

# THE INTERFAITH *LELAYU* TRADITION: RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN BULUNGCANGKRING VILLAGE JEKULO KUDUS

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to provide an in-depth description of the interfaith lelayu tradition practiced by the Muslim community and members of the Evangelical Church in Tanah Jawa (GITJ) congregation in Bulungcangkring Village, Jekulo, Kudus. The analysis focuses on the humanitarian values embodied in this tradition and examines how the community preserves harmony and respects religious boundaries during the lelayu process, which serves as a tangible expression of interreligious coexistence in local culture. The acts of offering condolences and performing tahlil reflect the spirit of tolerance and harmony among different faith communities. This research employed a qualitative approach with fieldwork as the primary data source, using observation, interviews, and documentation for data collection. The findings reveal that the lelayu tradition in Bulungcangkring Village transcends religious boundaries and provides a shared space for interfaith interaction grounded in mutual cooperation, empathy, and solidarity. Despite theological differences, community members maintain respect for their respective religious doctrines. Consequently, this tradition does not generate doctrinal conflict but rather reinforces the spirit of tolerance in social life, contributing to a broader understanding of cultural practices that foster peace and harmony within a pluralistic society.*

**Keywords:** *Lelayu tradition, Interfaith Relations, Plurality, Religious Harmony*

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is renowned for its rich cultural, religious, and traditional diversity. In this pluralistic society, sacred life events such as birth, marriage, and death are not only personal experiences but also social occasions that involve the broader community. One tradition that embodies this sense of collective togetherness is *lelayu*, a Javanese custom of responding to bereavement and paying final respects to the deceased (Annisa, 2022). Indonesian society is pluralistic in both vertical and horizontal dimensions: vertically, it is

characterized by social, economic, and political stratification; horizontally, it consists of various cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups. This diversity represents a socio-cultural asset, reinforced by Indonesia's geographic reality as the world's largest archipelagic nation (As'ad, 2018).

Despite this diversity, religious conflict, encompassing political, social, and economic dimensions, remains a topic of continuing concern. Intolerance often arises when individuals or groups make excessive truth claims, assuming that only their beliefs are correct while rejecting those of others. Such

attitudes may escalate into social tension, conflict, or even acts of terrorism. Strengthening religious moderation is therefore essential to counter intolerance and maintain social harmony (Mailin, Sazali, & Dharma, 2023). Political elites, scholars, intellectuals, and religious leaders continue to pursue various strategies to foster reconciliation and interreligious coexistence in the public sphere. These efforts include state policies, interfaith dialogues, and the reinterpretation of sacred texts to reconstruct harmonious relations among religious communities (Mukotip et al., 2024).

Radicalism, as a religious phenomenon, is rooted in an exclusive understanding of religion that disregards the pluralistic reality of religious life. It represents a marginal and disproportionate interpretation of faith (Alifuddin & Amir, 2022). Radicalism can manifest in two forms: ideological and practical. Ideological radicalism refers to extremist ideas or discourses that justify violence, while practical radicalism involves violent actions in social contexts (Adhan, 2021). In the religious sphere, radicalism is evident in destructive and anarchic behavior carried out by certain groups in the name of religion against both external and internal religious communities (Syuhudi, 2021).

Understanding social interaction enables individuals to grasp the dynamic processes that shape social relations. According to Badruzzaman (2008), there are four general forms of social interaction: cooperation, competition, accommodation, and conflict. From a sociological-anthropological perspective, the plurality of religion and culture in Indonesia is an unavoidable social reality. To ensure that this diversity remains a constructive social capital for national harmony, there must be a conscious effort to cultivate awareness of religious plurality, so that the positive potential within this diversity can be properly realized (Afifuddin, 2012).

Religious pluralism in Indonesia is both a historical and sociological inevitability that profoundly influences the nation's social and political dynamics. This pluralism emerged

through a long process of cultural exchange, trade, migration, and *da'wah* (Islamic proselytization), leading to a multicultural society comprising Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and various indigenous beliefs. The principles of *Pancasila* and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) provide a strong ideological foundation for interfaith dialogue and cooperation, which are essential to maintaining social cohesion and preventing sectarian conflict (Nendissa et al., 2025).

Historically, the legacy of figures such as Sunan Kudus illustrates how religious and cultural acculturation can promote pluralism. For example, the Wali Al-Makmur Mosque, built around 1549 AD by Arya Penangsang, one of Sunan Kudus's disciples, displays Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic architectural features. Sunan Kudus himself is remembered as a missionary who skillfully integrated local Javanese values with Islamic teachings, ensuring their acceptance among the local population. This demonstrates that cultural acculturation can effectively convey the essence of pluralism through local traditions (Mas'udi, 2016).

Pluralism serves as a crucial foundation for harmony in a diverse society, as illustrated by the experience of the Pucakwangi Village community. It cultivates mutual respect, acceptance of differences, and cooperation for the common good. Pluralism goes beyond mere tolerance; it involves active interaction between religious and cultural groups, such as mutual visits, joint celebrations, and cooperation during significant events. These interactions foster empathy, sympathy, and social solidarity (Mas'udi, 2018). Although pluralism has faced challenges, particularly in post-conflict contexts such as the aftermath of the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) incident, collective awareness and leadership by community and religious figures have helped restore harmony through dialogue, democratization, and social justice.

Within the Muslim community and the Evangelical Church in Tanah Jawa (GITJ) congregation in Bulungcangkring Village,

Jekulo, Kudus, the *lelayu* tradition, comprising *takziyah* (condolence visits) and *tahlil* (communal prayer), has become a deeply rooted practice. It not only represents a form of final respect for the deceased but also serves as a means of strengthening solidarity and kinship.

This strong sense of communal solidarity contrasts with the territorial exclusivity often associated with Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) communities. In Bulungcangkring, however, *pesantren* communities exhibit openness and a commitment to interreligious harmony. The presence of the GITJ church near an Islamic boarding school has not hindered social or religious interaction. Instead, both communities actively nurture mutual understanding and brotherhood, especially during condolence events.

*Takziyah* involves visits by relatives, neighbors, and community members to express sympathy and provide practical assistance, such as helping with funeral preparations, cooking, or offering moral support. Meanwhile, *tahlil* is a collective prayer typically held on the evening after the burial, asking for divine forgiveness for the deceased. This ritual continues on subsequent commemorative days: the 3rd, 7th, 40th, 100th, and even 1,000th day after death, as a continuous expression of remembrance and prayer ('Abidah & Salim, 2024).

Since the GITJ, which operates within a Muslim-majority environment, the *lelayu* tradition has evolved beyond a religious ritual into a shared cultural practice that reinforces empathy, solidarity, and social unity in times of grief. It demonstrates the enduring spirit of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) that defines the relationship between Muslim and Christian communities in Bulungcangkring Village.

In essence, *lelayu* is not only a mourning ritual but also a reaffirmation of collective identity and social cohesion, a reflection of harmony amid diversity. In heterogeneous societies, this tradition has transcended religious and ethnic boundaries, providing a space for interfaith encounters

where empathy and solidarity are expressed without compromising one's beliefs.

This phenomenon holds significant relevance in light of the increasing challenges of intolerance. Religious moderation within *pesantren* education plays a vital role in promoting tolerance, openness, and *wasatiyyah* (the middle path) among students. The curriculum of religious moderation emphasizes inclusive monotheism, respect for diversity, justice, and fraternity. Through dialogical and contextual learning methods, students are encouraged to think critically and respect differences, bridging the gap between religious and general knowledge. Consequently, *pesantren* institutions function as educational ecosystems responsive to social and cultural dynamics, fostering peace and interreligious harmony (Mas'udi & Muflihah 2024).

Harmony, in this context, refers to the condition and process of creating and sustaining diverse patterns of interaction among autonomous groups. It entails reciprocal relationships grounded in mutual acceptance, trust, respect, and shared understanding (Usman, 2019).

This study employs a qualitative approach supported by literature review and field observations to illustrate how humanitarian values, such as mutual cooperation, empathy, and respect for life, are preserved within religious diversity. The study further explores how interfaith rituals like *lelayu* contribute to maintaining harmony and tolerance without disrupting the distinct religious values of the GITJ congregation or the local Muslim community.

## Literature Review

Religious teachings play a crucial role in uniting social divisions by promoting moral values, solidarity, and peace in the resolution of social conflicts (Alifuddin & Amir 2022). Within this framework, the *interfaith lelayu* tradition represents a manifestation of social harmony cultivated through meaningful interactions between Muslims and members of the Evangelical Church in Tanah Jawa (GITJ) congregation in Bulungcangkring

Village. The practices of *takziyah* and *tahlil* transcend religious ritualism, functioning instead as mechanisms for strengthening empathy and social cohesion. They serve as spaces where local culture and differing religious traditions intersect peacefully, grounded in the theoretical perspectives of pluralism and *'urf* (custom) in Islamic law.

Previous studies, including those by Annisa (2022), Abidah and Salim (2024), Kapindo (2023), and Masudi (2016, 2018), interpret the traditions of *tahlilan* and condolence visits as forms of social innovation and cultural acculturation between Islam and local traditions. These practices are viewed as effective in reinforcing social relations within pluralistic societies. Reflections on the *lelayu* tradition and interfaith dialogue indicate that moments of grief can serve as natural opportunities to foster tolerance, solidarity, and harmony through locally rooted traditions deeply embedded in Javanese culture.

Social capital also plays a central role in shaping societal harmony, particularly in the context of interreligious relations. This is consistent with the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs No. 9 of 2006 and No. 8 of 2006, Article 1 Paragraph 1, which defines interfaith harmony as a condition of relationships among religious adherents based on tolerance, mutual understanding, mutual respect, recognition of equality in the practice of religious teachings, and cooperation in social, national, and state life within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia founded on *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution (Nuriyanto, 2018).

### **The Tradition of *Tahlil***

*Tahlilan* originates from the Arabic root word *tahlil*, a nominal form derived from *hallala – yuhallilu – tahlīl*, which means reciting the phrase *lā ilāha illallāh* (there is no god but Allah). In Indonesian, the word *tahlil* receives the suffix *-an*, forming *tahlilan*, which conveys a slightly broader meaning. Religion can influence culture in multiple ways, shaping social values and norms within

society. Religious beliefs and teachings affect people's worldviews, ethics, morals, and principles in daily life. They also influence social structures, including interpersonal and familial relationships, community dynamics, and gender roles (Mandar & Dhiyaul, 2024).

*Tahlilan* refers to a communal recitation that includes selected verses from the Qur'an, blessings (*salawat*), *tahlil* (the declaration of monotheism), *tasbih* (glorification of God), and *tahmid* (praise to God). The spiritual reward from these recitations is then dedicated to the deceased. This ritual is typically performed collectively on specific days following a person's death, such as the 7th, 40th, 100th, and 1000th days, and during the annual commemoration (*haul*) (Rohmah et al., 2023).

The *tahlilan* tradition exemplifies the acculturation between Islamic teachings and Indonesian local culture. While its core meaning refers to the recitation of *lā ilāha illallāh*, the practice has evolved into a collective procession that involves reciting Qur'anic verses, *salawat*, *tasbih*, and *tahmid* (Murdan, Amir, & Nurdin, 2022). These recitations are performed in congregation, primarily to dedicate rewards to the deceased. However, this practice has generated theological debate among Muslims. Some consider *tahlilan* an innovation (*bid'ah*), arguing that it was not practiced during the Prophet Muhammad's time. Others contend that *tahlilan* is permissible as long as it aligns with *sharia* principles, as it carries noble intentions, praying for the deceased and strengthening social bonds. Scholars from the Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools even recognize that dedicating the reward of Qur'an recitation to the deceased is meritorious.

Harmony, in this context, refers to coexistence within society through mutual agreement to avoid conflict and disagreement. It reflects reciprocal relationships characterized by acceptance, respect, togetherness, and tolerance (Ali et al., 2009: 301). More broadly, harmony signifies an atmosphere of fraternity and solidarity among

people regardless of ethnicity, religion, race, or social class (Hasanudin, 2018).

In the Indonesian context, the meaning of *tahlil* has further expanded to denote a series of religious ceremonies performed communally and aloud, typically to commemorate the deceased. These ceremonies involve the recitation of Qur'anic chapters such as *al-Ikhlās*, *al-Falaq*, *an-Nas*, *Ayat al-Kursi*, and the opening and closing verses of *al-Baqarah*. Participants also recite various forms of *dhikr*, including *tahlil*, *tasbih*, *tahmid*, and *salawat*, before concluding with a collective prayer and the distribution of food, which symbolizes blessing and gratitude. The event not only carries spiritual meaning but also reinforces social ties, as it brings together family members, relatives, and neighbors in a shared act of remembrance and empathy (Hidayah, 2023).

In contemporary Indonesian society, the *tahlilan* tradition represents more than the recitation of the *kalimah* (the declaration of faith); it has evolved into a comprehensive religious and social procession reflecting the harmonious integration of Islam with local culture. Through the collective recitation of Qur'anic verses, *dhikr*, and the sharing of food, *tahlilan* functions as both a spiritual practice and a medium for fostering social cohesion and community solidarity (Mas'ari & Syamsuatir, 2018). This flexibility illustrates how Islamic teachings can adapt to local cultural contexts while maintaining their theological essence. Nevertheless, modern challenges such as commercialization and economic pressures risk undermining the ritual's spiritual integrity. Thus, contextual understanding and public education are essential to preserve *tahlil* as a meaningful and sustainable cultural-religious heritage (Mansi, 2007).

From a sociological approach within Islamic law, *tahlilan* is perceived as a form of *ijtihad ijtima'i* (social initiative) emerging from the community's effort to embody religious values within a cultural framework. Beyond serving as a ritual to pray for the deceased, *tahlilan* plays a vital social role,

strengthening interpersonal bonds, promoting solidarity, and nurturing empathy. As a local custom (*'urf*), this tradition is recognized as valid under Islamic law, provided it does not contradict the core tenets of the religion. Although *tahlilan* did not exist during the Prophet's era, it evolved through the indigenization of Islam that adjusted to Indonesian cultural realities (Oganta, 2024).

A sociological lens interprets *tahlilan* as a dynamic interaction between religious norms, Islamic law, and societal needs, wherein Islamic teachings are contextualized without compromising their spiritual essence (Kawu, 2018). These values form the analytical foundation of this research, which explores interfaith cohesion by linking contemporary findings with insights from previous studies (March, 2024).

From this perspective, *tahlilan* serves not only as a religious ritual but also as a social mechanism that unites communities in empathy and collective harmony. This interpretation positions *tahlilan* as a legitimate and contextually relevant cultural adaptation that contributes to social harmony and inclusive Islamic propagation (Nursyamsi, 2023). It highlights that Islamic law is not solely normative but also responsive to social and cultural realities (Librianti, 2019).

Religiously, *tahlilan* encompasses *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *thayyibah* (good and pure) phrases, and moral exhortations that nurture the community's spiritual character, fostering devotion, patience, and spiritual awareness. Additionally, it provides space for social interaction and friendship, strengthening harmony and preventing conflict (Pratama, 2022). For instance, in Bulungcangkring Village, both Muslims and members of the GITJ actively participate in *tahlilan* events as a gesture of mutual concern and empathy. The spirit of *gotong royong* is deeply embedded in this practice, as all community members contribute, through financial support, labor, or logistical assistance, to ensure the event's success. This demonstrates that *tahlilan* is a living embodiment of collectivism and social

solidarity, hallmarks of Indonesian cultural identity (Pamungkas, Suleman, & Santoso, 2024).

### The Tradition of *Takziah*

Death is an inevitable part of human existence and, indeed, of all living beings. Although as old as life itself, every human death evokes deep sorrow among relatives and friends. The event carries profound sacred significance, prompting both immediate family members and acquaintances to participate in a variety of mourning practices. These rituals, rooted in both religious teachings and ancestral customs, serve to organize and give meaning to the process of death (Thaib, 2018).

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), *takziah* refers to an expression of condolence or sympathy. In traditional communities, this act is also known as *melayat* or *ngalayad*, meaning visiting the bereaved family to offer comfort and witness the funeral procession (Ray, 2023). The term *takziah* derives from the Arabic *al-ta'ziyah*, which means *al-taslyah*, “to comfort” those afflicted by misfortune. In a socio-religious context, *takziah* denotes an expression of respect for the family of the deceased, often through a visit to the funeral home to extend condolences and pray for the departed soul. Within Indonesian society, neglecting to offer condolences is frequently viewed as inappropriate, reflecting a perceived lack of empathy or social concern (Zulkifli, 2022).

From an Islamic perspective, *takziah* is an act of compassion that provides comfort and counsel to the bereaved, encouraging patience and sincere acceptance of divine will. In Catholic teachings, offering condolences is regarded as an expression of sympathy grounded in scripture, aimed at helping families overcome grief and maintain faith. Thus, whether understood as *takziah* or condolence, the practice represents a manifestation of human empathy, serving to express sorrow, strengthen emotional resilience, and reaffirm faith in divine providence (Ray, 2023). Broadly speaking,

condolences are an expression of social solidarity and moral responsibility that transcend religious boundaries, especially within pluralistic communities (Heydemans et al., 2023).

In Indonesian socio-religious life, *takziah* is not merely a formality within funeral rites but a profound expression of solidarity and empathy. The practice embodies moral and spiritual values that foster compassion and communal unity (Yusuf et al., 2023). Within Islam, *takziah* is recommended as a social obligation and an act of kindness toward fellow believers. It is even regarded as part of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad, intended to strengthen and console the hearts of the grieving. Similarly, in Catholic tradition, offering condolences is viewed not only as a moral duty but also as a testimony of faith in God’s love and enduring hope (Hidayah et al., 2024).

The condolence tradition observed in Bulungcangkring Village exemplifies the natural development of religious moderation within a pluralistic society. When a member of either the Muslim community or the GITJ passes away, the entire community participates in offering prayers according to their respective beliefs. The bereaved family provides space for neighbors of different faiths to pray for the deceased in their own ways, without disrupting one another’s religious rituals. Both communities may even attend the funeral together, maintaining mutual respect for their distinct religious traditions (Rahman et al., 2022).

This practice reflects that interfaith prayer for the deceased is not viewed solely as a theological issue but as an expression of mutual care and compassion, two core values deeply embedded in Sundanese cultural teachings that promote tolerance and coexistence. Consequently, interfaith condolences in Bulungcangkring Village serve not only as spiritual acts but also as social mechanisms that strengthen interreligious relationships, reduce prejudice, and model inclusive and humane religiosity (Hidayah et al., 2024). Such practices challenge exclusivist interpretations of

religious ritual, demonstrating that empathy and faith can coexist harmoniously. They also counter the narrow view that praying for individuals of different faiths is taboo, illustrating that communities can differentiate between expressions of empathy and theological conviction. In this sense, interfaith condolence rituals function as symbols of religious moderation, normatively grounded yet socially transformative in fostering harmony and cohesion within a plural society.

### Research Gap

Previous studies on the *lelayu* tradition and funeral practices in Java have primarily focused on religious rituals from an Islamic perspective or on social interactions within local cultural frameworks. However, limited research has examined the interfaith dynamics that emerge at the grassroots level, particularly between Muslim and the GITJ communities. Existing studies have tended to explore *tahlilan* as a form of religious acculturation or condolences as an expression of solidarity, yet few have comprehensively investigated how these two religious communities engage simultaneously in shared mourning practices while maintaining ritual autonomy and theological boundaries.

Thus, the research gap identified lies in the need for empirical studies that document and analyze how Muslim and Christian communities in Bulungcangkring Village cultivate harmony through the interfaith *lelayu* tradition. The mechanisms of cooperation, social adaptation, and potential friction in such interreligious encounters remain underexplored in previous literature. This research seeks to fill that gap by providing an in-depth examination of interfaith condolence practices as a lived expression of religious moderation and tolerance. By grounding its analysis in real community interactions rather than abstract theological discourse, this study contributes a fresh perspective to the study of pluralism and social harmony in Indonesian society.

### Conceptual Framework

In a society characterized by diverse beliefs, differences do not necessarily create separation. On the contrary, within profoundly human experiences such as grief and loss, opportunities arise to build closeness, share emotions, and strengthen social bonds. The *lelayu* tradition, inherited from Javanese culture, serves as a tangible expression of empathy and solidarity in the face of death. In Bulungcangkring Village, this tradition has evolved beyond religious boundaries, becoming a universal form of human expression understood by anyone who has experienced bereavement.

This study is grounded in the understanding that social practices such as *takziah* (condolence visits) and *tahlil* (communal prayers) are not merely religious rituals, but also social and spiritual encounters that bridge believers of different faiths. Within the *interfaith lelayu* tradition, Muslims and members of the Evangelical Church in Tanah Jawa (GITJ) congregation engage not only as neighbors but as fellow human beings who share compassion and mutual support without compromising their respective beliefs. In this context, the values of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), empathy, and togetherness take precedence over theological distinctions, reinforcing the moral foundation of social harmony.

### RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative field research approach to explore the dynamics of the *lelayu* tradition as a medium of interfaith harmony in Bulungcangkring Village. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Six individuals were selected as key informants, representing various religious and social backgrounds within the community.

To provide a theoretical foundation, this study also reviewed relevant previous research. Firda Annisa's article, "*Tahlilan as a Synchronization of Religion and Culture (A Legal Maxim Perspective)*", discusses

*tahlilan* as an acculturative process that integrates elements of ancient Hindu traditions with Islamic teachings, later adapted by the *Walisongo*. From a *fiqh* perspective, *tahlilan* is regarded as a legitimate form of *'urf* (local custom) as long as it does not contradict the principles of *sharia*. Although it does not directly examine interfaith *tahlilan*, the study provides a theoretical basis showing that death rituals in Islam are flexible and capable of absorbing local values such as tolerance and harmony.

The second study, conducted by Isna, Abidah, and Salim (2024) in “*The Tahlilan Tradition: Maintaining Social Balance and Upholding Islamic Educational Values in Arang Limbung Village, Kubu Raya Regency*,” highlights *tahlilan* as a means of sustaining social equilibrium and promoting Islamic educational values within the community. The third study, by Ray Angger Kapindo (2023), “*The Tradition of Condolence and Interfaith Harmony in East Pringsewu Village, Pringsewu Regency*,” examines *takziyah* (condolences) as a site of interfaith interaction between Muslims and Catholics. In East Pringsewu, people of different faiths jointly express condolences, offer moral support, and assist with funeral arrangements regardless of religious affiliation. This practice strengthens interfaith harmony and serves as a moral foundation for coexistence amid diversity (Tudang, 2024).

From these studies, it can be concluded that the *lelayu* tradition, encompassing *takziyah* and *tahlilan*, holds significant potential in fostering interfaith relationships. These previous works offer a conceptual foundation for analyzing how humanitarian values, mutual cooperation, and tolerance are reflected in death-related practices. However, none of these studies specifically focus on the *lelayu* tradition in Bulungcangkring Village. Thus, this research seeks to fill that gap by contributing new empirical insights into interfaith condolence practices within a pluralistic rural society.

## DISCUSSION

Diversity in Islam is viewed as part of divine design, a natural provision from Allah. Differences in ethnicity, race, religion, and culture are manifestations of this diversity, observable not only at the local but also at the global level. When properly managed, such diversity can become a source of collective strength, uniting communities across boundaries. Conversely, when misunderstood, it can generate tension and conflict in social, economic, and religious life. Acts of radicalism and extremism often stem from a lack of understanding and appreciation of diversity. Therefore, educating society about the meaning of difference, particularly in religious life, is crucial.

Islamic moderation (*al-wasathiyah*) provides a conceptual and practical framework for nurturing tolerance and mutual respect (Syihabuddin et al., 2024). The Qur’an repeatedly emphasizes the importance of coexistence and mutual understanding among believers (Muklis, 2019). The Prophet Muhammad exemplified this through his leadership in Madinah, where he established a plural society based on justice, equality, and interreligious harmony (Bosra & Umiarso, 2021).

The findings of this study on the interfaith *lelayu* tradition in Bulungcangkring Village reveal that socio-religious practices can effectively promote social cohesion within a religiously diverse community. The *lelayu* tradition, which includes both *takziyah* and *tahlilan*, functions not merely as a ritual of mourning but as a humanitarian meeting point that unites people across religious lines. In practice, members of the Muslim community and the Evangelical Church in Java (GITJ) congregation participate collaboratively in funeral ceremonies, offering prayers, expressing sympathy, and supporting the bereaved family. Such participation occurs within mutually respected theological boundaries, demonstrating active tolerance and interfaith solidarity in daily life.

Theoretically, this phenomenon aligns with the Islamic legal concept of *'urf* (custom), which recognizes the legitimacy of local traditions as long as they do not contravene *sharia* principles. *Tahlilan*, as part of the broader *lelayu* tradition, has evolved into a widely accepted socio-religious practice due to its rich spiritual and social dimensions, emphasizing solidarity, empathy, and respect for the deceased. In the Bulungcangkring context, *tahlilan* also serves as a social forum where individuals from different faiths gather to strengthen interpersonal bonds rooted in shared humanitarian values.

The tradition of *takziah* conveys a parallel message. In this community, mourning is not perceived as a mere formality but as an expression of empathy that transcends religious boundaries. Death is understood as a universal human experience, and comforting the bereaved is regarded as a shared moral responsibility. Local cultural values such as *tepo seliro* (tolerance), harmony, and *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) play a pivotal role in bridging religious differences and nurturing a sense of togetherness.

Consequently, the *lelayu* tradition in Bulungcangkring Village represents more than a cultural legacy. It stands as a living embodiment of religious moderation and interfaith harmony. It demonstrates that faith-based communities can coexist not merely through theological tolerance but through shared human experiences that foster empathy, cooperation, and sustainable peace.

This finding aligns with previous research, such as Kapindo (2023), which demonstrates that condolence practices can serve as natural spaces for interfaith interaction, and Annisa (2022), which emphasizes that *tahlilan* (a religious gathering), is a religious-cultural practice open to social values. However, the present study offers a distinct contribution by focusing on the interfaith *lelayu* practices in one specific setting, Bulungcangkring Village, which has not been extensively studied before.

This discussion also reveals that interfaith dialogue does not necessarily have to occur in formal forums or theological discussions but can instead emerge organically through shared emotional experiences such as grief and loss. In this shared space of mourning, communities demonstrate an inclusive form of spirituality and respect for diversity without compromising their religious identities.

Thus, the interfaith *lelayu* tradition in Bulungcangkring represents a tangible manifestation of religious moderation. This study positions the interfaith *lelayu* practice as a reflection of moderate religiosity within a pluralistic society. The findings confirm that death is not merely a personal spiritual experience but also a collective social event that involves the entire community. The *lelayu* tradition, which encompasses *takziah* (offering condolences) and *tahlil* (communal prayer for the deceased), functions as a social arena where Muslims and members of the GITJ gather, interact, and honor one another during moments of grief.

The methodology adopted, a qualitative approach supported by literature review, allows for an in-depth understanding of this religious-cultural practice despite its limited scope. A review of prior studies indicates that death-related traditions such as *tahlilan* and *takziah* have long served as effective mechanisms for fostering social bonds among religious communities in Indonesia. These findings align with the present study, which situates such practices within the framework of local customs that remain legitimate under Islamic law, as long as they do not contradict core religious principles.

This research specifically examines how interfaith interactions occur during the *lelayu* process. Notably, participation in this tradition is not merely symbolic but also substantive: Muslims assist in the mourning rituals of Christians, and vice versa, without intervening in theological matters. This illustrates that spirituality in the Indonesian local context can flourish within an inclusive and respectful social space.

From the perspective of *tahlil*, this tradition extends beyond religious recitation for the deceased; it also serves as a social gathering that reinforces community solidarity. The recitations of *dhikr*, *salawat*, and prayers not only convey blessings to the deceased but also strengthen the spiritual and emotional bonds among the living. Socially, this tradition nurtures a spirit of cooperation, reinforces social networks, and serves as a means of cultivating the community's religious character.

Meanwhile, *takziyah* or condolence visits embody a universal form of empathy that transcends religious boundaries. In the context of Bulungcangkring Village, residents of diverse religious backgrounds freely visit grieving families, express condolences, and offer prayers according to their own faith traditions. There is no mixing of religious rituals, but rather a profound mutual respect for each other's spiritual expressions. This demonstrates the unique strength of the interfaith condolence tradition, it functions not merely as a ritual act, but as a social bridge that reinforces human values, tolerance, and community cohesion.

The entire interfaith condolence practice in Bulungcangkring illustrates that social harmony does not necessarily have to be built through formal dialogue; instead, it can emerge organically from everyday, contextual, and emotionally resonant practices. In a world still confronted by sectarianism and intolerance, Bulungcangkring Village offers an exemplary model of how death rituals can serve as powerful moments for nurturing interfaith solidarity.

The interfaith *lelayu* tradition possesses a distinctive character that differentiates it from other mourning rituals. This uniqueness lies in its integration of local cultural values with an inclusive religious spirit. Social solidarity becomes the central value transcending religious boundaries, enabling people of various faiths to come together and pay their final respects without compromising their religious identities. This illustrates that empathy and compassion extend beyond

theological boundaries and are rooted in universal human values.

Furthermore, the tradition demonstrates the community's cultural flexibility in accommodating differences in faith. Villagers are able to adapt to the mourning customs of each religion without blending rituals. For example, when Muslims visit the home of a Christian mourner, they show respect by remaining silent or praying privately, rather than participating in the host's formal rites. This reflects a form of *practical tolerance* deeply embedded in community life, distinct from the formalities of interfaith dialogue.

This tradition also symbolizes local cultural unity, particularly in Javanese society, where values such as *rukun* (harmony), *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), and *tepo seliro* (tolerance) are foundational principles of social life. In such contexts, cultural identity often becomes a stronger unifying force than religious difference. The *lelayu* event thus becomes a natural meeting point that strengthens social relationships across religious lines.

Moreover, interfaith *lelayu* serves as an informal yet profound form of interfaith dialogue. It does not take the shape of seminars or formal forums but unfolds through genuine, everyday human interactions. People come to understand and appreciate other faiths not through theological debate but through empathy, compassion, and shared emotional experiences. This fosters a more meaningful and grounded form of dialogue.

Another distinctive feature of this tradition is the pivotal role of the local community in maintaining harmony. It is not religious institutions that dominate, but rather neighborhood associations (*RT/RW*), local volunteers, and residents themselves who ensure the smooth organization of *lelayu* events. Hence, the interfaith *lelayu* in Bulungcangkring stands as a powerful illustration that social cohesion in a pluralistic society can be achieved through inclusive cultural practices and the active participation of local communities.

The interfaith *lelayu* tradition in Bulungcangkring Village serves as a humanitarian meeting point, enabling Muslims and members of the GITJ to transcend religious boundaries during moments of mourning and bereavement. This interaction not only strengthens interpersonal connections but also reinforces social cohesion within a pluralistic community.

Participation in the mourning process is both symbolic and substantive. Members of each religious community not only attend but also offer prayers and moral support, all while maintaining respect for religious boundaries and refraining from engaging in the theological elements of other faiths. Such active involvement represents a tangible expression of tolerance and interfaith harmony. The traditions of *tahlil* (Islamic communal prayer for the deceased) and *takziah* (condolence visits) in Bulungcangkring have evolved into social mechanisms that foster mutual cooperation, empathy, and solidarity, demonstrating that spirituality can flourish in inclusive environments where diversity is respected.

Empathy stands at the core of the *lelayu* tradition. Individuals from various faith backgrounds adapt respectfully to each other's customs without blending religious rituals, exemplifying *practical tolerance* and the power of local cultural values in bridging religious differences.

A distinctive feature of this tradition is its organic and informal approach to interfaith dialogue. Rather than emerging through structured theological forums, dialogue develops naturally through real-life interactions and shared emotional experiences, particularly in facing death together. In this process, local social communities, rather than formal religious institutions, play a vital role in maintaining harmony during *lelayu* events. This dynamic underscores the importance of social solidarity and the inclusivity embedded within local culture as the foundation of peaceful coexistence.

## CLOSING

The interfaith *lelayu* tradition in Bulungcangkring Village is not only a practice that strengthens social solidarity but also a concrete manifestation of harmony in diversity and religious moderation within a pluralistic society. This tradition, which encompasses *takziah* and *tahlil* and involves both the Muslim community and the Evangelical Church in Java (GITJ), illustrates that death is not solely a religious event but also a social moment that naturally fosters relationships among people of different faiths, without causing theological friction. Through the interfaith *lelayu* practice, the Bulungcangkring community demonstrates that coexistence amid diversity is achievable, affirming that the values of humanity, tolerance, and mutual cooperation remain essential pillars of peace in a multicultural society.

This research provides an academic contribution by mapping new forms of social solidarity and religious moderation within a multicultural context, an area that has not been extensively studied. Beyond enriching scholarship in the sociology of religion and cultural anthropology, the findings broaden analytical perspectives on the inculturation and adaptation of Islamic teachings within local traditions, particularly in the context of death rituals.

Practically, the results of this study offer guidance for communities seeking to build interfaith harmony. The *lelayu* tradition demonstrates that meaningful interfaith interaction is not only possible but also effective in strengthening solidarity and empathy among religious groups. This tradition could be adapted in other pluralistic societies as a model for fostering harmony and mitigating tendencies toward intolerance and exclusivism.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its in-depth examination of interfaith social practices and innovations in Bulungcangkring Village, while also providing a foundation for future studies on Muslim-Christian relations in Islamic

boarding schools and minority church contexts. The findings can serve as a reference point for further research in regions with similar socio-religious characteristics. Future studies may explore the enabling and constraining factors of interfaith traditions at the regional level, the role of religious leaders and institutions in sustaining harmony, and the development of religious moderation programs rooted in local traditions that can be implemented nationally. A longitudinal approach would also be valuable to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of interfaith *lelayu* traditions in addressing social change, ensuring that the academic and practical impacts of this study remain sustainable.

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### **Interview**

- Interview With Abgrid, 2025
- Interview With Harni, 2025
- Interview With Joko, 2025
- Interview With Kusnan, 2025
- Interview With Kuthianah, 2025
- Interview With Islachuddin, 2025