

TABLIGH AKBAR ON THE MANGANAN TRADITION IN TUBAN: THE DYNAMICS OF LOCAL RELIGION AND CULTURE FROM A SYNCRETISM PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The Manganan tradition in Tuban is a cultural practice that has been passed down through generations and has undergone changes due to the influence of Islamization. This tradition initially served as an expression of gratitude to ancestors for the harvest, but with the introduction of Islam, a transformation occurred that led to the strengthening of Islamic values in its practice. One of the most striking forms of change is the integration of Tabligh Akbar as part of the Manganan series of events. This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods to understand the dynamics of religion and culture from a syncretistic perspective. The results show that Tabligh Akbar plays a role in the Islamization of the Manganan ritual without completely eliminating local cultural elements. This process reflects a pattern of syncretism, where the community maintains traditional values but also adapts religious teachings. Despite shifts in ritual practice, the community still upholds this tradition as a form of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and respect for religious values. Thus, the Manganan tradition with the addition of Tabligh Akbar serves as an example of how religion and culture can interact harmoniously in a dynamic whole.

Keywords: Syncretism, Tabligh Akbar, Manganan Tradition.

Abstrak

Tradisi Manganan di Tuban merupakan praktik budaya yang telah diwariskan secara turun-temurun dan mengalami perubahan akibat pengaruh Islamisasi. Tradisi ini awalnya berfungsi sebagai ungkapan rasa syukur kepada leluhur atas hasil panen, namun dengan masuknya ajaran Islam, terjadi transformasi yang mengarah pada penguatan nilai-nilai keislaman dalam praktiknya. Salah satu bentuk perubahan yang paling mencolok adalah integrasi Tabligh Akbar sebagai bagian dari rangkaian acara Manganan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologi untuk memahami dinamika agama dan budaya dalam perspektif sinkretisme. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Tabligh Akbar berperan dalam mengislamisasi ritual Manganan tanpa sepenuhnya menghilangkan unsur budaya lokal. Proses ini mencerminkan adanya pola sinkretisme, di mana masyarakat tetap mempertahankan nilai-nilai adat tetapi juga mengadaptasi ajaran agama. Meskipun terjadi pergeseran dalam praktik ritual, masyarakat masih menjunjung tinggi tradisi ini sebagai bentuk kebersamaan, gotong royong, dan penghormatan terhadap nilai-nilai keagamaan. Dengan demikian, tradisi Manganan dengan tambahan Tabligh Akbar menjadi contoh bagaimana agama dan budaya dapat berinteraksi secara harmonis dalam satu kesatuan yang dinamis.

Kata Kunci: Sinkretisme, Tabligh Akbar, Tradisi Manganan.



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic nation and is known for its rich and diverse traditions. This diversity of traditions is based on the diversity of cultures spread across the Indonesian archipelago. Java is one of the regions in Indonesia with a profound cultural richness. The practice of giving alms to the earth is not merely a ritual, but also reflects the values of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and respect for ancestors. In Indonesian society, there are many different traditions and cultures, but some are focused on religion. The Manganan Sedekah Bumi tradition is one example of a tradition that has religious elements. Manganan Sedekah Bumi is a ritual performed by people in Java to ask for safety and prosperity. The community performs various rituals and religious ceremonies, such as praying, reading the Bible, and performing other rituals.

The Manganan tradition underwent significant changes, both in practice and meaning, due to the strong influence of Islamization. Initially focused on honoring ancestral spirits, this tradition later evolved into an expression of gratitude to Allah SWT. This change was influenced by the role of local ulama, who successfully incorporated Islamic values into local traditions. Folk entertainment such as wayang (wayang) and tayub (traditional Islamic dance) were replaced by communal tahlil (religious recitation), demonstrating the acculturation between local culture and Islamic teachings. Despite this, the people of Wangun Village remain passionate about preserving the Manganan tradition, which demonstrates harmony, mutual cooperation, and strong ties among them. The Manganan earth offering (sedekah bumi) contains a spiritual aspect closely linked to Javanese religions, such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and local beliefs such as Kejawen. Each religion brings its own unique contribution to the interpretation and practice of this ritual. Each region has its own concept of how to carry out the earth offering, adapted to ancestral traditions that have been passed down through generations. The Earth Alms tradition is generally held as a form of gratitude for the blessings received by the community, and therefore, its implementation incorporates various symbols to express this gratitude. The Earth Alms tradition is always accompanied by the community's belief in supernatural powers beyond the human dimension. Earth Alms is a part of the community's culture, as the Earth Alms tradition fulfills various cultural elements.¹

In its early development, the Manganan tradition was simply a way of expressing gratitude to God Almighty for the harvest of the earth. However, over time, the implementation of this tradition has changed. For example, there are displays of traditional musical instruments such as Gamelan and usually local people bring some food to eat together, and now it ends with a recitation or tabligh akbar. The implementation of Tabligh Akbar in the context of the Manganan Tradition in Tuban is

¹ M Thoriqul Huda, "Harmoni Sosial Dalam Tradisi Sedekah Bumi Masyarakat Desa Pancur Bojonegoro," *Religió: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 7, no. 2 (2017): 267–96.

very important for understanding the religious and cultural impacts resulting from the relationship between Islamic preaching and traditional rituals. Studies like this can show how Islamic values are spread through local media and how people accept and interpret these applications in their daily lives.

Tabligh Akbar (Grand Tabligh) is an important part of the Islamization of local traditions in Tuban, particularly in Wangun Village, Palang District. The Manganan tradition was originally performed as a traditional ritual to express gratitude to God for salvation. However, as a result of the influence of Islamization, it has changed significantly. Folk entertainment such as wayang (wayang) and tayub (religious gatherings) are complemented by communal tahlil (religious recitation) and religious lectures, demonstrating the acculturation between local culture and Islamic teachings. In this context, Tabligh Akbar serves as a tool to convey Islamic principles and increase people's faith while maintaining local traditions with a more Islamic color. Tabligh akbar has become a tradition that is inherent and ingrained in the Indonesian people who are Muslim, with full solemnity in an attitude of exaltation, rejoicing and having fun carrying out tabligh akbar activities. The strings of holy verses from the Koran and the chanting of prayers accompanied by Islamic tunes add to the solemnity and peak of the festivity and joy at the Islamic Holiday celebrations.²

The Manganan ritual in Tuban is a deeply rooted tradition in Javanese society. Manganan, derived from the word "mangan," meaning to eat, is a ritual performed to celebrate the harvest and express gratitude to God. In recent years, the phenomenon of mass religious gatherings (tabligh akbar) has become an integral part of this ritual, attracting the attention of many groups, both religious and cultural. Tabligh akbar, which is a mass da'wah activity, not only serves as a means of disseminating religious values but also influences the social and cultural dynamics of the local community. This phenomenon is interesting to study due to the interaction between religious practices and local culture. In the Tuban context, tabligh akbar not only serves as an opportunity to strengthen faith but also serves as a moment of community gathering that strengthens social solidarity.

An interesting phenomenon reflecting this is the Manganan Tradition in Tuban, a practice that combines Islamic religious elements with local Javanese culture. In this context, syncretism is a key concept explaining how religious and cultural elements interact and adapt within the community's religious practices. Syncretism in the Manganan Tradition is evident in the Tabligh Akbar (Greater Islamic Community Service) celebration, which is integrated with local cultural rituals. Although theologically, the Tabligh Akbar is part of Islamic da'wah (Islamic outreach), this

² Mugni Labib, "Tabligh Akbar Dan Dampak Perubahan Terhadap Muslim Perkotaan," *Indonesian Journal of Innovation Science and Knowledge* 1, no. 1 (2024): 439–51.

practice maintains cultural values inherited from generation to generation. This fusion is a unique attraction for the community, while also sparking debate about the boundaries between pure Islamic teachings and long-standing cultural elements.

Syncretism is a combination of different elements, such as religion, culture, or philosophy, to achieve balance and harmony. The phenomenon of syncretism can be observed in various religious practices that accommodate traditional elements, thus creating harmony between religious doctrine and local wisdom. Sunandar and Tomi wrote in their journal, "Syncretism in religion is a phenomenon that occurs not by chance, but occurs through a long process (evolution) caused by beliefs that have been constructed in the lives of community groups, and is a fulfillment of life's needs in believing in a truth about supernatural powers and having omniscience over everything or in religious language called God."³ This syncretism is different from acculturation, if acculturation emphasizes the mixing of two or more cultures without eliminating the original culture, syncretism emphasizes the blending of several religions or several schools of thought that undergo adjustments so as to create their own uniqueness.⁴ Meanwhile, according to experts, syncretism, as explained by John L Esposito in the Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World, is a phenomenon where the practices and beliefs of one religion blend with those of another, creating new and distinct traditions. It can be concluded that syncretism is a process of assimilation and integration of different religious and cultural elements, resulting in new forms of expression to reflect the social diversity of society. In a multicultural society, syncretism serves as a bridge that allows local religious and cultural traditions to interact without losing their respective identities. The fusion of religious teachings and cultural traditions in religious practices often occurs.

In this research, syncretism serves as the analytical basis for understanding how the Manganan Tradition persists amidst social change and the influence of Islamic modernization. This study aims to delve deeper into how cultural and religious adaptations occur within this practice, as well as how society responds to the continuation of this tradition.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used is a qualitative approach with the Phenomenology method. This approach aims to understand the Tabligh Akbar phenomenon in the Manganan Tradition in Tuban in depth, by paying attention to the interaction between religion and local culture from a syncretism perspective. This research method uses the theory of syncretism, which can be used through

³ Sunandar dan Tom, "Sinkritisme Islam Dan Budaya Lokal: Ritus Kehidupan," *JURNAL SAMBAS (Studi Agama, Masyarakat, Budaya, Adat, Sejarah)* 6, no. 1 (2023): 57–66.

⁴ Tasya Kartika Chandra and Nur Hadi, "Sinkretisme Budaya Dan Agama: Tradisi Selamatan Dan Pagelaran Wayang Pesarean Gunung Kawi," *Jurnal Integrasi Dan Harmoni Inovatif Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 1, no. 2 (2021): 135–41, <https://doi.org/10.17977/um063v1i2p135-141>.

literature studies or critical theory studies. This researcher uses the theory of syncretism by using critical theory studies through observation or interviews with local communities. According to Feny Rita Fiantika in her book, qualitative research is descriptive research and tends to use analysis. Qualitative research often emphasizes the perspective of the subject, process, and meaning of the research by using theoretical foundations as an umbrella and/or support to match the facts on the ground.⁵

Qualitative research is conducted using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research is a type of qualitative research that looks and listens more closely and in detail to individual explanations and understandings of their experiences. Phenomenological research aims to interpret and explain the experiences a person has in life, including interactions with others and the surrounding environment.⁶

In this phenomenological research, the priority will be to find, study, and convey syncretism events that occurred in the Wangun village community, Tuban. The concept of Manganan and its relationship with the community in carrying out religious rites is based on the subjective nature of individual data and the value content that occurs in the Wangun village community. The determination of data sources in this study is based on the researcher's efforts to reveal subjective events as possible so that the determination of data informants in this study is the result of interviews that have knowledge competencies and in-depth understanding of Tabligh Akbar in the Manganan Tradition in Tuban: The Dynamics of Religion and Local Culture in the Perspective of Syncretism. Phenomenology focuses on how people experience certain phenomena. This means that people experience something not because of their own experiences, but because of the phenomena occurring in their lives. Researchers aim to use relevant informant phenomena to describe their research objects. According to the definition of phenomenology, a naturalistic impression can be created from a description of a phenomenon based on real and actual circumstances.

This research was conducted in Wangun Village, Palang District, Tuban Regency, East Java. This type of research is qualitative phenomenological, which aims to explore the subjective meaning of individuals or groups related to religious and cultural experiences in the Manganan tradition. Phenomenology focuses on how individuals experience and understand a phenomenon, making it suitable for examining the dynamics between Islamic teachings and local cultural elements in the practice of Tabligh Akbar. The research subjects were selected by purposive sampling, including: Religious leaders (involved in the Manganan tradition), Indigenous Youth

⁵ Et.al Fiantika, Wasil M, Jumiya, Honesti, Wahyuni, Jonata, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif. In Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif, Rake Sarasin*, 2022, <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=O-B3eJYAAAAJ&hl=en>.

⁶ Yuni, "Metode Penelitian," *STIE Indonesia Jakarta*, no. 2014 (2017): 1–9.

(who understand the history and implementation of the Manganan tradition), Community members (who have participated in the Manganan tradition). Then for data collection techniques, the researcher used in-depth interviews with religious leaders, indigenous youth, and participants in the Manganan tradition to gain an understanding of the meaning and implementation of the tradition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Emergence of the Manganan Tradition

The Wangun Village community has an annual traditional event that is always held every year. The Manganan tradition in Wangun Village, Tuban Regency, is an annual event that has deep cultural and spiritual meaning. Manganan is more than a series of rituals or ordinary activities. It is a way for the village community to express gratitude to God Almighty for the sustenance and safety they have received throughout the year. In addition, it is also a way to honor their ancestors. In addition to being an expression of gratitude, the Manganan tradition also plays an important role in strengthening social relations between residents and preserving cultural values passed down by ancestors. Although there are variations in its implementation in each village, the essence of this tradition remains the same: maintaining harmony between humans, nature, and the Creator. According to interviews with local residents, the Manganan tradition in Wangun Village is carried out in three places: two graves (kubur) and in the embong (reservoir). Although in Wangun Village there are three places for the Manganan tradition, the process of implementing the Manganan tradition is not much different from one place to another. However, what differentiates each of these traditional places is only the aim of the local community, where the place in the embong (reservoir) is because they aim to express gratitude by giving alms to the earth from the community's harvest, while at the grave (grave) the community aims to give prayers to the families who have been buried in the grave.

Manganan Traditional Procession

The results of interviews with religious figures in Wangun Village, Tuban Regency, the Manganan tradition in this village has three places, namely two in cemeteries (tombs) namely graves (ngogri tombs and big tombs) and one in embong (reservoirs), and each procession in each of these places is different. The Manganan activity procession in Wangun Village is carried out once a year. The Manganan activity procession is carried out in the 6th month in Javanese which is called the month of Selo, and this procession is carried out alternately every 1 week in each predetermined place.

1. Manganan procession at the cemetery (tomb)

In the Manganan tradition at the cemetery (tomb), the procession of activities at the two cemeteries (tomb) is the same. This traditional Manganan procession is carried out in the morning at the cemetery in Wangun Village, before the Manganan procession, some Wangun Village residents usually stay up late (melek'an) at the cemetery where the Manganan tradition will be held. Usually local people who stay up until morning play Dominoes and Remi. In the morning, local people who participate in this Manganan tradition bring food to the cemetery to be eaten together by the community participating in this Manganan tradition. After the community has finished the thanksgiving meal together in this tradition, the local community also invites a Gamelan team and is accompanied by Sindir to tayuban together, because in ancient times the ancestors really liked Gamelan musical instruments accompanied by Sindir so that the local community who participate in the Manganan tradition can be entertained and also happy with the implementation of this tradition. After the communal meal at the cemetery (tomb) and gamelan entertainment are finished, the evening is now usually followed by a large tabligh study. This grand tabligh is filled with religious studies and prayers together to pray for the deceased, and the place of this grand tabligh is usually in the grave or next to the grave, and the person who leads this grand tabligh study is usually a kyai in Wangun Village itself. According to sources, residents who bring food to the grave (tomb) for this tradition are usually relatives of the people buried in the grave and people whose houses are close to the grave (tomb), however, for people whose houses are not close to the grave and also their relatives are not buried in the grave are still allowed to bring food to the grave and also to participate in the procession of the Manganan tradition. In the Manganan tradition procession in both graves (tomb) the activities are the same the only difference is the place and also the day.

2. Manganan procession at the embong (reservoir)

In the traditional Manganan procession in the embong (reservoir), usually the people who participate in this activity are those who own land or rice fields around the reservoir. In the implementation of the Manganan tradition in the embong (reservoir) is not much different from the Manganan carried out in the cemetery (makam). The implementation of Manganan in the embong (reservoir) is carried out in the morning, and before the Manganan activity, local residents usually stay up late (melek'an) until dawn and usually besides gathering (jandoman) they also play dominoes and rummy. After that, in the morning, several local residents bring food to the reservoir to carry out the Manganan procession, namely eating together the food that the community brought to the reservoir. And after the community holds a thanksgiving meal together at noon, residents also invite

Gong or Gamelan entertainment and also accompanied by Sindir to tayuban together, because in ancient times the ancestors really liked Gamelan musical instruments accompanied by Sindir so that the local community who participate in the Manganan tradition can be entertained and also happy with the implementation of the tradition.

Changes and differentiation of the Manganan tradition in Wangun Village

1. Differentiation of Manganan traditions in Wangun Village

Based on observations by the people of Wangun Village, Tuban Regency, the Manganan tradition in this village is found in three locations: two in cemeteries (tombs) and one in a reservoir (embong). The procession of the Manganan tradition is different. The location at the cemetery (tomb) holds religious studies or a grand tabligh (Islamic study group), while the location at the reservoir does not. However, the procession of other Manganan activities is the same in each location. The only difference is the grand tabligh.

2. Changes in the Manganan tradition

According to sources from local residents of Wangun Village, the Manganan tradition has undergone changes. In the past, the ancestors of the Manganan tradition simply held a thanksgiving meal together and invited a gamelan team accompanied by a sindir. Several years later, around 2017, the local community implemented a change, namely, at the end of the Manganan tradition, they held a large-scale religious study group (tabligh). The only change from the previous and current Manganan tradition is the addition of a large-scale religious study group (tabligh).

Tabligh Akbar in the Manganan Tradition

According to a source from a religious shop in Wangun Village, the Tabligh Akbar (grand gathering) procession in the Manganan tradition is not only a gathering event but also an important momentum for all to reflect and improve themselves in an effort to achieve true goodness in this world and the hereafter, which is reflected in the good deeds we do individually and in groups, but our contribution to building a society with noble morals, full of tolerance and respect. The shift in the value of understanding the meaning of a religious ritual (Manganan) from Hindu-Buddhist rituals to Islamic rituals. In our view, both the old and new ways of Manganan are not in accordance with the true concept of Islam, because praying and asking for something at the grave is not allowed, in general the local community can understand and accept the existence of this Manganan tradition. Over time, the community in Wangun Village has made slight changes to the Manganan tradition procession, because some local residents want to change this Manganan tradition to be in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Syncretism in the Manganan Tradition

Syncretism is the process of combining or merging elements from different traditions, beliefs, or religions, often to create something new or achieve harmony. Syncretism assumes that Islam no longer exists in its original form but has been mixed with external elements.⁷ According to Ibn Rushd, religion and philosophy are considered twins, but both remain independent and should not be separated or opposed. Because the goal of philosophy is to acquire true knowledge and do what is right, in accordance with the goal of religion, which is to guarantee true knowledge for humans and show the right path for practical life, it is necessary to combine them.⁸ The syncretism of Islam and Javanese culture can also be traced through the Serat Sasangka Jati, which is known as the "Paguyu Rahayu" (Jalan Rahayu), a term that Javanese adherents of the Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal (Pangestu) believe is the way to true happiness in this world and the hereafter.⁹ Syncretism in the Manganan tradition in Tuban can be seen as a process of compromise between local culture and Islamic teachings. This tradition was not completely eliminated, but rather underwent transformation to remain relevant to the Islamic values embraced by the majority of the community. In the context of syncretism theory, the Manganan tradition, with the addition of the grand tabligh (Islamic outreach) tradition, exhibits several syncretic patterns:

1. Coexistence of Tradition: Islam and local culture do not mutually exclude each other, but rather develop side by side, influencing each other. Communities maintain elements of tradition that do not conflict with Islam, such as togetherness during feasts and mutual cooperation in preparing Manganan.
2. Ritual Transformation: The process of syncretism is also evident in the changing forms of rituals. While Manganan once focused more on mystical elements and worship, it now focuses more on the spiritual aspects of Islam, featuring sermons and communal prayers. This demonstrates how the Islamization of tradition can occur gradually through the reinterpretation and adaptation of religious values.
3. Shifting Social Functions: The Manganan tradition, which originally served primarily as a traditional ritual, has now shifted to become a platform for religious outreach and social gatherings. This shift is part of an effort to build social harmony in an increasingly religious society.

⁷ Imam Mubarak and Satriyo Pambudi, "Sinkretisme Islam Dan Budaya Nusantara Dalam Sedekah Laut Cilacap," *An-Nuha* 9, no. 1 (2022): 186–96.

⁸ Khanza Jasmine, *Sinkretisme Filsafat Dan Agama Menurut Ibnu Rusyd, Penambahan Natrium Benzoat Dan Kalium Sorbat (Antiinversi) Dan Kecepatan Pengadukan Sebagai Upaya Penghambatan Reaksi Inversi Pada Nira Tebu*, 2014.

⁹ Abdullah Safiq, "Model Sinkretisme Islam Dan Kejawen: Kajian Historis-Filosofis Atas Serat Sasangka Jati," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Filsafat* 16, no. 1 (2019): 87, <https://doi.org/10.22515/ajpif.v16i1.1519>.

Thus, the grand tabligh (Islamic outreach) in the Manganan tradition in Tuban can be seen as a concrete example of syncretism, where Islamic values and local culture interact with each other and shape the religious and cultural identity of the local community. This process demonstrates how religion and culture can adapt to each other to achieve harmony while maintaining local identity within the boundaries of Islam. This phenomenon demonstrates that syncretism is not only a means of cultural and religious compromise, but also a way for people to maintain a balance between tradition and modernity in a developing Islamic society.

CONCLUSION

The Manganan tradition in Tuban represents a form of acculturation between local culture and Islamic teachings that have developed within the community. Through the integration of the Tabligh Akbar event into the Manganan tradition, a dynamic between religious and cultural elements emerges, indicating a process of syncretism. This study found that Tabligh Akbar not only serves as a means of preaching but also as an instrument for strengthening religious identity without eliminating local cultural values that have been passed down through generations. The results of this study indicate that the Tuban community accepts Tabligh Akbar as part of the Manganan tradition from various perspectives. Some view it as an effort to Islamize local culture, while others view it as a form of preserving traditions that are more relevant to current developments. The existence of syncretism in this tradition reflects the community's pattern of adaptation in maintaining their cultural values while still accommodating religious teachings.

Thus, the Manganan tradition, combined with the Tabligh Akbar (Great Tabligh) celebration, demonstrates that cultural and religious practices can coexist harmoniously. This study confirms that syncretism in religious traditions is not merely a compromise, but a cultural strategy in response to the social and religious dynamics of an ever-evolving society.

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