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Cultural Acculturation and Islamic Educational Values in the Grebeg Sadranan Festival

Akulturası Budaya dan Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam dalam Festival Grebeg Sadranan

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Abstract

The Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival reflects a blend of Javanese and Islamic cultures and embodies many noble values, both in its history of acculturation and in its present practice. Little research, however, has examined how this acculturation developed and how well the community understands the religious values embedded in the festival. This study therefore aims to examine the acculturation process between religious rituals and Javanese culture and to analyze community understanding of these religious values in Cepogo District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java. The study used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation, and were analyzed through data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the acculturation of Grebeg Sadranan is rooted in Javanese beliefs originally framed by Hindu-Buddhist rituals and integrated with the Islamic teachings of the Wali Sanga. Questionnaire responses supported this interconnection, with 93%–100% agreement. Most of the community also understood the meaning of the festival (89%–100%), and the implementation of its values ranged from 86% to 100%. The festival is therefore a form of acculturation that integrates Islamic values into Javanese culture without erasing either identity, and it can sustain cultural preservation while keeping religious values intact. The findings are limited to the sampled villages and respondents in Cepogo District.

Keywords: Acculturation; Javanese culture; Religious rituals; Sadranan

Abstrak

Festival budaya Grebeg Sadranan mencerminkan perpaduan budaya Jawa dan Islam serta memuat banyak nilai luhur, baik dalam sejarah akulturasinya maupun dalam pelaksanaannya saat ini. Namun, kajian tentang perkembangan akulturası tersebut dan tingkat pemahaman masyarakat terhadap nilai keagamaan dalam festival ini masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji proses akulturası antara ritual keagamaan dan budaya Jawa serta menganalisis pemahaman masyarakat terhadap nilai keagamaan tersebut di Kecamatan Cepogo, Kabupaten Boyolali, Jawa Tengah. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, kuesioner, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis melalui pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa akulturası Grebeg Sadranan berakar pada kepercayaan Jawa yang semula dibingkai ritual keagamaan Hindu-Buddha dan dipadukan dengan ajaran Islam Wali Sanga. Kuesioner memperkuat keterkaitan ini dengan tingkat persetujuan 93%–100%. Sebagian besar masyarakat juga memahami makna festival (89%–100%), dan penerapan

nilainya berada pada rentang 86%–100%. Dengan demikian, festival ini merupakan wujud akulturasi yang mengintegrasikan nilai Islam ke dalam budaya Jawa tanpa menghilangkan identitas keduanya, serta dapat menopang pelestarian budaya dengan tetap menjaga nilai keagamaan. Temuan ini terbatas pada desa dan responden yang menjadi sampel di Kecamatan Cepogo.

Kata kunci: Akulturasi; Budaya Jawa; Ritual Keagamaan; Sadranan

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Introduction

In the digital era, indigenous cultures can easily be marginalized and forgotten, and their history, meaning, and values gradually erode over time. Many Indonesian cultural expressions can also be claimed by other countries because people pay little attention to learning about them (Suparno & Apoy, 2017). One example occurred in 2008, when Malaysia used elements of Indonesian culture in a tourism promotion campaign, including the *pendet* dance, *angklung*, *wayang*, the song “Rasa Sayange,” and *reog ponorogo* (Hasanah et al., 2024). It is therefore important to know, understand, appreciate, and study the cultures and traditions of Indonesia. One of them is the Grebeg Sadranan tradition in Cepogo District, Boyolali, Central Java.

Grebeg Sadranan in Cepogo is a religious ritual in which people pray for deceased ancestors and strengthen kinship ties (Walyoto, 2019). Setiawan and Putro (2020) described the activity as a feast held at a public cemetery to send prayers to ancestors who have died. In other words, Sadranan is a tradition held at the cemetery to pray for ancestors who have passed away. In Cepogo, Sadranan is held in the month of Sha’ban, shortly before Ramadan. Maharani (2024) similarly described Grebeg Sadranan as a Javanese tradition held in Sha’ban (Hijri calendar) or Ruwah (Javanese calendar), in which people visit ancestral graves to express gratitude and to remember death.

Over time, the Cepogo government made the ritual a regular agenda and developed it into an annual cultural festival (Yandri, 2021). A cultural festival is an effort to preserve ancestral heritage by presenting various forms of art and tradition to the public, which increases knowledge of and affection for regional culture (Susanto, 2024). Public enthusiasm for the event is high because people believe it brings tranquility and blessings in life (Syahputra et al., 2023). Festivalization, however, has consequences that need to be considered. From the perspective of the purity of tradition, festivalization may affect the sacredness of a tradition when it is oriented toward tourism and routine

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840 | *Safira Meisa Dewi et al.*

activity. [Pratama and Setiadi \(2025\)](#) argued that preserving a tradition without educating people about the meaning and customary elements of a ritual can shift sacred values toward the profane. At the same time, festivalization is also a form of cultural preservation that can attract people across generations. It is therefore a dynamic that must be managed so that cultural preservation continues without eroding the religious values within it. [Khasanah \(2022\)](#) explained that cultural acculturation occurs when a foreign culture enters and is accepted by a community, is combined with the local culture, and yet the local culture retains its distinctive character. This view is consistent with the classic definition of acculturation as the changes that follow continuous first-hand contact between groups of different cultures ([Redfield et al., 1936](#)).

Previous studies have approached Sadranan from several angles. [Wulanjari et al. \(2024\)](#) examined the meanings and relationships contained in Sadranan, toward God, nature, and other people, as a form of acculturation between Javanese tradition and Islam. [Hasan et al. \(2023\)](#) explained how the development of the era affects the acculturation of the Sadranan tradition and Islamic teachings, and thereby its social and religious values. [Marianto \(2019\)](#) described Sadranan as a medium that has maintained harmony as Islam entered Javanese belief. However, these three studies do not explain in detail the history of the acculturation process or the level of community understanding of the Sadranan tradition. This lack of attention is regrettable, given the historical and religious depth of the tradition, which can be put to use in community life.

This information gap may leave the community with little understanding of the values and the historical background of acculturation in the Grebeg Sadranan tradition of Cepogo District, Boyolali, Central Java. In turn, it risks the loss of the substantive meaning of the tradition, not only in cultural terms but also in social life. The limited in-depth discussion of the acculturation between religious ritual and the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival also increases the potential for misunderstanding the history and the implementation of its noble essence, which operates latently. The novelty of this study lies in its dual focus. It examines not only the history of acculturation and the Islamic values in the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival, but also measures the community's level of understanding of Islamic teachings in the festival through their application and benefits in daily life. Earlier studies of the Grebeg Sadranan tradition have often overlooked this aspect.

This study therefore aims to explore the history of how the acculturation emerged and how the community understands and implements the Islamic values in the Grebeg Sadranan tradition. It also identifies the benefits of applying these religious values in community life. The study is important for sustaining the history, cultural values, and traditions of Indonesia, and for motivating people to continue learning, practicing, and instilling religious values in their lives.

Method

This study used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The approach was chosen because it explains the acculturation of Javanese culture and religious ritual in the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival in Cepogo, and because it describes in narrative form the community's level of understanding and application of Islamic values in the tradition. The research was conducted from May to June 2026.

The population comprised the people of Cepogo District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java Province. The sample covered two villages for the interviews, Cepogo and Sukabumi, where informants were selected through snowball sampling (Naderifar et al., 2017). It also covered nine villages for the questionnaire, namely Gedangan, Genting, Cabean Kunti, Sukabumi, Sumbung, Wonodoyo, Cepogo, Bakulan, and Mliwis, where respondents were selected through purposive sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). The villages were selected because of the high intensity of community involvement with the research subject. The interviews involved nine informants (three traditional leaders, one kiai, one village head, one village secretary, one cultural officer, one staff member of the Culture Division of Boyolali Regency, and one community member), and the questionnaire was distributed to 100 respondents who answered each item with "Yes" or "No."

Data were collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. The data were then analyzed through data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). To maintain credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the study applied source, method, and theory triangulation (Carter et al., 2014). Interview excerpts that were originally in Indonesian or Javanese are presented here in English translation.

Results and Discussion

The Acculturation of Religious Rituals and Javanese Culture in the Grebeg Sadranan Cultural Festival of Cepogo

Informant K stated that the acculturation of religious values is closely connected with the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival. He described the history of how Hindu-Buddhist religious rituals were acculturated with Islamic teachings as part of the da'wah strategy of the Wali Sanga, who introduced Islam to the community. He said:

"The date and year when Sadranan began are unknown, but the tradition has existed ever since people lived in Boyolali Regency. Before there were Muslim residents, the people first followed a local belief, often called *Kapitayan*. Then followers of Hindu-Buddhist beliefs from the Ancient Mataram Kingdom, which flourished in Central Java, arrived. We can see this development in the temples that were built, such as Candi Sekawan, Candi Rogoh, Candi Petak, Candi Roto, and many others. There were also various places of worship, such as the worship of Kali Suci and Dewi Kunthi. For that reason, a culture of offerings (*sesaji*) emerged among the people. It derives from the worship culture of Hindu-Buddhist people from India, known as *sraddha*, which means a chant or a way of praying to the Almighty.

At the end of the 15th century, the Majapahit Kingdom began to decline and Islamic influence began to grow on the island of Java. The Sultanate of Demak, led by Raden Patah and supported by the Wali Sanga, emerged. Da'wah teams were formed and spread to various regions of Java, some going west, east, south, and so on, to spread the teachings of Islam. In the process, the teams used methods that followed the habits or traditions of each area and acculturated them with Islamic teachings."

Informant KD gave a similar account of the origins of the acculturation of Sadranan, from the arrival of Hindu-Buddhist influence to the gradual spread of Islam among the people. Informant KD explained:

"Well, the Sadranan tradition is actually the result of acculturation between Hindu-Buddhist culture and Islamic culture. Hindu-Buddhist culture did not become the tradition known as Sadranan without reason. The earlier people who spread Islam among the Javanese were known for their wise approach. When

Cultural Acculturation and Islamic Educational Values ... | 843

they introduced Islamic values, they did so gradually, adapting to the Hindu-Buddhist culture that had developed earlier on the island of Java.

Returning to the Sadranan tradition, it has been practiced for a long time. In the Cepogo area, however, the first hamlet to hold Sadranan was Tumang Hamlet, because Tumang was known as one of the cultural centers of its time. There is also a relic associated with the Hindu-Buddhist period, a *randu alas* tree believed to mark the boundary of sacred places. This relic can still be found today, outside the cemetery area."

The timing of the celebration is further evidence of acculturation. Sadranan is held in Ruwah (the Javanese month) or Sha'ban (the Hijri month), which is related to the Hindu-Buddhist culture of the past. Informant SB explained:

"This is related to the long story of the Bhairawa Tantra culture of the past. Before someone meets his God, he first satisfies his hunger and desires. So, before the fasting period begins, people eat their fill and enjoy themselves so that they feel content during the fast and can be at peace with themselves."

Informant PB added:

"Culture is a unifier. If we look at history, religious figures and scholars, especially the Wali Sanga, used culture as a means for us to practice religion."

As a concrete example of how Hindu-Buddhist culture and Islamic teachings were brought together, informant K pointed to the religious ritual practices of the community. He explained:

"For example, in the Puroloyo cemetery lies the grave of Syekh Ibrahim, an envoy of Raden Patah of Demak who came to spread Islam. He carried out this mission in disguise as Kiai Bonggol Jati so that he could be closer to the people. At that time, the people followed the *Kapitayan* belief and worshiped Kiai Mintowiji, a former ruler of the area, by cleaning the grave to ask for blessings and to give thanks for the harvest. Seeing this, he transformed the grave-cleaning activity into grave visitation (*ziarah kubur*), or *nyadran*, to pray for the ancestors to Allah SWT. Meanwhile, the thanksgiving for the harvest was redirected into the *kenduren*."

The development of Sadranan into a cultural festival widely known as Grebeg Sadranan took a very long time, as informant PB explained:

“This tradition has actually been practiced since our ancestors, so it has existed for a long time. However, the simultaneous celebration centered at the district level only began around 2020, after the COVID-19 period.”

Informant MW gave similar information about the start of the festival:

“First, let me explain that Grebeg Sadranan itself began not long ago, around 2019, and so far it has been held only about twice. The first Grebeg Sadranan was held when Mr. Insan Adi Asmono was Head of Cepogo District, who is currently Head of the Transportation Office of Boyolali Regency.”

As Sadranan was transformed into a cultural festival, various developments and adjustments were made to attract a wider audience. Informant SB said:

“The prayers remain the same and will not change. Perhaps only the language has been translated or adjusted, but the essence of divinity remains the same, because God is All-Knowing.”

Informant SD supported this statement, explaining that the core of the worship procession and the prayers continues as it should and is not detached from past history:

“The prayers and the performance of worship remain the same, so they are not detached from the elements of history and past customs.”

Many figures have been involved in spreading and maintaining the religious values of Sadranan, which today is widely known as the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival. Informant SB said:

“Because this tradition is very old, the earliest figures cannot be identified. But those we can identify now are the elders of the community in each area, such as the head of the neighborhood association (RT), the head of the community association (RW), even the mosque imam and the elders in each village, who carry out the Sadranan tradition.”

Informant TA2, a pioneer of the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival, described these figures in more detail:

“The lineage begins with the first pioneer of Sadranan, Mbah Kiai Bonggol Jati, followed by Mbah Ki Ageng Giring, Mbah Ki Ageng Ahmad Dahlan, Mbah Rekso Yudho, and Mbah Ramli Diryo Kartono as the first guardian figure in Cepogo. It was then continued by Mbah Kiai Syamsuri and Mbah Muh. Parno, and now by me, Giyarto, who continue the Sadranan activities, which have been packaged as Grebeg Sadranan since before COVID-19, or around 2017.”

Informant K gave a similar statement, listing the important figures involved in spreading and preserving the religious values of the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival:

“There are many figures, because every generation has its own. It starts with the Puroloyo cemetery in Tunggulsari Hamlet, Sukabumi Village, which holds the grave of a famous figure such as Syekh Ibrahim, or Kiai Bonggol Jati, who was the forerunner of those who transformed or acculturated Sadranan. His struggle was then continued by Ki Ageng Giring, Ki Ageng Ahmad Dahlan, Rekso Yudho I, Rekso Yudho II, Kiai Ramli Diryo Kartono, Kiai Ahmad Syamsuri, and so on until today.”

The questionnaire distributed to 100 respondents from the community of Cepogo District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java Province, was used to measure the validity of the acculturation process in the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival. The results are presented in Figure 1.

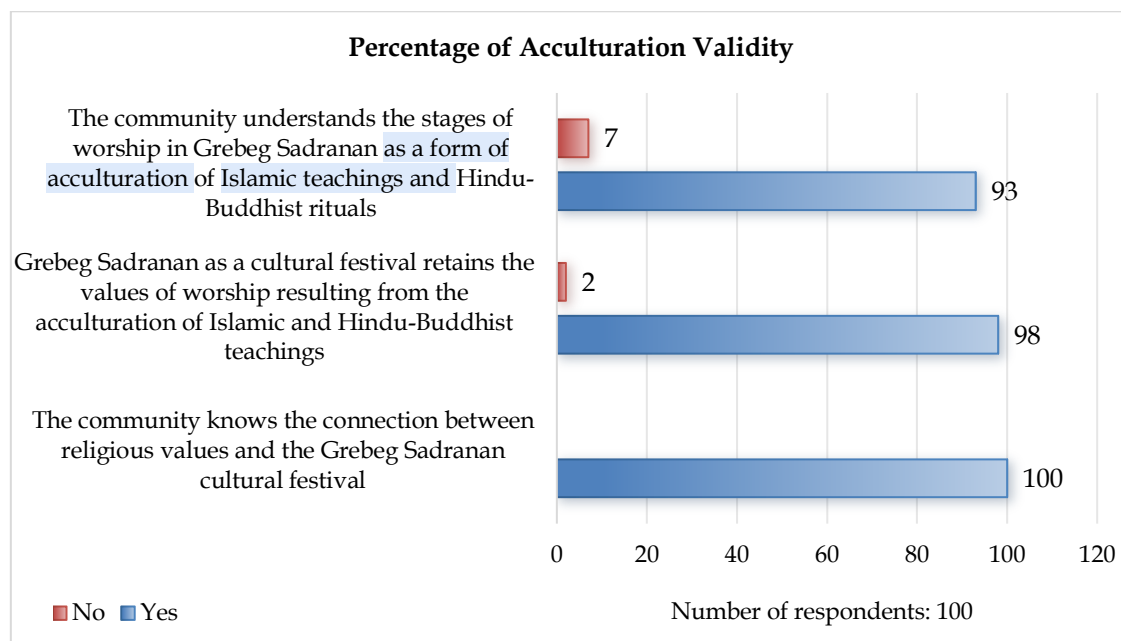


Figure 1. Percentage of Respondents' Perceptions of the Acculturation of Grebeg Sadranan

The researchers' observations of the Grebeg Sadranan celebration at the research sites corroborated the interview and questionnaire results. The observations revealed relics of Hindu-Buddhist culture, such as temples used for worship or ritual and Hindu-Buddhist religious ritual practices, which have since been Islamized while retaining their

cultural identity. These ritual practices are still performed, but Islamic values have been incorporated and the procedures and prayers adjusted accordingly.

The interviews with the nine informants and the questionnaire show that religious ritual and Javanese culture have been acculturated in the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival. Grebeg Sadranan is a form of acculturation rooted in the formation of the Islamic da'wah teams known as the Wali Sanga, who blended Islamic values with the Hindu-Buddhist religious practice of *sraddha*, which came from India. *Sraddha* derives from Sanskrit and means faith. In this context, it refers to a way of praying to the Almighty, also known as *kidungan*.

Historical tracing through interviews and literature shows that people on Java, in particular, originally followed a local belief called *Kapitayan*, which gave them great respect for ancestral graves as sacred places. This belief developed as Hindu-Buddhist influence arrived through the power of the Ancient Mataram Kingdom, bringing new teachings and elements, including the *sraddha* ritual.

In the Hindu-Buddhist period, *sraddha* was a ceremony to purify the spirits of ancestors. It involved cleaning temples or other sacred places, offering gifts or *sesaji* to ancestors, and chanting prayers and religious songs. Evidence of this development appears in the many temples built during this period and in the *randu alas* trees found at places believed to be sacred, such as the graves of ancestors or elders. At this stage, reverence that had been abstract took the formal ritual form of offerings and *tumpeng* as a means of communicating with spirits. This pre-Islamic cultural layer became the ritual vessel (*wadah*) for those who spread Islam on Java. The questionnaire supports this explanation: 100% of respondents knew that religious values are connected with Grebeg Sadranan. This indicates that Sadranan and Grebeg Sadranan have long been oriented toward worship.

At the end of the 15th century, as Hindu-Buddhist power weakened on Java, Islamic influence strengthened and entered through the Sultanate of Demak and the Wali Sanga. The preachers gradually used a method of cultural acculturation, inserting Islamic values into the Hindu-Buddhist culture of Javanese society. This strategy allowed Islamic teachings to enter and be accepted without conflict with the long-standing cultural identity of the people. The well-known figures who spread Islamic values in the Cepogo area until they became the Sadranan tradition include Kiai Bonggol Jati (Syekh Ibrahim), Ki Ageng Giring, Ki Ageng Ahmad Dahlan, Rekso Yudho, Kiai

Ramli Diryo Kartono, and Kiai Ahmad Syamsuri, among others. This account is in line with the survey on the persistence of worship values resulting from the acculturation of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic teachings in Grebeg Sadranan, which shows a significant difference between respondents who answered “Yes” (98%) and those who answered “No” (2%).

8 The acculturation can also be observed in the background of the *kenduri* held in Sadranan in the month of Sha’ban or Ruwah, the month before the fasting month. *Kenduri*, a communal feast and shared prayer, derives from the Hindu-Buddhist cultural history known as Bhairawa Tantra. This culture was a gathering to satisfy hunger and desire before meeting God, so that one could be at peace with oneself and worship with focus, undisturbed by worldly wishes. Because Bhairawa Tantra culture was already embedded in Javanese society through the vessel of the *sraddha* ritual, the Wali Sanga used it as a means of spreading Islam peacefully. Communal ritual meals of this kind (*slametan*) have long been central to Javanese religious life (Geertz, 1960), and they have been interpreted as ritual performances in which Islamic ideas are expressed in Javanese form (Woodward, 1988). The description is consistent with the questionnaire finding that 93% of respondents understood the stages of worship as products of the acculturation of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic teachings. It indicates that most people know of and acknowledge the Hindu-Buddhist influence mixed with Islamic teachings in the stages of worship.

Both the interviews and the questionnaire therefore indicate that the Sadranan tradition is a form of cultural acculturation. This conclusion rests on the informants’ accounts and on “Yes” responses ranging from 93% to 100%, a gap of 7% between the highest and lowest indicators. The small gap indicates that most people are aware of the acculturation process in this tradition. It also resembles the “integration” strategy in Berry’s (1997) acculturation framework, in which a group adopts elements of another culture while maintaining its own cultural integrity.

Following modernization, the Sadranan tradition was developed into a cultural festival to attract a wider public to participate in and enliven the event. A tradition once known only to local people and relatives is now attended by people from outside the area and has been known since 2019 as the Grebeg Sadranan Cepogo cultural festival. The change was driven by local residents’ desire to introduce a long-standing culture and tradition to the wider public.

These acculturation findings can be explained by the concept of peaceful cultural penetration (*penetration pacifique*). The concept is evident in the way the Wali Sanga, or the preachers, realized that removing the *sraddha* ritual by force would provoke rejection from the community. They therefore used a persuasive cultural method, a da'wah strategy of infiltration. In the context of the Islamization of the archipelago, this process can be analyzed through two forms, accommodation and substitution. Accommodation means blending in with the community while preserving deeply rooted social and cultural practices, such as gathering at graves and working together (*gotong royong*). Substitution means gradually inserting Islamic values to replace old values that were not suitable, such as worship of Allah SWT, almsgiving, and maintaining kinship ties. These two forms are best understood as an analytical framework for the acculturation process, not as universal stages that apply to every da'wah practice.

The concept of peaceful penetration is evidenced in Sadranan by the replacement of ancestor-worship mantras with the recitation of Surah Yasin and *tahlilan* addressed to Allah, and by the shift in the function of food from offerings to the *kenduri*, a form of social almsgiving among residents. Peaceful penetration thus produced a new tradition that retained original cultural elements while reworking their religious meaning.

Several earlier studies are consistent with these findings. They show that Sadranan, which later developed into the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival, is a product of acculturation among Javanese culture, Hindu-Buddhist elements, and Islamic teachings, and that it serves not only as cultural heritage but also as a medium for instilling the value of worship. Rosyadiana (2023) found that Sadranan is a form of acculturation between local culture and Islamic teachings and that it contains values of worship, social dealings (*muamalah*), and kinship (*silaturahmi*) as an application of Islamic teachings in community life. Wajdi (2017) likewise explained that Sadranan results from acculturation between Islam and Javanese culture previously influenced by animism, dynamism, and Hindu-Buddhist traditions, and that it was transformed from a ritual to ward off misfortune (*tolak bala*) into an expression of gratitude to Allah and respect for ancestors. In the same vein, Aryanti and Masjid (2023) reported that *nyadran* results from acculturation among Javanese, Hindu-Buddhist, and Islamic cultures. According to them, the acculturation adapted local culture to Islamic teachings without erasing existing cultural identity, by inserting educational and religious values such as

gratitude, peacefulness, care for the environment and for others, responsibility, and patriotism, all of which can be applied in community life.

On the basis of this analysis and the earlier research, the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival can be regarded as the result of the festivalization of the Sadranan tradition. That tradition is a manifestation of local culture, cloaked in Hindu-Buddhist religious ritual elements, that has been acculturated with Islamic values such as gratitude, almsgiving, and conflict avoidance, as the Wali Sanga brought them in their Islamic da'wah. The interviews, the questionnaire, the conceptual framework, and earlier studies therefore agree on the history of acculturation in the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival of Cepogo. This history matters because it shows that Islamic values entered the community through cultural continuity rather than replacement, which is what allows the festival to be both a cultural and a religious practice.

Community Understanding of Religious Values in the Grebeg Sadranan Cultural Festival and Their Role in Community Life

An interview with informant SK showed that religious values are linked to the Grebeg Sadranan tradition, as seen in the *ijab qabul* stage, which accords with Islamic law:

“In the strict sense of ritual worship (*mahdhah*), the Sadranan tradition is not taught in Islam, but it is part of community culture. There is certainly still a connection with belief, namely in terms of Islamic law, or at the time of *ijab qabul*, such as *dhikr*, *tahlil*, blessings upon the Prophet, and prayers to Allah SWT. So the culture is cultural, but the belief in the prayers remains in accordance with each person's religion.”

The Sadranan tradition naturally involves a series of stages of worship, as described by informant SD:

“One day before Sadranan takes place, the people, especially the women, are already very enthusiastic about preparing dishes for the guests. Then, in the morning after the dawn prayer, people go to the cemetery to clean the graves. This is followed by praying for the ancestors together by reciting *dhikr*, *tahlil*, speeches, and so on. Next, people open the various *tenong* (food baskets) to eat together. The menu in the Sadranan *tenongan* is usually free, according to people's tastes, to increase enthusiasm for taking part in Sadranan. If food is left over, people take it home in plastic bags, so no food is wasted. At the end, after

Sadranan is finished, around 08.00 or 09.00 WIB, people visit the homes of neighbors to strengthen ties, an activity often called open house. It continues until night. Some villages hold open house for two days or more. In Sukabumi Village, open house is held for two days, for example in Sangkal Hamlet, because if it were held for only one day in such a large area, the time would not be enough."

The figures involved in the religious procession of the Sadranan tradition were described by informant SK:

"The figures involved are the elders, or people who are respected in the village, who lead the prayers (*didongani*), as well as the mosque imams and the RT and RW heads, who coordinate the community."

In this regard, informant TA1 also emphasized that the stages of worship in the Grebeg Sadranan tradition carry cultural, social, and religious values. In Javanese, he said:

"Nilai budayanipun katingal saking Tenongan lan arak-arakan tumpeng. Nilai sosialipun punika silaturahmi sederek-sederek. Dene nilai religiusipun inggih punika sodoqoh lan donga sesarengan nyuwun keselamatan dhumateng Gusti Allah."

('The cultural value is seen in the *tenongan* and the *tumpeng* procession. The social value is kinship ties among relatives. The religious value is almsgiving and praying together to ask Allah for safety.')

Keeping pace with the times, informant TA2 explained that the Sadranan tradition has been packaged as the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival to attract the enthusiasm of people from many generations, although the value of worship is maintained:

"The prayers and the value of worship remain almost the same. Perhaps there is something added, in that Sadranan is now packaged to be more interesting for all generations."

Informant TA2 also described the meaning, or moral message, that the community has always preserved in the Grebeg Sadranan tradition:

"Grebeg Sadranan teaches that through mutual cooperation, respect for differences, and a spirit of togetherness, a tradition can bring economic blessings, strengthen kinship, and open space for everyone to contribute."

25

Informant SD discussed the economic, social, and religious impacts that the community feels when the Sadranan tradition is packaged as a festival:

“Economically, of course, the community’s micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have increased, because many people attend the event. Socially, people can enjoy a variety of dishes, so everyone feels equally happy, whether rich or poor. Religiously, it is about how people share and give alms sincerely.”

To maintain the values contained in the Grebeg Sadranan tradition in community life, residents also help one another and cooperate in activities outside Sadranan, as informant K described:

“Yes. An example of *gotong royong* is the RTLH, or *Rumah Tidak Layak Huni* (uninhabitable house) program, in which people help build so that a resident’s house can stand and be livable. The residents cooperate wholeheartedly without expecting any reward. Also, when events are held on certain days, residents usually cooperate in preparing them. For example, the menu served at such events usually comes from the community itself: each family brings food freely, such as satay and other dishes, which are then exchanged and eaten together.”

In line with this statement, informant SD mentioned small *kenduri*, *selamatan*, and regular *arisan* (rotating savings gatherings) that strengthen kinship ties among residents outside the Grebeg Sadranan tradition:

“Of course. On certain days, such as the night of the first of Suro, *pitulasan* (Independence Day celebrations), and others, there is a *kenduren* held at the house of the RT head, or sometimes on the street. There are also regular neighborhood gatherings at the RT level, such as the PKK (family welfare movement), held once a month.”

Residents also hold religious study sessions (*pengajian*), *tahlilan*, and other gatherings as shared worship outside the Grebeg Sadranan tradition, as informant KD described:

“In my village, *tahlilan* is a routine held every Thursday night. The activity includes reciting Surah Yasin, *tahlil*, and other religious activities.”

To keep the religious values of Sadranan even though it has become a cultural festival, informant K explained:

“Well, to keep the tradition as it should be, we still need to add better and more attractive modern elements. For example, in the past it was announced only by word of mouth; now that is no longer necessary. Today we can announce it through internet technology such as mobile phones.”

Informant KD emphasized that prayers and worship in Sadranan still feel as authentic as before, even though the tradition has become a cultural festival:

“It is still the same. It begins with worship, then praying by reciting *dhikr* and *tahlilan*, all of which are still done today. The only difference is that the *silaturahmi* (visiting) activity has been added.”

Informant KD further explained that making Sadranan a cultural festival does not affect its religious values:

“Grebeg Sadranan can be seen as a kind of proclamation (*syiar*) to the community that the Sadranan tradition, in the month of Sha’ban or Ruwah, has begun. That is why Grebeg Sadranan is held before the 10th of Sha’ban, or before the Sadranan tradition begins. Therefore, the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival does not affect the existing values of worship. On the contrary, making it a cultural festival attracts more residents, community members, and young people to learn about it and take part.”

For the festival to run well, Grebeg Sadranan also needs the enthusiasm of young people. Informant SK described how young people responded to making Sadranan a cultural festival:

“The response is very good, because at least young people can recognize and understand their own culture. With the festival, those who did not know now know, and from this knowledge a sense of concern will arise to preserve the tradition in the future.”

Respondents’ answers to each questionnaire item, collected from 100 residents of Cepogo District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java Province, show the community’s level of understanding of the religious values in the Grebeg Sadranan tradition. The results are presented in Figure 2.

Cultural Acculturation and Islamic Educational Values ... | 853

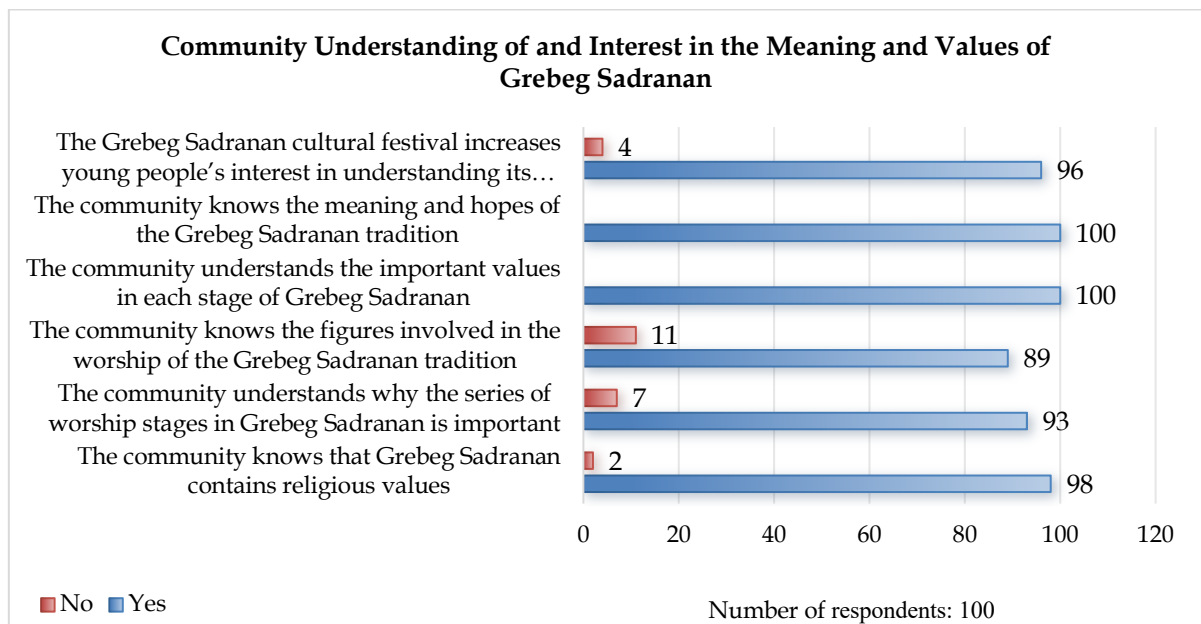


Figure 2. Percentage of Respondents' Level of Understanding of the Values of Grebeg Sadranan

The questionnaire answers also show that residents of Cepogo District, Boyolali, Central Java, actively take part in community activities as an implementation of the values contained in Grebeg Sadranan, as shown in Figure 3.

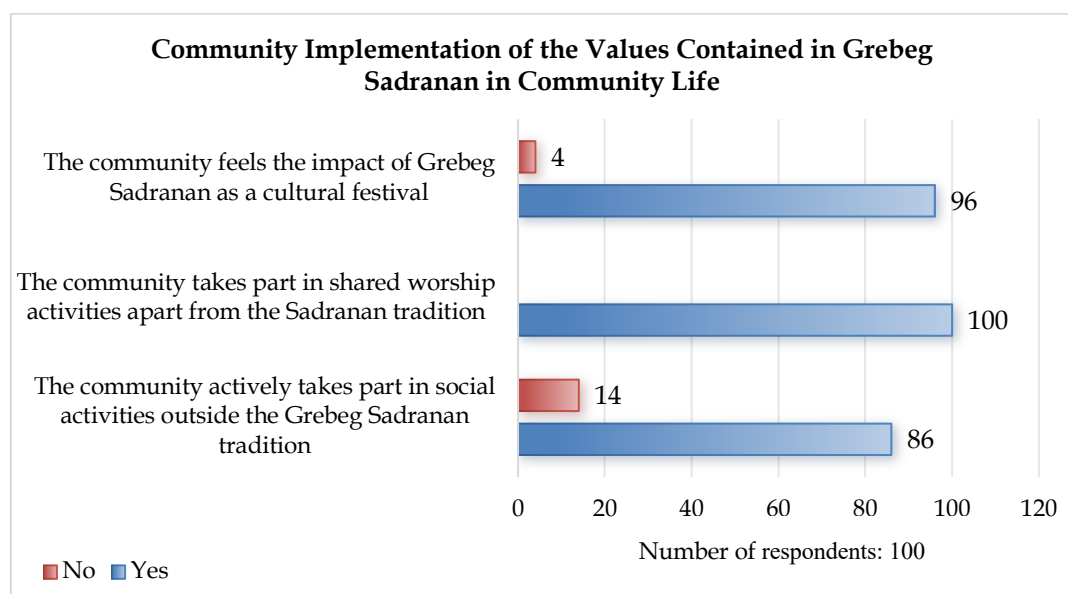


Figure 3. Percentage of Implementation of Grebeg Sadranan Values in Community Life

Field observations by the researchers showed consistency among the interviews, the questionnaire, and the observations regarding the community's understanding and implementation of the essence of Grebeg Sadranan in community life.

The interviews with the same nine informants show that the community understands the religious values in the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival in community life. The community deepens and preserves the purity of the value of worship through practices in line with Islamic law, supplemented by modern elements to keep pace with the times and attract the enthusiasm of various generations. Making Sadranan the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival therefore does not affect the purity of its prayers and worship. Instead, it benefits the community by strengthening kinship ties and upholding the principle of equality, so that people from the area and from outside it can contribute to the festival.

The questionnaire distributed to 100 residents of Cepogo District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java Province, found that Grebeg Sadranan is not merely an inherited tradition but one that carries religious values that must be understood and kept pure. These values include mutual cooperation, almsgiving, kinship, worship, and tolerance. They are reflected throughout the series of Grebeg Sadranan activities, which begin with grave cleaning (*resik makam*), prayers for ancestors, *kenduren*, and *selametan*, and which aim to build kinship and strengthen Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*). Community knowledge of the meaning of the tradition is supported by the questionnaire, in which 100% of respondents answered “Yes” to the statement that the community understands the meaning and hopes of Grebeg Sadranan. In the series of worship activities, elders or respected figures of the village lead the prayers, and the community knows this, as shown by 89% of respondents answering “Yes.” The questionnaire also confirmed that the community recognizes religious values throughout Grebeg Sadranan, such as kinship, almsgiving, and other aspects of Islamic brotherhood, with 98% of respondents saying so.

Overall, “Yes” answers on the understanding aspect ranged from 89% to 100%, a gap of 11% between the highest and lowest indicators. This small variation indicates that the community generally has good knowledge of the religious values of Grebeg Sadranan. The gap also suggests, however, that understanding of the importance of carrying out the tradition is slightly lower than knowledge of its meaning and values. Most respondents therefore show good knowledge of the religious values, which, through the lens of [Muhaimin's \(2014\)](#) theory of value internalization, corresponds to the stage of value transformation.

Value internalization does not stop at knowing a value. [Muhaimin \(2014\)](#) explained that after individuals know a value, the next stage is value transaction. This stage appears in the community's understanding of the values contained in the tradition: 100% of respondents stated that the community understands every important value in the stages of the tradition, such as social and religious values and tolerance. In addition, 100% of respondents stated that the community applies these religious values through activities such as *tahlilan*, *pengajian*, or *perjanjen* (*Barzanji* recitation) on certain days as shared worship. The community thereby gains benefits such as greater gratitude to Allah, awareness of death, mutual respect, and harmony and peace in the neighborhood. Socially, most Cepogo residents also take part directly in *arisan*, small *kenduri*, and *gotong royong* to maintain kinship ties. The questionnaire supports this statement, with 86% of respondents answering "Yes" and 14% answering "No." In addition, 93% of respondents stated that the community understands the importance of carrying out the series of worship activities in the tradition.

The percentage of "Yes" answers on the implementation of values ranged from 86% to 100%, a gap of 14% between the highest and lowest indicators. Despite this gap, most respondents remained highly involved in social and religious activities as a way of applying the values in daily life. This shows that the community has implemented in community life the values it understands from the Grebeg Sadranan tradition. Given the indicators used, this condition can be categorized as the value transaction stage in [Muhaimin's \(2014\)](#) theory of value internalization, in which values that are understood begin to be applied through interaction and social life. However, the 14% gap shows that the implementation of values is still slightly lower than the community's understanding of them. Although implementation is already high, there is room to strengthen the application of these values in daily life.

In 2019, the Sadranan tradition developed into the Grebeg Sadranan Cepogo cultural festival. The transformation of Sadranan into a cultural festival could not have happened without community figures, such as Mr. Sugiyarto, one of the pioneers of Grebeg Sadranan, who contributed greatly to the development of the tradition. In the festival, the whole community gathers at one place for the opening of Sadranan, which is attended by people from within and outside the area, and activities then continue in the villages. After this transformation, Sadranan also became more attractive, and people take part with great enthusiasm that stems from their pride in the tradition.

The Sadranan tradition is closely tied to religious values because it cannot be separated from spiritual elements such as prayer, *selametan*, and expressions of gratitude to the Creator. Designating Sadranan as the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival in Cepogo District, Boyolali Regency, Central Java Province, has brought major changes in how people understand its meaning and values. Even so, the noble essence and the purity of worship in the festival remain preserved and well implemented. The questionnaire shows this: 98% of respondents answered “Yes” and only 2% answered “No” to the statement that the purity of the tradition’s prayers is unaffected by its becoming a festival amid changing times. The change has also had positive effects on social, economic, and cultural aspects of community life. According to the questionnaire, 96% of the community feel these effects, not only during Sadranan but also in the long term, in the form of greater social cohesion, a boost to the local economy, and stronger equality among residents. At the same time, festivalization encourages young people to take part in, enliven, and learn about the event every year; in the questionnaire, 98% of respondents felt that festivalization increased young people’s interest in understanding its meaning.

These results indicate that most Cepogo residents treat the religious values of Grebeg Sadranan not merely as knowledge and routine activity but also as part of how they interact socially. In [Muhaimin’s \(2014\)](#) theory of value internalization, this condition is the final stage of the process, trans-internalization of values. Trans-internalization received the highest achievement, which shows that most of the community has accepted the religious values in Grebeg Sadranan as a lasting guide to behavior. The change in the form of celebration into a cultural festival is therefore not seen as reducing the purity of the values of worship it contains.

These findings are consistent with [Putri et al. \(2024\)](#), who explained that the transformation of the Sadranan tradition into a cultural festival is an effort to preserve the tradition while attracting the participation of young people. Their study showed that cultural transformation brings economic benefits to the community without erasing the noble essence of the tradition. This agrees with the present finding that the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival serves not only to preserve culture but also to strengthen the social and economic life of the community. The values of worship, *muamalah*, and *silaturahmi* that [Rosydiana \(2023\)](#) identified in Sadranan also appear in this study, through the community’s understanding of worship and the implementation of kinship

values in community life. This study is also supported by [Soniatin \(2021\)](#), who stated that the religious function of the *nyadran* tradition is reflected in shared prayers asking God for safety, health, and welfare. This supports the present finding that the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival retains its religious dimension as the tradition develops into a cultural festival.

These findings also respond to the concern about festivalization raised in the Introduction. [Pratama and Setiadi \(2025\)](#) warned that preservation without education can shift sacred values toward the profane. In Cepogo, by contrast, the prayers and worship procedures continue, and the community shows high understanding of the meaning of the tradition. This pattern accords with [Cohen's \(1988\)](#) argument that cultural products presented to a wider audience do not necessarily lose their meaning for local people, because that meaning can be maintained or renegotiated. It also fits the view in event research that festivals can serve cultural and social purposes beyond economic ones ([Getz, 2008](#); [Getz & Page, 2016](#)).

Earlier research thus indicates that even though the Sadranan tradition has been festivalized in the modern era, the community can still understand its religious values. Religious values are an essential element that animates every procession of Sadranan. Worship values are the main foundation of practices that reflect the community's belief in God. Kinship is both the primary aim and a form of implementation of the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival in Cepogo, and it strengthens Islamic brotherhood. The interviews, the questionnaire, the theory, and earlier studies therefore agree on the religious values in the Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival and on their implementation.

Conclusion

The Grebeg Sadranan cultural festival in Cepogo is a tradition that emerged through the acculturation of religious ritual and Javanese culture. The acculturation took the form of peaceful cultural adaptation by Islamic preachers, who retained local cultural elements that were compatible with religious values and integrated Islamic values into their practice. This acculturation did not erase Javanese cultural identity but produced a tradition that keeps its cultural values. The development of Sadranan into a cultural festival has further strengthened the tradition's function as a medium for cultural preservation and community identity. In daily life, the people of Cepogo District show an adequate level of understanding of the values, which they use as guidelines consistent with Islamic law through activities such as *tahlilan*, small *kenduri*, *gotong royong*, and

pengajian. These results answer both objectives of the study, namely how the acculturation occurred and how the community understands and implements the religious values of the tradition.

Theoretically, the findings show that the concept of peaceful cultural penetration and the theory of value internalization are useful for explaining how a festivalized tradition keeps its religious meaning. Practically, the community is encouraged not only to take part in the festival but also to learn its religious and cultural meanings. Village and regional governments are expected to keep supporting the festival through sustained cultural programs. Schools and madrasahs should introduce the history of acculturation and internalize the religious values of Sadranan through co-curricular projects to build pride in local culture. Future research may examine other Javanese traditions that foster harmony among residents. This study is limited to the sampled villages and respondents in Cepogo District, and the implementation of values remained slightly lower than understanding, so the findings should not be generalized to other communities.

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