



## **STRENGTHENING MORAL EDUCATION VALUES: Sociological Analysis of the Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* at Pesantren Benda Kerep, Cirebon**

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**Abstract:** This article explores the role of Mbah Sholeh *haolan* (commemoration) in strengthening Islamic education in Benda Kerep Village. This event serves as a cornerstone for cultural preservation, intergenerational learning, and practical implementation of Islamic values. The *kyai*, or spiritual leaders, play a pivotal role in guiding the community, reinforcing their authority and the respect they command. The *haolan* facilitates social cohesion, fosters a strong sense of identity, and exemplifies the community's commitment to Islamic teachings. By examining the significance of Mbah Sholeh *haolan*, the article provides insights into how traditional Islamic communities can navigate the challenges of modernity while preserving their religious and cultural heritage. This study shows that commemoration is one of the means used to pass on the cultural and religious values contained in "Wasiat Sepuh" as one of the character education and character-building. *Kyai* is the central figure, the foremost patron, followed by the community, so what Scott calls a patron-client cluster is formed. *Kyai* in Benda Kerep serves as an information leader who, in many ways, trumps the role of formal government officials. *Kyai* serves as the community's protector, a place to seek advice, and the final decision-maker on various problems in the area.

**Keywords:** commemoration; Mbah Sholeh; education values; Benda Kerep; charismatic leader.

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## Introduction

ISLAMIC EDUCATION in Indonesia has significantly shaped communities' cultural, social, and religious landscape nationwide. Rooted in centuries-old traditions, Islamic educational institutions, such as *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), have not only provided religious instruction but also fostered a deep sense of community and continuity of cultural heritage. These institutions have been instrumental in preserving and transmitting Islamic teachings, values, and traditions, ensuring their relevance in the modern world while maintaining a connection to the past.<sup>1</sup> Benda Kerep Village, a traditional village, is a testament to Islamic education's enduring influence. The village's rich traditions and adherence to Islamic principles exemplify how intertwined religious and educational practices are. Central to this is the role of the *kyai*, both religious leaders and educators, guiding the community in spiritual and moral development.<sup>2</sup>

Preserving traditional Islamic values and religious practices in modern societies poses a significant challenge, particularly with the rapid pace of modernization and globalization.<sup>3</sup> In Benda Kerep Village, the Mbah Sholeh *haolan* plays a crucial role in the community's cultural and religious identity. Mbah Sholeh's full name is K.H. Sholeh Zamzami, the founder of the village and the Pesantren Benda Kerep, which is still related to the Kanoman

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<sup>1</sup> Sutomo et al., "Religious-Sociocultural Networks and Social Capital Enhancement in Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2024): 139, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v10i1.19997>.

<sup>2</sup> Ta'rif, "Orientasi Pendidikan Pesantren Salafiyah: Studi Kasus Pesantren Benda Kerep Cirebon," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* 10, no. 2 (August 1, 2012): 221-22, <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v10i2.161>. See also Anzar Abdullah et al., "Application of Multicultural Education in Strengthening Community Solidarity in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 11, no. 3 (September 30, 2023): 1173, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v11i3.965>.

<sup>3</sup> Juan E. Campo, *Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York: Facts On File, 2009), 588; Mila Anggar Wati and Kundharu Saddhono, "Islamic Religious Values in Dhukutan Traditional Ceremony as Character Education for Elementary School," *El Harakah* 21, no. 1 (2019): 66; Muhammad Talhah Ajmain Jima'ain, "Dawah in the Digital Age: Utilizing Social Media for the Spread of Islamic Teachings," *Journal of Current Social and Political Issues* 1, no. 1 (2023): 1-7.

Cirebon Palace. Despite the influences of modernity, the village has managed to maintain a solid adherence to these traditions. It is essential to understand the significance of Mbah Sholeh's *haolan* in the inheritance of religious values and its impact on strengthening Islamic education. This understanding can provide insights into how traditional Islamic communities can preserve their heritage while adapting to contemporary societal changes.

*Haolan*, also known as *haulan*, *khol*, or *haul*, is a gathering to commemorate the death of a religious figure who is considered to have charisma and is exceptionally meritorious for Muslims, often seen as a *wali* and possessing *karamah* (spiritual gifts).<sup>4</sup> In *haolan* events, it is common for worshipers to explore the merits, advice, and teachings of the figure, emulating their struggle and service to religion, society, the nation, and even the state. The congregation attending *haolan* often comes from the area where the figure lived, from various other regions, and even from abroad. They willingly sacrifice as a form of respect (*takzim*) and hope to receive blessings from the figure (*tabarukan*). Javanese people term this as *ngalap berkah*.<sup>5</sup>

The term *haolan* comes from the Arabic word “ḥawl” (حَوْل), which means ‘strength, power’, ‘cleverness, skill’, and ‘years’.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) contains the term “haul” with three meanings: (1) derived from the Arabic word, meaning ‘power, strength’ (2) as a term in Islam, meaning ‘one year enough for the ownership of wealth, such as commerce, gold, livestock as a limit for paying zakat’; and (3) as a noun form, meaning ‘the commemoration of the day of death of a person held

<sup>4</sup> Kairin Toha, “The Historicity and the Tradition of Pesantren Benda Kerep,” *Jurnal Tamaddun: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan Islam* 5, no. 2 (2017): 60, <https://doi.org/10.24235/tamaddun.v5i2.2091>.

<sup>5</sup> Muhammin A.G., *Islam Dalam Bingkai Budaya Lokal: Potret Dari Cirebon* (Ciputat: Logos, 2002), 252–53; A.G. Muhammin, *The Islamic Traditions of Cirebon: Ibadat and Adat Among Javanese Muslims : Ibadat and Adat Among Javanese Muslims, The Islamic Traditions of Cirebon: Ibadat and Adat Among Javanese Muslims : Ibadat and Adat Among Javanese Muslims*, 2006, [https://doi.org/10.26530/oapen\\_459298](https://doi.org/10.26530/oapen_459298).

<sup>6</sup> Ahmad Warson Munawwir, *Kamus Arab-Indonesia Al-Munawwir*, *Pustaka Progresif* (Surabaya: Pustaka Progresif, 2007), 311.

once a year (usually accompanied by *selamatan arwah*).<sup>7</sup> In this article, the third meaning is what *haolan* means.

As is customary in the country, *haolan* is held in the place of origin of the religious figure concerned. However, it is not uncommon for it to be held at the gravesite of the figure or in a nearby mosque. Some people organize *haolan* privately, making it a straightforward event with a relatively short duration, usually filled with *tahlilan* and ending with serving food. The food served at the event is intended for *selamatan* or alms on behalf of the commemorated figure.<sup>8</sup> However, many people not only serve food but also distribute blessings, which are food parcels consisting of rice and side dishes, to the congregation.<sup>9</sup>

*Haolan* is also a way of remembering death. "As long as it is not accompanied by polytheism, it is permissible." A hadith narrated by al-Waqidi in *Nahj al-Balāghah* states that once, the Prophet made a pilgrimage to the graves of the martyrs of Uhud. Upon arriving at the slopes of Mount Uhud, he said aloud, "May prosperity be bestowed upon you, thanks to your patience, so what a good place to end up." Later, Abu Bakr, Umar bin Khattab, and Uthman bin Affan did the same. Thus, *haolan* is also one of the recommended forms of grave pilgrimage. The point is to remember death. The more one remembers death, the more it encourages a person to do good, which is also a provision for life in the afterlife.<sup>10</sup>

Several studies on Benda Kerep, both in terms of tradition and education, have been conducted by various scholars. For example,

<sup>7</sup> "Https://Kbbi.Kemdikbud.Go.Id/Entri/Haul," July 31, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Hanif Abdulloh, "Tradisi Peringatan Haul Dalam Pendekatan Sosiologi Pengetahuan Peter L. Berger," *DIALOGIA: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Sosial* 13, no. 1 (2015): 53; Abdulloh Hanif and Saifur Rahman, "Moralitas Diskursus Dan Otoritas Wacana Keagamaan Di Media Sosial," *Palita: Journal of Social Religion Research* 8, no. 1 (2023): 79–96, <https://doi.org/10.24256/pal.v8i1.3773>.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Ali Chozin and Ahmad Jamhuri, "Pesantren Bendakerep Sebagai Penjaga Tradisi Islam Nusantara," *Jurnal Educationem* 01, no. 01 (2019): 30–32.

<sup>10</sup> Erdy Nasrul, "Hakikat Makna Haul," *Republika*, 2017; Maknunah and Wakhit Hasim, "Tradisi Haul Di Pesantren," *Jurnal Yaqzhan: Analisis Filsafat, Agama Dan Kemanusiaan* 5, no. 2 (December 17, 2019): 3, <https://doi.org/10.24235/jy.v5i2.5662>.

Ta'rif discussed the orientation of Salafiyah education at the Pesantren Benda Kerep, which focuses on preserving traditional Islamic education. Ta'rif's study covers aspects of inheriting moral values through strict religious education, but it does not explicitly address the *haolan* tradition as a means of passing down these moral values.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Ruyadi's study highlights the integration of local wisdom in character education within pesantren. While this approach is relevant for understanding the context of Mbah Sholeh *Haolan*, Ruyadi's research does not also specifically address how moral values are inherited through the *haolan* tradition.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, Sulistiana's work on social change and the Tarekat Syattariyah explores the influence of this Sufi order on social changes and the role of pesantren as mediators. The role of the Syattariyah Tarekat is relevant to spiritual inheritance in Benda Kerep. However, it is not directly connected to Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* or the inheritance of moral values through the *haolan* tradition.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, Toha examined the historical and traditional aspects of the Pesantren Benda Kerep, including its role in preserving the Islamic traditions of Cirebon. Toha's study provides a solid foundation for understanding the relationship between the history of pesantren and the sustainability of traditions in general.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Chozin and Jamhuri discussed the role of Benda Kerep in maintaining the Islam Nusantara tradition, a localized form of Islam. Although they do not directly mention Mbah Sholeh *Haolan*, their study is relevant in connecting local Islamic practices with traditions like the *haolan*.<sup>15</sup> Fitri Meliani et al. also conducted a historical study that revealed the dynamics of Islamic boarding schools in Cirebon, including Benda Kerep,

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<sup>11</sup> Ta'rif, "Orientasi Pendidikan Pesantren Salafiyah: Studi Kasus Pesantren Benda Kerep Cirebon."

<sup>12</sup> Yadi Ruyadi, "Model Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Budaya Lokal," in *Proceedings of The 4th International Conference on Teacher Education; Join Conference UPI & UPSI*, 2010, 576–94.

<sup>13</sup> Ivan Sulistiana, "Tarekat Syattariyah Dan Perubahan Sosial Di Cirebon: Kajian Sosio-Historis," *Jurnal Dialog* 39, no. 1 (2016): 1–16.

<sup>14</sup> Toha, "The Historicity and the Tradition of Pesantren Benda Kerep."

<sup>15</sup> Chozin and Jamhuri, "Pesantren Bendakerep Sebagai Penjaga Tradisi Islam Nusantara."

and its significant role in the socio-religious landscape. However, their study, like others, needs to address how the Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* tradition is used as a medium to inherit moral values.<sup>16</sup>

Another relevant study in character education is by Eka, who discusses character education from an Islamic perspective, focusing on the moral values taught in pesantren.<sup>17</sup> Eka's article supports the idea that religious traditions can be an effective medium for character education. However, there is no specific discussion about the role of the *haolan* tradition or how the inheritance of moral values is facilitated through the *haolan* tradition. Likewise, Baharun introduced the Total Moral Quality (TMQ) approach to character education in pesantren.<sup>18</sup> Although this approach does not directly link the *haolan* tradition with character education, it is relevant for understanding how traditions like Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* can contribute to holistic character formation.

According to previous studies, Pesantren Benda Kerep is recognized for maintaining tradition, inheriting moral values, and character education. However, there is a significant gap in research explicitly addressing the inheritance of moral values through the Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* tradition. Many studies focus on character education or the pesantrens' education without exploring how *haolan* serves as a medium for passing down moral values and the essential role of the kyai. Therefore, further research is needed to explicitly link the *haolan* tradition to the inheritance of moral values and character education within the context of Benda Kerep.

This article will examine the annual *haolan* tradition in Benda Kerep Village, Argasunya Village, Harjamukti District, Cirebon City, West Java Province. There, the *haolan* tradition is carried out

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<sup>16</sup> Fitri Meliani, Andewi Suhartini, and Hasan Basri, "Dinamika Dan Tipologi Pondok Pesantren Di Cirebon," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah* 7, no. 2 (2022): 297–312, [https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2022.vol7\(2\).10629](https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2022.vol7(2).10629).

<sup>17</sup> Eka Eka, "Revisiting Character Education from Islamic Perspective," *Ullumuna* 21, no. 1 (2017): 1–33, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v21i1.1156>.

<sup>18</sup> Hasan Baharun, "Total Moral Quality: A New Approach for Character Education in Pesantren," *Ullumuna* 21, no. 1 (2017): 57–80, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v21i1.1167>.

to commemorate the services of the village elders who have passed away, especially Mbah Sholeh, not the others. The reason is that K.H. Sholeh Zamzami was the founder of the village and the Pesantren Benda Kerep. Additionally, the article explores the inheritance of religious tradition values in Benda Kerep, focusing on the significant role of the kyai and the community's commitment to maintaining traditional practices. Through the lens of Islamic education, we examine how the values taught and upheld by these leaders permeate the villagers' daily lives, fostering a cohesive and resilient community that upholds its cultural identity amidst the pressures of modernization.

The significance of studying Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* tradition is due to at least two reasons. *First*, the tradition is still preserved by the people of Benda Kerep Village to this day. Through the preservation of the tradition, there is also a process of inheriting the values taught by Mbah Sholeh since the village was founded. The people of Benda Kerep recognize the "Wasiat Sepuh" (Elders' Will; His teachings and struggles), essentially a message to always maintain piety and care for tradition. Thus, *haolan* is one of the traditions used as a means to remember the "Wasiat Sepuh" and then pass it on from generation to generation<sup>19</sup>. *Second*, the *haolan* tradition holds significant importance in efforts to preserve and promote culture in Indonesia. This aligns with the Ministry of Religious Affairs Strategic Plan 2020-2024 on the harmony between religious and cultural teachings.

This research on Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* tradition is qualitative research, defined as a process that seeks to understand the complexity of human interaction better. However, qualitative research is not limited to studying humans; it can also target events, history, objects like photographs, artifacts, relics of ancient civilizations, and so on.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, this article's target of qualitative research includes humans and their cultures and activities, such as implementing traditional ceremonies, namely Mbah Sholeh *Haolan*.

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<sup>19</sup> K.H. M. Miftah Faqih, "Interview" (Cirebon, August 29, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Sarwono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Dan Kualitatif* (Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu, 2006), 193–94.

The primary data source in this study is various forms of oral language passed down from generation to generation (oral tradition), though written data is also considered. Data collection was conducted through field observations, interviews, and literature studies. Observations were conducted extensively, beginning with the river crossing path that separates Benda Kerep Village from the neighboring village. We explored the paths within the traditional village, where there were no motorized vehicles, and none of the residents used communication devices such as smartphones. Likewise, radios and televisions were absent from people's homes.

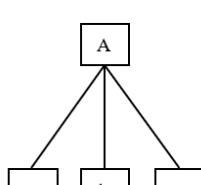
In-depth interviews were held with key figures, including K.H. Ismail, who is regarded as the *Kyai Sepuh* (elder kyai), and K.H. M. Miftah Faqih, who is also recognized as a supreme figure and serves as a caretaker of the Pesantren Benda Kerep in Cirebon. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with representatives from the Cirebon City Government, specifically the Youth, Sports, Culture, and Tourism Office (DKOKP). The participants included Adin Imaduddin Nur (Secretary), Siti Solecha (Head of the Culture Division), Wiyono (Head of the History and Cultural Heritage Section), and Nunung Kurniasih (Head of the Tradition Value Section).

Similarly, a limited discussion was held with the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Cirebon City, featuring key speakers such as H. Aan Fathul Anwar (Head of the Administration Subdivision), along with several employees from the Planning Section and the Islamic Religious Information Section at the Cirebon City Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. As for local officials, an in-depth interview was conducted with M. Markhum, Vice Chairman of RW XI Benda Kerep, and Enon Abdulmanan, Head of RT 01/RW XI Benda Kerep. Additionally, an FGD was held at the residence of Kyai H. Miftah with several santris (students) and local community members.

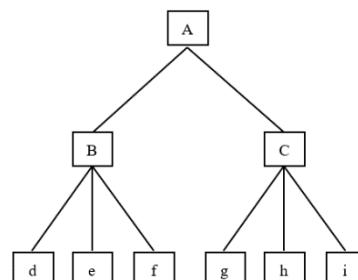
Data presentation and analysis were conducted descriptively and analytically, describing the results of field findings or data, then classifying or categorizing them and connecting them. This research uses a sociological approach, particularly in examining social structures and relationships between people. Therefore, we

decided to use James C. Scott's theory of patron-client relationships and Max Weber's theory of charismatic leadership.

Scott states patron-client relationships are a particular case of dyadic (two-person) relationships involving instrumental friendships. In practice, an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his or her influence and resources to provide protection, benefits, or both to someone of lower status (client). The person of lower status reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron.<sup>21</sup> This relationship is voluntary, informal, flexible, and expansive. To examine the larger structure associated with merging many relationships, Scott mentions two terms: (1) patron-client cluster and (2) patron-client pyramid. A patron-client cluster is a direct relationship between a patron and a client. On the other hand, the patron-client pyramid is a broader relationship than the "cluster," although it is still focused on one person and their vertical link. However, within the patron-client pyramid, there are clusters.<sup>22</sup> For more details, see the chart below.<sup>23</sup>



**Chat 1:** patron-client cluster



**Chat 2:** patron-client pyramid

Regarding the theory of charismatic leadership, Weber explains that someone with unusual traits or circumstances (beyond ordinary people) can generally become a leader in society. This leadership is usually informal, often referred to as informal leadership. Due to the figure's advantages, the community treats

<sup>21</sup> James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *The American Political Science Review* 66, no. 1 (1972): 92.

<sup>22</sup> Scott, 92.

<sup>23</sup> Scott, 92.

them as leaders, giving them the authority to organize and direct their followers.<sup>24</sup> Charisma arises from personality qualities that most people, such as honesty, trustworthiness, firmness, consistency, courage, and intelligence, highly admire.<sup>25</sup>

### Benda Kerep: A Historical Overview

Benda Kerep is the name of a village and one of the oldest Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Administratively, Benda Kerep Village is located in RW XI, Argasunya Village, Harjamukti District, Cirebon City. Located 12 kilometers south of Cirebon City Hall, Benda Kerep is separated from the city's hustle and bustle by a toll road, a dense teak forest, and a large river.<sup>26</sup>

K.H. Ismail bin Muhtadi Azmatkhan, one of the village elders, stated that Benda Kerep was originally named Cimeuweuh. In Sundanese, "Cimeuweuh" consists of two words: "ci," which means 'water,' and "meuweuh," which means 'lost.' It was named so because, in the past, everyone who entered the area would disappear. Benda Kerep Village was founded by K.H. Sholeh Zamzami (Mbah Sholeh) in the first half of the 19th century. Since its establishment, the people of this village have maintained their traditions and the pesantren's salafi model, studying several yellow books, such as *Safina al-Najāt*, *Sullam Munājat*, *Jurumiya*, *Fath al-Qarīb*, *Fath al-Mu'in*, *Alfiya*, *Tafsir Jalālayn*, and *Kitab Bidāya al-Hidāya*.<sup>27</sup>

The establishment of Benda Kerep Village is closely linked to the history of Cirebon, especially following the bankruptcy of the VOC at the end of the 18th century. In the 19th century, resistance

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<sup>24</sup> Jennifer L. Epley, "Weber's Theory of Charismatic Leadership: The Case of Muslim Leaders in Contemporary Indonesian Politics," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 5, no. 7 (2015): 8; Ruyadi, "Model Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Budaya Lokal," 581–82; Ta'rif, "Orientasi Pendidikan Pesantren Salafiyah: Studi Kasus Pesantren Benda Kerep Cirebon."

<sup>25</sup> Ruyadi, "Model Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Budaya Lokal"; Neng Nur Annisa and Nabila Tabassum, "Challenges of Multiculturalism: Integration of Religion in State Policy," *Religion and Policy Journal* 1, no. 1 (2023): 8–15.

<sup>26</sup> Tim Penyusun, *Kecamatan Harjamukti Dalam Angka 2022* (Cirebon: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2022).

<sup>27</sup> K.H. Ismail, "Interview" (Benda Kerep, August 13, 2020).

against the colonial government in Cirebon intensified, and there was internal friction within the Cirebon Sultanate, particularly the Kanoman Sultanate. This friction led young palace rulers, supported by religious leaders (kyai), to adopt an oppositional stance.<sup>28</sup> In this context, Kyai Sholeh Zamzami declared his intention to establish a particular area for religious studies. In 1826, he founded a pesantren on land granted by the Kanoman Palace and named the village Benda Kerep, which means 'dense or lush object tree'<sup>29</sup>. Unfortunately, as the population has grown and more houses have been built, the number of benda trees in the area has dramatically reduced.<sup>30</sup>

Kyai Sholeh Zamzami is a son of Kyai Raden Muta'ad from Pesantren Buntet. Kyai Muta'ad succeeded Kyai Muqoyyim, the founder of Pesantren Buntet, after Kyai Muqoyyim's death. Though not a direct descendant, Kyai Muta'ad married one of Kyai Muqoyyim's granddaughters, Nyai Kholifah. In the 18th century, an attack by the VOC ravaged the old Buntet Pesantren, forcing Kyai Muqoyyim to move frequently. Once the situation stabilized in the early 19th century, Kyai Muta'ad became the leader of Pesantren Buntet. Kyai Sholeh has a close relationship with Pesantren Buntet from this family line.<sup>31</sup>

In terms of his scholarly lineage, Kyai Sholeh Zamzami was a student of Kyai Anwarudin Kriyan, one of the founders of the Syattariyah *tariqa* in Cirebon. Kyai Anwarudin Kriyan connects Kyai Sholeh's Syattariyah *tariqa* lineage to Kyai Asy'ari from Pesantren Kaliwungu, Central Java. Consequently, Pesantren Benda Kerep is one of the centers for the Syattariyah *tariqa* in

<sup>28</sup> Islamiati Rahayu, "Strategi-Strategi Perlawanan Rakyat Cirebon Dalam Perang Kedongdong Tahun 1802-1818 M," *Tamaddun* 4, no. 1 (2016): 148-49; Nur Hata, "Babad Darmayu: Catatan Perlawanan Masyarakat Indramayu Terhadap Kolonialisme Pada Awal Abad Ke-19," *Manuskripta* 2, no. 1 (2012): 153.

<sup>29</sup> Sulistiana, "Tarekat Syattariyah Dan Perubahan Sosial Di Cirebon: Kajian Sosio-Historis," 10-11.

<sup>30</sup> Faqih, "Interview."

<sup>31</sup> Rina Rindanah, "Geneologi Pesantren Benda Kerep Dan Pesantren Buntet Cirebon; Suatu Perbandingan," *Holistik* 14, no. 2 (2016): 209-30; Ta'rif, "Orientasi Pendidikan Pesantren Salafiyah: Studi Kasus Pesantren Benda Kerep Cirebon," 219-20.

Cirebon<sup>32</sup>. Most of Kyai Sholeh's male descendants were sent to Pesantren Kaliwungu, including Kyai Ahmad Faqih, Kyai Miftah's father, to maintain this scholarly lineage. Kyai Miftah himself studied at Pesantren Kaliwungu before continuing his education at Sultan Agung Islamic University (Unissula) in Semarang, Central Java<sup>33</sup>. Kyai Sholeh is not only known as a murshid (spiritual guide) of the tarekat but also as an expert in "magic" wisdom, demonstrated by his courage in opening wilderness land, which symbolized his resistance to colonial domination following the destruction of the Cirebon people's resistance in the Kedongdong War (1806-1816).<sup>34</sup>

Visitors to Benda Kerep Village will encounter a unique rule: no vehicles are allowed to enter. Cars and even bicycles are prohibited within the village. Despite some visitors violating this rule, the villagers continue to uphold it, displaying banners inviting people to maintain the traditions of their elders.<sup>35</sup> The village is separated from Sumurwuni Village by a river, with only concrete steps and a wire handle to cross. A bridge reserved for pilgrims to Kyai Sholeh's grave is used by villagers only during heavy rains when the river overflows.<sup>36</sup>

Upon entering the village, visitors will see a traditional pesantren complex. Young children and teenagers wear skullcaps (*peci*), men wear sarongs, and women wear kebaya and headscarves. This traditional dress reflects the teachings of Mbah Sholeh and the Syattariyah *tariqa*. Villagers practice various professions, such as farming, trading, and teaching, while maintaining a selective attitude toward outside cultural

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<sup>32</sup> Toha, "The Historicity and the Tradition of Pesantren Benda Kerep."

<sup>33</sup> Faqih, "Interview."

<sup>34</sup> Ivan Sulistiana, "Tasawuf Dan Perubahan Sosial Di Cirebon: Kontribusi Tarekat Syattariyah Terhadap Perkembangan Institusi Keraton, Pondok Pesantren, Dan Industri Batik" (Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2015), 94–96; Zamzami Amin, *Baban Kana: Sejarah Pesantren Babakan Ciwarining Dan Perang Nasional Kedongdong, 1802-1919* (Bandung: Humaniora, 2014).

<sup>35</sup> Ismail, "Interview."

<sup>36</sup> Faqih, "Interview."

influences<sup>37</sup>. Although the village has modern residential buildings, the mosque remains the center of religious activities. Electricity was introduced in the 1980s, and sophisticated communication tools like cell phones are widely used. However, radio and television are banned to prevent disruptions to the education process and the value system. Interestingly, villagers can access social media platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Ancient Mosque and Worship in Benda Kerep Village**

The ancient mosque built by the village founder is not the only place of worship in Benda Kerep. Each complex or neighborhood has several musala (prayer rooms) for daily worship activities. However, Friday prayers and mass religious traditions are still centered at the ancient mosque, which has been equipped with a meeting hall on the eastern side.<sup>39</sup>



**Fig. 1-2:** Left: Ancient Mosque of Benda Kerep; Right: Hall east of the Mosque (Team doc., 2020)

One of the exciting aspects of Benda Kerep Village is the number of pesantren managed by kyai. There is no specific record of the exact number of pesantren, but it is noted that each kyai typically runs a pesantren. If there are ten kyai, there are also ten

<sup>37</sup> Sulistiana, "Tasawuf Dan Perubahan Sosial Di Cirebon: Kontribusi Tarekat Syattariyah Terhadap Perkembangan Institusi Keraton, Pondok Pesantren, Dan Industri Batik."

<sup>38</sup> Enon Abdulmanan, "Interview" (Benda Kerep, September 6, 2020).

<sup>39</sup> M. Surya, "Benda Kerep Tetap Menjaga Tradisi Lokal," Suara Cirebon, 2019.

pesantren. All these pesantren are under the authority of Pesantren Benda Kerep and are managed by the Amparan Benda Kerep Foundation. Despite the large number of pesantren, the number of santri (students) does not reach thousands, as is the case with larger pesantren like Pesantren Lirboyo in Kediri, Pesantren Buntet in Cirebon, or Pesantren Babakan Ciwaringin. Each pesantren usually has around 20 students of various ages, from elementary school children to adults. The learning system and materials vary according to the kyai but generally follow traditional pesantren teachings. Students are housed either in the kyai's home or in dormitories. The kyai are generally descendants or sons-in-law of Mbah Sholeh's lineage who live in Benda Kerep. Some of the elder kyai include K.H. Ismail, K.H. Miftah Faqih (who is also respected as the "spokesman" of Benda Kerep), K.H. Ahmad Faqih, K.H. Muhammad, Kyai Kholil, and K.H. Amsor. Female students are also taught by the kyai's wives, known as *nyai*.<sup>40</sup>

In December 2019, Benda Kerep was officially designated as a religious tourism village by the Cirebon City Government.<sup>41</sup> Kyai Miftah emphasized the need to promote the village's unique attributes while maintaining local traditions. He noted that these traditions are part of the legacy of the elders of Pesantren Benda Kerep and Sunan Gunung Jati Cirebon, who emphasized the importance of worship and caring for the poor, "Isun titip tajug lan fakir miskin" ('I entrust the *tajug* [small mosque] and the poor'). According to Kyai Miftah, "... entrusting the *tajug* means that we worship Allah more. If we entrust the poor, it means we must prosper the poor."<sup>42</sup>

### **Mbah Sholeh Haolan**

*Mbah Sholeh Haolan* is held annually from the 12th to the 14th of Zulhijah. This event is more lively than other village traditions such as *Syawalan* (*Ketupat* Eid on the 8th of Shawwal), *Muludan*

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<sup>40</sup> Ta'rif, "Orientasi Pendidikan Pesantren Salafiyah: Studi Kasus Pesantren Benda Kerep Cirebon."

<sup>41</sup> Tim Penyusun, *Kecamatan Harjamukti Dalam Angka* 2022.

<sup>42</sup> Faqih, "Interview."

(commemorating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday on the 12th of Rabiulawal), *Rajaban*, *Nisfu Sya'ban*, and the Hijri New Year. The *haolan* attracts many attendees, including community members, santri, and thousands of visitors from various regions, especially alumni and relatives.<sup>43</sup>

Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* offers significant social benefits to the community. It fosters social interaction and strengthens relationships between individuals and groups. Social interaction, a fundamental aspect of human life, involves communication and the exchange of experiences. *Haolan* serves as a unifying event, enhancing the bonds of brotherhood and religiosity among participants. It also reunites relatives who live outside the village or abroad and allows attendees to find potential marriage partners.<sup>44</sup> Thus, *haolan* is an invaluable cultural asset promoting harmony by preserving local traditions.<sup>45</sup> This aligns with the notion that successful societies depend on everyone embracing core values and actions. Respecting differences and fostering effective communication through narrative language abilities are crucial in multicultural settings. These competencies enable creative and critical thinking, which is essential for processing information and fostering collaboration.<sup>46</sup> By preserving *haolan*, a community can maintain its cultural heritage while promoting unity and mutual understanding, vital for societal progress in diverse environments.

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<sup>43</sup> Sulistiana, "Tarekat Syattariyah Dan Perubahan Sosial Di Cirebon: Kajian Sosio-Historis."

<sup>44</sup> Nurus Sholihah, "Tradisi Haul Habib Ali Al-Habsyi Masyarakat Muslim Muhibbin Di Pasar Kliwon Surakarta Tahun 1980-2006" (Universitas Sebelas Maret, 2009), 74; Jajat Burhanudin, *Ulama Dan Kekuasaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 2012), 352; Abdul Kadir Ahmad, "Demensi Budaya Lokal Dalam Tradisi Haul Dan Maulidan Bagi Komunitas Sekarbela Mataram," *Al-Qalam* IX, no. 14 (1997): 1-15, <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v9i2.596>.

<sup>45</sup> Mustolehudin, "Merawat Tradisi Membangun Harmoni: Tinjauan Sosiologis Tradisi Haul Dan Sedekah Bumi Di Gresik," *Harmoni, Jurnal Multikultural Dan Multireligius* 13, no. 3 (2014): 22-35.

<sup>46</sup> Rosemary Sage, "Supporting Successful Multicultural Societies Education Is Key to National Progress," *Journal of Current Social and Political Issues* 2, no. 1 (2024): 48-59.

The *haolan* spans three days and two nights, with the main event being *tahlilan*. *Tahlilan* is held three times: on the night of the 12th of Zulhijah, the night of the 13th of Zulhijah, and the morning of the 14th of Zulhijah until Zuhr prayer. After the *tahlilan*, the congregation disperses on the afternoon of the 14th, each receiving a *berkat* (gifts in the form of food).<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, almost all community members, including the *kyai*, provide blessings. Residents' homes are open to visitors, offering food to guests. This hospitality is also observed during *Muludan*, although *Muludan* is a one-day event, whereas *haolan* lasts for three days. Each household in Benda Kerep village provides at least 200 packages of *berkat*, while the *kyai* prepare 2,000-3,000 packages for the thousands of guests. Despite the lack of public advertisement, guests know the *haolan* schedule on 12-14 Zulhijah. Due to the many attendees, vehicles are parked up the highway limits, particularly at the T-junction known as Patok Besi.<sup>48</sup>

### **Inheritance of Religious Tradition Values in Benda Kerep**

The residents of Benda Kerep Village continue to maintain traditions and values closely related to Islamic beliefs and rituals. According to Adin Imaduddin Nur, Mbah Sholeh *Haolan*, including *Syawalan* and *Muludan*, is a special symbol for the people of Benda Kerep Village. These religious traditions are celebrated to the fullest. Kyai Miftah notes that Mbah Sholeh *haolan* his merits, *karamah* (spiritual gifts), morals, and virtues, inspiring the community to emulate his noble life.<sup>49</sup> Benda Kerep has successfully preserved traditional ceremonies, reinforcing fundamental and instrumental values. Basic values underlie behavior and materialize as instrumental values (**Chart 3**).<sup>50</sup>

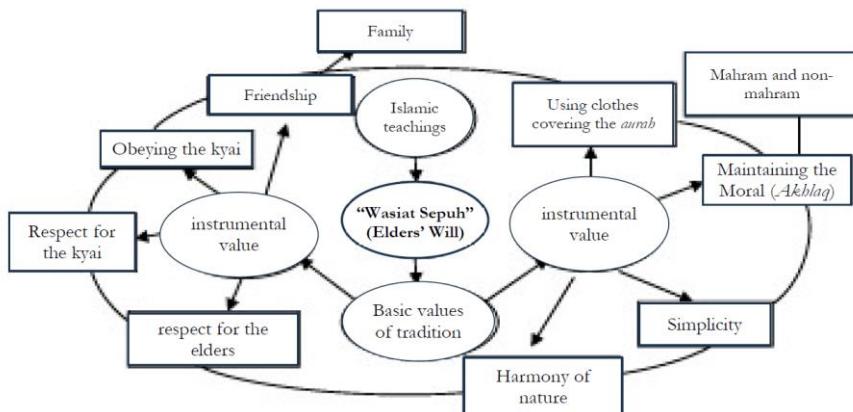
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<sup>47</sup> M. Markhum, "Interview" (Benda Kerep, September 5, 2020).

<sup>48</sup> Abdulmanan, "Interview."

<sup>49</sup> Faqih, "Interview."

<sup>50</sup> Ruyadi, "Model Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Budaya Lokal."



**Chart 3: Fundamental Values and Instrumental Values of the Tradition of Benda Kerep Village Community<sup>51</sup>**

The core values of the tradition include obedience to the "Wasiat Sepuh" (Elders' Will), resulting in instrumental values such as respecting kyai and elders and fostering kinship. The people of Benda Kerep also reject practices contrary to Islamic teachings, leading to instrumental values like dressing modestly, maintaining morals, observing the principles of *mahrams* and non-*mahrams*, simplicity, and harmony with nature. The community's dress code—sarongs and skullcaps for men and cloth or sarong with headscarves for women—reflects their values and resistance to colonial influences.<sup>52</sup>

The inheritance of these values centers on obedience to leaders, especially kyai. Adin Imaduddin Nur states, "Obedience to the leader, to the kyai, is number one. There (Benda Kerep), the reference is Islam. Traditional Islam, not *adat* (custom). If the village has an ideological foundation, it is different; there is an element of belief. If there... Islam, kyai."<sup>53</sup> The community obeying the kyai establishes a social structure independent of the government. While RT and RW administrators exist, the kyai holds dominant, informal leadership. RT and RW administrators consult the kyai before making decisions, and residents will only

<sup>51</sup> Ruyadi, 583.

<sup>52</sup> Ruyadi, "Model Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Budaya Lokal."

<sup>53</sup> Adin Imaduddin Nur, "Interview" (Cirebon, September 8, 2020).

proceed with the kyai's approval. RT and RW administrators mainly handle government affairs related to marriage, divorce, reconciliation, birth, and death.<sup>54</sup>

**Chart 4** illustrates that Benda Kerep's fundamental values originate from a social system that places kyais as charismatic leaders and role models. Obedience to ancestors (kai) is a foundational value upheld and passed down through Mbah Sholeh *Haolan*. The social system, combined with the significance of *haolan*, fosters instrumental values like respect for kyai, friendship, togetherness, mutual assistance, care, modest dress, and polite behaviour. These values shape daily life and become the local wisdom of Benda Kerep, originating from the "Wasiat Sepuh."

Benda Kerep, a village in Cirebon, Indonesia, is renowned for its deep-rooted Islamic traditions and its vibrant pesantren community, which shapes both the spiritual and daily life of its residents.<sup>55</sup> Led by the respected kyai and attended by dedicated santri, the pesantren emphasizes religious education, character building, and community service. Daily life is interwoven with religious practices, communal prayers, and social interactions centered around the mosque. The pesantren also preserves traditional arts and culture, while community events and religious festivals foster unity. Economically, the pesantren supports local businesses and promotes self-sufficiency.<sup>56</sup> Despite modern influences, Benda Kerep maintains its traditional way of life, blending religious devotion, cultural heritage, and communal living. This makes it a unique and inspiring example of a traditional Islamic community in Indonesia. Consequently, it is not easy to distinguish between santri and ordinary residents, as the community actively participates in all pesantren activities.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Nur.

<sup>55</sup> Johanna Pink, *Qur'an Translation in Indonesia: Scriptural Politics in a Multilingual State* (Taylor & Francis, 2023).

<sup>56</sup> Abdul Karim, "Managerial Inspiration in the Traditional Pesantren," *UMRAN-Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* 3, no. 3-1 (2016).

<sup>57</sup> Ta'rif, "Orientasi Pendidikan Pesantren Salafiyah: Studi Kasus Pesantren Benda Kerep Cirebon"; Syukri Syukri, "Global Salafism Study of Roel Meijer's Views," *International Journal of Islamic Khazanah* 13, no. 2 (2023): 77–87.

In Benda Kerep, the village leadership hierarchy is not formalized but operates through consensus. The community acknowledges the *kiai sepuh* (elder kyai) as the village leader. Consequently, almost all community activities reflect obedience to the elder. According to Weber's theory of "charismatic leadership," kyai who possess charisma are regarded as leaders, resulting in authority to regulate and guide the community.<sup>58</sup> Charisma stems from admired personality traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, firmness, consistency, courage, and intelligence, which can lead to a "magical charm," a supernatural influence bestowed on a select few.<sup>59</sup> This significant influence fosters a patron-client relationship between the kyai and the community. As patrons, kyai, with their knowledge, provide protection, spiritual guidance, and resolution of unrest and anxiety for the community. In return, the community feels indebted to the kyai, reinforcing the solid patron-client relationship that underpins traditions in Benda Kerep Village.

According to Scott's patron-client theory, the relationship between the kyai and the community in Benda Kerep fits into a patron-client cluster. The kyai holds the highest position, with the community directly below, without an intermediary hierarchy. This relationship exhibits two key characteristics: (1) specific membership for each link and (2) individual ties to a leader rather than shared characteristics or horizontal ties among followers.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ta'rif, "Orientasi Pendidikan Pesantren Salafiyah: Studi Kasus Pesantren Benda Kerep Cirebon"; Ruyadi, "Model Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Budaya Lokal."

<sup>59</sup> Epley, "Weber's Theory of Charismatic Leadership: The Case of Muslim Leaders in Contemporary Indonesian Politics."

<sup>60</sup> Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia."

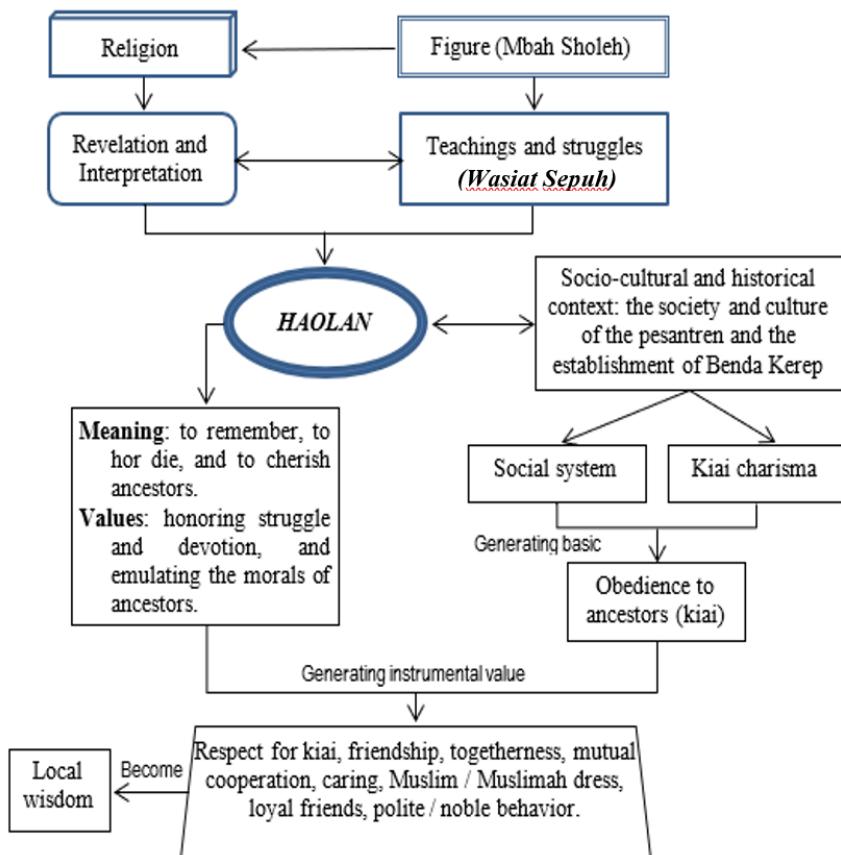


Chart 4: Basic Value and Instrumental Value of Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* Tradition in Benda Kerep, Cirebon (Chart by Asep Saefullah and proofed by the Team, 2023)

The process of inheriting both religious and traditional values in Benda Kerep Village is rooted in Mbah Sholeh's message: *Wa ittaqi-llāha haiṣu mā kunta wa atbi'i al-sayyi'ata al-hasanata tamhuha wa khāliqi al-nāsa bi khuluqin hasanin* (Fear Allah wherever you are, follow evil with good to undo the evil, and treat people with good manners).<sup>61</sup> This message has been institutionalized, socialized, and practiced by the community. Despite being close to a modern urban area, the villagers maintain a traditional character, selectively adopting modernization, such as using electricity and modern

<sup>61</sup> Faqih, "Interview."

technology, while avoiding radio, television, and loudspeakers.<sup>62</sup> This selective adaptation demonstrates the community's commitment to preserving traditions through a communal system, obedience to *kyai* leadership, maintaining Islamic boarding schools, traditional celebrations, knowledge transmission, and avoiding specific modern influences. Thus, there is continuity and a cycle of inheritance of traditions and values carried out continuously and jointly by almost all residents of Benda Kerep Village.

The primary value inherited from the ancestors, centered on *haolan*, is to uphold and implement the "Wasiat Sepuh." The chart illustrates the cycle of tradition and value inheritance. Islamic teachings, sourced from the Qur'an, hadith, and religious texts, are studied by the *kyai* and taught to students and descendants. In Benda Kerep's social system, the *kyai* is a charismatic and de facto community leader, fitting Weber's charismatic leadership model. Based on Scott's patron-client theory, the social structure shows a direct patronage of the *kyai* by the entire community (see **Chart 5**).

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<sup>62</sup> Fatih Sukamdani Saputro, "Dampak Modernisasi Terhadap Kehidupan Masyarakat Kampung Benda Kerep Kota Cirebon Tahun 1980-2000" (Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, 2017), 99.

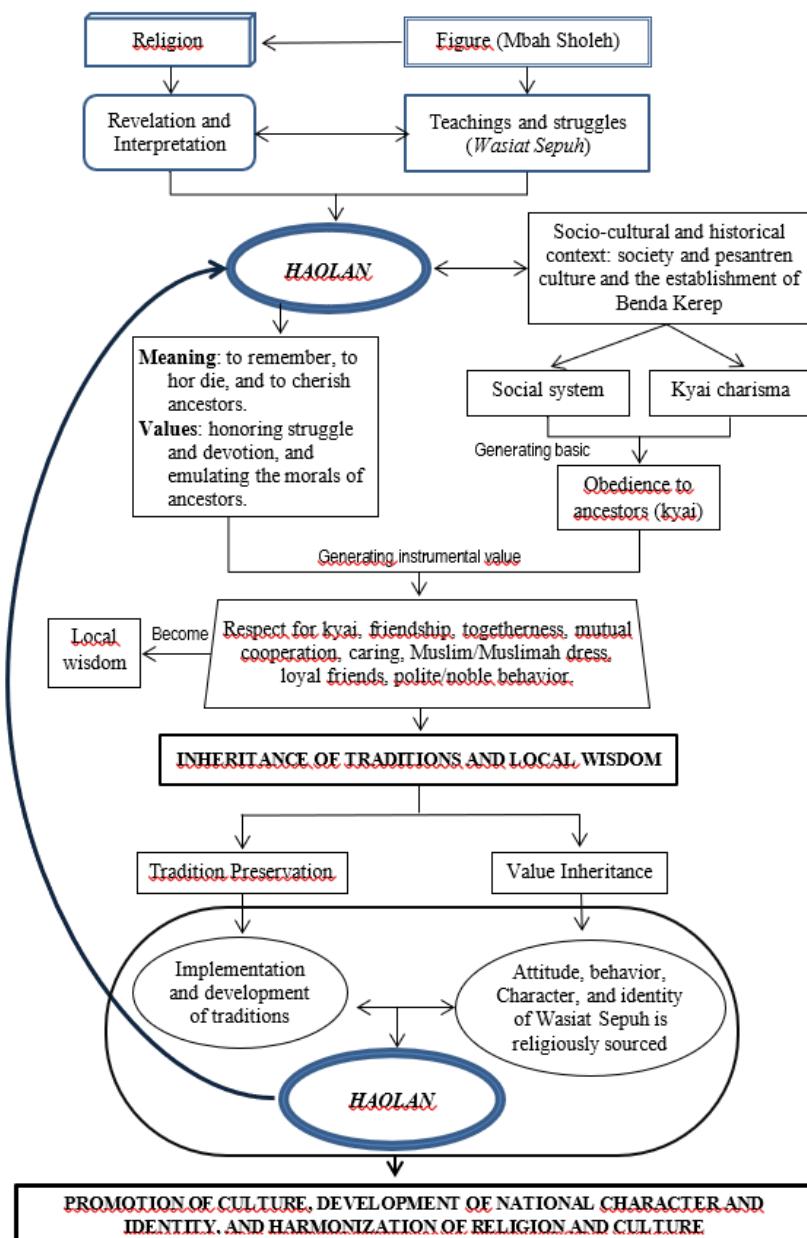


Chart 5: Continuity and Cycle of Inheritance of Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* Tradition and Local Wisdom Values in Benda Kerep, Cirebon (Chart by Asep Saefullah, and proofed by the Team, 2023)

*Haolan* holds significant meaning and value. It honors and remembers ancestors, recognizing their struggle and dedication to community progress and welfare. These meanings and values constitute local wisdom, ensuring the continuation of the *haolan* tradition. This process involves tradition preservation and value inheritance, shaping the community's character and identity.<sup>63</sup>

Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* is more than just a religious celebration; it is a vital tradition that encapsulates the community's historical, cultural, and spiritual legacy. This event serves as a cornerstone for transmitting religious values and reinforcing Islamic education in several ways. For example, 1) acts as a living repository of the village's Islamic traditions, ensuring these practices are preserved and passed down through generations. The event reinforces the community's connection to its historical roots and promotes a sense of identity and continuity; 2) serves as an informal educational platform where Mbah Sholeh's teachings, morals, virtues, and religious principles are highlighted and imparted to the younger generation. This helps instill a strong foundation of Islamic values and ethics in the youth; 3) The event fosters social cohesion by bringing together people from various backgrounds, including alums and relatives from distant regions. This communal participation strengthens relationships and promotes the spirit of *gotong royong* (cooperation), which is integral to Islamic teaching; 4) The *kyai*, as the spiritual leaders and custodians of Islamic knowledge, play a pivotal role in the *haolan*. Their guidance and teachings during the event reinforce their authority and the community's respect for religious scholars. This relationship between the *kyai* and the community ensures that religious values are upheld and transmitted effectively; and 5) The *haolan* is a practical demonstration of Islamic values such as charity, hospitality, and piety. The community's involvement in providing blessings, hosting guests, and performing religious

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<sup>63</sup> Muhammad Alqadri Burga and Muljono Damopolii, "Reinforcing Religious Moderation through Local Culture-Based Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (December 31, 2022): 145–62, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i2.19879>.

rituals exemplifies these values, making them tangible and relatable for the participants.<sup>64</sup>

The inherited values, such as respecting kyai, fostering friendship, togetherness, mutual assistance, modest dress, loyalty, and polite behaviour, manifest the community's adherence to the "Wasiat Sepuh," rooted in Islamic teachings. These values strengthen Benda Kerep's community character and identity, contributing to national cultural and character development goals.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, *haolan*, blending religion and culture, illustrates their harmony, fostering religious and cultural harmony through preserving and developing the *haolan* tradition.

## Conclusion

Amid modernity, globalization, and the current era of information technology, Benda Kerep Village exemplifies a community that consciously, responsibly, and consistently maintains ancestral traditions and their inherent meanings and values. These values are deeply embedded in the practice of *haolan*, as its essence is to preserve and implement the "Wasiat Sepuh." For the tradition bearers, *haolan* symbolizes remembrance, respect, and appreciation for the ancestors' contributions, particularly Mbah Sholeh, the village founder. The value lies in the ancestors' struggle and dedication to the progress and welfare of the people.

The significance and value of Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* intertwine with Benda Kerep's social system, which is influenced by the charisma of the kyai, resulting in a fundamental value of obedience to ancestors. This dynamic fosters instrumental values manifest in daily life, such as respect for the kiai, strong

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<sup>64</sup> Pudentia MPSS, ed., *Metodologi Kajian Tradisi Lisan*, 4th ed. (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2015); Mustolehudin, "Merawat Tradisi Membangun Harmoni: Tinjauan Sosiologis Tradisi Haul Dan Sedekah Bumi Di Gresik"; Ta'rif, "Orientasi Pendidikan Pesantren Salafiyah: Studi Kasus Pesantren Benda Kerep Cirebon"; Ruyadi, "Model Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Budaya Lokal"; Faqih, "Interview."

<sup>65</sup> See also Nuranifah Nuranifah, Cut Zahri Harun, and Nasir Usman, "Management of Strengthening Islamic Character Education in Senior High School," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 10, no. 3 (September 30, 2022): 629–38, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v10i3.659>.

friendships, togetherness, cooperation, care, dressing modestly as Muslims, and exhibiting polite and noble behavior. These elements constitute the local wisdom of the Benda Kerep Village community, offering valuable lessons in unity, character building, and identity reinforcement. Moreover, the traditions, especially Mbah Sholeh *Haolan*, blend cultural and religious elements harmonized and integrated into the fabric of the community's life. This integration underscores the village's commitment to preserving its cultural heritage while navigating the challenges of the modern world.

Efforts are essential to maintain the tradition of Mbah Sholeh *Haolan* and other similar traditions, focusing on the two main aspects of cultural promotion: preservation and protection. These traditions will inevitably change as cultural products due to internal and external factors. Cultural promotion involves maintenance and strengthening, revitalization, and socialization. The maintenance and strengthening of a tradition aim to keep it alive despite any modifications. Revitalization is an effort to sustain the tradition with a positive motivation, especially if the community still needs it and it continues to function. The highest level of revitalization involves engaging as many supporters as possible.

On the other hand, socialization seeks to introduce the tradition to a broader audience. These efforts are interrelated, with socialization crucial in maintaining, strengthening, and revitalizing traditions. Additionally, socialization transfers (inherits) traditions from generation to generation, transforming values for character building and national identity.

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