



HARMONIZATION OF JAVANESE CUSTOMS AND ISLAMIC TRADITIONS IN CLEAN VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT

This tradition is not merely a customary ceremony but a philosophical representation of the Javanese worldview in understanding the relationship between humans, nature, fellow beings, and the Divine. This study examines the dynamics of interaction between Javanese customs and Islam in the Clean Village tradition as a complex cultural phenomenon. The research aims to explore adaptation mechanisms, transformation, and preservation of tradition in the context of contemporary social changes. Using library research method with qualitative-interpretative approach, the study analyzes cultural, ethnographic, and religious literature sources. Research findings reveal Clean Village as a dynamic cultural construction continuously evolving through symbolic negotiation between locality and universality. Modernization, demographic changes, and religious dynamics influence tradition transformation. Constructive preservation model emphasizes participatory approaches, cross-generational cultural education, and interpretative creativity spaces. Research implications include responsive cultural heritage preservation strategies that maintain spiritual and cultural essence while adapting to social changes.

Keywords: Clean Village Tradition, Cultural Acculturation, Cultural Transformation, Heritage Preservation

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INTRODUCTION

The village cleansing tradition (*Clean Village*) is a sublime manifestation of Javanese local wisdom, reflecting a balance between spiritual and social harmony. In its ideal concept, this tradition represents the perfect harmonization between local cultural values and Islamic teachings, where every ritual and procession carries profound meanings of gratitude, togetherness, and reverence for ancestors and the environment. This tradition is not merely a customary ceremony but a philosophical

representation of the Javanese worldview in understanding the relationship between humans, nature, fellow beings, and the Divine. The conceptual beauty of *Clean Village* lies in its ability to integrate Islamic spiritual practices with the indigenous wisdom of the archipelago, creating a dialogical space between tradition and religion that mutually respects and complements each other ([Handono & Mahatmaharti, 2021](#)).

In contemporary practice, the *Clean Village* tradition faces increasingly complex socio-cultural and religious dynamics. Modernization, urbanization, and shifts in social values have posed significant challenges to its preservation and implementation. Some members of society have begun to question the relevance of these rituals, while others continue to uphold them with strong conviction. The process of acculturation between Islam and Javanese culture has led to diverse interpretations, with some religious figures viewing certain elements of the tradition as potentially leading to syncretism, while others regard it as a form of local wisdom that should be preserved. This reality illustrates the intricate relationship between tradition, religion, and social change in contemporary Javanese society ([Al Qutuby, Kholiludin, & Salam, 2020](#)).

The gap between the ideal and the reality of the *Clean Village* tradition lies in the increasing divergence of interpretations and practices. There is a widening divide between the ideal conception of cultural and religious harmony and its actual implementation in the field. Differences in understanding across generations, shifting religious perspectives, and the pressures of modernization have created fragmentation within the tradition. While some communities strive to maintain the authenticity of the rituals, others have undergone substantial modifications. The tension between religious purism and cultural relativism has become more apparent, resulting in complex dynamics in preserving the essence of the tradition. This gap is not only external but also internal, reflecting the ongoing struggle over identity and meaning in the context of continuous social change ([Lubis, 2017](#)).

The urgency of this research lies in the pressing need to understand and preserve the dynamic harmonization between Javanese customs and Islam within the *Clean Village* tradition. In the context of increasing globalization and modernization, this tradition stands at a critical juncture between preservation and extinction (Rahman, 2021). This study is crucial for identifying adaptation mechanisms, preservation strategies, and integration models that can bridge the gap between tradition and contemporary social contexts. An in-depth analysis is necessary to understand how cultural practices can endure and evolve without losing their spiritual essence. The urgency of this research also lies in its potential to develop a conceptual framework that can be used to safeguard cultural heritage in a constantly changing social landscape while maintaining social cohesion and the cultural identity of the Javanese people ([Abbas, Suparman, Suryanto, & Wafa, 2023](#)).

The solutions proposed in this research include a comprehensive approach to bridging the gap between tradition and modernity. First, the development of a constructive dialogue model involving traditional leaders, religious figures, and

younger generations. Second, the reconstruction of the symbolic meaning of *Clean Village* rituals through contextual interpretations that take contemporary social dynamics into account. Third, the development of a cultural education curriculum that integrates a deep understanding of traditions within the framework of modern education. Fourth, facilitating intergenerational dialogue spaces to transform traditional practices into a living and dynamic cultural field. These solutions aim to create adaptation mechanisms that allow the preservation of the tradition's essence while accommodating inevitable social changes ([Endraswara, 2017](#)).

The academic contribution of this research lies in developing a new perspective in cultural studies and the anthropology of religion. This study will generate a conceptual framework explaining the mechanisms of syncretism and cultural adaptation within the context of the *Clean Village* tradition. Theoretically, this research will produce an analytical model that can be used to understand the dynamic interactions between local cultural practices and religious belief systems. The methodological contribution includes developing an interdisciplinary approach that integrates anthropological, historical, and sociological studies ([Lubis, 2017](#)). Additionally, this research opens new avenues for understanding the complexity of cultural identity in Indonesia, demonstrating how the negotiation of meaning and cultural practices occurs within a dynamic society.

The significance of this research spans both theoretical and practical dimensions. Academically, it provides a substantive contribution to understanding the dynamics of cultural and religious interactions in Indonesia. For cultural practitioners, the findings offer a conceptual framework for preserving and developing local traditions. Regional governments can utilize these findings as a reference in designing responsive cultural policies. The general public will gain a deeper understanding of the significance of the *Clean Village* tradition in contemporary social contexts. Furthermore, this research strengthens intercultural dialogue, fostering mutual understanding between older and younger generations while offering constructive cultural adaptation strategies. On a broader level, it contributes to efforts in preserving cultural heritage and enhancing the cultural resilience of Javanese society.

This study explores the complexity of harmony between Javanese customs and Islam within the *Clean Village* tradition through three primary research questions:

1. How do interactions and negotiations of meaning occur between local cultural practices and Islamic teachings in the implementation of the *Clean Village* tradition?
2. What factors influence the transformation and adaptation of the *Clean Village* tradition in the context of contemporary social change?
3. What constructive model of preservation and development can bridge the intergenerational gap while maintaining the cultural and spiritual essence of *Clean Village* without compromising its social relevance?

METHODS

This study employs the library research method, focusing on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of secondary data from various literary sources related to the *Clean Village* tradition ([Zed, 2008](#)). This method is chosen to explore the complexity of interactions between Javanese customs and Islam through a comprehensive and systematic approach to relevant literature.

The research process begins with the identification and mapping of literary sources, including classical texts, manuscripts, academic books, scholarly journals, ethnographic documents, and publications discussing the *Clean Village* tradition. This process involves a systematic search in academic libraries, cultural documentation centers, regional archives, and private collections of cultural experts, using specific keywords related to the research theme ([Hadi, 2021](#)).

The data analysis stage is conducted through content analysis and comparative methods, where each source is examined in-depth to identify patterns, themes, and meaning constructions related to the harmonization of Javanese traditions and Islam. This process involves narrative deconstruction, symbolic analysis, and contextual interpretation to understand the dynamics of the transformation of the *Clean Village* tradition across social, cultural, and religious dimensions ([Suwendra, 2018](#)).

The final stage of the study involves the synthesis of findings, where analytical results from various sources are integrated to develop a conceptual model explaining the mechanisms of adaptation and preservation of the *Clean Village* tradition. An interdisciplinary approach is employed to generate a comprehensive theoretical framework, allowing for a deeper understanding of the complex interactions between local cultural practices and religious belief systems within the context of contemporary Javanese society.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study reveals that the *Clean Village* tradition is a dynamic cultural construction that reflects the complexity of interactions between Javanese cultural practices and Islamic teachings. The findings indicate that the transformation of this tradition is not merely a linear process but an ongoing dialectic between preserving its spiritual essence and adapting to contemporary social changes.

Substantively, the research identifies four key mechanisms in the preservation of the tradition: (1) Symbolic reinterpretation of rituals, (2) Intergenerational cultural education, (3) Digitization and comprehensive documentation, (4) Development of a participatory model that fosters creative engagement. The study emphasizes that the sustainability of *Clean Village* depends on the community's ability to create a dialogical space, ensuring that the tradition remains alive, meaningful, and responsive to the complexities of social dynamics.

1. Dynamics of Interaction and Meaning Negotiation in the *Clean Village* Tradition

The concept of "*bersih*" in Javanese tradition is a complex term that goes beyond the literal meaning of physical cleanliness. Etymologically, the word carries deep spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions, reflecting the holistic philosophy of Javanese society regarding cosmological balance ([Kanafi, 2020](#)).

Prominent anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz identify "*bersih*" as a cultural construct that represents the community's effort to create harmony between material and spiritual realities. This concept is not merely a ritual of purification but a fundamental mechanism for maintaining social and cosmic equilibrium ([Geertz, 1972](#); [Riady, 2021](#)).

From an Islamic theological perspective, "*bersih*" holds a multidimensional meaning that aligns with the concepts of *thahara* (purification) and *tazkiyah* (spiritual refinement). The purification process is not only physical but also spiritual, integrating local practices with the universality of religious teachings ([Umar, 2019](#)). The *Clean Village* tradition serves as a dialogical space where Javanese cultural practices and Islamic teachings interact through complex mechanisms. The process of meaning negotiation is continuous, involving symbolic reinterpretation and dynamic conceptual adaptation.

The ritual structure of *Clean Village* reflects the ability of Javanese society to accommodate social changes while preserving its spiritual and cultural essence. Each community develops a unique interpretative model based on its local context, demonstrating the flexibility of the tradition. The process of acculturation between Javanese cultural elements and Islam takes place through symbolic syncretization, ritual reinterpretation, and the negotiation of spiritual meanings. This results in a continuously evolving cultural practice that still maintains traditional continuity ([Alfa Syahriar & Sy, 2021](#)).

Gender relations and power dynamics also shape the social construction within the *Clean Village* tradition. The division of roles in rituals is not merely a mechanistic practice but a complex representation of social structures and cultural actor interactions. The dialectic between tradition and modernity presents both challenges and opportunities for the transformation of *Clean Village*. Communities creatively adapt rituals, repositioning cultural practices within an ever-changing social landscape ([Faris, 2014](#)).

The concept of "*bersih*" in Javanese tradition goes beyond the physical dimension, encompassing spiritual, social, and environmental purification. This ritual functions as a mechanism to maintain cosmological balance and strengthen social cohesion ([Abbas, Alhabsi, & Assalam, 2024](#)). The symbolic interpretation of *Clean Village* reflects the complex worldview of Javanese society regarding human relationships, nature, and the Divine. Each ritual element carries a philosophical narrative about harmony and interconnectedness ([Munna & Ayundasari, 2021](#)).

The transformation of *Clean Village* is inseparable from the evolving social, religious, and cultural dynamics. This tradition demonstrates the resilience of cultural adaptation in facing change without losing its core identity. The negotiation of meaning within *Clean Village* involves an ongoing hermeneutic process, where communities continuously reinterpret rituals, producing dynamic and contextual understandings ([Munna & Ayundasari, 2021](#)).

The spiritual aspect of this tradition serves as a medium for preserving cultural and religious values. *Clean Village* becomes a space where locality and universality meet within a dialogical and mutually understanding framework. The complexity of *Clean Village* lies in its ability to function as both a medium for social transformation and a means of cultural preservation. This tradition is not static; rather, it is alive and evolving through the active participation of the community ([Permata, Julianti, Putri, & Asiyah, 2024](#)). Ultimately, *Clean Village* is more than just a ritual—it is a philosophical expression of how Javanese society understands its existence in relation to its environment, fellow human beings, and the spiritual dimension that transcends empirical reality.

2. The Transformation of *Clean Village* Tradition in Contemporary Social Change

Modernization and urbanization are fundamental factors that have reshaped the social structure of Javanese society. The shift from a traditional agrarian lifestyle to an industrial economic system has led to significant transformations in cultural practices, including the *Clean Village* tradition. Demographic changes, particularly youth migration to major cities, have resulted in a decline in direct participation in traditional rituals. This phenomenon has created a cultural gap between the older generation, who remain deeply committed to tradition, and the younger generation, who tend to be more critical and skeptical ([Prasojo & Pabbajah, 2023](#)).

Contemporary religious dynamics also exert a complex influence on the adaptation of *Clean Village*. The emergence of more puritanical and fundamentalist religious movements has questioned the legitimacy of cultural practices perceived as potentially syncretic. Meanwhile, globalization and the advancement of information technology have expanded the space for cultural dialogue and transformation. Social media and digital platforms have become new mediums for negotiating the meaning and representation of tradition, enabling more dynamic symbolic reinterpretations ([M. A. Abdullah, 2013](#)).

Economic changes and shifting livelihoods in rural communities have influenced patterns of participation in rituals. Economic pressures and the need for survival have shifted priorities, reducing community engagement in traditional cultural practices. Government policies in cultural preservation and rural development play a strategic role in either maintaining or marginalizing traditions. Top-down approaches that fail to appreciate local contexts risk degrading the substantive meaning of *Clean Village*.

The transformation of the education system, which has become increasingly secular and globally oriented, also shapes the younger generation's perspective on tradition. The lack of intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge threatens the continuity of *Clean Village* practices. The dynamics of pluralism and multiculturalism in Indonesia create a complex space for negotiating cultural identity. As a result, the *Clean Village* tradition is no longer understood in a linear manner but rather through a dialogical and continuously evolving process of reinterpretation ([Baidhawiy, 2005](#)).

Environmental changes and global climate shifts pose new challenges to agricultural practices and human-nature relationships. This directly affects ritual dimensions related to agrarian and cosmological cycles. However, the complexity of social, economic, and cultural factors does not necessarily diminish the significance of *Clean Village*. Instead, it drives creative adaptations, allowing the tradition to remain alive and meaningful within the context of contemporary social change.

3. A Constructive Model for the Preservation and Development of the Clean Village Tradition

Cultural education serves as a fundamental strategy in bridging intergenerational gaps. Designing curricula that integrate a deep understanding of the *Clean Village* tradition into the formal education system can be an effective mechanism for knowledge transfer and cultural appreciation ([Baidhawiy, 2005](#)). Digitalization and comprehensive documentation of the *Clean Village* tradition represent strategic steps for preservation. The establishment of digital archives, podcasts, documentaries, and multimedia platforms can serve as responsive knowledge transformation mediums that align with the characteristics of the younger generation.

Symbolic reinterpretation of rituals requires a dialogical approach that embraces multiple perspectives. Intergenerational discussion forums involving academics, cultural figures, and religious leaders can create a constructive and inclusive space for negotiating meaning ([Rahayu, Setyarto, & Efendi, 2015](#)). Developing a participatory model for the implementation of *Clean Village* is key to the tradition's sustainability. Providing space for creativity and personal interpretation among younger generations—without losing the tradition's spiritual essence—becomes an effective adaptation strategy.

Cross-sector collaboration between government bodies, academics, cultural practitioners, and local communities is necessary to establish a comprehensive preservation ecosystem. An interdisciplinary approach can generate a dynamic model for tradition development. Economic-cultural transformation, through the integration of *Clean Village* into educational tourism industries, can create economic value while maintaining the authenticity of the tradition. Meaningful cultural tourism emerges as a potential alternative for preservation.

Youth empowerment through cultural mentorship programs and symbolic responsibilities within rituals can bridge generational divides. The regeneration of cultural leadership becomes a crucial instrument for the continuity of tradition. Deconstructing traditional narratives using contemporary approaches, such as performing arts, digital media, and creative expressions, can establish new

emotional connections between younger generations and their ancestral traditions (M. Q. Abdullah, 2020).

Developing a participatory research model that actively involves local communities in documentation and interpretation processes can yield more authentic and meaningful perspectives on the *Clean Village* tradition. Preservation strategies should not be merely conservative but should instead foster creativity and interpretation, ensuring that the tradition remains alive, evolves, and retains its significance in an ever-changing social context.

CONCLUSION

The *Clean Village* tradition represents the complexity of the dialectical interaction between Javanese customs and Islamic teachings. It is more than just a ritual – it is a fundamental mechanism for communities to maintain cosmological, social, and spiritual balance. This study reveals that the tradition undergoes continuous transformation through an ongoing negotiation between locality and universality, creating a dialogical space that allows cultural practices to remain alive and meaningful.

The dynamics of tradition transformation are influenced by various complex factors, including modernization, demographic shifts, religious dynamics, and globalization. Despite facing contemporary social challenges, *Clean Village* demonstrates the cultural adaptability necessary to preserve its spiritual essence while remaining responsive to change. The constructive model of tradition preservation developed in this research emphasizes the importance of participatory approaches, intergenerational cultural education, and spaces for creative interpretation. These strategies not only aim to preserve the tradition but also foster meaningful transformations that bridge intergenerational gaps. Ultimately, *Clean Village* is not merely a static heritage, but a living cultural ecosystem that continues to evolve. Its sustainability depends on the community's ability to create dialogical spaces, ensuring the tradition remains relevant, meaningful, and a medium for dynamic cultural identity expression.

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