

Tilik Kaji Tradition in Wonosobo: Between Prayer, Solidarity, and Social Ethics

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the social, religious, and cultural significance in the tradition of *tilik kaji* (visiting prospective pilgrims) in the rural Muslim community of Wonosobo. This tradition is carried out before the departure of the Hajj. The research uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods. Data collection is through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of prospective pilgrims, families, community leaders, and residents involved in the tradition. Data analysis was carried out thematically to understand the relationship between cultural practices, religious values, and social relations of the community. The results of the research are that the tradition of the hajj ritual not only functions as a practice of friendship, but also as a medium for strengthening social solidarity, mutual cooperation culture, and the reproduction of people's religious values. The practice of bringing consumer necessities reflects the collective participation of the community in helping the host. In addition, the choice to visit before departure shows the social ethics of the community that avoids the impression of asking for souvenirs after returning from the hajj. This study recommends the importance of preserving local religious traditions as part of strengthening the social cohesion of rural Muslim communities.

Keywords: Hajj Tradition, Religious Culture, Rural Communities, Social Solidarity, Wonosobo.

INTRODUCTION

One of the worships in Islam in Indonesia that has spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions in people's lives is the hajj (Syaripuddin & Ardi, 2023). In the context of Indonesian Muslim society, hajj is not only understood as a religious obligation related to human relationship with God, but also part of the social and cultural practices of the community. Indonesians view the position of Hajj as sacred and make various activities related to Hajj develop into social traditions that are inherited from generation to generation. This tradition is present in various forms, such as joint prayers, *walimatus safar*, thanksgiving for the return of the hajj, to the practice of social visits to prospective pilgrims and pilgrims who have just returned from the Holy Land. This shows that the hajj has a strong influence in shaping the social and cultural relations of the local Muslim community.



The study of the relationship between religion and local culture in the religious practices of the Indonesian Muslim community has continued to develop in recent years. Research from Rahman and Salim (2021) explains that the religious practices of the Indonesian Muslim community cannot be separated from the local cultural context that shapes the religious expression of the community. Another study conducted by Yusuf (2020) shows that social rituals around the hajj have an important function in strengthening social solidarity and the collective identity of Muslim communities. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Hidayat and Pranowo (2022) confirms that the traditions that develop in rural Muslim communities are often a space for negotiation between religious teachings, social norms, and local cultural values. These studies show that social practices related to Hajj are not just ceremonial activities, but also represent the social and cultural construction of Muslim society.

In the context of Javanese society, social practices related to the hajj have their own characteristics. The culture of the Javanese people that upholds the values of harmony, *unggah-ungguh* (politeness and proper social conduct), and social solidarity also influences the traditions surrounding the implementation of the hajj. These cultural values are reflected in concrete social practices such as visiting prospective pilgrims before departure, speaking politely and respectfully to pilgrims and their families, participating in collective prayers, and bringing consumer goods such as rice, sugar, tea, or snacks to help the host prepare for visiting guests. In addition, the Javanese value of harmony is also reflected in the community's tendency to avoid visiting pilgrims after they return from the Holy Land because they do not want to create the impression of expecting souvenirs. This practice demonstrates the importance of maintaining social sensitivity, respecting others, and preserving harmonious social relations within the community. Hajj is often positioned as a symbol of one's piety, social honor, and spiritual success in society.

Therefore, various forms of social respect for prospective pilgrims and pilgrims who have returned from the Holy Land have become an important part of the life of the Javanese Muslim community. Research conducted by Azizah (2019) explains that the social status of hajj in Javanese society is not only interpreted religiously, but also related to social legitimacy and moral recognition in society. Another study from Fauzi and Lestari (2023) also explains that the social traditions around the hajj function as a medium for reproducing the value of mutual cooperation and communal solidarity of rural communities. One of the traditions that develops in the rural Muslim community in Wonosobo is *tilik kaji* (*visiting prospective pilgrims*) before departure to the Holy Land. This tradition is carried out by the community for generations. In practice, the people who visit come not only from the family environment, but also neighbors, friends, and other social relations. People who come usually bring consumer goods that can be used by the host to entertain other visiting guests. This tradition shows the relationship between religious practices and the culture of mutual cooperation and social solidarity of rural communities.

Another interesting phenomenon in this tradition is the tendency of the Wonosobo people to visit before the departure of the Hajj compared to after the return of pilgrims from the Holy Land. Of

course, the choice of time of the visit raises a question about the social values behind it. In fact, in many traditions of the Indonesian Muslim community, visits to pilgrims who have just returned from Hajj are actually common because of the belief that the prayers of people who have just returned from the Hajj have spiritual blessings.

Academically, the study of social traditions around the Hajj has been more focused on aspects of religious rituals, changes in the social status of pilgrims, religious symbols, or post-Hajj traditions. Research on social practices before the departure of Hajj, especially the tradition of visiting prospective pilgrims in rural communities, is still relatively limited. In addition, previous research has not examined the relationship between the practice of social visits, *sungkan* culture, communal solidarity, and religious construction of the Javanese Muslim community. Therefore, there is still room for study that needs to be developed to understand social practices before Hajj as part of the religious cultural dynamics of the Indonesian Muslim community.

Based on these conditions, this research is important because it examines the social, religious, and cultural significance in the tradition of visiting prospective pilgrims in the rural Muslim community of Wonosobo. This research is directed to understand how the tradition represents social solidarity, mutual cooperation culture, and social ethics of the Javanese Muslim community. Therefore, this research is expected to be able to enrich the study of Islamic living and religious anthropology through the discussion of religious cultural practices that live in local communities.

The novelty of this research lies in the focus of the study on the tradition of visiting before the departure of Hajj as a social and cultural practice of rural Muslim communities. This research not only views the tradition as a religious ritual, but also as a space for the reproduction of social solidarity, ethics of politeness, and the construction of religious meaning in people's lives. Thus, this research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of the study of the sociology of religion, Islamic anthropology, and cultural studies of contemporary Indonesian Muslim society.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning derived from social and cultural problems in people's lives. The ethnographic method is used to understand the cultural practices of the community where the researcher is directly involved in the field as well as the observation of the social activities of the community naturally (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

The research was carried out in Wonosobo Regency, Central Java, especially in rural communities who still maintain the tradition of visiting prospective pilgrims before departure to the Holy Land. The selection of the location was carried out purposively because the area has strong socio-religious practices and has been passed down from generation to generation. The research was carried out during the departure season of pilgrims so that researchers could directly observe the process of social visits carried out by the community.

The research subjects consist of prospective pilgrims, family members, neighbours, religious leaders, and communities involved in the tradition. The determination of informants uses purposive sampling techniques by considering the level of involvement and knowledge of the informants to the traditions being studied. Purposive sampling techniques are considered effective in qualitative research because they allow researchers to obtain informants that are relevant to the focus of the research (Sugiyono, 2022).

Data collection techniques were carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation is carried out by directly observing community activities when visiting prospective pilgrims, including forms of social interaction, prayer practices, and the culture of bringing consumer goods to help the host. According to Spradley (2016), participatory observation allows researchers to understand the meaning of culture through direct involvement in community activities. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with informants to explore their views on the purpose of the tradition, the value of social solidarity, and the religious meaning contained in the practice. Documentation is done by collecting photographs, field notes, and other supporting documents related to the social traditions of the community.

Data analysis uses the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selects and groups data that is relevant to the focus of the research. The next stage is the presentation of data in the form of narrative descriptions so that the social and cultural patterns found are easier to understand. The final stage is carried out through drawing conclusions and interpreting the social, religious, and cultural meanings in the tradition of visiting prospective pilgrims. To maintain the validity of the data, this study uses source triangulation techniques and triangulation methods by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation (Moleong, 2021).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of the study show that the rural Muslim community in Wonosobo has a tradition of visiting prospective pilgrims before departure to the Holy Land. This tradition is carried out by neighbours, relatives, friends, and the surrounding community as a form of expression of happiness and spiritual support for prospective pilgrims. The visit is usually carried out a few days to a few weeks before the departure of the hajj and takes place informally at the house of the prospective pilgrim.

People who visit generally bring consumer goods such as sugar, tea, coffee, instant noodles, rice, or snacks. The items are used by the host to entertain other guests who come in turn. The tradition of carrying goods shows the existence of a culture of collective participation in helping the families of prospective pilgrims face the increase in social activities before departure. Sugar, tea, and coffee symbolize hospitality, social warmth, and respect for guests because these drinks are commonly served when receiving visitors. Rice symbolizes blessing, prosperity, and economic support since it is the

staple food of Javanese society. Meanwhile, snacks symbolize practical social participation in helping the family of prospective pilgrims serve the many guests who come to visit before the hajj departure.



Figure 1. Visit a student’s parents who are going on Hajj

In addition, the results of the study show that people prefer to visit before departure rather than after pilgrims return from the Holy Land. The informant stated that post-hajj visits are often avoided because there are concerns that they are considered to expect hajj souvenirs. Therefore, the public views the visit before departure as a form of sincerity and more ethical social respect.

Nevertheless, the community still believes that pilgrims who have just returned from Hajj have a special spiritual status and their prayers are considered easy to answer. This belief causes close family or certain relatives to continue to visit after the pilgrims return from Makkah. These findings show a relationship between religious values, social solidarity, and cultural hesitancy in the lives of rural Muslims.

Table 1. Key Research Findings

Aspects of the Findings	Forms of Social Practice	Social and Religious Meaning
Pre-Hajj visit	The public comes before departure	Moral support and prayer of salvation
Carrying consumables	Sugar, tea, rice, snacks	Social solidarity and mutual cooperation
Avoiding post-hajj visits	Fear of being considered as asking for souvenirs	Culture of Scepticism and Social Ethics
Close family visit post-hajj	Asking for prayers and friendship	Confidence in the blessings of Hajj

The results of this study show that the pre-hajj tradition in Wonosobo not only functions as a socio-religious ritual, but also as a mechanism for maintaining social relations of the community. These findings are different from previous studies that have highlighted the tradition of welcoming pilgrims after returning from the Holy Land or the social status of Hajj in Muslim society. This research shows that the pre-departure phase is actually an important social space in building community collective solidarity.

Discussion

Local Culture and the Religious Tradition of *Tilik Kaji*

The tradition of visiting prospective pilgrims in the rural Muslim community of Wonosobo shows that the hajj is not only understood as an individual spiritual ritual, but also as a social event that involves the collective participation of the community. A person's departure to perform the hajj is seen as a shared happiness that needs to be welcomed through prayer, moral support, and social presence of the surrounding community. In this context, the tradition of pre-hajj visits serves as a medium that brings together the religious dimension with the social solidarity of rural communities. This finding is in line with research by Syaripuddin and Ardi (2023) who stated that the hajj has spiritual and social dimensions in the lives of Muslim communities. In addition, Hidayatullah (2021) explained that the social rituals that develop around the hajj are a form of expression of the religious diversity of people living in the context of local culture.

The results of the study show that the community has a collective awareness to visit prospective pilgrims before departure to the Holy Land. The visit was carried out not only by close family, but also by neighbours, friends, and other social relations. This condition shows that the implementation of the hajj has a symbolic position that goes beyond personal affairs. Hajj is understood as a form of spiritual success as well as social honour that involves the collective recognition of the community. These findings are in line with Azizah (2019) research which explains that the status of hajj in Javanese society is not only seen as a religious identity, but also as a symbol of moral legitimacy and social prestige. Rofiq (2022) also shows that rural Muslim communities view the departure of Hajj as a social event that strengthens relationships between communities.

Religious Meaning and Collective Prayer

The practice of pre-hajj visits shows the social function of religious rituals as explained by Émile Durkheim that religion has an important function in creating social solidarity and community integration. Religious rituals are not only related to human relationships with God, but also form a sense of togetherness between fellow members of society (Durkheim, 2014). In the pre-hajj tradition in Wonosobo, community visits become a social space that strengthens social relationships through joint activities, collective prayers, and interaction between residents. Yusuf (2020) and Laksono (2026) research shows that social rituals in Indonesian Muslim society have the function of strengthening

collective identity and maintaining social cohesion in rural communities.

In addition to showing social solidarity, this tradition also shows the strong culture of mutual cooperation of the community. The results of the study found that people who came to visit generally brought consumer goods such as sugar, tea, coffee, instant noodles, rice, and snacks. These items are used by the host to entertain other guests who come in turn before the departure of the hajj. This practice shows that the community is not only symbolically present through congratulations and prayers, but also provides material support that is collective. These findings reinforce the research of Fauzi and Lestari (2023) who explain that the social traditions of rural Muslim communities function as a medium of cultural reproduction of mutual cooperation and communal solidarity.

From a cultural anthropological perspective, the practice of carrying consumer goods shows that the value of mutual cooperation is still an important part of the life of rural Javanese Muslim communities. Geertz (2017) explained that the culture of the Javanese people is built on the principles of togetherness, social harmony, and respect for social relations. Therefore, material support to prospective pilgrims is seen as a form of social responsibility of the community-to-community members who are carrying out important religious rituals.

Ethical Values in Javanese Muslim Society

The findings of this study differ from some previous studies that highlighted the tradition of welcoming pilgrims after returning from the Holy Land. Research by Hanum Khasanah (2023) shows that people visit pilgrims who have just returned from Hajj to ask for prayers and obtain spiritual blessings. Nasruddin's (2020) research on the Hajj culture of the Bugis people also shows that the post-hajj tradition has become a space of social respect for pilgrims who have just returned from Makkah. Meanwhile, this study found that the people of Wonosobo actually prefer to visit before departure rather than after the return of the pilgrims. These differences show the existence of a distinctive cultural pattern in the Muslim community of Wonosobo.

The tendency of the community to visit prospective pilgrims before departure is closely related to the *sungkan* culture that lives in Javanese society. Based on the results of the interview, people feel uncomfortable if they come after the pilgrims return from the hajj because they are afraid of being considered expecting souvenirs from the Holy Land. This tradition is common across all areas in Wonosobo, both cities and villages, and across all age groups, young and old, especially among people who are not closely related by blood. In the context of Javanese culture, guarding the feelings of others and avoiding social prejudices is an important part of the social ethics of society. Magnis-Suseno (2018) explained that Javanese culture places social harmony and hesitation as the basis for building human relationships. Therefore, people prefer to visit before departure as a form of social respect and sincerity.

The culture of hesitation shows that the religious practices of the community are not only influenced by religious values, but also local social and cultural norms. Humaedi (2021) explains that local Islamic practices in Indonesia are often formed through a negotiation process between religious

teachings and the cultural values of the local community. In Javanese society, social relations are built on the principles of harmony, respect, and politeness. These values then affect the way people carry out socio-religious practices, including in the hajj tradition.

Although people avoid post-hajj visits, the results of the study show that people still believe in spiritual blessings in pilgrims who have just returned from the Holy Land. Hajj pilgrims are seen as having a higher religious status so that their prayers are considered easy to grant. This belief shows that the status of hajj in rural Muslim communities is not only related to the success of performing worship, but also forms moral and symbolic legitimacy in the social life of the community. Research by Soehadha et al., (2026) shows that the title of Hajj in Indonesia's Muslim society is often associated with an increase in one's social respect and moral authority in society.

From the perspective of *Islamic living*, the tradition of visiting prospective pilgrims in Wonosobo shows how Islamic teachings live and are practiced in the context of the local culture of the community. Islam does not exist solely as a textual normative teaching, but is practiced through social traditions that are integrated with the culture of everyday society. The value of friendship, joint prayer, mutual cooperation, and respect for prospective pilgrims is part of the expression of the religious diversity of the rural Muslim community. This statement is in line with Woodward's (2019) research which explains that the practice of Islam in the archipelago develops through the integration between Islamic values and the local culture of the Indonesian people.

This tradition also shows that local Muslim communities have the ability to interpret religious practices according to their cultural values. In this context, Javanese culture such as *sungkan*, harmony, and social solidarity do not contradict religious teachings, but rather strengthen the religious practices of the community. Therefore, the tradition before leaving for Hajj can be understood as a form of integration between Islam and local culture in the life of the Indonesian Muslim community.

Theoretical Implications on Islamic Sociology and Religious Anthropology

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of the study of religious anthropology and Islamic sociology, especially in understanding the relationship between religious rituals and the social structure of society. This study shows that pre-departure social traditions have an important function in building social solidarity, strengthening community cohesion, and reproducing local cultural values. In addition, this study also expands the study of the hajj tradition in Indonesia which has so far highlighted more symbols of social status or post-hajj rituals.

Thus, the tradition of visiting prospective pilgrims in Wonosobo cannot be understood as a mere ceremonial activity. The tradition is a representation of the complex relationship between religion, local culture, social solidarity, and ethics of the rural Javanese Muslim community. In the midst of modern social changes and the development of a culture of individualism, the existence of this tradition shows that the value of mutual cooperation and social solidarity is still an important foundation in the life of rural Muslims in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the tradition of visiting prospective pilgrims in the rural Muslim community of Wonosobo functions not only as a socio-religious practice, but also as a mechanism for strengthening social solidarity, mutual cooperation, and social ethics rooted in Javanese culture. The tradition reflects collective interpretations of the hajj through friendship, moral support, safety prayers, and communal participation in helping the families of prospective pilgrims, while the preference for visiting before departure demonstrates the influence of *sungkan* culture and Javanese politeness norms in shaping local religious practices. This research also expands previous studies on hajj traditions in Indonesia by highlighting the social and religious significance of the pre-departure phase, thereby contributing to the study of religious anthropology, Islamic sociology, and living Islam through an understanding of the relationship between religion, local culture, and community solidarity. Future studies may conduct comparative research on pre-hajj traditions in different regions of Indonesia to examine variations in local culture and their transformation amid modern social change.

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