



Islam and Local Culture: Shifting Values of Religious Practices Among Modern Javanese Society

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore more deeply the clustering of society in the understanding of Islam. Clifford Geertz's clustering or classification of society in his previous research, as an initial reference to look at the development of the era until now. This clustering, if seen carefully, is still strongly felt in modern society today. So the author tries to detect back from previous research to the symptoms that occur today. This research uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The main literature is Clifford Geertz's research in his book *The Religion of Java*. By reviewing the book, the author found a clustering or classification of people in East Java about the understanding of Islam divided into 3 (three), namely: (1). the abangan, (2). the santri, and (3). the priyayi. By looking at the clustering of society according to Clifford Geertz's perspective, which is then used as a basic theory to look at modern society today, it turns out that there is still no change. In society, this clustering is still felt indirectly. There is still a group that is the object of preaching as the abangan, there is a group of santri as preachers and also the priyayi or officials. Which starts from the seat will be made different, both quality and position. Then from there are certain areas that can only be accessed by certain groups. Based on this theory, we can also observe shifts in the social and spiritual values of modern Javanese society. Specifically, regarding the traditions of *slametan*, religious study circles, and mosques, which have been central to Javanese society since ancient times. From this study, it can be concluded that there have been several shifts in values within the *slametan* tradition, namely a shift from communal-symbolic values to functional-practical values. The symbolic meaning of culture has begun to fade. In the general *pengajian* tradition, as a means of religious education, there has been a shift from face-to-face, charismatic values to digital, informative values. The style of religious communication has become more informal, audiovisual, and entertaining. Mosques, as social-spiritual centres, have shifted from being collective social-spiritual centres to formal spiritual symbols. Young people are beginning to distance themselves from physical religious activities.

Keywords: *Islam, Value Shift, Local Culture, Clifford Geertz, Modern Javanese Society.*

Abstrak

Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk mengulik lebih dalam tentang klasterisasi masyarakat dalam pemahaman terhadap Islam. Klasterisasi atau penggolongan masyarakat dalam penelitiannya Clifford Geertz terdahulu, sebagai acuan awal memandang perkembangan jaman sampai saat ini. Klasterisasi ini jika dilihat seksama ternyata masih kental terasa di masyarakat modern saat ini. Sehingga penulis mencoba mendeteksi kembali dari penelitian terdahulu terhadap gejala yang terjadi saat ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode *Systematic Literatur Review* (SLR). Yang menjadi literatur utama yaitu hasil penelitian Clifford Geertz dalam bukunya *The Religion of Java*. Dengan mereview buku tersebut penulis menemukan klasterisasi atau penggolongan masyarakat di Jawa Timur tentang pemahaman terhadap Islam dibagi menjadi 3 (tiga), yaitu: (1). kaum abangan, (2). kaum santri, dan (3). kaum priyayi. Dengan melihat klasterisasi masyarakat tersebut menurut perspektif Clifford Geertz, yang kemudian dijadikan

Islam and Local Culture: Shifting Values of Religious Practices Among Modern Javanese Society - Arif Wibowo

teori dasar melihat masyarakat modern saat ini, ternyata masih tidak ada perubahan. Dalam masyarakat secara tidak langsung masih terasa klaterisasi ini. Masih ada kelompok yang menjadi obyek dakwah sebagai kaum abangan, ada kelompok santri sebagai pendakwah dan juga kaum priyayi ataupun para pejabat. Yang mana mulai dari tempat duduk akan dibuat berbeda, baik kualitas maupun posisinya. Kemudian dari ada area tertentu yang hanya boleh diakses oleh kalangan tertentu. Berangkat dari teori ini kita bisa juga membaca pergeseran nilai sosial-spiritual masyarakat Jawa modern ini. Khususnya tentang tradisi slametan, pengajian, dan masjid yang merupakan sentral tradisi yang sudah ada di masyarakat Jawa dari jaman dulu. Dari penelitian ini dapat disimpulkan yaitu terjadi beberapa pergeseran nilai dalam tradisi slametan yaitu Pergeseran dari nilai komunal-simbolik menuju fungsional-praktis. Makna simbolik budaya mulai luntur. Dalam tradisi pengajian umum sebagai sarana pembelajaran keagamaan secara umum mengalami pergeseran dari nilai tatap muka-karismatik ke digital-informatif. Gaya komunikasi agama berubah menjadi lebih informal, audiovisual dan entertaining. Masjid sebagai pusat sosial-spiritual mengalami pergeseran dari pusat sosial-spiritual kolektif ke simbol spiritual-formal. Anak muda mulai menjauh dari aktifitas fisik keagamaan.

Keywords: Islam, Pergeseran nilai, Budaya Lokal, Clifford Geertz, Masyarakat Jawa Modern.

Introduction

One way to study Islam more deeply is through a regional approach or by looking at the local wisdom that exists in that area. We cannot judge the *muamalah* (social relations) that exist in one area based on the customs that exist in another area. This is because each area has its own local wisdom that will differ from the local wisdom of other areas. This applies to language, culture, customs, and so on.

Therefore, an assessment and interpretation from a local perspective is necessary to delve into the implicit values within it. Similar to the da'wah (Islamic preaching) carried out by the first spreaders of Islam in Indonesia, particularly on the island of Java, which involved the acculturation of Islamic teachings with local culture. The da'is at that time did not immediately abolish or prohibit previous cultures that were not in accordance with Islamic teachings, but instead replaced some of the content of those cultures with Islamic readings. As a result, the values contained therein became positive and in accordance with Islamic teachings. However, entering the modern era, the tide of globalisation, technological advances, and the development of the Islamic purification movement have led to significant changes in religious practices. The younger generation, especially those exposed to formal religious education and digital media, often have different views on local traditions compared to previous generations. These changes have given rise to interesting social and religious dynamics, especially in the context of the balance between cultural preservation and the purification of Islamic teachings.

Changes in religious practices among modern Javanese society have given rise to several important issues. First, there is a difference in perception between groups that uphold religious traditions based on local culture and groups that consider these traditions incompatible with the principles of Islam. Second, there has been a shift in the meaning of certain rituals, with some members of society performing them more as social activities than as sacred acts of worship. Third, the role of social media and digital information in

accelerating the process of value change, while simultaneously widening the gap in understanding between generations. These issues have implications for the religious identity of Javanese society, which now finds itself at a crossroads between preserving cultural heritage or adapting it to the demands of purifying Islamic teachings.

This study aims to analyse the forms of value change in the religious practices of modern Javanese society influenced by the interaction between Islam and local culture. Specifically, this study seeks to reveal the factors driving and inhibiting such change, explore the perceptions of various community groups towards Javanese religious traditions, and map the social and religious impacts arising from this shift in values. Thus, the research findings are expected to contribute academically to understanding the dynamics of religious and cultural acculturation in the modern era, while also serving as a reference for efforts to preserve traditions that align with Islamic teachings.

Research methods

This study uses the systematic literature review (SLR) method, which is a term used to refer to a specific research methodology and development carried out to collect and evaluate research related to a specific topic. The purpose of SLR can be carried out for various purposes, including to identify, review, evaluate, and interpret all available research on interesting topics, with specific relevant research questions.

The object of this research is the phenomenology of social conditions in the coastal areas of East Java regarding the harmony of research conducted by Clifford Geertz in his book *The Religion of Java* on religious phenomena in East Java. The research questions (RQ) in this study are:

RQ1. How does Clifford Geertz's perspective view the shift in modern Indonesian society?

RQ2. Why did the shift in society occur from Clifford Geertz's perspective?

This research is a qualitative study that uses a natural setting with the aim of interpreting phenomena that occur in order to discover and describe them narratively by observing shifts and changes in modern Indonesian society. This discussion begins with the initial theory proposed by Clifford Geertz in his research on the community in Modjokuto, Kediri, East Java, around 1960. By examining the phenomena of modern Indonesian society, we can determine whether there have been changes and shifts in society, what factors have influenced these changes, and in which direction these developments are heading.

To narrow the discussion, the researcher focuses this study on analysing community activities related to slametan traditions, public religious gatherings, and mosques. Geertz observed that in Indonesian society, particularly Javanese society (*slametan*, *pengajian umum*, and *masjid*), there are strong religious, social, and symbolic elements. The researcher will examine more deeply whether these traditions are still preserved, modified, or even abandoned in this modern digital era by the younger generation, and how Islamic values play a role in this process.

Islam and Local Culture: Shifting Values of Religious Practices Among Modern Javanese Society - Arif Wibowo

To obtain data for this study, data collection techniques were used, namely: (1) Documentation, through analysis of documentary data including books, articles, and artefacts related to the theme discussed; (2) Observation, where the researcher directly observed and analysed existing traditions in Javanese society, particularly the slametan tradition, general religious gatherings, and mosques in both historical and modern contexts, (3). Interviews, where the researcher conducted interviews with the general public and religious figures to obtain more in-depth information about the traditions commonly practised.

Results and Discussion

Islam and local culture: a regional approach

In studying Islam, many approaches can be taken, one of which is the regional or area approach. The term 'approach' is synonymous with 'methodology,' which refers to 'the perspective or way of viewing and treating something that is the focus of attention or the subject of study.' The approach refers to the perspective or paradigm within a field of study that is subsequently used in understanding religion. In this context, Jalaluddin Rahmat states that religion can be studied using various paradigms.¹

The regional or geographical approach is also often referred to as area studies. Area studies consists of two words, namely study and area (region/geographical area). Study means 'devotion of time and thought to getting knowledge,' which means the use of time and thought to obtain knowledge. Study also implies 'something that attracts investigation,' meaning something that needs to be examined. Area means 'region of the earth's surface,' referring to a specific geographical region. Area also signifies: extent, region, local area, and field. Terminologically, area studies (region/area) is the examination used to explain the results of a research study on a particular issue according to the region where the issue occurs.²

According to Azzumardy Azra, the definition of Islamic Area Studies is a study that seems to explain how the current situation came about, because the focus of the study is on various areas of the Islamic world and the existing institutions, which are analysed in detail. This includes the growth, development, and social and cultural characteristics within these regions, as well as the factors that support the emergence of various characteristics and the growth of culture in each Islamic region. Thus, formally, the object of study must include geographical, demographic, historical, linguistic, and various social and cultural developments, which are common characteristics of the overall development in each cultural region.³

Area studies are one of the approaches of historical studies, whose understanding is based on external-physical (exoteric) aspects that tend to be reductionist. This differs from the normative approach to understanding religious phenomena, which is characterised by literalism, textualism, and scripturalism, and also delves into and touches on the inner aspects and deepest meanings and moralities contained in the teachings of religion itself. Thus, the study of Islam through the Area Studies approach involves the

¹ Koko Abdul Kodir, *Metodologi Studi Islam*, (Bandung, Pustaka Setia:2017), cet. 2 hlm. 234

² Peter Salim, *Webster's New World Dictionary* (Jakarta: Modern English Press, t.th) h. 31

³ Azyumardi Azra, *Studi Kawasan Dunia Islam*, (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2009), hlm. 2.

collection of data and phenomena related to the religious practices of Muslims and Islamic culture in a specific region, followed by research on the existing data using a historical-reductionist approach. Through the Area Studies approach in Islamic Studies and Muslim communities, it is hoped that Muslims can get to know and understand each other better, thereby facilitating closer and mutually beneficial cooperation within the Muslim world.

The Need for a Regional Approach

The Prophet Muhammad SAW, in practising and spreading Islam, both as a religious leader and as a political leader, was very dynamic and harmonious in Medina at that time, as felt by its inhabitants. Both Muslims and non-Muslims. Because Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) truly served as an excellent role model, both in his words and actions, all issues could be resolved by him with guidance from Allah (SWT). Thus, Islam spread rapidly and extensively. By the end of Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) leadership, many companions had come from all corners of the Arabian Peninsula to learn the religion from the Prophet.

The propagation of Islam did not cease after the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) passed away. The propagation of Islam continued to be carried out by the Prophet's companions during the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. During the caliphate of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) and Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), the Islamic realm had already reached Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, southern Iraq, Persia, Syria, the Mediterranean coast, and Egypt. This propagation of Islam was continued by Caliph Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) as far as Sijistan, Khurasan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.⁴ It continued further under the Umayyad, Abbasid, and subsequent dynasties.

With the expansion of Islamic territories across various regions, a regional approach is essential for a deeper study of Islam based on its location or region.

The application of a regional/territorial approach in Islamic studies can avoid misconceptions about the state of Islam and its followers in different parts of the world from where the observer is located. Research using this approach will consider the elements of place, object, time, background, and the actors involved in the event. Through the regional/territorial approach, we are invited to shift from an idealistic realm to a realistic-phenomenological realm, ultimately enabling us to draw more objective conclusions and evaluations of the facts discovered regarding an object in a particular region.

As explained above regarding the significance of the regional/territorial approach, the contributions of this approach to Islamic studies include the following⁵: (a) Providing an explanation of the state of Islam in a particular region based on existing data and facts, enabling researchers to view the situation with a degree of objectivity. For example, how Indonesian Muslims view Indian Muslims as having a strong Hindu syncretic character, so that their Hinduism is more prominent than their Islam, even though in reality this is not the case, as it is easy to find Muslim communities there that practise their religion in a very Islamic manner in accordance with Islamic Sharia law. Then, how do Indonesian Muslims assess modernisation and secularism in Turkey with a tone of concern, when in fact Turkey remains a strongly Islamic country where it is difficult to find churches?

⁴ Harun Nasution, *Islam Ditinjau Dari Berbagai Aspeknya*, (Jakarta, UI-Press:1985), hlm. 30

⁵ *Opcit.* Koko Abdul Kodir, hlm. 236

Similarly, how do Turks and Middle Easterners perceive the situation in Indonesia? They assume that it is difficult to distinguish between Muslims and non-Muslims in Indonesia, whether men or women. According to them, Indonesian Muslims are highly vulnerable to apostasy due to the absence of Islamic spirit, movements, or institutions. However, in Indonesia, the practice of Islam is quite vibrant, and Islamic movements are still easily found. (b). Having a thorough understanding of a particular culture, so that we are able to distinguish between universal and local values in Islamic teachings. (c). Raising awareness among Muslims about the importance of mutual assimilation and acculturation, so that Muslims have a rich and diverse cultural heritage.

Enabling cooperation in the social, cultural, economic, and educational fields, as well as defence and security, to advance these fields through multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research and to form a strong and stable global Muslim community that is respected by both friends and foes. Muslim nations or communities have the autonomy to develop various potentials in their countries or regions for the struggle to improve the welfare of their people, whether they are Muslim majorities or minorities, so that they do not always depend on the West and America, which do not share the same beliefs, namely *Aqidah Islamiah*, with the Muslim world.

The Struggle Between Islam and Local Culture in The Religion of Java

In the general Indonesian dictionary, culture is defined as the result of human intellectual activities and creations, such as beliefs, arts, customs, and traditions, and also refers to intellectual activities (efforts) to create something that is considered a cultural product.⁶

Meanwhile, Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana states that culture is a complex whole that arises from various elements such as knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morality, customs, and all other skills acquired by humans as members of society.⁷

Thus, culture is the result of human creativity, utilising and mobilising all of its inner potential. Culture encompasses knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, customs, and so on. All of these are then used as a frame of reference or blueprint by individuals in responding to the various issues they face. For this reason, culture appears as an institution that is continuously maintained by its creators and subsequent generations who inherit that culture.

This kind of culture can also be used to understand religion at the empirical level or religion that appears in a formal form that is prevalent in society. The practice of religion in society is processed by its adherents from religious sources, namely revelation through reasoning. For example, when we read *fiqh*, *fiqh*, which is the implementation of the Qur'an and hadith, already involves elements of reasoning and human ability. Thus, religion becomes cultural or grounded in society. Religion that appears in this form is related to the culture that develops in the society where the religion develops. Through an understanding of this culture, a person will be able to practise religious teachings.⁸

Then, when we view and treat religion as culture, what we see is religion as a belief that lives within society. Thus, religion becomes a local characteristic that is in line with the culture of that society. And in order to become the knowledge and belief of the society

⁶ W.J.S. Poerwadarminta, *Kamus Umum Bahasa Indonesia*, (Jakarta, Balai Pustaka:1991), cet. II. hlm.156

⁷ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, *Antropologi Baru*, (Jakarta, Dian Rakyat:1986), cet.III., hlm. 207

⁸ Abuddin Nata, *Metodologi Studi Islam*, (Jakarta, Raja Grafindo Persada:2014) cet.21 hlm. 49

concerned, religion must undergo various processes of struggle in eliminating cultural values that conflict with the true beliefs of that religion. Therefore, it must be able to adapt its core values to the cultural values and cultural elements that exist. In this way, religion can become the values of that culture.⁹

Islam, as stated in the Qur'an, Allah SWT says in Surah Al Anbiya' verse 107:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

Which means: 'And We (Allah) have not sent you (Muhammad) except as a mercy to the worlds.'

This verse implies that Prophet Muhammad SAW was commanded by Allah SWT to convey the message of Islam globally (universally). It is not limited to certain tribes as was the case with previous messengers.

One very interesting thing is that, in reality, Islam has a global (universal) character and can be accepted in any time and place. However, on the other hand, as Islam has spread to various regions around the world, its global character has blended into the local wisdom of the areas where Islam has developed. And Islam is able to adapt to the existing local wisdom. This is the true proof of the verse above, that localism can 'tame' the universality of Islam as a global force. In this context, Islam is viewed as a religion that maintains unity within its diversity (unity in variety) in its theological and spiritual aspects, while its local diversity varies in its application patterns according to the cultural variations of each region.

As in the research conducted by Clifford Geertz in the city of Mojokuto, East Java, on the three types of culture found in that city. This research was conducted over a period of six years, both in Indonesia and the United States, and was later published in a book titled *The Religion of Java*. Clifford Geertz studied the groups in Mojokuto that had been influenced by the religious and cultural systems of the city. According to Clifford, these groups were the Abangan, Santri, and Priyayi. According to Geertz's observations, this division was created indirectly by the Javanese people themselves but is evident in their daily lives. As Geertz explained, these three variants have very strong 'genealogical' roots or connections. Their 'birth' was influenced by similarities in geographical location, economy, and being part of the same diverse society, sharing the same cultural values, formed within the same social structure, and regardless of how difficult it may be to understand their religious practices, since Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam had not yet arrived among them, the Javanese held firmly to the ancestral beliefs of animism and dynamism, which were passed down through generations.¹⁰

The first is Abangan, according to Geertz: Abangan are fairly indifferent to doctrine but fascinated with ritual detail. Abangan are completely indifferent to doctrine but fascinated by ritual detail.¹¹

Clifford Geertz, in his book, begins his classification of the social groups in Mojokuto, East Java, with the Abangan community. Generally, the Islam of the Abangan community is still influenced by their old beliefs, and the blend of Hindu and Buddhist cultural elements provides a unique space while also distinguishing the Mojokuto community from others. This is because the arrival of Islam did not immediately disrupt

⁹ *Opcit.* Koko 2 hlm. 92

¹⁰ Clifford Geertz, *Agama Jawa Abangan Santri Priyayi Dalam Budaya Jawa*, Terjemahan Aswab Mahasin dan Bur Rasuanto, (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2014), cet. II, h. 309-310

¹¹ *Ibid*, hlm. 127

Islam and Local Culture: Shifting Values of Religious Practices Among Modern Javanese Society - Arif Wibowo

the existing social order, customs, and Javanese culture. On the other hand, Islam remained consistent in preserving the originality of its teachings, without eliminating the originality of the previous religion. Therefore, Islam was well-received by the Javanese community, especially among the Abangan community.

The development of Islam in Java cannot be separated from very traditional and simple yet meaningful ideas. The ideas held by the Javanese people are a gift that no other society possesses, and this is the Javanese belief known as 'kejawen'. From this, Islam and Javanese culture share many similarities, particularly in their belief in the energy or great power present in nature. However, in Islam, belief is fully directed toward Allah, the Creator of the universe. In Javanese culture, the centre of belief is also directed towards God, but before undergoing a renewal of faith, the Javanese people still believed in the old beliefs known as animism and dynamism, which are essentially beliefs in supernatural beings (which are actually God). The Javanese people believed that they could not live independently without the help of the surrounding natural world.¹²

As mentioned by Geertz, an example of cultural and religious acculturation that occurs here is the *Slametan* ceremony. When holding a slametan, the pattern of the *slametan* varies in terms of the food served, depending on who is holding the *slametan*. The host typically invites neighbours or close relatives, for example, to hold a *slametan* for weddings, births, deaths, moving house, name changes, or circumcisions. Before the event takes place, the host first prepares (1) a prayer leader, (2) a *tahlil* leader, and finally (3) a *berkat*. These three elements must not be overlooked, as failing to prepare the blessing will result in the host being criticised by the local community, and the *slametan* will be considered less blessed. This is because the essence of the *slametan* lies not in the prayers but in the offerings prepared in the form of food.¹³

The second group discussed in this book is the *santri* group. According to Geertz, *santri*: a great society of equal believers constantly repeating the name of the Prophet going through the prayers chanting the *qur'an*.¹⁴ are manifested in the careful and orderly implementation of the basic rituals of Islam, such as the obligation to pray five times a day, Friday prayers at the mosque, fasting during *Ramadan*, and performing the *hajj*. This means that in practising Islam, *santri* do not mix in other elements besides Islam, unlike the abangan. The characteristics of *santri* are better known as Islamic traditions, which make it easier for us to understand the *santri* community.

The *santri's* religious variant is associated with the market, which is one of the three core social and cultural elements. The other two are the village and the bureaucratic government. For professions commonly adopted by *santri*, in urban areas, *santri* typically work as merchants or craftsmen, particularly tailors. In rural areas, *santri* work as farmers, so not all farmers in the village are abangan; there are also farmers who are *santri*.

Due to their active involvement in Islam and its beliefs, its values and norms are characteristic of *santri*, it is reasonable to assume that among the population of Mojokuto, *santri* are found in every major social category, the aristocracy and the common people, old and young merchants and farmers, the traditional and the modern, the educated and the uneducated, just as it is reasonable to assume that there are abangan in every category.

¹² *Ibid*, hlm. 240

¹³ *Ibid*, hlm. 8

¹⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), hlm. 128

Santri do not necessarily live in groups within a neighbourhood community, although groups of houses inhabited by *santri* may be found in various places in the city or rural areas, such as near mosques and the residences of religious leaders (kiai). Groups of houses around mosques include what are known as *kauman* and complexes of *santri* residences around the kiai's house, called *pesantren*.

Identifying someone as a *santri* is quite difficult, as it depends on the individual's own understanding of what a *santri* is. Many people consider a *santri* to be someone who is devoutly religious, someone who regularly and obediently performs the required rituals, a student at an Islamic boarding school, someone who has knowledge of the contents of the Quran, and so on. There is no formal initiation process that can be used as a guideline to determine who qualifies as a *santri*, nor is there any formal membership. As a result, while the characteristics of the *santri's* religious tradition are relatively clear, it is often unclear exactly who is considered a *santri*.¹⁵

The third is *Priyayi* are a class of nobility (prijajis its gentry) affiliated with the government, who generally profess Islam, although they do not practise religious commands in the same way as the *santri* class. They still maintain and practise Javanese culture, which originated from Hindu-Buddhist traditions.¹⁶

The *Priyayi* class is a legitimate elite group, manifesting a unique religious tradition known as the *Priyayi* variant of the general religious system in Java. In relation to the position of the *Priyayi* class within the social structure of Mojokuto, Dr. Geertz describes them as a group of bureaucratic officials who, based on their place of residence, are considered urban dwellers. In the past, they were considered part of the royal aristocracy. The term *priyayi* refers to people from a certain social class, who according to the law are the traditional elite. It refers to people who, according to the law, are considered different from ordinary people.

The *priyayi* class was distinguished from the common people by their honorary titles, which consisted of various levels according to a hierarchy of rights and obligations. These titles included Raden, Raden Mas, Raden Panji, Raden Tumenggung, Raden Ngabehi, Raden Mas Panji, and Raden Mas Aria. These titles are abbreviated and placed before the name of the person who holds the title. Not only men, but women are also entitled to titles such as Raden Roro, Raden Ajeng, and Raden Ayu.

As the elite of Javanese society, the *priyayi* have more opportunities to acquire knowledge, both traditional and modern, than ordinary people. The *priyayi* were educated to know the etiquette in their behaviour, the patterns of behaviour associated with the *priyayi*. In terms of belief, the *priyayi* had various religious beliefs and not just one religious tradition, which was a variant of the religious system of the Javanese people in general. *Priyayi Santri* is a term for *priyayi* who were actively involved in Islam. Their devotion to religion can be expressed through mysticism or by studying writings about Islam. Second, *Priyayi Abangan* is a term for *priyayi* who do not pay much attention to Islam. Some of them do not care about religion at all. However, there are also *priyayi* who are not irreligious. They may embrace the religion of their ancestors, namely Javanese religion.

Thus, according to Geertz, the religious beliefs, values, and norms of the *priyayi* are essentially no different from those of non-*priyayi*. However, with the exception of matters related to Islam, the *priyayi* are able to express their beliefs and values more explicitly and

¹⁵ *Opcit*, Terjemah, hlm. 130

¹⁶ *Opcit*, The Religion of Java, hlm. 228

thus have a more advanced, more sophisticated form of religious tradition. Meanwhile, the traditions found among the common people have a cruder form.¹⁷

Shifting Values of Religious Practices Among Modern Javanese Society

Before the arrival of Islam in Java, the people already adhered to animism and dynamism, believing in objects considered to have magical powers and in spirits with extraordinary abilities. This was an imaginative interpretation by the Javanese people of forces beyond their human reach. As a manifestation of their recognition of these powers, the people performed various rituals as a means of expressing their hopes and granting their requests. When Islam entered Indonesia, particularly Java, there was a cultural and doctrinal assimilation within traditions. One tradition that remains deeply rooted is the slametan tradition, public religious gatherings, and mosques, which form a multidimensional unity of social, cultural, religious, and tolerant elements within the framework of nationalism.

The core elements within these Javanese traditions align with Islamic teachings. The Javanese people of old performed traditions aimed at worship, expressing gratitude, and making requests. This concept is also present in Islamic teachings, specifically in the teachings or practices of prayer. Within these prayer practices, there are several intentions or expressions, namely,¹⁸ (1). Request (*assual*)¹⁹, (2). Seeking help (*istighotsah*)²⁰, (3). Praise or glorification (*ats tsana'*)²¹, (4). Speech or utterance (*al qoul*)²², (5). Worship (*'ibadah*)²³, (6). Call or invitation (*ad da'wah*)²⁴. What needs to be noted is that the concept of prayer in Islam is not merely asking or requesting from another person or fellow creature, but it has a more specific meaning, namely the vertical relationship between a servant and the Creator. This differs from the requests and praises performed by the ancient Javanese people, who praised and requested from fellow creatures such as trees, stones, spirits, and other objects they believed to possess power.

In the slametan tradition, whether it be slametan in the context of harvest, birth (*tingkeban, brokohan, selapanan*), marriage (*sepasaran*), death (3, 7, 40, 100, 1 year (*haul*), 1,000 days), grave cleaning (*nyadran*), village cleaning, religious ceremonies (*Suran-Muharram* month, *Maulud-Maulud Nabi* month)²⁵, and so on, this tradition is still practised among Javanese communities. Slametan rituals typically consist of several activities, including *tahlil* (recitation of the Quran), prayers, communal meals, and blessings. The participatory involvement of modern society is still followed with devotion. However, most of those who participate are the elderly, while the younger generation rarely joins in these slametan rituals. According to Kyai Hanif, this is due to the lack of proper regeneration from parents to children. Since invitations are usually limited to one household (head of the family), only the eldest member of the family attends. The procession of several slametan rituals is now

¹⁷ *Opcit*, terjemah, hlm. 313

¹⁸ Abdul Wahab, *Doa dalam tradisi Islam Jawa*, el Harakah, Vol. 14 no. 1 tahun 2012

¹⁹ Al Quran surat Al Mukmin ayat 60

²⁰ Al Quran surat Al Baqoroh ayat 23

²¹ Al Quran surat Al Isra' ayat 110

²² Al Quran surat Yunus 10

²³ Al Quran surat Yunus ayat 106

²⁴ Al Quran surat An Nakhl ayat 125

²⁵ Jarman Arroisi, *Aliran Kepercayaan dan Kebatinan: membaca tradisi dan Budaya Sinkretis Masyarakat Jawa*, Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama, Vol. 1 No. 1 tahun 2015

only performed in a few stages, not all stages as in the past. For example, the slametan for birth is only performed for a week, and the *slametan* for death is only performed for seven days, followed directly by a one-year commemoration (*haul*)²⁶. This is because people now prefer simpler ceremonies²⁷. Those invited to these events are usually the closest neighbours (within the Rukun Tetangga-RT area) and selected neighbours from further away (other RT areas)²⁸. In terms of invitations, there is still a strong sense of family tolerance, even those with different beliefs or religions are still invited to participate in this activity.

In the past, public recitations were usually held at local mosques or, when there was not enough space, in open fields. Public recitations are classical learning activities conducted through lectures by religious leaders with participants from all elements of society. These general religious gatherings serve as the primary means of general da'wah (proselytising) for all groups. They are usually held in conjunction with major Islamic holidays or as part of weddings, circumcisions, or on a regular schedule every 40 days (*selapanan*). In modern times, general religious gatherings have evolved to include thematic discussions held in mosques or prayer rooms. Some are held after dawn prayer (*subuh* study session), after dhuha prayer (*dhuha* study session), after noon prayer, afternoon prayer, sunset prayer, or evening prayer. The themes have also expanded beyond *fiqh* to include *tauhid*, *tasawuf*, and even philosophy for young people. Additionally, alongside the study sessions, live streaming is conducted through digital media, allowing everyone worldwide to watch in real-time. The challenge of this activity lies in selecting themes and speakers that capture public interest; if the themes and speakers are unappealing, the event risks being overlooked. The challenge of this activity is that the theme and characters must attract public attention. If the theme and characters are not interesting, they will be eliminated automatically. Thus, there has been a transformation in form, developing into a religious entertainment stage in the form of a *sholawat* stage.²⁹

In the tradition of ceremonies and activities in mosques, which form a single entity, the role of mosques is slowly shifting to the virtual realm. This shift is due to several factors, namely that the mosque, which was once the centre of intellectual and socio-cultural development, as a place of worship, an informal educational institution such as the Quranic education centre (TPA), the elementary religious school (MDA), and a place for community meetings, now has its own dedicated spaces for each of these functions. TPA now has its own building, MDA has its own building, and community meetings have their own RW building, so the mosque now serves primarily as a place of worship and for some thematic study activities. Young people rarely set foot in the mosque except during prayer times. The mosque committee or management consists of older adults or adults. This serves as a reminder and evaluation that young people should not be excluded from mosque activities to prevent them from becoming unfamiliar with the mosque itself.³⁰

In summary, the shifts in values, culture and functions in modern Javanese society can be seen in the following table:

²⁶ Wawancara tokoh Agama Kyai Abdullah Hanif (Imam dan Pendakwah Masjid Jami' Gedanganak, Ungaran Timur Kab. Semarang)

²⁷ Wawancara masyarakat umum

²⁸ Wawancara tokoh masyarakat Bpk Haji Masrur (ketua RW 9 Gedanganak Ungaran Timur Kab. Semarang)

²⁹ Wawancara Kyai Hanif

³⁰ Wawancara Kyai Hanif

Islam and Local Culture: Shifting Values of Religious Practices Among Modern Javanese Society - Arif Wibowo

Tradition	The past (traditional)	Present Day (Modern)	Shift in values
<i>Slametan</i>	Considered as core rituals of social-spiritual life (birth, death, harvest, moving house, marriage, etc.), performed collectively by the community.	It is beginning to be abandoned by some of the younger generation. It is considered impractical and too ritualistic. It has been replaced by communal prayers or short religious lectures.	A shift from communal-symbolic values to functional-practical values. The symbolic meaning of culture is beginning to fade.
<i>Pengajian umum</i>	It serves as the main means of religious preaching and social consolidation. It is usually held in a field or mosque with charismatic religious leaders as speakers.	It still exists, but has been replaced by thematic recitations, online recitations, live streaming studies, or YouTube lectures. Interest declines if it is not interactive or relevant to current issues.	A shift from face-to-face charismatic values to digital informative values. The style of religious communication has become more informal and audiovisual.
<i>Mosques as social and spiritual centres</i>	Mosques are centres for worship, informal education (TPA, MDA) and village deliberations. Many young people are involved as students or youth members of the mosque.	The role of mosques is beginning to be replaced by virtual spaces. Young people are more active online. Some mosques are only busy during Ramadan or special events.	A shift from collective social-spiritual centres to formal spiritual symbols. Young people are beginning to move away from physical religious activities.

Conclusion

Islam has developed through a long historical process and different cultures have influenced its development. Differences in historical and cultural backgrounds have an equal impact on Islam. Religious views can change and be justified differently due to differences in time, era, environment, situation, objectives, and traditions that are in accordance with certain principles. Therefore, objective studies of Islam in various regions will yield accurate interpretations and applications of Islam that need not be identical to those practised in other regions. For this reason, the establishment

of Islamic study centres is highly desirable to address the evolving challenges of the future.

Islamic regional studies have become important for Muslims. Therefore, as Muslims, we must also contribute to the development of Islamic studies. This will allow us to understand the development of Islam more comprehensively. For example, the development and shift in Islamic values in relation to the cultural development of modern Javanese society. Specifically, regarding the traditions of *slametan*, *pengajian*, and *masjid*, which have been central to Javanese society since ancient times. There have been several shifts in values within the *slametan* tradition, specifically a shift from communal-symbolic values toward functional-practical values. The symbolic meaning of the culture is beginning to fade. In the *pengajian umum* as a means of religious learning in general, there has been a shift from face-to-face charismatic values to digital-informative values. The style of religious communication has become more informal, audiovisual and entertaining. Mosques as social-spiritual centres have shifted from being collective social-spiritual centres to formal spiritual symbols. Young people are beginning to move away from physical religious activities.

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