

Cultural Expression and Religious Syncretism in The *Ngunjung Buyut* Tradition: Implications for Multicultural Education Discourse in Cirebon

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Abstract: The cultural diversity of Cirebon society is increasingly challenged by the rise of intolerance, social polarization, and the spread of radical ideologies that threaten to undermine social cohesion. Within this context, local traditions are recognized as potential instruments of social learning capable of internalizing the values of multicultural coexistence. This study aims to analyze the forms of cultural expression and religious syncretism embedded in the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition, identify the principles of Islamic multicultural education reflected in the tradition, and examine its implications for the development of multicultural education discourse in Cirebon. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of cultural anthropology, religious syncretism, and multicultural education by positioning the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition as both an epistemological resource of indigenous knowledge and a model of community-based multicultural pedagogy. Employing a qualitative research design with an interpretive-anthropological approach, this study adopts ethnography as its methodological framework. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with customary leaders, cultural practitioners, and academics, as well as document and literature analysis. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition represents an adaptive form of religious syncretism through the accommodation of Islamic values within local cultural practices. The tradition facilitates the internalization of social solidarity, mutual cooperation, tolerance, respect for collective memory, spirituality, and social harmony through participatory cultural experiences. These findings demonstrate that local traditions function as a space for the production of lived multiculturalism, strengthening social cohesion while offering an alternative paradigm for the advancement of Islamic multicultural education that is more contextual, participatory, and socially relevant. Furthermore, the study highlights the strategic role of local traditions in fostering community resilience against intolerance and radicalism.

Keywords: *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition; religious syncretism; Islamic multicultural education; lived multiculturalism; community-based multicultural pedagogy.

Introduction

Cirebon is characterized by a religiously, culturally, and ethnically plural society, distinguished by its unique linguistic features and rich local traditions. This diversity has evolved through a long and dynamic process of historical and social development. (Nursanty & Susilowati, 2024) (Kartika et al., 2020). As a multicultural society, Cirebon has a long-standing history of diversity shaped by the interaction of various ethnic groups and cultural traditions, including Javanese, Sundanese, European, Arab, and Chinese communities. This historical process is reflected in the city's original name, Caruban, which literally means “mixture” or “blending” (Sulendraningrat, 1985) (Atja, 1986). The term symbolizes the harmonious coexistence that has long characterized Cirebon society. Nevertheless, diversity should not be viewed solely as a source of social capital that fosters social integration and cohesion (Mahmudin et al., 2021), it also presents significant challenges in sustaining social harmony and intercommunal coexistence (Nye, 2007).

Intolerance, discrimination rooted in group-based sentiments, and identity-based conflicts constitute significant threats to the stability and harmony of multicultural societies. Social polarization, manifested in the fragmentation of society into opposing groups, remains an enduring feature of contemporary social dynamics (May, 2000). Such divisions are frequently driven by identity-based sentiments, socioeconomic disparities, and political differences. Moreover, the ongoing process of globalization has accelerated the advancement of information and communication technologies, facilitating the rapid dissemination of ideas, beliefs, and ideological narratives. While these developments have created new opportunities for social interaction, they have also introduced additional challenges to the sustainability of multicultural harmony (Suradi, 2018). Within this context, local traditions and cultural practices are increasingly marginalized, and in some cases, are perceived as incompatible with religious orthodoxy. Consequently, the relationship between local culture and religion has evolved into a complex arena of social negotiation, in which competing interpretations and cultural identities interact to shape and sustain social cohesion in contemporary Cirebon society.

Multicultural education holds strategic significance as an educational approach for fostering awareness of pluralism, tolerance, respect for diversity, and social solidarity within heterogeneous societies (Banks, 2009) such as Cirebon. Accordingly, cultivating an inclusive consciousness that enables individuals to coexist peacefully and

harmoniously has become an indispensable prerequisite for addressing the potential challenges of future social conflicts. Multicultural education is understood as a process of social transformation aimed at nurturing inclusive attitudes grounded in intercultural awareness (Banks, 2001) (Arab et al., 2026). This perspective is closely aligned with the cultural realities embedded in the local traditions of Cirebon society. The persistence and continuity of traditional cultural practices demonstrate their enduring role as informal educational spaces through which communities transmit values, norms, and ethical principles essential for the sustainability of future generations. From the perspective of multiculturalism, these living cultural traditions serve as authentic arenas for the expression and enactment of social solidarity, mutual recognition, and social integration within the everyday lives of the community (Parekh, 2000).

One of the enduring local cultural practices in Cirebon that demonstrates the close interrelationship between religion, culture, and social solidarity is the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition (Arief et al., 2024). This tradition constitutes a cultural expression of communal reverence for ancestors or influential historical figures who have played a significant role in shaping the community's social identity. The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition is manifested through a variety of ritual and cultural activities, including pilgrimage to ancestral graves, collective prayers, *sedekah bumi* (earth thanksgiving ceremonies), and traditional *wayang* performances, all of which actively involve participants from diverse social and religious backgrounds (Hidayat, 2017). These ritual practices illustrate the convergence of Islamic values and indigenous cultural traditions that have been transmitted across generations. Accordingly, the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition may be understood as a distinctive form of religious syncretism characteristic of the coastal communities of Java.

The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition represents one of the prominent manifestations of religious syncretism that has evolved through a continuous process of dialogue between religious values and local cultural traditions. Syncretism within society does not necessarily emerge in rigid or formalistic forms; rather, it adapts to local cultural contexts, giving rise to contextualized religio-cultural expressions and ritual practices. The integration of religious rituals with customary traditions as a means of honoring ancestors reflects an ongoing process of cultural accommodation within the religious life of the community (Sohrah et al., 2023). From a socio-anthropological perspective on religion, such practices should not be understood merely as formal religious rituals. Instead, they function as social mechanisms that preserve communal harmony, strengthen social solidarity, and reinforce the collective identity of the community. (Mustofa, 2019).

Religious syncretic practices, such as the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition, are frequently met with resistance from puritan religious groups, which regard such practices as deviations from Islamic creed (*'aqidah*), religious innovations (*bid'ah*), or practices inconsistent with the perceived purity of religion (Jahroni, 2018). The ongoing contestation between cultural preservation advocates and puritan religious movements reflects a fundamental tension concerning the relationship between religion and local cultural identity in Cirebon Cirebon (Muhaimin, 1995) and, more broadly, in Indonesia (Tahara et al., 2023). The growing prevalence of religious intolerance and the diminishing space for intercultural dialogue indicate an urgent need for transformative models capable of internalizing the values of multicultural education within society. Such models should be embedded in the lived traditions and sociocultural practices of local communities rather than remaining confined to formal educational settings (Jahroni, 2018). In this regard, the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition offers a community-based model for the transformation and internalization of values that promotes tolerance, inclusivity, and social integration.

A substantial body of previous research has examined the relationship between religion and local culture within Indonesian society (Kersten, 2015). Clifford Geertz (1976), seminal study of Javanese religion demonstrates a distinctive pattern of religious syncretism in which Islam, local traditions, and indigenous belief systems converge to shape the unique religious expressions of Javanese society. Other studies have likewise explored local traditions, including *sedekah bumi* (Alamsyah, 2020), *slametan* (van den Boogert, 2017), *haul*, and pilgrimage rituals (*ziarah*), as manifestations of cultural accommodation within the religious practices of Indonesian communities (Salim, n.d.). In addition, scholarship on multicultural education in Indonesia has predominantly emphasized conceptual development (Sjamsi Pasandaran, Dasim Budimansyah, 2024) the promotion of tolerance (Huda, Saeful, Rahim, Rosyada, & Zuhdi, 2024), religious moderation (Subchi et al., 2022), and character education as essential strategies for addressing societal pluralism (Bagley, 2015).

Nevertheless, these studies exhibit several important limitations. First, research on local traditions has largely concentrated on anthropological, ritualistic, or historical dimensions, with limited engagement with the discourse of multicultural education. Second, studies of multicultural education have tended to adopt normative, textual, and institutional perspectives, while paying comparatively little attention to local culture as a source of social learning and pedagogical knowledge. Third, scholarly investigations specifically addressing the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition remain scarce, particularly those examining how its religious syncretic practices may function as a pedagogical medium for strengthening multicultural values within the sociocultural context of Cirebon.

Against this background, the present study seeks to address this scholarly gap by examining the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition in the Jamblang District of Cirebon not merely as a cultural practice and religious ritual, but also as a site for the production and transmission of multicultural values within the local community. The novelty of this research lies in its integration of the perspectives of cultural studies, religious syncretism, and multicultural

education into a single, comprehensive analytical framework. Whereas previous studies have generally treated local culture and educational discourse as separate domains of inquiry, this article reconceptualizes local tradition as an epistemological resource for the development of multicultural education grounded in indigenous wisdom.

More specifically, this study aims to examine the forms of cultural expression and religious syncretism embodied in the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition as practiced by the community of Jamblang, Cirebon. It further seeks to identify the social, spiritual, and cultural values embedded within this tradition and to explore its implications for the advancement of multicultural education discourse in Cirebon. In pursuit of these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) How is religious syncretism manifested in the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition of the Jamblang community in Cirebon? (2) How does this tradition embody and transmit multicultural values within community life? (3) What is its relevance to the development of multicultural education discourse in Cirebon? It is anticipated that the findings of this study will contribute to both the theoretical advancement and the practical implementation of multicultural education in Cirebon and, more broadly, in Indonesia.

This study is expected to make both theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical perspective, it extends the scholarly discourse on the interrelationship between religion, culture, and education by proposing that local traditions can serve as epistemological foundations for the development of multicultural education. Furthermore, the study enriches the literature on religious syncretism in Indonesia through an interdisciplinary approach that integrates cultural anthropology, the sociology of religion, and educational studies. From a practical perspective, the findings are expected to provide a valuable reference for the development of multicultural education models grounded in local wisdom that are more contextual, inclusive, and responsive to the social realities of Indonesian society. In this regard, the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition should be understood not merely as a form of cultural heritage, but also as a medium of social learning with the potential to foster tolerance, promote religious moderation, and strengthen social integration within multicultural communities.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in an interpretive-anthropological approach. A qualitative methodology was considered appropriate because the study seeks to interpret the socio-religious realities embodied in the cultural expressions and religious syncretism of the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition in Cirebon. The interpretive-anthropological paradigm was adopted to explore the meanings, symbols, values, and socially constructed understandings embedded within the community through interpretive analysis of the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition (Field-Springer, 2020). Accordingly, this research is situated within an ethnographic framework, focusing on the interrelationship between local traditions, religious practices (Leppälä et al., 2024) and the development of multicultural education discourse in Cirebon. Through this ethnographic inquiry, the study seeks to demonstrate that the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition should not be understood merely as a symbolic or formalistic cultural ritual; rather, it constitutes a dynamic space for social construction and community learning, encompassing spiritual, moral, ethical, and historical dimensions that shape the collective life of the community.

The study was conducted in the Jamblang community of Cirebon, where the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition continues to be actively practiced. Although this tradition is observed more broadly across Cirebon, Jamblang was purposively selected as the research site due to its distinctive social characteristics. The community is highly pluralistic and culturally rich, yet it continues to demonstrate harmonious social relations despite its religious, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity. This setting therefore provides an appropriate context for examining the interplay between local traditions, religious syncretism, and multicultural values. Research participants were selected through purposive sampling (Andrade, 2021), whereby informants were intentionally chosen based on the richness of the information they could provide, their expertise, and their direct involvement in the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition. The participants included customary leaders, academics, and Cirebonese cultural practitioners, all of whom possessed extensive knowledge and experience relevant to the focus of this study.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. Participant observation involved the direct observation of the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition, encompassing the preparation of ritual activities, the sequence of cultural ceremonies, patterns of community interaction, and the religious and customary symbols embedded throughout the event. This approach enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth empirical understanding of the community's social relationships and cultural practices. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' interpretations of the tradition, including its religious significance, forms of religious syncretism, cultural symbolism, and their perspectives on tolerance and multicultural coexistence within Cirebon society. To complement the field data, a literature review was undertaken through a critical examination of scholarly works addressing cultural anthropology, religious syncretism, multicultural education, and the local wisdom of the Cirebonese community.

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher, who functioned as the human instrument and was directly involved in the processes of data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Serving as the principal research instrument enabled the researcher to collect data in a flexible, in-depth, and context-sensitive manner, thereby

accommodating the sociocultural dynamics of the community under investigation. Throughout the research process, the researcher also sought to maintain analytical objectivity and cultural sensitivity to ensure that the data accurately reflected the authentic social realities of the participants.

In fulfilling this role, the researcher engaged intensively in the field through participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and document analysis, thereby gaining a comprehensive understanding of the meanings, values, and patterns of social interaction embedded within the research community. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed, including source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking. These procedures were undertaken to verify the consistency between the researcher's interpretations and the participants' lived experiences and understandings, thereby strengthening the credibility of the study.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (Salmona & Kaczynski, 2024) which consists of three interrelated stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data reduction stage, information obtained from participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis was systematically selected, categorized, and condensed in accordance with the research objectives, with particular emphasis on cultural expressions, religious syncretism, and the multicultural values embodied in the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition.

The reduced data were subsequently organized and presented through narrative descriptions, thematic matrices, and symbolic interpretations to facilitate a systematic understanding of the relationships and patterns emerging from the data. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions through the interpretation of cultural meanings, patterns of religious syncretism, and their implications for strengthening multicultural education discourse within Cirebon society. In addition, the analysis was informed by a symbolic-anthropological perspective, through which symbols, rituals, and cultural practices were interpreted as representations of the community's social and spiritual values.

Results and Discussion

1. Cultural Expressions and Religious Syncretism in the *Ngunjung Buyut* Tradition

The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition constitutes a distinctive form of cultural-religious practice in Cirebon, reflecting a dynamic relationship between local cultural heritage and the Islamic teachings that have evolved within the community. From the perspective of the anthropology of religion, this ritual cannot be understood merely as an annual ceremonial activity; rather, it represents a social space in which religious meanings are continuously produced, reproduced, and negotiated in response to changing sociocultural contexts (Solikhin et al., 2025). In this regard, Made Casta argues that the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition represents a form of *lived religion*, namely, a mode of religious practice that emerges from the lived experiences of the community. In Cirebon, the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition constitutes an ancestral heritage practiced by communities shaped by Hindu-Islamic cultural traditions (Casta, 2026). The tradition thus demonstrates that religious expression is not necessarily synonymous with normative doctrine; rather, it is also shaped by collective memory, historical experiences, and locally embedded cultural constructions.

From a cultural anthropological perspective, *Ngunjung Buyut* represents a form of collective identity that serves to preserve historical continuity, strengthen social solidarity, and reproduce cultural values across generations. The ritual functions as a symbolic medium that connects the community with its ancestors (ancestor veneration) as historical figures regarded as having made significant contributions to the formation and development of the community. Reverence for ancestors should not be understood merely as a spiritual practice; rather, it constitutes an expression of appreciation for the historical memory that has shaped the community's social identity. As Maurice Halbwachs argues, collective memory constitutes a fundamental basis for the formation of group identity because experiences of the past are continually reconstructed through recurring social practices. In *On Collective Memory*, Halbwachs emphasizes that memory is never entirely individual in nature (Syahroni, 2025). Rather, memory is fundamentally a social construction that is formed, maintained, and transmitted through various symbolic forms produced by communities, including language, images, written texts, and other media that function as repositories and vehicles for the preservation and transmission of collective memory.

Within the context of *Ngunjung Buyut*, the annual ritual serves as a mechanism for reproducing collective memory, enabling younger generations to understand the origins of their community, the values of togetherness, and their historical relationship with the territory in which they live. In this sense, the tradition functions as a cultural institution through which social values are continuously transmitted across generations. At the same time, the cultural symbols embedded in the ritual including ancestral graves, gravestones, communal meals, processions, prayers, and the participation of diverse segments of the community constitute a symbolic system of meaning that reinforces social cohesion. Drawing on Clifford Geertz's perspective, these symbols operate simultaneously as a model of reality and a model for reality (Kurniawan, 2024). In other words, they not only

represent the community's worldview but also shape patterns of social behavior that are regarded as desirable and socially appropriate. Consequently, *Ngunjung Buyut* provides a cultural space for the reproduction and reinforcement of values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), respect for elders, communal solidarity, and social responsibility.

Within the context of modernization, the continuity of this tradition demonstrates that local culture is neither static nor merely a romanticized remnant of the past. Rather, it undergoes continuous processes of adaptation in response to social change through the reinterpretation of meanings, innovation in ritual forms, and integration with Islamic religious practices. *Ngunjung Buyut* thus functions as a mechanism for preserving local wisdom while simultaneously serving as an arena for negotiating cultural identity amid the forces of globalization and cultural homogenization. The phenomenon of *Ngunjung Buyut* further reveals a syncretic character that has emerged through the historical process of Islamization in Cirebon society. In this context, syncretism should not be understood simply as the blending of religious doctrines, but rather as a process of cultural accommodation. This adaptive process has enabled Islamic values to be embraced without eliminating the symbolic structures of the local community. Islam developed through mechanisms of cultural acculturation, whereby normative religious teachings entered into a dialogical interaction with traditions that had already been deeply rooted in the social life of the community.

According to Wastani Bajuri, (2026), the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition constitutes an ancestral heritage of Cirebon that embodies Islamic values. This is evident in the recitation of Qur'anic verses, *tahlil*, collective prayers, and *dhikr* that accompany the ritual proceedings. The practice of *Ngunjung Buyut* among Cirebon communities demonstrates how religious legitimacy is conferred upon the tradition through the incorporation of Islamic symbols and practices. At the same time, elements of local culture continue to be preserved through reverence for ancestral graves, beliefs concerning the spiritual blessings associated with particular places, the use of ritual foods, and symbolic practices that reflect a harmonious relationship between human beings, nature, and their ancestors. This perspective can be examined through the theoretical framework of Clifford Geertz (Wiyani, 2023). From this perspective, religion is understood not merely as a theological system but also as a cultural reality that is continuously produced and reproduced through social interaction. Geertz conceptualizes religion as a system of symbols that shapes conceptions of reality, instills particular motivations and dispositions, and provides legitimacy for socially meaningful actions. Accordingly, religious practices such as the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition can be understood as symbolic expressions that reflect the dialectical relationship between religious beliefs, cultural identity, and the social structures of the community.

The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition reflects a form of cultural Islam that has evolved through a synthesis between local belief systems and Islamic teachings. Following Robert Redfield, (1955) conceptual framework, this phenomenon can be understood through the distinction between the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition. The Great Tradition represents normative Islamic teachings rooted in authoritative religious texts, whereas the Little Tradition refers to the religious practices of local communities shaped by their particular cultural experiences. The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition constitutes a point of convergence between these two traditions, giving rise to a distinctive and contextually grounded form of religious expression. The community does not merely receive religious doctrines passively; rather, its members actively interpret and enact Islamic teachings in accordance with their lived social and cultural experiences. Accordingly, religious syncretism manifested in the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition is more appropriately understood as a creative process through which a locally grounded religious identity is constructed and negotiated, rather than as a deviation from religious orthodoxy.

One of the defining characteristics of *Ngunjung Buyut* is its capacity to function as an arena in which diverse religious meanings are negotiated within the community. The ritual demonstrates that religious practice is situated within an ongoing dialogue among normative doctrine, cultural experience, and individual and collective interpretation. According to Casta, (2026) some community members understand the ritual primarily as an expression of respect for the contributions of their ancestors, without attributing any theological significance to the ancestral figure known as the *buyut*. Wastani Bajuri, (2026) similarly explains that, for this group, the prayers offered during the ritual are directed exclusively to Allah, while the ancestral grave serves merely as a reminder of the community's historical heritage and collective identity. Conversely, some community members continue to associate the ritual with beliefs concerning the spiritual blessings (*barakah*) of particular places or the sacred significance attributed to ancestral graves. These divergent interpretations demonstrate the plurality of meanings embedded in the community's religious practices and illustrate how religious understanding is continuously negotiated within a culturally diverse social context. Generational differences also shape the construction of meaning surrounding the ritual. Older generations tend to preserve the spiritual and symbolic dimensions transmitted across generations, whereas younger generations are more likely to understand *Ngunjung Buyut* as a form of cultural identity, historical heritage, and a means of preserving local traditions. This generational shift demonstrates that the ritual undergoes continuous reinterpretation in response to transformations in social structures, educational experiences, and access to contemporary religious discourses.

Cultural traditions constitute an arena of symbolic struggle, as conceptualized by Pierre Bourdieu, (1979). Various social actors seek to establish legitimacy in defining which forms of religious practice are regarded as

legitimate through symbolic capital, including scholarly authority, institutional position, and social influence (Harker et al., 2009). Within this context, customary leaders and local religious figures construct and negotiate narratives concerning the meaning and legitimacy of *Ngunjung Buyut*. As part of this process, elements perceived as incompatible with Islamic teachings are gradually diminished or reinterpreted, while practices such as the recitation of prayers, *tahlil*, religious study sessions, and communal charitable offerings are increasingly reinforced. This phenomenon demonstrates that the tradition has not been eradicated; rather, it has undergone a process of transformation through negotiation between the demands of Islamic orthodoxy and the community's need to preserve its local cultural identity. *Ngunjung Buyut* thus represents a dialectical space in which competing discourses of formal religion and local culture are continuously contested and negotiated. The tradition illustrates that the Islamization of society has proceeded through processes of negotiation rather than unilateral domination, thereby generating an adaptive form of religious expression capable of responding to broader processes of social change.

2. Identifying the Values of Multicultural Islamic Education Embedded in the *Ngunjung Buyut* Tradition

The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition represents not merely a form of cultural heritage but also a social space in which the values of multicultural Islamic education are continuously reproduced. Through the dynamic interplay between religion, culture, and social structures, these educational values are transmitted in ways that are both inclusive and adaptive. According to Wastani Bajuri, (2026) traditions and cultural practices preserved by communities essentially constitute the last line of defense against the detrimental influences of external cultural forces. From the perspective of the anthropology of education, therefore, rituals should not be understood merely as ceremonial activities. Rather, they constitute pedagogical mechanisms through which systems of values are transmitted, collective identities are shaped, and social norms are internalized by subsequent generations (Hariyono, Candra, dkk 2024). Accordingly, identifying the values embedded in the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition requires an analytical examination of how a community constructs, transmits, negotiates, and transforms the values that sustain social life while simultaneously strengthening contextually grounded religious practices.

Within the framework of multicultural Islamic education, the values embedded in the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition demonstrate that educational processes can take place through culturally situated practices, or cultural pedagogy, that are embedded in community life. The tradition functions as an arena for social learning, enabling community members to internalize collective values, tolerance, respect for diversity, social responsibility, and a form of spirituality grounded in lived experience (lived religion). In this regard, *Ngunjung Buyut* serves as a space for the reproduction of cultural capital as well as a medium through which social habitus is formed, thereby contributing to the development of an inclusive and harmonious society. From Pierre Bourdieu's perspective (Darmawan, 2024), the reproduction of values takes place through the formation of habitus, understood as a set of socially acquired dispositions transmitted through recurrent cultural practices. The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition constitutes one such mechanism of cultural reproduction because it provides a participatory space in which diverse segments of the community come together through a shared cultural experience. Through collective participation in the ritual, community members not only preserve their cultural heritage but also internalize the social values that underpin their shared life.

The values of multicultural Islamic education are cultivated through the interaction between Islamic teachings that emphasize moderation (*tawasuth*), balance (*tawazun*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and justice (*i'tidal*) (Djazilan, 2025). The cultivation of these dispositions through traditional practices demonstrates that educational values do not emerge in an abstract form; rather, they are constructed through social experiences that are continuously reproduced within community life. According to Casta, (2026) one of the principal values reflected in the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition is social solidarity, togetherness, and communal fraternity. Casta further argues that the implementation of the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition provides a space for social collaboration involving virtually all segments of the community, regardless of age or social group. Each community member contributes according to their respective capacities, as the tradition is understood through the local expression *buyut duwe gawe*, meaning "the ancestor has an occasion to commemorate" or "the ancestor has a communal undertaking." This understanding transforms the ritual into a collective responsibility, undertaken both as an expression of reverence for the ancestors and as an effort to preserve cultural heritage. The ritual involves nearly all segments of the community, irrespective of social status, age, or socioeconomic background. Such collective participation creates a shared space of social interaction that strengthens social cohesion and fosters closer relationships among different groups within the community.

From the perspective of multicultural Islamic education, such collective experiences constitute an effective medium for social learning. Through participation in the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition, community members acquire firsthand knowledge of the importance of cooperation, mutual respect, and collective responsibility in social life. This process of value internalization takes place through tangible social experiences rather than solely through the transmission of normative doctrines. Accordingly, the practice of *Ngunjung Buyut* functions as a process

through which the values of inclusivity and togetherness are internalized, contributing to the development of the community's social character. From a cultural anthropological perspective, this practice also serves as a mechanism for preserving collective memory (Yuniar et al., 2026) and maintaining the continuity of community identity. The *buyut* figure is positioned as a historical symbol representing the community's origins, struggles, and moral values transmitted to subsequent generations. Reverence for the *buyut*, therefore, constitutes one of the fundamental values embedded in the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition.

The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition also functions as a medium for the informal transmission of social ethics through active community participation. It embodies a range of values, including respect for elders, social concern, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), simplicity, deliberation, and collective responsibility. These values are transmitted and transformed through direct involvement in the ritual process. From a social learning perspective, such internalization occurs through processes of observation, imitation, and participation (Imamah & Rofiq, 2026) enabling younger generations to learn social norms through concrete lived experiences. Children and adolescents who participate in the preparation and implementation of the ritual gradually develop a social *habitus* that values togetherness, mutual support, and concern for the wider community. In this regard, *Ngunjung Buyut* functions as a pedagogical space in which cultural, educational, and religious dimensions converge. The values of multicultural Islamic education are therefore not transmitted solely through verbal instruction; rather, they are embodied and enacted through shared social practices that contribute to strengthening the community's social character.

Some members of the community regard the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition as an expression of reverence for the contributions of their ancestors that is not incompatible with Islamic teachings. This phenomenon demonstrates that multicultural Islamic education seeks to cultivate dialogical spaces in which diverse interpretations can coexist peacefully within a framework of mutual respect. In this regard, the tradition is relevant as a medium for learning about the importance of intra-religious tolerance. Conceptually, therefore, the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition constitutes a culturally grounded pedagogical space in which the values of multicultural Islamic education are continuously reproduced through processes of internalization, negotiation, and transformation. Values such as social solidarity, transcendental spirituality, respect for collective memory, social ethics, tolerance, and religious moderation are cultivated through lived ritual experiences embedded in the everyday life of the community. These findings contribute to the broader scholarship on multicultural Islamic education by demonstrating that local traditions can function as effective educational media for fostering inclusive, harmonious, and culturally resilient communities amid the dynamic conditions of modernity.

3. Implications of the *Ngunjung Buyut* Tradition for the Development of Multicultural Education Discourse in Cirebon

Cirebon Regency has a concerning record with regard to intolerance, violence, and radicalism. A particularly distressing incident occurred in 2011 (Andri, 2011), and by 2018, Cirebon had been designated as a "red zone" for radicalism (Diskominfo, 2018). At the same time, various forms of juvenile delinquency, ranging from intergroup brawls to motorcycle gang activity, have continued to occur in the region (Waled, 2023). In response to these challenges, the Cirebon District Police have undertaken socialization programs and preventive guidance initiatives in educational institutions, particularly following an increase in cases of violence and intolerance (Humas, 2023). Between 2011 and 2022, several arrests of individuals suspected of involvement in terrorist activities were recorded in the Cirebon area. Notably, some of these arrests took place in Jamblang District, particularly in Orimalang Village, on September 8, 2011; January 15, 2016; August 15, 2019; and, most recently, April 4, 2021 (Wahid, 2017).

Based on the findings of this case study, there is a pressing need for an adaptive, context-sensitive, and implementable model of multicultural Islamic education to strengthen community resilience, prevent the spread of radical ideologies, and foster an inclusive culture of religious life. According to Wastani Bajuri, (2026), one potential strategy is the preservation of cultural traditions grounded in Islamic values. In this regard, *Ngunjung Buyut* represents a tradition with deep historical roots and strong Islamic significance for the people of Cirebon. Its significance extends beyond that of a local cultural-religious practice; it also offers important conceptual contributions to the development of multicultural education paradigms in Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that multicultural values are not produced exclusively through formal educational institutions or state policies. Rather, they emerge organically and are continuously reproduced through cultural practices embedded in community life. *Ngunjung Buyut* can therefore be understood as a social laboratory that illustrates how communities construct interpersonal relationships, negotiate differences, and continuously transmit values of inclusivity across generations.

These implications call for a reconstruction of the prevailing paradigm of multicultural education, which has traditionally tended to emphasize normative and curriculum-oriented approaches. The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition demonstrates that multicultural education also possesses a strong epistemological foundation in the cultural experiences of Indonesian communities, particularly in the form of indigenous knowledge. Accordingly, the development of multicultural education theory needs to create greater conceptual space for local wisdom as a

legitimate source of knowledge and educational practice. Over the past several decades, scholarship on multicultural education has been significantly influenced by Western paradigms that emphasize equality, minority rights, anti-racism, and the recognition of diverse identities (Wulandari, 2020). Although these perspectives have made important contributions to the field, their application within the Indonesian context has not always fully accounted for the distinctive characteristics of communities shaped by locally embedded cultural experiences. Consequently, multicultural education has often been conceptualized as a set of normative principles delivered through formal curricula, with limited integration into the lived social realities of local communities.

The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition offers an alternative epistemological foundation for the development of multicultural education in Indonesia. In this context, local traditions can be positioned as epistemic resources capable of generating forms of multicultural education that are context-sensitive, participatory, and experience-based (Falaq & Juhadi, 2023). This argument also supports the broader agenda of decolonizing knowledge in educational scholarship, which seeks to move beyond the dominance of universalizing paradigms toward greater recognition of local knowledge systems and indigenous knowledge (Pratama, n.d.). Within this framework, *Ngunjung Buyut* should not be regarded merely as a cultural object of study, but rather as a source of theoretical insight capable of illuminating how Indonesian communities construct and sustain multicultural ways of life through their own historical and cultural experiences.

The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition demonstrates that education does not take place exclusively within formal classroom settings but also emerges through cultural interactions embedded in community life. The entire sequence of rituals creates a collective learning environment in which individuals develop the capacity to cooperate, respect others, cultivate social empathy, and understand their cultural identity. From the perspective of experiential learning (Kolb, 2014), learning takes place through direct experience that involves active participation in community life. Younger generations do not merely receive information about the importance of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) or tolerance; rather, they experience these values directly through their involvement in the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of the ritual. Such embodied experiences facilitate deeper value internalization than learning processes based solely on abstract or conceptual instruction.

From a multicultural education perspective, tolerance should not be understood merely as an outcome of cognitive learning; rather, it constitutes a social competence developed through repeated and participatory cultural practices (Wardani, dkk 2026). This argument challenges the tendency of multicultural education to remain dominated by formalistic approaches. To date, multicultural education has largely been implemented through the incorporation of instructional content addressing diversity, tolerance, and human rights (Firtikasari & Andiana, 2024). However, such approaches have not yet fully succeeded in providing learners with authentic experiences of multicultural social life. This tendency positions multiculturalism primarily as an object of knowledge rather than as a lived social experience. Consequently, learners may acquire a conceptual understanding of tolerance without necessarily having sufficient opportunities to develop empathy, engage in meaningful dialogue, or cultivate the capacity to interact constructively with individuals and groups from different backgrounds.

The *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition offers a different perspective. Multicultural education unfolds through collective experiences that engage emotions, symbols, participation, and direct social practices. The values of inclusivity are cultivated through collective action rather than merely through the transmission of information. This calls for a reconstruction of the multicultural education paradigm that places greater emphasis on cultural experience than on content-based learning alone (Fiqry, 2025). The tradition creates a space for social integration by bringing community members together through shared cultural experiences (Aslan & Ningtyas, 2025). The continued presence of the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition strengthens the community's sense of belonging while simultaneously reducing tendencies toward exclusivism that may emerge from social fragmentation. Values such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), social solidarity, respect for historical heritage, and appreciation of differences constitute cultural foundations that contribute to strengthening community cohesion.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the reconstruction of the multicultural education paradigm in Indonesia through three principal arguments. *First*, multicultural education should be understood as a sociocultural process rooted in the lived experiences of communities rather than merely as a formal curricular project. *Second*, local traditions such as *Ngunjung Buyut* constitute epistemological resources that enrich multicultural education theory through the lens of indigenous knowledge. *Third*, this study proposes the concept of lived multiculturalism as an analytical framework for understanding how multicultural values are produced, negotiated, and transmitted through cultural practices embedded in the everyday lives of communities. Accordingly, the principal implication of the *Ngunjung Buyut* tradition for the development of multicultural education discourse lies in its potential to serve as a model of community-based multicultural pedagogy that integrates cultural experiences, Islamic values, and practices of communal life. This model offers an alternative paradigm for multicultural education that is more context-sensitive, participatory, and firmly rooted in the sociocultural realities of the community.

Conclusion

The Ngunjung Buyut tradition constitutes a cultural-religious practice that represents the dynamic interplay among Islam, local culture, and the social life of the Cirebon community. It functions as a space for the reproduction of collective identity, social values, and religious life. This study demonstrates that the tradition embodies important values of multicultural Islamic education, including social solidarity, gotong royong (mutual cooperation), respect for diversity, collective memory, spirituality, and social harmony. Amid the ongoing contestation between cultural Islam and religious puritanism, Ngunjung Buyut continues to demonstrate an adaptive capacity to foster dialogue and strengthen social cohesion. This finding affirms that local traditions constitute epistemological resources for multicultural education grounded in indigenous knowledge, thereby enriching the paradigm of multicultural Islamic education in Indonesia. Through the concept of lived multiculturalism, this perspective demonstrates that multicultural values are not merely taught normatively within formal educational institutions but are also enacted and internalized through collective cultural experiences, providing a foundation for community-based multicultural pedagogy.

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