūrat al-Qadr* into the baby's right ear, (Sholikhin, 2012) Subsequently, each invited guest recites a prayer and *Sūrat al-Qadr* into the baby's right ear and gently blows into the ear three times. This tradition is carried out simultaneously with the *ʿaqīqah* ceremony.

ʿAqīqah is a prescribed practice in Islamic law for newborn babies as an expression of thanksgiving. The *ʿaqīqah* may be performed when the baby is one week old, two weeks old, or one month old. If the family is not yet able to perform it at that time, it may be postponed until the child reaches adolescence or adulthood, such as at the time of circumcision or marriage. (Shulhki, 2024) For a male baby, the *ʿaqīqah* prescribes the sacrifice of two young male goats, while for a female baby, one goat is required. The *ʿaqīqah* meat is then cooked into dishes such as *satay* and *empal* (goat soup), after which it is prepared as *berkat* (food packages) to be distributed to relatives and invited guests attending the *marhabanan* (recitation of *ṣalawāt* upon the Prophet). The *ʿaqīqah* ceremony thus consists of a series of thanksgiving rituals and prayers offered for the newborn whose umbilical cord has detached.

6. Mudun Lemah Tradition (Stepping on the Earth)

The *Mudun Lemah* tradition, or stepping on the earth, is performed when a child reaches the age of seven months and enters the eighth month. In Javanese culture, this ritual is referred to as "*Mudun Lemah*". (Asy'ari, 1925) This ritual is performed because, at the age of seven months to entering the eighth month, a child or toddler begins to place their feet on the ground for the first time, symbolizing the early stages of sitting and walking. The child is guided to descend a small staircase, stepping down three steps to reach the ground. This process is repeated seven times. After reaching the ground, the child is placed inside a rooster's bamboo cage, inside which various items are prepared, such as a *kopyah* (cap), *Iqro'* book, pen or pencil, comb, mirror, rice grains, and gold or money. Each of these items carries its own symbolic meaning.

The equipment required for the *Mudun Lemah* tradition includes the following:

- a. A bamboo staircase decorated with colorful *wajik* paper cut into ornamental shapes, along with soil or sand for stepping; *Juadah* 7 warna;
- b. *Juadah* in seven different colors;
- c. A decorated chicken cage;
- d. Objects to be chosen by the child during the *Mudun Lemah* ritual, such as a *kopyah*, *Iqro'* book, pen or pencil, comb, mirror, rice grains, and gold or money;
- e. A *tumpeng* served with *urap* vegetables and *bekakak* chicken

The *Mudun Lemah* ritual procession is carried out as follows: The ceremony begins with stepping on *juadah* in seven colors. *Juadah* is a traditional food made from glutinous rice mixed with grated young coconut and seasoned with salt to create a savory taste. (Chamami, 2016) The seven colors consist of yellow, black, red, blue, orange, white, and green. These colors carry the following symbolic meanings;

- a. Blue = Identity
- b. White = Fundamental character
- c. Orange = The sun
- d. Green = A symbol of life
- e. Yellow = Hope for the achievement of aspirations
- f. Red = Spirit or enthusiasm
- g. Black = Grandeur or dignity

The symbolic meaning embedded in the *juadah* represents the stages of life that the child will experience, beginning with the first step upon the earth and continuing until adulthood. The colors symbolize the various choices and challenges that the child will encounter throughout life. Typically, the sequence of the seven colors progresses from darker shades to brighter ones. (Azra, 2004)

The child then climbs the decorated staircase and steps onto the soil or sand. After that, the child is guided into the decorated chicken cage, inside which several objects are placed, such as a *kopyah*, *Iqro'* book, pen or pencil, comb, mirror, rice grains, and gold or money. The child selects one of these items, which is intended to symbolize the child's future interests, inclinations, and potential occupation in adulthood.

7. Kliwonan Tradition

The *Kliwonan* tradition is a series of ceremonial activities performed regularly and may be considered a ritual, as it is conducted consistently at a specific time. The timing of the *Kliwonan* tradition remains fixed, occurring exclusively on the night of *Friday Kliwon*, and it has been passed down from generation to generation. (Situs Resmi Pondok Buntet Pesantren, n.d.) The *Kliwonan* tradition is

also regarded as a sacred ritual, as it aims to purify and cleanse individuals from elements perceived as negative, harmful, or evil.

Within the *Kliwonan* tradition, the Buntet community together with *santri* and *kiai* typically engages in a series of religious activities, including *istighāthah* (collective supplications and remembrance of God), the recitation of *manāqib*, *Ṣalawāt Nārīyah*, grave pilgrimage (*ziārah qubūr*), *tahlilan*, and social gatherings (*silaturahmi*).

8. Tahlilan Tradition

The *Tahlilan* tradition involves the recitation of the *tahlīl* formula (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*). Essentially, *tahlīl* is a form of *dhikr* intended to seek protection from Allah SWT and to offer prayers for the well-being of fellow Muslims, whether for those who have passed away or for the safety and welfare of the living. This tradition is commonly performed when a Muslim passes away, with *tahlilan* held for seven consecutive days, followed by commemorations on the 40th day, the 100th day, and the first anniversary of death, known as the *haul*. (Dhofier, 2011) In addition, *tahlil* is also performed during communal thanksgiving events or sacred occasions such as *Kliwonan*, circumcision ceremonies (*khitanan*), *Walīmat al-Ursy* (wedding celebrations), grave pilgrimages, and other events that are commonly accompanied by the recitation of *tahlil*.

9. Manaqiban Tradition

The *Manaqiban* tradition is a ritual practice that has become a longstanding tradition within the community of Pondok Buntet Pesantren. It involves the recitation of *manāqib*, namely the biographical accounts of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, a legendary saint (*walī*) in Indonesian Islamic tradition who is widely revered as the “father of the saints.” The recitations include his genealogical lineage, life history, moral character, and *karāmah* (spiritual virtues or miracles). In addition, the *manāqib* contain poetic prayers (*naẓm*) that express praise and *tawassul*, namely supplicating to Allah SWT through the intercession of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. (Yusuf Nz., 2024)

The community of Pondok Buntet Pesantren commonly organizes *manaqiban* ceremonies when they have particular intentions (*hajat*) and seek the swift fulfillment of their prayers. In doing so, they make spiritual efforts (*ikhtiar*) through the recitation of the *manāqib* of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī as a means of *tawassul*. In addition, *manaqiban* is also held as part of *slametan* or thanksgiving ceremonies and other communal activities. Overall, this ritual may be understood as a symbolic expression of gratitude for the abundance of sustenance (*rizq*) bestowed by Allah SWT, which is then shared as *ṣadaqah* with fellow Muslims who participate in the event. (Al-Farisi, 2024) The expectation is to obtain blessings (*barakah*) from the recitation of the *manāqib* and to

strengthen social harmony and the bonds of brotherhood within the surrounding community. This practice is grounded in the belief that Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī is a highly esteemed *Walī Qutb*, endowed with exceptional spiritual status and the ability to bestow blessings upon people’s lives.

Participants often bring bottles of water and place them near the imam or the person leading the *manāqib* recitation. This practice is intended to receive blessings from the prayers recited during the ceremony. When consumed, the water is believed to become blessed and beneficial for health. Other perceived benefits include healing from various illnesses, success in business endeavors, the fulfillment of prayers, and the attainment of other forms of blessing according to the individual needs of those who drink it.

10. Marhabanan Tradition

The *Marhabanan* tradition is performed when a newborn baby’s umbilical cord has detached (*puput*), coinciding with the thanksgiving ceremony of *‘aqīqah*. This event includes the recitation of *Marhabanan*. *Marhaban* refers to the chanting of *ṣalawāt* upon the Prophet, commonly taken from the *Kitāb al-Marhabanan* authored by Shaykh Ja‘far al-Marhabanī. The text contains narratives or biographical accounts of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, beginning from his birth and early life, including his infancy and upbringing, (Yachsyi Al-Husaini Fuad Hasyim, 2024) The text recounts the childhood of the Prophet, his adolescence, and other stages of his life until the passing of Prophet Muhammad SAW.

During the *Marhabanan* ceremony, the baby is carried around among those reciting the *Kitāb al-Marhabanan*. Each participant, in turn, recites a prayer into the baby’s right ear and gently blows into it three times. This ritual is intended to pray that the child will grow into a righteous son or daughter (*ṣāliḥ/ṣāliḥah*) who embodies the noble character of Prophet Muhammad SAW. (Mulkhan, 1997) In addition, this tradition is also recited during the commemoration of *Maulid* (the birthday of Prophet Muhammad SAW), the observance of *Isrā’ Mi‘rāj*, and is regularly performed every Thursday night (*Friday eve*) in each dormitory and the mosque of Pondok Buntet Pesantren.

11. Muharroman Tradition

The *Muharroman* tradition is a celebration of the Islamic New Year (*Hijri New Year*). The Buntet community typically commemorates it through a torchlight parade accompanied by the recitation of *ṣalawāt*, while walking around the village. After the parade, various competitions are held for the *santri*, including *Musābaqah Tilāwat al-Qur’ān* (MTQ), *Musābaqah Ḥifẓ al-Qur’ān* (MHQ), speech competitions, *Musābaqah Qirā’at al-Kutub* (MQK), and other related contests, (Situs Resmi Pondok Buntet Pesantren, n.d.) The peak night of the event

is marked by a public religious lecture (*pengajian umum* or *siraman rohani*) delivered by senior scholars and *kiai* of Pondok Buntet Pesantren.

12. Syura'an Tradition

The *Syura'an* tradition is observed on the 10th day of the month of Muharram, commonly known as the 10th of *Syuro*. At Pondok Buntet Pesantren, this tradition is typically carried out through the giving of *ṣadaqah* or charitable assistance to orphans. On the evening prior to the distribution of aid, the community gathers for a series of communal prayers. A distinctive feature of this tradition is the preparation of *Syura porridge*, which is then distributed as *ṣadaqah* to all neighbors, both nearby and distant.(Dhofier, 2011)

Syura porridge is a dish made by cooking various food ingredients together into a porridge. Its ingredients include beans, corn, rice, glutinous rice, eggs, and other items. The preparation of *Syura porridge* originates from the story of Prophet Nūḥ (peace be upon him), who, during a time of scarcity aboard the ark, gathered the remaining food supplies and cooked them together.

13. Muludan Tradition

The *Muludan* tradition is a commemoration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad SAW. The event is observed over three consecutive days by *santri* and local residents. For the first two days, the *santri*, together with the *kiai*, engage in the study and recitation of the *Kitāb al-Marhabanan*. On the third day, the event involves the broader community, including residents, *santri*, elders, and *kiai*, who collectively recite *Marhabanan* at the Jami' Mosque of Pondok Buntet Pesantren. Following the *Marhaban* recitation, the program concludes with a short religious sermon delivered by senior scholars and *kiai* of Pondok Buntet Pesantren.(Asy'ari, 1925)

The *Muludan* tradition also commonly serves as an auspicious occasion for the residents of Pondok Buntet Pesantren, including *ustadz*, elders, and *kiai*, to perform acts of *ṣadaqah* (charitable giving) for the *santri* and local community members who attend the event. Such charitable contributions may take the form of food and beverages or material assistance.

14. Rajaban Tradition

The *Rajaban* tradition is a commemoration of a major Islamic holy event that holds significant historical importance in Islamic civilization, namely the celebration of the *Isrā'* and *Mi'rāj* of Prophet Muhammad SAW.(Pals, 2011) The *Rajaban* tradition is conducted in a manner similar to the *Muludan* tradition, being held over three consecutive days. However, the main distinction lies in the text studied by the *santri*, who recite and study the book *Qishṣatul Mi'rāj* instead of *Al-Marhabanan*. The event is then followed by a series of activities similar to those carried out in the *Muludan* tradition, as previously described.

15. Sya'banan Tradition: Bathing in Seven Wells

The *Sya'banan Mandi Tujuh Sumur* tradition takes place in the middle of the month of Sha'bān, around the 15th–16th of Sha'bān. According to long-standing beliefs passed down by elders and *kiai* of Pondok Buntet Pesantren, it is believed that during this period Allah SWT bestows Zamzam-like water upon every natural water source (wells) in the surrounding village (Mulkhan, 1997).

However, some believe that this phenomenon occurs only at certain specific water sources (wells). For this reason, community members flock to bathe at various water sources (wells) with the aim of obtaining blessings (*barakah*) or spiritual grace (*karāmah*) from the Zamzam-like water believed to originate from these wells.

16. *Haulan* Tradition

The *Haulan* tradition is a commemorative event marking the anniversary of the death of residents and elders of Pondok Buntet Pesantren. What distinguishes the *Haulan* tradition at this pesantren from similar traditions in other pesantren is the strong sense of togetherness between community members and the *kiai*. The *Haulan* tradition at Pondok Buntet Pesantren is not limited to commemorating only the elders and religious leaders, but also includes the remembrance of the wider pesantren community members. (Chamami, 2016) The *Haulan* tradition is organized as a single, integrated series of events and is celebrated on a large scale. When the *Haulan* takes place, those who host the occasion (*ṣāhib al-ḥājah*) and the invited guests are not limited to the *kiai* alone; the indigenous residents of Pondok Buntet Pesantren also participate as hosts and invite their own guests. As a result, the annual *Haulan* tradition at Pondok Buntet Pesantren, Cirebon, attracts numerous traders who come to conduct business during the event.

Fundamentally, the *Haulan* tradition originally consisted of a series of grand *tahlil* rituals held at Maqbaroh Gajah Ngambung, organized by the *kiai* and local residents to offer prayers for deceased community members and religious leaders. However, over time and in response to social development, the *Haulan* tradition has evolved beyond the practice of prayer and *tahlil* recitation alone. It now encompasses a wide range of additional activities, such as mass circumcision ceremonies, mass weddings, and various forms of entertainment, culminating in a *Tabligh Akbar* attended by prominent religious figures and high-ranking government officials in Indonesia.

Moreover, the *Haulan* tradition has also transformed into a night market. Approximately thirty days prior to the main event (H-30), traders begin arriving in large numbers to sell their goods. In addition to commercial activities, various forms of entertainment are also present to enliven the celebration, including

circuses, carousels, mechanical music rides (*komidi putar* and *komidi orsel*), *kora-kora* rides, and other attractions. (Baso, 2015) Consequently, this tradition has become the most highly anticipated event for both male and female students (*santriwan* and *santriwati*) at Pondok Buntet Pesantren. Not only the students, but also local residents and traders eagerly await this occasion, as many merchants experience significant economic benefits during the event. In addition, the *santri* look forward to being visited by their families, allowing them to reunite during the *Haulan* tradition. This moment also provides an opportunity for students to enjoy leisure time by strolling with family members, friends, and relatives while savoring traditional foods and various night-market beverages within the Pondok Buntet Pesantren area.

17. The *Lebaran Ketupat* Tradition

The *Lebaran Ketupat* tradition takes place after the celebration of *Eid al-Fitr*, following the observance of six consecutive days of the Sunnah *Shawwal* fasting. The seventh day, or one week after *Eid al-Fitr*, is known as *Lebaran Ketupat*. Historically, this tradition was observed only by members of the community who performed the six days of *Shawwal* fasting. However, over time, *Lebaran Ketupat* has evolved into a broader communal celebration, resembling major Islamic holidays such as *Eid al-Fitr* itself. (Syam, 2007) Each household and *kiai* prepares traditional *ketupat* dishes to be served to guests who come to engage in *silaturahmi* (social and familial visits). The celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat* is not limited to those who observe the six days of Sunnah *Shawwal* fasting; individuals who do not perform the fasting also participate in the celebration. The distinctive characteristic of *Lebaran Ketupat* lies in its primary culinary symbol, namely *ketupat*, which serves as the central dish of the event.

18. *Halal Bihalal* Tradition

The *Halal Bihalal* tradition is closely associated with the *Lebaran Ketupat* celebration, as both traditions are conducted simultaneously. In essence, the primary purpose of *Lebaran Ketupat* is to strengthen social bonds through *silaturahmi*. The *Halal Bihalal* tradition functions as a social gathering dedicated to mutual forgiveness and reconciliation among community members. Consequently, those who attend the *Lebaran Ketupat* celebration also participate in *Halal Bihalal* activities. The attendees typically include parents of students (*wali santri*), alumni, relatives, close and distant family members, as well as prospective male and female students (*santriwan* and *santriwati*) who intend to enroll and reside at Pondok Buntet Pesantren. Prospective students generally begin arriving during the *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Halal Bihalal* celebrations.

19. The *Azdan Slamet* Tradition

The *Azdan Slamet* tradition refers to the recitation of a special call (*adhan*) performed when an individual is about to depart for the pilgrimage (*haji*), move to a new residence, get married, or undertake other significant life events. The purpose of this tradition is to seek divine facilitation, safety, and well-being, both physically and spiritually. The term *slamet* is derived from the Javanese language, meaning 'safety' or 'salvation.' This tradition frequently accompanies various religious ceremonies and rituals conducted at Pondok Buntet Pesantren. Fundamentally, *Azdan Slamet* reflects a collective aspiration for divine protection and smooth progression in every stage of life, guiding individuals toward success in worldly endeavors and ultimately toward spiritual fulfillment in the hereafter.

20. The *Bebarik* (Ritual of Warding Off Misfortune) Tradition

The *Bebarik* tradition is a communal ritual involving a large number of participants who collectively recite the sholawat: '*Yā Muhaimīnu Yā Salām, Sallimnā wal Muslimīn bin-Nabī Khairil Anām wa bi Ummil Mu'minīn.*' The ritual is led by a *kiai* and followed by students (*santri*) and local residents as they walk together around the village. At each intersection or corner of the village, the *Azdan Slamet* is recited. This tradition is typically performed on the night of Friday *Kliwon*, either late at night or at midnight. However, during periods of social instability or crisis such as during the COVID-19 pandemic the *Bebarik* ritual may be conducted more frequently, even on a daily basis. The primary objective of this tradition is to seek protection from diseases, calamities, and various forms of harm.

The Intersection of Islam and Local Traditions at Pondok Buntet Pesantren, Cirebon

Islam in the Indonesian archipelago is widely recognized for its capacity to adapt to local traditions without compromising the core principles of Islamic teachings. This phenomenon is clearly observable at Pondok Buntet Pesantren in Cirebon, West Java, which functions not only as a center of Islamic education but also as a custodian of local cultural traditions. The pesantren exemplifies how Islam and indigenous traditions can interact synergistically to create social harmony within the community (Baso, 2015). This subchapter examines the intersection between Islam and local traditions at Pondok Buntet Pesantren, which has positioned the institution as a center of cultural and spiritual diversity.

The interaction between Islam and local traditions at Pondok Buntet Pesantren is reflected in several ritual practices, including the Ngupati, Nujuh Bulan, Marhabanan, and Khaul traditions. Each of these traditions encompasses a series of interconnected rituals that form a coherent cultural and religious framework. According to Cirebonese traditional beliefs, a fetus at the seventh month of

pregnancy is considered to have reached the spiritual status of *martabati insan kāmīl*. At this stage, it is deemed necessary to offer prayers and supplications invoking the Prophet.

The thanksgiving ritual is conducted through the recitation of Qur'anic verses and prayers led by religious figures (*ustadz* or *kiai*), with the intention of seeking a safe and smooth childbirth, ensuring the well-being of both the mother and the baby (Asy'ari, 1925). The Qur'anic verses recited during the ritual usually consist of a complete *khatm* of the Qur'an or selected chapters, including Surah Yusuf, Surah Luqman, and Surah Al-Waqi'ah. Surah Yusuf is recited with the hope that if the child to be born is male, he will possess physical attractiveness and exemplary character akin to Prophet Yusuf. Surah Luqman is recited with the expectation that the child will grow to be knowledgeable, grateful for the blessings bestowed by Allah, and, in adulthood, become a parent capable of educating future generations in accordance with the moral teachings exemplified by Luqman.

Furthermore, Surah Al-Waqi'ah is recited with the aspiration that the child will be loved by Allah and by fellow human beings, protected from hardship and poverty, and granted sustained prosperity, in line with the spiritual meanings contained within the chapter itself (Yusuf Nz., 2024). Subsequently, Surah Maryam is recited with the hope that if the child to be born is female, she will be able to preserve her purity and moral integrity, following the exemplary model of Maryam. The recitation of Surah An-Nisa' is intended to express the aspiration that, should the child be female, she will be protected and that her rights will be upheld, in accordance with the values embodied in Surah An-Nisa'. Meanwhile, Surah Yasin is recited as a supplication for the safety of the unborn child and for a smooth and unobstructed childbirth process (Syam, 2007).

The moral values, both explicit and implicit, embedded in these traditions emphasize that parents particularly husbands whose wives are expecting are encouraged to continually draw closer to Allah SWT and to offer prayers for the safety and well-being of both the mother and the unborn child. Essentially, this tradition represents a supplication to Allah SWT (the Almighty) for protection, so that the child may be born smoothly, in good health, safely, with physical completeness, and without any complications. This practice reflects Javanese ethical values, which emphasize self-discipline through *tazkiyat al-nafs* (spiritual purification) as a means of supplication to the Almighty. In this sense, the tradition constitutes a form of devotion and submission to Allah SWT.

Upon closer examination, the processes and forms of the Ngupati and Nujuh Bulan traditions among the *priyayi* social group are rich in ethical and philosophical values. In contrast, the implementation of the Ngupati and Nujuh Bulan traditions among the *abangan* group tends to be perceived as an obligatory practice carried out through rigid and formal ceremonial procedures (Dhofier, 2011). Among the

priyayi social group, which emphasizes ethical values, the Ngupati and Nujuh Bulan traditions are understood as a preparatory process for welcoming childbirth. Therefore, a pregnancy thanksgiving ritual is considered necessary, commonly referred to as *sedekah wulan* or *candraning bobot*.

From a social perspective, the Ngupati and Nujuh Bulan ceremonies possess significant social value. These rituals serve to foster harmony, cooperation, and mutual assistance within the community, preserve the tradition of *gotong royong* (collective cooperation), and reduce individualistic tendencies among the people of Pondok Buntet Pesantren. Essentially, human beings are social creatures who cannot live independently; they depend on one another and require mutual support and assistance. From preparing the bathing area (*siraman*), organizing the *tahlilan* and religious gatherings, preparing mashed fruit salad (*rujak tumbuk*), to the various ritual processes undertaken by the expectant mother, all stages require the involvement and help of others.

It is within this context that social harmony among neighbors is cultivated. Through these traditions, social integrity among community members and relatives is maintained, while values of togetherness and collective cooperation are strengthened. As such, these rituals function as an effective process of social accommodation.

Another form of the intersection between Islam and local tradition at Pondok Buntet Pesantren is the Marhabanan tradition. The introduction of Marhabanan to Indonesia cannot be separated from the influence of Persian communities who once resided in Gujarat and adhered to Shi'i teachings, who were among the earliest transmitters of Islam to the archipelago.

Other scholarly views argue that the Marhabanan tradition was introduced by scholars of the Shafi'i school, particularly Shaykh Maulana Malik Ibrahim known as the teacher of the Wali Songo who originated from the Hadramaut region (Yemen). In spreading Islam along the eastern coast of Sumatra and the northern coast of Java, these scholars adopted a highly tolerant and moderate approach by assimilating Islamic teachings with local traditions and cultural practices. The art of Marhabanan subsequently inspired Sunan Kalijaga to compose well-known devotional songs such as *Lir-Ilir* and *Tombo Ati*, which remain highly familiar within pesantren communities and were instrumental in his da'wah efforts in the inland regions of Java (Azra, 2004).

For this reason, the Marhabanan tradition subsequently developed rapidly among pesantren communities across Java, including Pondok Buntet Pesantren in Cirebon. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which is widely regarded as a major pesantren-based organization, is often considered a key preserver of this tradition. This is due to the significant and deep-rooted Shi'i influences within NU's religious culture. The practice of reciting Marhabanan or Diba'i, which has become a distinctive feature of

NU communities, is historically derived from Shi'i traditions. Accordingly, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) once noted that one of the manifestations of Shi'i influence in the Islamic expression of Indonesia can be seen in the practice of devotional chanting or praise (*pujian*) performed prior to congregational prayers. This practice is commonly observed among members of the Nahdliyyin (NU), including within Pondok Buntet Pesantren (Geertz, 1960).

The tradition of reciting *Marhabanan* in praise of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as practiced within pesantren communities, is generally grounded in the opinions of jurists from the Shāfi'i school of law. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, for instance, asserted that such traditions embody moral goodness and virtue. Likewise, al-Suyūṭī demonstrated a tolerant attitude toward cultural expressions arising from the veneration of the Prophet's birth. These views were also shared by other Shāfi'i jurists, such as Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī and Abū Shāmāh.

According to the latter two scholars, the commemoration of the Prophet's Mawlid constitutes one of the most commendable religious innovations (*wa min aḥsani mā ubtudi'a*), provided that it is accompanied by acts of social benevolence (*iḥsān*), such as charity (*ṣadaqah*), almsgiving (*infaq*), and other activities imbued with devotional value. They maintained that the recitation of *Marhabanan* during the celebration of the Mawlid may serve as a means of attaining the Prophet's intercession on the Day of Judgment.

Within certain local customs, including those observed at Pondok Buntet Pesantren, the recitation of *Marhabanan* is also performed alongside the ritual of passing a newly shaved infant around a circular gathering. During this ritual, the clothing or fabric of those who hold the infant is lightly sprayed or anointed with perfume or powder. Beyond birth-related rituals, *Marhabanan* is frequently recited on various occasions, such as prior to weddings, during house-moving ceremonies, upon the purchase of new vehicles, and in other significant life events. These practices are carried out at Pondok Buntet Pesantren not only among the santri community, which emphasizes religious aspects, but also among groups commonly categorized as *abangan*, who tend to stress animistic or symbolic elements. This reflects the coexistence and interaction of religious devotion and local cosmological beliefs within the same ritual framework. A similar pattern of interaction between Islamic norms and local tradition can be observed in the practice of *Khaul*. Etymologically, the term *haul* appears in classical fiqh literature, particularly in discussions on zakat. It denotes the one-year period that constitutes a prerequisite for the obligation of zakat on livestock, gold, silver, and trade goods. Thus, *haul* refers to wealth that becomes zakatable after the passage of one lunar year.

Beyond its juridical meaning, *haul* has also developed into an annual commemorative tradition widely practiced in pesantren communities across Java (Asy'ari, 1925). Almost all pesantren communities hold annual commemorations

(*ḥawl*), marking the anniversary one full year (*tepat satu tahun*) of the death of religious scholars (*kiai*) who played a significant role in establishing the pesantren. The *kiai* believe that the pursuit of blessing (*barakah*) is not limited to living saints or teachers, but also extends to those who have passed away. Deceased *kiai* are therefore still regarded as important figures through whom blessings may be sought. For this reason, the *ḥawl* is consistently observed every year, based on the belief that blessings continue to exist even after the death of the individuals associated with them.

Accordingly, the *ḥawl* tradition, as an annual commemoration of the death of religious scholars and community members, constitutes an important ritual at Pondok Buntet Pesantren. The event is attended by the wider community and typically includes collective prayers, religious sermons (*tausiah*), and various social activities. Beyond its spiritual dimension, the *ḥawl* also serves as a means of strengthening the relationship between the pesantren and the surrounding society. In addition, Pondok Buntet Pesantren incorporates local symbolism into Islamic education. One example is the use of traditional Cirebon batik worn by santri as a marker of local identity. This practice represents the pesantren's effort to instill values of patriotism and love for the homeland through respect for and appreciation of local culture (Yachsy Al-Husaini Fuad Hasyim, 2024).

Impacts of the Interaction between Islam and Local Culture

The interaction between Islam and local culture has produced significant impacts, including the following:

1. **Preservation of Local Traditions**

Islam that adapts to local traditions contributes to the preservation of indigenous culture without contradicting religious values.

2. **Interreligious and Interethnic Harmonization**

The integration of local traditions with Islamic teachings fosters harmony among diverse religious and ethnic communities. Pesantren traditions function as cultural and religious bridges within society..

3. **Strengthening Culturally Based Islamic Education**

Santri are not only educated in religious knowledge but are also introduced to cultural values, thereby fostering a generation that is deeply rooted in tradition while remaining responsive to modern developments. (Sholikhin, 2012)

Thus, local traditions at Pondok Buntet Pesantren are not merely part of religious activities but are also integrated into the educational curriculum. Santri are taught to understand that Islam is inseparable from the local cultural context. This integration is reflected in the teaching of local Islamic arts, such as calligraphy, *rebana* music, and traditional Cirebonese woodcarving.

CONCLUSION

The intellectual foundations of the ulama of Pondok Buntet Pesantren in Cirebon reflect a synthesis of classical Islamic texts and contextually relevant approaches. Through the principles of moderation, respect for local culture, and inclusive da'wah, the ulama of Buntet have successfully integrated Islamic values into social life in a harmonious manner. This approach not only strengthens the practice of Islam in Indonesia but also preserves cultural diversity as an integral part of national identity.

Pondok Buntet Pesantren in Cirebon serves as a concrete example of how local traditions can enrich religious practices. Traditions such as *njuhu bulan*, *ngupati*, grave pilgrimage (*ziarah kubur*), the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday (*Maulid Nabi*), *hawl*, and other practices not only preserve cultural identity but also reinforce the spiritual values of the community. In this way, the pesantren maintains a balance between Islamic teachings and the preservation of local traditions, which constitutes a valuable heritage for future generations.

Pondok Buntet Pesantren in Cirebon stands as clear evidence of how Islam can interact with local traditions to create social and religious harmony. Practices such as *njuhu bulan*, *ngupati*, *marhabanan*, local Islamic arts, *hawl*, and other traditions exemplify points of interaction that enrich religious life within the pesantren. Consequently, Pondok Buntet Pesantren functions not only as an institution of Islamic education but also as a guardian of valuable local traditions

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