

EDUCATING ISLAMIC VALUES THROUGH *Wiwitan* TRADITION

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Abstract: Javanese traditions such as *wiwitan* have often been perceived as being rooted in Hindu and Buddhist culture, and thus syncretic in nature. As the Javanese people have increasingly emphasized rational–functional values, and as orthodox (Islam as represented by *santri* has become more mainstream), these traditions have been transformed, allowing the ritual *wiwitan* to become Islamic tradition, expressing gratitude, alms, family, and tolerance. This article explores the educating processes of Islamic values through *wiwitan* tradition. Data are collected through observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. The analyses use a descriptive and interpretative approach. The findings have revealed that the *wiwitan* tradition by East Java's farmers is not a syncretic tradition, as commonly argued, but rather has experienced two important transformations. First, it has become more Islamic as an orthodoxy has become mainstream in Java. Second, the *wiwitan* tradition has a socio-religious purpose of providing a cultural space for divine (*ilāhīyah*) and humanitarian (*insānīyah*) values. *Wiwitan* has thus offered a means of educating Islamic values, because it contains the values of *shukr*, *sadaqah*, kinship, and tolerance.

Keywords: *Wiwitan* tradition, educating Islamic values, local culture, syncretism

Introduction

Owing to its use of various offerings, the *wiwitan* tradition practiced by the farmers of East Java has often been misunderstood as a non-Islamic practice (*shirk*).¹ During this ritual, farmers

¹ *Shirk* is an Islamic terminology which means associating Allah with others (beings), see Ahmad bin Muhammad Āly al-Fayoumy, *Al-Misbah Al-Mounir, Mu'jam Arabiy-Araby* (Libanon: Nasyirun, 2001), 114.

leave offerings in the rice fields and recite Javanese-language prayers (rather than Arabic-language prayers, as in Islamic practice). However, this agrarian ritual—strongly rooted in local tradition—has religious importance and relevance amongst farmers. It is through this ritual that agro-ecological order is created, and the social economy is driven; as such, it is a core part of social harmony. As previous scholars have shown, such rituals are complexly interrelated with various aspects of social life.²

Agricultural rituals do not exist within a vacuum but are dialectically connected with their practitioners' physical and mental environment (i.e. their structure and culture). Generally, studies of agricultural rituals have focused on three dimensions: first, the cognitive dimensions on how the world is conceptualized and perceived;³ second, the evaluative dimensions, the values, practices, and interactions that demonstrate them;⁴ and third, the symbolic aspects which include the material expressions involved in the ritual.⁵ Studies have thus emphasized the social function of agricultural rituals. Few have examined local rituals such as *wiwitan* within the context of Islamic education and its values of divinity (*ilāhīyah*) and humanitarianism (*insānīyah*), even though such rituals reflect the values of their society.⁶

This article seeks to clarify the link between *wiwitan*, an agrarian ritual, and Islamic education. Although rituals have important religious value and offer a basis for creating social harmony, their

² Marc Howard Ross, "Ritual and the Politics of Reconciliation," *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation* (2020), 197-220; Benjamin G. Purzycki & Richard Sosis, "The Extended Religious Phenotype and the Adaptive Coupling of Ritual and Belief," *Israel Journal of Ecology and Evolution* 59, 2 (2013), 99-108.

³ Victor Turner, Roger D. Abrahams, and Alfred Harris, *The Ritual Process, Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 35-38; Janet Hoskins, "Symbolism in Anthropology," *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015), 860-865.

⁴ Dick Vom Lehn and Will Gibson, "Interaction and Symbolic Interactionism," *Symbolic Interaction* 34, 3 (2011), 315-318; Monica Wohlrab-Sahr and Thomas Schmidt-Lux, "Interaction ritual chains," *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 58 (2006), 147-148.

⁵ Tim Ambrose, "Archaeology, Ritual, Religion," *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 2, 3 (2006), 379-380; Timothy Insoll, "Materializing Performance and Ritual: Decoding the Archaeology of Movement in Tallensi Shrines in Northern Ghana," *Material Religion* 5, 3 (2009), 288-310.

⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 143.

importance has long been ignored. Positing the locus in Kediri, East Java, this article seeks to answer three questions: (a) how has the *wiwitan* tradition been practiced by the farmers; (b) how are Islamic educational values constructed within the *wiwitan* tradition, and (c) how can the *wiwitan* tradition be used to convey Islamic values to farmers? Answering these three questions will promote a better understanding of how this ritual is constructed by the Javanese people, as well as the external characteristics and functions of this cultural practice (i.e. its link with social order).

This article comes with three arguments. First, *wiwitan* tradition has been misperceived because it has not been understood comprehensively, and as such its religious aspects have been ignored. Second, the tradition contains both divine and humanitarian values, as well as cognitive, evaluative, and symbolic aspects. Third, owing to a lack of socialization and enculturation, the tradition has had a limited effect on the social life of East Java's farmers. In other words, *wiwitan* tradition has been misperceived because it has been misunderstood.

Relating Local Tradition with Islamic Education

Traditional communities have their means of regulating relationships between individuals and God, between individuals and other individuals, and between individuals and nature. These traditions are maintained collectively, with their culture being central to village affairs as well as the conservation of cultural properties (natural, cultural, and local).⁷ This argument is supported by Widyaningsih and Kuntarto, who argue that local traditions must be considered in conservation activities because they promote environmental considerations.⁸ Local traditions refer not only to communities' cultural heritage but also the wisdom through which they understand their world. Local traditions are part of local

⁷ Dickson Adam, "The Place and Voice of Local People, Culture, and Traditions: A Catalyst for Ecotourism Development in Rural Communities in Ghana," *Scientific African* 6 (2019), 1-12.

⁸ R. Widyaningsih & Kuntarto, "Local Wisdom Approach to Develop Counter-Radicalization Strategy," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 255 (2019), 1-7.

culture, as well as determinants of local livelihoods.⁹ Duangta et al., regard the tradition as the knowledge that originates from the collective experiences that are propagated, maintained, and passed inter-generationally within a community. Traditions have deep historical roots, having developed over time, and become part of local culture.¹⁰

Studies of the link between Islam and tradition have generally combined Islamic studies with sociology and anthropology. Others, meanwhile, have examined the social interactions and tendencies of Muslim societies. They recognize Islam and its development as being inexorably linked with local cultural contexts. Indeed, these may coexist within the same rituals and ceremonies. In such cases, it is difficult to determine whether local traditions fail to reflect Islamic values or whether Islam has been shaped by local traditions. According to Syawaludin, the religious practices of the Indonesian Archipelago have been shaped by centuries of religious life, and as such the history of Islam cannot be separated from the spiritual culture that existed before Islam's arrival. Islam in Indonesia has thus been influenced by cultural and religious values.¹¹ Cultural influence on religious values has not solely affected the practices of Muslims and Muslim organizations. Take, for example, the *subak* tradition of the Balinese, a system that is incorporated into the teachings of *tri hita karana*.¹² In Bali too, the religious traditions adhered to by Balinese Muslims are identical to local Hindu-based cultures. This means that the existence of local culture in Bali

⁹ Chusorn Pornpimona, et.al., "Strategy Challenges The Local Wisdom Applications Sustainability in Schools," *Social and Behavioral Science* 112 (2014), 626-634.

¹⁰ Kanchana Duangta, Yos Borisutdhi, and Suchint Simaraks, "Knowledge Management of Pomelo Production System in Northeast Thailand: Case Study of the Pomelo Farmer Group in Ban Thaen District," *Forest and Society* 2 (2018), 162-172.

¹¹ Mohammad Syawaludin, "Cultural Harmony Between Islam and Local Traditions of Caramseguguk in Rengas Payaraman Ogan Ilir Indonesia," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 156, 1 (2018).

¹² I Putu Sriartha, I Nyoman Jampel, I Wayan Widiana, and I Gede Astra Wesnawa, "Local Wisdom of Subak as a Model of Character Building for Social Studies Learning in Schools," 2nd International Conference on Innovative Research Across Disciplines (ICIRAD 2017), *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 134 (2017), 114-120.

greatly influences the Islamic practice of Balinese people.¹³ Similarly, the Baduy of West Java has used fire and clear cutting to make fields (*buma*), reducing the threat of forest fires and landslides in the area.¹⁴

Local tradition seeks to enable individuals to become competent members of a cultural group, sharing the identity, language, rituals, and values of their community.¹⁵ Enculturation can occur through individuals' interactions with their family and communities, through their access to their cultural heritage, through their shared ethnic and cultural identity, and their traditional values.¹⁶ The concepts of acculturation and enculturation are evident in their values, their acceptance of local tradition, and their social interactions.¹⁷ Yoshihama identifies enculturation as consisting of three components: behavior, values, and social participation.¹⁸ Enculturation often occurs amongst migrants who, when traveling abroad, bring their cultural practices with them.¹⁹

Enculturation is often identified as the socialization of cultural practices and the transmission of values and norms. Alamilla

¹³ Kunawi Basyir, "The 'Acculturative Islam' as a Type of Home-Grown Islamic Tradition, Religion and Local Culture in Bali," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, 2 (2019), 326-349.

¹⁴ R. Hamdani Harahap and Humaizi, "Local Wisdom in the Preservation of Lake Toba Ecosystems: Study on Toba Lake community in the Village of Silalahi I, Sub District of Silahisabungan, Dairi Regency, North Sumatera Province)," *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 126 (2018), 1-8.

¹⁵ Gail M. Ferguson, Catherine Costigan, Christy Clarke, and Julianna Ge, "Introducing Remote Enculturation: Learning Your Heritage Culture From Afar," *The Society for Research in Child Development* 10, 3 (2016), 166-171.

¹⁶ Saul G. Alamilla, Bryan S. K. Kim, Tamisha Walker, and Frederick Riley Sisson, "Acculturation, Enculturation, Perceived Racism, and Psychological Symptoms Among Asian American College Students," *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 45, 1 (2017), 37-65.

¹⁷ Yi Du and Meifen Wei, "Acculturation, Enculturation, Social Connectedness, and Subjective Well-Being among Chinese International Students," *The Counseling Psychologist* 43, 2 (2015), 299-325.

¹⁸ Mieko Yoshihama, Juliane Blazeviski, and Deborah Bybee, "Enculturation and Attitudes toward Intimate Partner Violence and Gender Roles in an Asian Indian Population: Implications for Community-Based Prevention," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 53, 3-4 (2014), 249-260.

¹⁹ Marcelo Suárez-Orozco and Carola Suárez-Orozco, "Migration between and within countries: Implications for families and acculturation," *The Oxford Handbook of Human Development and Culture: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* 97, 4 (2015), 8-14.

defines enculturation as a process through which individuals learn and embrace the norms, values, and customs of their community, and through which they develop their behaviors, attitudes, perspectives, communication skills, social interactions, and ethnic identities.²⁰ This is closely associated with acculturation, which is defined as the socialization of culture to mainstream society. Although acculturation and enculturation are independent processes, they may occur simultaneously.²¹

Local wisdom can potentially provide similar values to Islamic education. Islamic education conveys values and ideals that are derived from Islamic, as well as understandings of worldly phenomena.²² As such, Talbani in Saada & Gross writes that Islamic education—as with all forms of education—can be influenced by ideologies such as secularism, modernization, Islamization, and radicalization.²³ Roslan and Malim define Islamic education as the planned and conscious effort to teach people to understand, recognize, and value God (*taqwā*) and faith (*īmān*) while practicing Islamic values in their everyday lives.²⁴ Such an education, drawing from the Quran and the Hadith, may be provided through guidance and training. Students are thus taught to apply Islamic values in their everyday lives while still respecting other faiths and creating peace and harmony. It is therefore necessary for building character and regulating interpersonal relations.²⁵

²⁰ Alamilla, “Acculturation, Enculturation, Perceived Racism, and Psychological Symptoms,” 37–65.

²¹ Hung-Hui Chen and Li-Yin Chien, “Ethnic Drinking Culture, Acculturation, and Enculturation in Relation to Alcohol Drinking Behavior Among Marriage-Based Male Immigrants in Taiwan,” *American Journal of Men’s Health* 12, 5 (2018), 1517–1529.

²² Masumeh Alinejad, “Nature and Domain of Islamic Education,” *Social Sciences* 7, 1 (2012), 90-94.

²³ Najwan Saada and Zehavit Gross, “Islamic Education, and the Challenge of Democratic Citizenship: A Critical Perspective,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 38, 6 (2016), 807-822.

²⁴ M. Roslan Mohd Nor and M. Malim, “Revisiting Islamic Education: the Case of Indonesia,” *Journal for Multicultural Education* 8, 4 (2014), 261-276.

²⁵ Irwan Abdullah, et.al., “Beyond School Reach: Character Education in Three Schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia,” *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 9, 3 (2019), 145-159.

The scope of Islamic education includes all Islamic teaching and learning activities that are in the family, school, and community education. For this reason, the study of Islamic education includes the substance or content of education, methodology, institutional systems, and socio-economic functions of Islamic educational institutions. Tafsir reveals that the map of study and the scope of Islamic education encompasses education in the family (physical, mind, and heart), education in society (physical, mind, and heart), education in schools. Each component at least discusses objectives, education, students, materials, methods, tools, and evaluation.²⁶

Muhaimin expresses his more comprehensive thoughts on the map of studies and the scope of Islamic education. He introduces two maps of study or the scope of Islamic education, namely: *first*, Islamic education is an education system that is deliberately organized to realize Islamic teachings and values.²⁷ In its implementation in Indonesia, Islamic education can at least be grouped into five types, namely: (1) Islamic boarding schools or madrasah *diniyah*; (2) madrasah and further education such as State Islamic University, Institute, or Colleges under the Ministry of Religious Affairs; (3) kindergarten/*raudlatul athfal/bustanul athfal*, (4) Islamic religious education (PAI) at schools/*madrasahs*/tertiary institutions as subjects or subjects, and/or as study programs, and (5) Islamic education in families or places of worship, and/or in forums recitation, *majlis taklim* (nonformal religious learning), and other institutions such as recitation, *arisan* (family gathering), and others that are currently being promoted by the community. In other words, Islamic education can be implemented through formal, non-formal, and informal education channels.²⁸

Second, Islamic education is an educational system that is developed from and inspired or imbued with Islamic teachings and values. In this second sense, Islamic education can include (1) educators/teachers/lecturers, principals of *madrasah*/schools or leaders of higher education institutions and/or other education

²⁶ Ahmad Tafsir, *Ilmu Pendidikan dalam Perspektif Islam* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 1992), 32.

²⁷ Muhaimin, *Pemikiran dan Aktualisasi Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam* (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2011), 39.

²⁸ Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kemenag RI, *Profil Pendidikan Islam Tahun 2009* (Jakarta: Ditjen Pendidikan Islam Kemenag RI, 2009), 32.

personnel who carry out and develop educational activities that are motivated or inspired by and/or strive to realize teachings. and Islamic values or (2) educational institutions and their components, such as objectives, teaching materials/materials, facilities and infrastructure, learning tools/media/resources, learning methods (processes), evaluation, environment/context, management, and others, what are driven or inspired by Islamic teachings and values, or are characterized by Islam.²⁹

Educating Islamic values need curriculum design that consists of four substantial components: creativity, reflexivity, cooperation, and responsibility.³⁰ It is intended to teach children to understand and practice Islamic values while believing its teachings and appreciating their contribution to their lives. Waghid writes that Islamic education can be best understood through three interrelated concepts: *tarbiyah* (raising or nurturing), *ta'lim* (learning), and *ta'dib* (meeting needs).³¹ Three perspectives have been used to understand Islamic education: Islamic education as *madrasah* (formal education institution),³² Islamic education as part of political Islam;³³ and Islamic education as a means of promoting

²⁹ Muhaimin, *Pemikiran dan Aktualisasi Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam*, 39-40; Ibid., 31-32.

³⁰ Maimun Aqsa Lubis, Met.al., "Systematic Steps in Teaching and Learning Islamic Education in the Classroom," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 7 (2010), 665-670.

³¹ Yusef Waghid, "Islamic Education and Cosmopolitanism: A Philosophical Interlude," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 33, 3 (2013), 329-342.

³² M. Niaz Asadullah and Nazmul Chaudhury, "To Madrasahs or not to Madrasahs: The Question and Correlates of Enrolment in Islamic Schools in Bangladesh," *International Journal of Educational Development* 49 (2016), 55-69; Dana Burde, Joel A. Middleton, and Rachl Wahl, "Islamic Studies as Early Childhood Education in Countries Affected by Conflict: The Role of Mosque Schools in Remote Afghan villages," *International Journal of Educational Development* 41 (2015), 70-79; D' Aiglepieerre Rohen and Bauer Arthur, "The Choice of Arab-Islamic Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Findings from a Comparative Study," *International Journal of Educational Development* 62 (2018), 47-61.

³³ Guven Ismail, "The impact of Political Islam on Education: "the Revitalization of Islamic Education in the Turkish Educational Setting," *International Journal of Educational Development* 25, 3 (2005), 193-208; Lyn Parker and R. Raihani, "Democratizing Indonesia through Education? Community Participation in Islamic Schooling," *Educational Management Administration and Leadership* 39, 6 (2011), 712-732.

multiculturalism.³⁴ Such education is provided both by schools and mosques, which seek to improve students' religious skills and understandings. So that this effort can be successful, it can be done by developing routine activities, spontaneous activities, modeling, and habituation. Using local culture as a media in educating Islamic values, this article discusses *wiwitan* tradition and make it as focus of study in presenting the Islamic education values through local tradition.

The *Wiwitan* Tradition in East Java

Wiwitan is a harvest ritual held by the farmers of Kediri, East Java, before the harvest. Usually, the ritual is conducted in the rice fields and involves 5–10 participants; more may be involved, depending on the economic situation of the owner. During this ritual, which is intended to show gratitude to God and express desire for a good harvest, an elder or religious figure leads participants in praying to God Almighty. Sometimes they burn incense, spray fragrances, or place offerings around the field. After prayers are completed, participants return home with a bundle of food: rice, chicken, and snacks. Woodward suspects that this *wiwitan* activity is the same as *nercha* activity in Kerala, the region of South India.³⁵

During the ritual, landowners package food with *takir* (banana-leaf boxes) and place it within a *jodhang* (open basket). These packages consist of rice (cooked plain, savory, or in coconut milk), fried/spiced chicken, *sambal* (chili paste), *urap-urap* (steamed vegetables seasoned with shaved coconut), cooked egg, and yellow/white noodles. Landowners also prepare *tumpeng* (cooked rice shaped into a cone and served with various side dishes) and chicken *ingkung*, which is shared amongst participants once the ritual is completed. The *jodhang* is carried by two adults to the field, as are offerings such as *cok bakal* (woven flowers placed in a small basket). Offerings are gathered in one location, where participants subsequently pray congregationally. The *takir* is subsequently

³⁴ Imam Hanafi, „Urgensi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Berbasis Multikultural di Sekolah,“ *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1, 1 (2012), 55-68; Inkwri Rissanen, “Teaching Islamic Education in Finnish Schools: A Field of Negotiations,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 28, 5 (2012), 740-749.

³⁵ Mark R. Woodward, *Islam Jawa, Kesalehan Normatif versus Kebatinan* (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 1999), 71.

divided amongst participants. This series of rituals is a Javanese tradition of finding harmony and tranquility in the world, which in Javanese belief is a mirror of supernatural reality.³⁶

Central to this ritual are prayers that express participants' desire for salvation and good fortune. Before the 1980s, prayers were led by elders or '*ulamā*' (Islamic scholars), who initiated the ritual with a Javanese-language prayer and concluded it with an Arabic-language prayer.³⁷ The content of these prayers was essentially the same: a request that God grant salvation, a good harvest, and abundant food. Such prayers were accompanied by the burning of incense and the placement of flowers around the field. However, since the death of *Mbah Wongso*³⁸—the village elder—the practice has changed. Now, the *wiwitan* ritual is led by religious leaders, who generally use prayers in Arabic that convey a wish for worldly salvation and an end, not just a special affair with the harvest. Although essentially the meaning of prayer in Javanese and Arabic is the same because prayer in Javanese also takes the essence of Islamic teachings,³⁹ prayer in Arabic gives the impression of the loss of syncretism in the *wiwitan* ritual.

Islamic Values in the *Wiwitan* Tradition

The 1980s was an important decade for the *wiwitan* tradition in Kediri, East Java. Previously, the ritual had been syncretic, combining elements of Islam with animistic teachings.⁴⁰ In its later development, Islamic values have since become increasingly dominant. Elements that were perceived as *shirk*—as contrary to Islamic teachings—have been slowly replaced by ones that are deemed more Islamic. Moving the ritual from the fields to the home, for example, substantially transformed villagers' perspective of the harvest and promoted more Islamic views. Flowers and incense are removed from the ritual, thereby simplifying it. Around

³⁶ Suwardi Endraswara, *Agama Jawa, Ajaran, Amalan, dan Asal Usul Kejaven* (Yogyakarta: Narasi, 2018), 32.

³⁷ Interview with several village elders, November 2019.

³⁸ Nobody knows for sure when *Mbah Wongso* died, according to a local village elder in the late 70s, interview with several village elders, November 2019.

³⁹ Karkono Kamajaya Partokusumo, *Kebudayaan Jawa, Perpaduannya dengan Islam* (Yogyakarta: Ikatan Penerbit Indonesia, 1995), 269.

⁴⁰ Sutyono, "Tradisi Masyarakat Sebagai Kekuatan Sinkretisme Di Trucuk, Klaten," *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora* 16, 1 (2011), 45-59.

this time, residents begin to study at *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), thus introducing more orthodox beliefs into the religious practices of the community. Over time, syncretism gives way to a moderate Islam to incorporate both *ilāhīyah* and *insānīyah* values.⁴¹ This moderate Islam is mostly represented by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), one of the Islamic organizations that since the beginning has promoted moderate ideas of Islam along with its contextual understanding.⁴²

The local community understands *shukr* (gratitude) and *ṣadaqah* (charity) as having divine values, as positively affecting their relationship with God. Thanksgiving rituals such as *wiwitan*, thus, provide a sense of mental and spiritual satisfaction. They believe that, by doing these rituals and giving alms, they will receive God's blessings (*barakah*).⁴³ However, they have different approaches to articulating their sense of *shukr* and their giving of *ṣadaqah*. These approaches are informed by their economic situation and their cognizance of the religious meaning of *shukr* and *ṣadaqah*. Some express gratitude and charity solely through oral means, expressing happiness without providing any material contributions. Others articulate their gratitude and charity by distributing their wealth through rituals at home, in the field, in prayer rooms, or in mosques. Still, others articulate their gratitude and charity through their actions, through their grateful and charitable deeds. They may help others harvest their rice, or build their homes, or build or clean mosques, or clean public places.

⁴¹ Muhaimin and Abdul Mujib, *Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam* (Bandung: Trigenda Karya, 1993), 111; Mansur Isna, *Diskursus Pendidikan Islam* (Yogyakarta: Global Pustaka Utama, 2001), 98; Agus Maimun, Abdul Mukti Bisri, and Hasanuddin, *Profil Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) Model Pada Sekolah Umum Tingkat Dasar*, (Jakarta: Ditmapendais Ditjen Binbaga Islam Kemenag RI, 2003), 8.

⁴² Tazul Islam and Aminata Khatun, "Islamic Moderation' in Perspectives: A Comparison Between Oriental and Occidental Scholarships," *International Journal of Nusantara Islam* 3, 2 (2016), 69-78; Agus Maimun, *NU di Tengah Globalisasi, Kritik, Solusi, dan Aksi* (Malang: UIN Press, 2015), 26.

⁴³ *Barokah* means the increase of something, in the context of *wiwitanwitananwitananan*, *barokah* is the increase in *rizki* through the harvest that is now obtained or the harvest that will come, see Ahmad Warson Al-Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap* (Surabaya: Pustaka Progressif, 1997), 78; Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2005), 179.

The *wiwitan* tradition also contains *insānīyah* values, thereby shaping interpersonal relations. Particularly prominent are the values of family and tolerance. Local farmers believe that the *wiwitan* tradition can strengthen kinship bonds, and as such promote cooperation, collaboration, and security—both in times of happiness and times of sorrow. The *wiwitan* ritual treats all participants as equal, no matter their social class or economic status; all participants sit, cross-legged, atop a rattan mat, and eat the same food. Even persons of different faiths are invited, not for prayer but to show humanitarian values. Togetherness and harmony are therefore guaranteed.

There has frequently been debate in the community regarding *wiwitan*, not its essence but its form and processes. All agree that, essentially, the *wiwitan* tradition incorporates values of *shukr*, *sadaqah*, kinship, and tolerance. However, they disagree about whether its practices are rooted in religious teachings. Some understand *wiwitan* as compatible with Islamic teachings, and its processes as being acceptable from a religious perspective. Others believe that the *wiwitan* tradition can only be accepted when its practice, timing, and place are correct. Only when religious leaders become involved are such debates resolved, or when the *wiwitan* ritual is practiced in the appropriate place and at the appropriate time. Religious and cultural values must be brought into harmony, creating a tradition that does not violate Islamic doctrine.⁴⁴

Many religious groups have identified all Javanese traditions (including *wiwitan*) as being rooted in Hindu and Buddhist culture, and thus syncretic in their practice. Although this view is not entirely incorrect, the empirical analysis must also recognize the substantial elements of such rituals. *Wiwitan* must be understood comprehensively, not partially, by combining an esoteric and exoteric approach. An esoteric approach would provide an understanding of its substance, while an exoteric approach would provide an understanding of its tangible elements (including its structure and practices). These approaches are mutually complementary; ignoring one would mean failing to understand the ritual. By combining the esoteric and exoteric approaches, misunderstandings of the *wiwitan* tradition will vanish on their own.

⁴⁴ Joshua Hordern, "Religion and culture," *Medicine (United Kingdom)* 8 (2016), 589-592.

MacFarlane writes that cultural relativism is necessary to produce shared understandings about traditions.⁴⁵

The *wiwitan* tradition, being deeply embedded in its practitioners' everyday lives, has both cultural and sociological meaning.⁴⁶ Sociologically, *wiwitan* may be perceived as an important social obligation, one that provides social recognition and status. The wealthy are recognized and respected by their community for regularly holding the ritual, and identified as socially pious. This implies that involvement in the *wiwitan* tradition brings with it respect. Village administrators and wealthy residents often hold luxurious rituals, providing good variety and nutrition to participants. As such, the *wiwitan* tradition has changed over time, as its society has transformed.

Ritually, the tradition is getting faded over time. However, substantially, until now, it is still maintained with a load of Islamic content, from food serving to prayer. This tradition is not only carried out by the *abangan* community, but also by the Islamic *santri* community in general. People still believe that expressing *shukr* and *sadaqah* are noble Islamic values and must be implemented in life. With these two values, they are sure that their sustenance will be blessings and benefits. Blessings and benefits of fortune will always be sought after by all Muslims because it is useless if the economic activity does not have a blessing value. Meaningful blessings always increase⁴⁷ and meaningful benefits lead a person to a calm life, avoid bad behavior, and understand others.⁴⁸ For that, blessings and benefits of sustenance will increase one's welfare in life.

Initially, efforts to shift the *wiwitan* tradition from rice fields to houses, mosques, or prayer rooms were also rejected, especially the lay community or the *abangan*. They think that this shift violates the rules of their ancestors that they have followed for decades. This

⁴⁵ John MacFarlane, "Relativism and disagreement," *Philosophical Studies* 132 (2007), 17-31.

⁴⁶ Amir Tajrid, "Tradisi Wiwitan: Kajian Simbolik-Hermeneutik terhadap Masyarakat Desa Jetak, Kecamatan Wedung, Demak, Jawa Tengah," *Sabda: Jurnal Kajian Kebudayaan, Sabda, Journal of Cultural Analysis* 7, 1 (2017), 19-29.

⁴⁷ M. Abdul Mujieb, Ahmad Ismail, and Syafi'ah, *Ensiklopedia Tasawuf Imam Al-Ghozali, Mudah Memahami dan Menjalankan Kehidupan Spiritual* (Jakarta: Hikmah, 2009), 79.

⁴⁸ Handrix Chris Haryanto, "Apa Manfaat dari Agama?: Studi pada Masyarakat Beragama Islam di Jakarta," *InSight* 12, 1 (2016), 19-31.

condition has led to several comments stating that people who violate their traditions of life will not be calm and prosperous. Slowly but surely, Islamic leaders among moderate santri provided a rational understanding of this wiwitan tradition, so that people who initially refused wiwitan were moved to their homes, mosques, or prayer rooms then accepted gracefully. This is the importance of local wisdom in preaching for religious leaders or according to Wiwik Setiyani as the *Kiai Kampung* or according to Martin van Bruinessen referred to as community *kiai* because they have extraordinary religious authority whose *fatwā*'s tend to be followed by the community.⁴⁹ They do not have to drift away from tradition but also do not convey religious teachings textually with strict truth claims. This is where a contextual religious attitude is needed in facing the heterogeneity of society with all its traditions. Thus the messages of Islam can be easily accepted by all levels of society, without having to cause social conflict.

Over time, expressions of *shukr* and *ṣadaqah* are not done with salvation or *wiwitan* in the fields, but are done at home and also in mosque or *mushalla*. Such activities are more practical and can bring people closer to a mosque or *mushalla*. Because not everyone is used to going to a mosque; some of them go to the mosque only on every Friday prayer and holidays and some conduct daily worship is done at home, so this activity at the same time expands the function of the mosque, not only as *'ibādah maḥḍah* (rituals with formally divine stipulation) but also as *'ibādah ghayr maḥḍah* (rituals with no formally divine stipulation).⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Wiwik Setiyani, "The Exerted Authority of *Kiai Kampung* in the Social Construction of Local Islam," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, 1 (2020), 51-76; Martin van Bruinessen, *Rakyat Kecil, Islam dan Politik* (Yogyakarta: Gading, 2013), 404.

⁵⁰ *Ibadah maḥḍah* is a form of worship that has clear provisions based on the Quran & Hadith, *ibadah maḥḍah* cannot be increased or decreased, like *wudhu*, *tayammum*, *hadats* bathing, *adzan*, *iqamat*, *prayer*, reading the Qur'an, *i'tikaf*, fasting, pilgrimage, *umrah*, and *tajbiḥ al-Janazah*; While *ibadah ghayr maḥḍah* is worship that has no clear provisions based on the Quran & Hadith, such as expressions of *shukr*, *ṣadaqah*, marriage, study, *dzikir*, *da'wah*, and helping out. See Aswaja Center PWNNU Jawa Timur, *Kebiasaan Aswaja: Memahami, mengamalkan dan Mendakwahkan Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah* (Surabaya: Aswaja Center PWNNU Jawa Timur, 2016), 214; H.E. Hasan Saleh, Zubair, Suhilman and Hasan Shohibi, *Kajian Fiqh Nabawi dan Fiqh Kontemporer* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2008).

Even though there are many controversial views about *wiwitan*, especially in the early 21st century, along with the lively fundamental Islamic groups that have begun to enter the villages which firmly reject any form of tradition,⁵¹ the values contained in *wiwitan* can still be preserved until now. Maintaining this *wiwitan* tradition has had a very long conversation. Several fundamental Islamic groups are of the view that the *wiwitan* tradition must be ended, both ritually and substantially. This is because they consider that it contradicts Islamic teachings and has never been exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad saw. However, moderate Islamic groups have a different view and see the *wiwitan* tradition in substance. For this group, ritual procedures are a means in which each region has a different way of articulating its activities. If substantially the line is correct according to religious teachings, then the ritual tradition can still be tolerated. For moderate Islamic groups, the *wiwitan* tradition still contains the values of *shukr* and *ṣadaqah* as well as a means of building social and emotional relationships between them, so that they do not go too far into the spiritual area that is worrying towards *shirk*. The *wiwitan* tradition also contains social and emotional relationships which are one of the pillars of building solidarity between communities.⁵² Therefore, the *wiwitan* tradition can still be maintained with more Islamic modifications.

The Practice of *Wiwitan* as An Islamic Tradition

Local religious and societal leaders agree that the *wiwitan* tradition reflects the teachings of Islam. It promotes such Islamic values as *shukr*, *ṣadaqah*, family, and tolerance. However, they often have difficulty explaining this point logically and comprehensively to others. Congregational prayers and sermons at the mosque rarely touch on the real experiences of the local community (such as *wiwitan*), instead of providing normative and textual answers to questions of *‘aqīdah* (creed) and *akhlāq* (morality). Consequently, many younger residents use a textual approach to understanding religion and are uninterested in *wiwitan*, which has no basis in religious texts. They fail to recognize that the tradition teaches *shukr* and *ṣadaqah*, both of which are the essence of religious human life.

⁵¹ Ibid., 349-341.

⁵² Frans Magnis Suseno, *Etika Jawa: Sebuah Analisis Falsafi tentang Kebijakan Hidup Jawa* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1993), 69.

Such individuals have perceived *wiwitan* as deeply entrenched in Javanese spiritualism or *kejawen*, and thereby unable to contribute to Islamic education. They believe that the practice continues to maintain syncretic elements, such as being held in the field in the early evening, before *maghrib* prayer, with incense, special offerings, and other paraphernalia. Such elements are explicitly Javanese, as are the traditional outfits worn: *beskap* (an open-backed vest) and *blangkon* (a Javanese head covering). They have failed to recognize the Islamic values implicitly contained within the ritual, or that—as religious and *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) educations have become more prevalent—such elements have been abandoned. Today's rituals maintain the same essence while being conducted at home or in a mosque and using a different format. Food is no longer served in *takir* (banana leaves), but in cardboard boxes. The ritual does not involve *cok bakal* (offerings), and need not be conducted before *maghrib* prayer; it may be conducted after *maghrib* prayer or even after *'isha'* prayer.

Although *wiwitan* is not a social obligation, many residents feel guilty if they fail to become involved. They recognize *wiwitan* as enabling them to establish emotional relationships and create unity. If their economic situation permits it, residents will hold *wiwitan* regularly and consistently; if they cannot afford this, they will not force themselves, let alone borrow money. *Wiwitan* rituals are conducted only where feasible. At the same time, however, they believe that behaving more charitably (i.e. giving more *sadaqah*) would bring them good fortune. They do not perceive charitable giving as leading to poverty or debt; rather, they believe that *sadaqah* will enrich them. Indeed, it is those who fail to give *sadaqah* who generally have difficulty dealing with their social lives and who experience crippling debt.

During the *wiwitan* tradition, field owners traditionally provided food that is wrapped in *takir*. These banana leaves and their contents are given the same semiotic meaning. In old Javanese, *takir* is understood as an abbreviation of *tatake pikir*—all people must have firm beliefs and work consistently to face life's challenges. Only then can they deal with temptation and overcome hurdles.

This ability will enable them to live safely and comfortably, without worry.⁵³

Takir is made of banana leaves, with bananas being ordinary plants that decompose when in the ground. This implies that humans come from the earth and will return to it after death. As such, *takir* reminds people of their origins and their mortality and warns them that they must avoid arrogance and remain eternally mindful of God. These banana leaves are often used to wrap rice (cooked plain, savory, or in coconut milk) as well as several side dishes (*lauk pauk*). Each of these foods had a particular semiotic meaning. The union of chicken, egg, *sambal* (chili paste), *urap-urap* (steamed vegetables seasoned with shaved coconut), and yellow/white noodles in a single package symbolize the togetherness of the local community, that all people were equal before God Almighty and depend on Him for salvation and harvests. Only with God's will could they live comfortably and securely, conduct their worship in peace.⁵⁴

It is important to consider the involvement of societal leaders in the *wiwitan* ritual, as their involvement has significantly shaped the ritual form and practice. It is necessary, for example, to consider whether a ritual is led by an *abangan* Muslim or a *santri* Muslim. In the past, the *wiwitan* ritual was led by *abangan* Muslims (often identified as *engki* 'village elders'). All social rituals involved these elders; their involvement in birth, marriage, and death rituals was clear. These elders came from an *abangan* background, and thus often burned incense and delivered prayers in Javanese. Over time, however, these *engki* has begun to be marginalized, being replaced by individuals from a *santri* background. This significantly affects various traditions, which slowly lost their syncretic elements.⁵⁵ More 'pure' forms have been adopted, even the essence has remained the same. In the case of the *wiwitan* ritual, incense was abandoned, while prayers began to be delivered in Arabic.

The simplification and rationalization of the *wiwitan* tradition coincided with a paradigm shift in the local community. As

⁵³ Interview with village elders in Kediri, November 2019.

⁵⁴ Interview with village elders in Kediri, November 2019.

⁵⁵ Yollanda Wahyu Novella Ardini, "Upacara Menanam Padi di Desa Lambeyan Wetan, Kecamatan Lambeyan, Kabupaten Magetan," *Haluan Sastra Budaya* 2, 1 (2018), 105-119.

residents began emphasizing practicality, pragmatism, and rationality, they abandoned irrational approaches in favor of simpler and more easily understood ones.⁵⁶ *Wiwitan* is a heavenly (*ukhrawi*) investment, and as such its results cannot be directly measured; it will only come to fruition after death. From an economic perspective, such rituals are not profitable, as there is no financial return on the money spent. Nonetheless, from a religious perspective, such an *ukhrawi* investment is greatly beneficial, as it facilitates access to eternal bliss. This is an irrational matter, one of belief, and thus cannot be understood rationally. Understanding its religious significance is necessary for understanding the social importance of *wiwitan*.

Educating Islamic Values through *Wiwitan* Tradition

Ultimately, *wiwitan* teaches *shukr* and *sadaqah*, both of which are central to religious practice. *Wiwitan* is identical with *kenduren* or *gendurenan*⁵⁷ because both of them teach these noble values.⁵⁸ Those who feel gracious will be satisfied by what God has provided them, and as such, they will not become ambitious or arrogant. Losing this sense of gratitude will only prove deleterious. Gratitude must be accompanied by *sadaqah*, a means of manifesting one's humility and willingness to share with others. Although charity is frequently identified with material giving, this is not necessarily true; sharing one's happiness and kindness is also a form of charity.⁵⁹ Within the context of the *wiwitan* ritual, *sadaqah* is manifested through the sharing of foods (rice and side dishes). Although the giving of such foods may appear simple, especially to those who enjoy economic stability, for rural villagers it is special because it provides necessary nutrition and sustenance. In other

⁵⁶ George Soroka, "Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State," *Journal of Church and State* 54, 4 (2012), 650-652.

⁵⁷ *Selamatan* and *gendurenan* are two terms in Javanese terminology that refer to a feeding ceremony for other people, usually in a *selamatan* that involves a large number of people (more than 15 people) and *gendurenan* only a few people (10-15 people), see Endraswara, *Agama Jawa*, 31-36.

⁵⁸ Fifi Nur Rokhmah, "Javanese Religious Expression through *Kenduren* Tradition," *Ijtima'iyah Journal of Muslim Society Research* 4, 1 (2019), 90-101.

⁵⁹ Anim Rahmayati, "Filantropi Islam: model dan akuntabilitas," *The 2nd Call for Syariah Paper (SANCALL)* (2015).

words, it provides them with a means of improving the health of the local community.

According to an Islamic education perspective, *shukr* and *ṣadaqah* are important divine values, informing their relations with God. Divine values such as *ikhlās*, *riḍā*, *shajā'ah*, *qonā'ah*, *ḥubd*, *'iffah*, *ikhtiyār*, *tawakkal*, and *khushnudhdhan* are promoted through *wiwitan*, all of which teach them to remain close to God worldly wealth is temporary, being granted only through God's will. As such, it must be returned to Him through *ṣadaqah*, rather than through activities that weaken faith (syncretism, *shirk*, superstition, *bid'ah*, and *khurāfah*).⁶⁰ At the same time, *wiwitan* conveys the social values of family and tolerance, both of which are *insānīyah* values akin to love, concern, empathy, collaboration, respect, and responsibility. The *'ulamā* and other religious scholars thus have to place *wiwitan* within a rational and functional mental framework wherein divine and humanitarian values can be expressed. In this manner, *wiwitan* will become more functional from a social and religious perspective.

Essentially, the value of *wiwitan* as *shukr*, *ṣadaqah*, kinship, and tolerance which is manifested in the activities of *selamatan* or *gendurenan* are stills often taught in Islamic educational institutions, such as formal *madrasah* (*ibtidaiyah*, *tsanawiyah*, and *alīyah*), *madrasah diniyah* (people often call them afternoon school, because they are held in the afternoon after *'Aṣr*), Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPQ, the Quranic Learning Centre), and recitation in mosque or *musholla*, especially institutions affiliated to NU. Even in schools or *madrasah* under NU management, there are special subjects of Aswaja & NU's education for MI which are taught starting from grades IV - VI which contain material on the importance of *shukr*, *ṣadaqah*, kinship, and tolerance which is manifested in *selamatan*, *tablil*, *diba'*, *manaqiban* and other religious activities.⁶¹ His books are published by the Committee of Ma'arif NU of Kediri Regency.⁶²

This Islamic education institution is very strategic in cultivating the spirit of Islam in educational activities, especially in delivering

⁶⁰ Ahmad Anfasul Marom, "Kyai, NU dan Pesantren dalam Perspektif Demokrasi Deliberatif," *Jurnal Agama dan Hak Azazi Manusia* 2, 1 (2012), 15-40.

⁶¹ Interview with one of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers in Kediri, January 2020.

⁶² LP Ma'arif NU Kediri, *ASWAJA, Pendidikan Aswaja dan Ke-NU-an* (Kediri: PC LP Ma'arif NU Kediri, 2006).

wiwitan messages. Because *wiwitan* can be a means to instill importance in children from an early age so that when they grow up their sense of empathy will be even greater. This education has a tremendous impact, children begin to grow awareness to share. Not only sharing in food, but learning tools and games between them borrow and borrow. This is the meaning of *wiwitan* on a broad scale, which is happy to share with others. More than that, by interacting with their children, parents also grow awareness of sharing by making gratitude and *sadaqah* as routine activities carried out at rice harvest time.⁶³

Until now, salvation and prayers at mosques, *mushalla*, and people's homes are still going well. Most of them do it on Thursday night. Thursday night also coincides with the community's routine activities to carry out *tahlil* and prayers at the mosque or *musholla*, as well as at the residents' houses on a rotating basis, so the moment is right for prayer and gratitude. They think that day is a good day for prayer and thanksgiving. Because tomorrow is Friday and Friday is *sayyid al-ayyam* (the best day of the others).⁶⁴ Although it did not rule out the possibility of holding a similar event on another day, most people held the event to coincide with night Thursday to Friday.

Some of the essential practices of *wiwitan* have tremendous social impacts, especially for students in schools or *madrasah*. The sense of kinship and togetherness is getting better. This kind of behavior will reduce the number of fights between children. Because there is an inner relationship between them that is tied with sharing ropes, so that in villages or villages, fights rarely occur between students, because of high social ties.⁶⁵ Unlike the reality in the city, fighting between children often occurs. Although weak social ties are not the only factor causing fights between children, at least weak social ties can trigger friction between them.

⁶³ Interview with one of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers in Kediri, January 2020.

⁶⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an tentang Zikir & Doa* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2006), 256-258.

⁶⁵ Yuliningsih, Kundharu Saddhono, and Budhi Setiawan, "Internalizing the Local Wisdom Value of *Nyadran* Tradition to Students through Audio Visual Media," *Seward Fresh* (2019), 1-7.

As a reinforcement of the *wiwitan* tradition in society, *madrasah* teachers often invite their students to share.⁶⁶ For example, when parents are harvesting, they should be grateful by inviting other friends to buy snacks. Because in society it has become a tradition that parents usually give additional pocket money to their children during the main harvest. With excess pocket money, it is hoped that children can share with others. Sharing activities for children does not only mean material but has a deep symbolic meaning, that all enjoyment and happiness must be felt by everyone, including those who are less fortunate. This is a form of social harmony ethics that is built on the principles of togetherness, harmony, and mutual respect to negate individualistic attitudes in each person.⁶⁷ In Javanese society, individualistic attitudes are contrary to Javanese ethics which emphasize the attitude of life, respect, responsibility, obedience, cooperation, and deliberation.⁶⁸

The agricultural harvest season is carried out every three to four months, so that the atmosphere is shared with friends at least once every three months. In the perspective of Islamic education, sharing is one of the strategies in shaping Muslim personality. Because the purpose of Islamic education is basically to develop life values in the form of social or brotherhood values, sharing, human efficiency, habits of service, creative aesthetics, healthy sportsmanship, and responsible information.

This spirit of sharing is often carried out in schools and *madrasah* which are affiliated with NU. For example, when there is a celebration of the so-called Islamic holy days, school or *madrasah* leaders often invite their students to bring food according to their abilities. Some bring cakes, rice, and dishes. Then the foods are placed in a plate and divided again to the students by exchanging among them. Apart from being an expression of *shuker*, this activity also contains the value of togetherness and sharing. Those are the noble values in Islamic education that must be developed by educational institutions, without having to look at everything in black and white. This is where religious thought based on moderate local wisdom is needed, by prioritizing the essence and social values

⁶⁶ Interview with one of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers in Kediri, January 2020.

⁶⁷ Suseno, *Etika Jawa*, 69-70.

⁶⁸ Cutiana Windri Astuti, "Sikap Hidup Masyarakat Jawa Dalam Cerpen-Cerpen Karya Kuntowijoyo," *Jurnal K@ta* 1, 1 (2017), 64-71.

contained therein. Therefore, textual-partial religious thinking must be replaced with universal-contextual thinking so that people can understand religious teachings that are conducive to the context of their era.⁶⁹

Conclusion

Belying common misperceptions, the *wiwitan* tradition is no longer a syncretic practice. It has experienced two significant transformations. First, it has evolved to incorporate Islamic values, as shown in this article. Second, it has been given social and religious significance as a cultural space through which individuals can show gratitude, give charity, establish kinship bonds, and create tolerance. It thus contains within it both *ilāhīyah* and *insānīyah* values. *Wiwitan* is a cultural instrument, one used to teach important Islamic values. It is thus inappropriate to identify *wiwitan* as a solely Hindu or Buddhist tradition.

This study has enabled a deeper socio-religious understanding of *wiwitan* and its practice amongst the farmers of East Java in educating Islamic values. Such an understanding is necessary to produce a comprehensive portrait of *wiwitan* as teaching mutual assistance and sharing, creating harmony, comfort, and security in times of happiness and sorrow. It is an open cultural space, one wherein all are equal. The *wiwitan* ritual treats all participants as equal, no matter their social class or economic status; all participants sit, cross-legged, atop a rattan mat, and eat the same food. Even persons of different faiths are invited, not for prayer, but to show humanitarian values. As such, this cultural space provides a means of creating strong interpersonal bonds and a sense of togetherness.

This study has yet to reflect the historical development of this tradition, as well as how it has transformed together with local society. Without accommodating such historical elements, it is impossible to truly understand the socio-religious dimensions of this tradition. Local culture and Islam have developed in tandem, and thus been mutually supportive. As such, subsequent studies should apply a diachronic approach which give a room for

⁶⁹ Moeslim Abdurrahman, *Islam Transformatif* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1995), 253-254.

examining the essence of the tradition and its contribution to local religious and cultural developments. []

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