

The Sekaten Culture in the Yogyakarta and Surakarta Regions from the Perspective of Islamic Religious Education

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the Sekaten culture in the Special Region of Yogyakarta and Surakarta from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education and to examine its relevance as a source of multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. The research uses a qualitative approach with a type of library research combined with a phenomenological approach. Data were obtained from various literatures in the form of books, scientific articles, previous research results, and documents related to the Sekaten culture, Islamic Religious Education, and multicultural education. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing with source triangulation to maintain data validity. The research results show that the Sekaten culture is a form of acculturation of Islam and Javanese culture that contains religious values, tolerance (tasamuh), brotherhood (ukhuwah), mutual cooperation (ta'awun), deliberation (syura), and respect for cultural diversity. These values align with the goals of Islamic Religious Education in shaping students who are faithful, possess noble character, are moderate, and can live harmoniously in a multicultural society. In addition, the Sekaten tradition has the potential to serve as a source of contextual learning because it can connect Islamic teaching concepts with the socio-cultural practices of the community. This research also found that studies on Sekaten from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education are still relatively limited, thus this research provides a conceptual contribution to the development of local wisdom-based Islamic Religious Education learning. Thus, the Sekaten culture can be used as an alternative learning resource that supports the strengthening of character education, religious moderation, and the development of a more contextual, inclusive, and adaptive Islamic Religious Education curriculum in response to the cultural diversity in Indonesia

I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural and religious diversity is an inseparable social reality from the life of Indonesian society (Fastmadhi et al., 2024). In this context, education plays a strategic role in instilling values of tolerance, inclusivity, and appreciation for differences (Karadona et al., 2026., Karadona et al., 2025., Arqam et al., 2026). Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as one of the core subjects in schools is expected to serve as a medium for shaping students' character to be moderate and open to diversity. However, the practice of PAI learning often remains normative and less contextual with the socio-cultural realities of a pluralistic society. In an effort to address these challenges, a multicultural approach in Islamic Education (PAI) is becoming increasingly relevant. Multicultural Islamic

education emphasizes the importance of integrating Islamic teachings with the realities of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. This approach is not only oriented toward the cognitive aspects but also the affective and social dimensions of learners, thereby fostering tolerant, just, and inclusive attitudes (Hakim et al., 2025., Siddik et al., 2025). One form of local wisdom that can be used as a source of multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) is the Sekaten culture in Java. Sekaten is a tradition that has developed in Javanese society as a form of celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, rich in religious and cultural values. This tradition not only serves as a religious ritual but also as a cultural preaching medium that integrates Islamic values with local culture. The Sekaten culture reflects the process of acculturation between Islamic teachings and local traditions that occurs peacefully and harmoniously. Through cultural symbols such as the Sekaten gamelan, grebeg, and nite market, the community is invited to understand Islamic values in a more contextual manner. This shows that Islam can develop without having to erase local cultural identities, but rather enrich and give new meaning (Hilman et al., 2025).

In the perspective of education, Sekaten has the potential to serve as a culture-based learning medium that can instill multicultural values. Students can learn about the importance of tolerance, mutual cooperation, and appreciation of traditions through real social experiences. This approach is in line with the concept of contextual learning, which emphasizes the connection between the subject matter and everyday life (Mugiono, 2026., Zahra et al., 2025., Hadiningrum, 2018). Various previous studies have examined the Sekaten culture from different perspectives. The research focuses on the historical development of Sekaten, the acculturation of Javanese and Islamic cultures, its socio-cultural functions, philosophical values, and its role as a cultural tourism attraction. Other research also examines Sekaten as a medium for the cultural propagation of Walisongo and a symbol of legitimacy for the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Surakarta Sunanate. Meanwhile, studies in the field of education generally only place local culture as a medium for character education or local wisdom-based learning in general, without deeply examining its relation to the substance of Islamic Religious Education. Nevertheless, there is still a research gap that needs to be further examined. First, most previous research still positions the Sekaten culture as an object of historical, anthropological, or cultural studies, thus not many have revealed the educational values contained within it from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education. Second, research on Sekaten generally only focuses on one region, namely Yogyakarta or Surakarta, so there have not been many studies that conduct a comparative analysis of the implementation of Islamic values in the Sekaten tradition in both areas. Third, research linking Sekaten culture with the strengthening of religious moderation, Islamic character education, and the development of Islamic Religious Education learning based on local wisdom is still relatively limited. However, the integration of local culture into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is one of the important strategies in building contextual, inclusive, and relevant learning for students' lives.

The condition indicates that the utilization of local culture in Islamic Religious Education is still not optimal. Many educators have not yet utilized local traditions as learning resources, resulting in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) being more focused on textual material delivery and less on providing contextual experiences to students. As a result, the Islamic values that are alive in the cultural practices of the community have not been fully internalized in the learning process. In fact, the integration of Islamic values with local wisdom can be an effective means of shaping religious character, tolerance, and strengthening religious moderation among students. Based on the aforementioned description, this research aims to analyze the Sekaten culture in the Special Region of Yogyakarta and Surakarta from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education. This research is expected to provide conceptual contributions to the development of Islamic Religious Education studies based on local wisdom, as well as produce recommendations for the development of more contextual, adaptive PAI learning that can internalize Islamic values through local culture. In addition, this research is expected to strengthen the implementation of character education and religious moderation as part of the reinforcement of Islamic education in Indonesia.

II. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a type of library research combined with a phenomenological approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to understand the meanings, values, and symbols contained in the Sekaten culture as a socio-religious phenomenon. Data were obtained from various literature sources such as books, scientific journals, previous research findings, and official documents relevant to the theme of Sekaten culture and multicultural Islamic Education. A phenomenological approach was used to explore the subjective meaning of Sekaten cultural practices that exist within the community, so that they can be understood in depth within the context of education (Creswell et al., 2017., Creswell et al., 2014., Sugiyono, 2022). The data analysis technique used is content analysis with the steps of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The researcher identifies key concepts related to multicultural values in the Sekaten culture, then categorizes and interprets them from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education. The validity of the data is maintained through source triangulation by comparing various credible and relevant references. With this method, it is hoped that a comprehensive understanding of the potential of the Sekaten culture as a source of multicultural PAI learning will be obtained (Qomaruddin et al., 2024., Moleong, 2019).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Sekaten culture is one form of cultural da'wah that has strong historical roots in the process of spreading Islam in Java (Nurjana et al., 2024., Sari et al., 2026). This tradition is believed to have developed since the time of the Demak Sultanate and was later preserved by the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Surakarta Palace. Sekaten not only serves as a commemoration of the Prophet

Muhammad's birthday (Maulid), but also as a means of internalizing Islamic values through a cultural approach. In this context, preaching is carried out persuasively by accommodating local traditions so that Islamic teachings can be widely accepted by the community without cultural conflict (Idza et al., 2023).

Multicultural Values in the Sekaten Tradition

In facing the dynamics of an increasingly diverse Indonesian society, a multicultural approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has become one of the paradigms that is increasingly important to develop. Islamic Religious Education is no longer understood merely as a process of transferring religious knowledge focused on mastering cognitive aspects, but also as a means of character formation for students to live peacefully alongside the diversity of cultures, ethnicities, languages, and religions. Through a multicultural approach, PAI learning is directed to instill universal Islamic values such as justice (al-'adl), tolerance (tasamuh), brotherhood (ukhuwah), mutual respect (ta'aruf), and cooperation (ta'awun), which are the foundation for creating a harmonious society. Thus, PAI not only shapes students with a good understanding of religious teachings but also with social sensitivity, empathy, and the ability to appreciate differences as part of the implementation of the Islamic teaching of rahmatan lil 'alamin (Fita, 2020). The multicultural approach in Islamic Religious Education also emphasizes the importance of integrating Islamic values with the social and cultural realities of society. Learning is no longer centered on the textual delivery of material, but rather on linking Islamic teachings with the real experiences of students, making the learning process more contextual and meaningful. The teacher acts as a facilitator who connects Islamic concepts with social phenomena in the students' environment through discussions, case studies, collaborative learning, and the use of local culture as a learning resource (Hasyim, 2025., Nurlela et al., 2026). This approach enables students to understand that Islamic teachings have strong relevance in addressing the diverse issues of society while also fostering an open attitude toward differences. The research results show that the integration of multicultural values in PAI learning can enhance attitudes of tolerance, empathy, social concern, and the ability of students to build harmonious relationships with individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds (Sirojiddin et al., 2025., Anisa et al., 2025). Various previous studies have shown that the integration of local wisdom in Islamic Religious Education learning significantly contributes to strengthening students' character and developing a moderate religious attitude.

Purnamasari A's research found that the application of multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning can enhance students' attitudes of tolerance, mutual respect, and social concern through the integration of cultural values in the learning process (Purnamasari et al., 2026). In line with this, Hamzah A's research explains that PAI learning based on local culture provides a more contextual learning experience because students not only study religious concepts theoretically but also understand their implementation in community life through the cultural values

that develop in their environment (Hamzah et al., 2025). Another study conducted by Nassaruddin also shows that the utilization of local wisdom as a learning resource can strengthen religious character, enhance tolerance, and build students' awareness of the importance of maintaining harmony in a multicultural society (Nasruddin et al., 2025). The results of the research indicate that local culture can serve as an effective medium for internalizing Islamic values contextually, so that learning is not only oriented toward cognitive aspects but also touches on the affective and psychomotor dimensions of students. These findings also indicate that Islamic Religious Education learning that utilizes local culture can overcome the tendency of learning that has so far been normative and oriented toward memorization. Through learning experiences based on the social and cultural realities of the community, students have the opportunity to observe, understand, and directly experience the implementation of Islamic values in daily life. Saleh A emphasizes that a contextual approach based on local culture can enhance religious understanding while also shaping religious character and a tolerant attitude (Saleh et al., 2025). Similarly, Machmudi N's research shows that the integration of local culture in PAI learning encourages the development of values such as mutual cooperation, deliberation, responsibility, and appreciation of diversity as part of the implementation of moderate Islamic teachings (Machmudi et al., 2026). Thus, local wisdom-based learning becomes an effective alternative in building more meaningful, adaptive, and relevant PAI learning in the lives of students. Nevertheless, most previous research still focuses on the implementation of multicultural education or the utilization of local wisdom in PAI learning in general. These studies have not specifically examined the Sekaten Culture as a learning resource for Islamic Religious Education, particularly through the analysis of Islamic educational values contained in the Sekaten tradition in the Special Region of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. Additionally, comparative studies on the implementation of Islamic values, religious moderation, and character education in the Sekaten tradition in these two regions are still very limited. Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap by analyzing the Sekaten Culture from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, with the hope of enriching the development of local wisdom-based PAI learning and contributing to the strengthening of character education and religious moderation in Indonesia.

The Relevance of Sekaten in the Development of Multicultural Islamic Religious Education

Various previous studies have shown that the Sekaten tradition is one form of the acculturation of Islam and Javanese culture that successfully maintains Islamic values without erasing local cultural identity. Febriansyah A's research explains that Sekaten is a cultural preaching medium developed by Walisongo through a cultural approach, allowing the process of spreading Islam to be accepted by the community in a peaceful and persuasive manner (Febriansyah et al., 2026). In line with that, Yasir H's research found that the series of Sekaten processions, such as the ringing of the Sekaten gamelan, Grebeg Maulud, and the tradition of community gatherings in the palace environment, contain values of religiosity, togetherness, tolerance, mutual cooperation, and

respect for cultural heritage (Yasir, 2024). The research emphasizes that Sekaten is not merely a ceremonial tradition, but a representation of the harmony between Islamic teachings and local culture that has been preserved to this day. The findings indicate that the Sekaten culture has educational value that can be used as a learning medium to instill moderate, inclusive attitudes and appreciation for diversity among students. These findings are supported by research conducted by Hakim N, which explains that local wisdom-based Islamic Religious Education can shape religious character and strengthen religious moderation attitudes because students gain more contextual learning experiences (Hakim et al., 2026). The research results of Fita Mustafida also show that the integration of multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education can enhance students' attitudes of tolerance, social concern, and their ability to appreciate cultural and religious diversity (Mustafida, 2020). Meanwhile, Guspani R's research reveals that the utilization of local culture in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) makes the learning process more meaningful because students are able to connect Islamic teachings with the realities of community life (Guspani et al., 2025). Thus, various research findings indicate that local culture plays a strategic role as a learning resource capable of contextualizing Islamic values while also strengthening character education and religious moderation.

However, various studies also reveal that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning based on local culture still faces several obstacles. Hatima Y's research shows that some teachers still tend to use a textbook-oriented learning approach, so the potential of local culture has not been optimally utilized as a learning resource (Hatima et al., 2025). Similar findings were also presented by Raisul Umam, who stated that the low utilization of local wisdom is influenced by the limited teaching materials, lack of learning innovation, and the teachers' minimal ability to integrate local culture with Islamic Religious Education materials (Raisul et al., 2024). This condition causes PAI learning to still be dominated by the delivery of normative concepts and has not yet fully provided a contextual learning experience in accordance with the students' lives. Based on the synthesis of various studies, it can be concluded that the Sekaten culture has a very strong relevance in the development of multicultural Islamic Religious Education learning. Religious values, tolerance, mutual cooperation, deliberation, unity, respect for culture, and religious moderation contained in the Sekaten tradition align with the goals of Islamic Religious Education in shaping students who are faithful, noble in character, and able to live harmoniously in a diverse society. However, previous studies have mostly discussed Sekaten as an object of historical, cultural, tourism, or Islamic da'wah media studies, while research specifically analyzing the Sekaten Culture in the Special Region of Yogyakarta and Surakarta from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education is still relatively limited. Therefore, this research is novel as it examines the values of Islamic education contained in the Sekaten tradition while also analyzing its relevance as a source of multicultural Islamic Religious Education based on local wisdom. The results of this research are expected to

contribute to the development of a more contextual and adaptive PAI curriculum, as well as to strengthen character education and religious moderation in Indonesia.

Implementation of the Sekaten Tradition in Yogyakarta and Surakarta

The implementation of the Sekaten tradition in Yogyakarta and Surakarta shares a fundamental similarity as a commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (Maulid), but also has distinct characteristics in its technical execution. In general, the series of Sekaten lasts for several days, culminating in the Grebeg Maulud procession. This tradition is organized by the royal courts, namely the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Surakarta Palace, and involves broad participation from the community. Systematically, the implementation of Sekaten can be explained in several stages. First, the preparation stage, which includes determining the timing of the event based on the Javanese-Islamic calendar and preparing ceremonial equipment such as the Sekaten gamelan and gunungan. Second, the opening stage is marked by the procession of the Sekaten gamelan from the palace to the main mosque, namely the Masjid Gedhe Kauman in Yogyakarta and the Masjid Agung in Surakarta. This gamelan is then played regularly during the Sekaten period as a symbol of preaching and an invitation to the community to draw closer to the teachings of Islam (Arroichan et al., 2023., Daryanto, 2016). Third, the core implementation stage lasts for several days, during which the community gathers around the mosque and the square to participate in various religious and cultural activities, including sermons, nite markets, and social interactions.

At this stage, the multicultural values are clearly visible, as this tradition is open to all groups without distinguishing between social or cultural backgrounds (Fikri et al., 2022). Fourth, the peak stage is the Grebeg Maulud procession, marked by the parade of gunungan from the palace to the mosque. The gunungan contains agricultural products that are then contested by the community as a symbol of blessing. This procession reflects the values of charity, togetherness, and social justice in line with Islamic teachings (Farida et al., 2020). Fifth, the closing stage, which marks the end of the entire series of Sekaten activities, is signified by the return of the gamelan to the palace. This stage also symbolizes the end of the celebration and the hope that the values conveyed during Sekaten can be internalized in the daily lives of the community. Thus, the implementation of Sekaten in Yogyakarta and Surakarta is not only a ceremonial tradition but also contains a structured value system rich in educational meaning. This tradition can be used as a contextual learning medium in multicultural Islamic Religious Education because it integrates religious, social, and cultural aspects comprehensively.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that the Sekaten culture in the Special Region of Yogyakarta and Surakarta is an Islamic cultural heritage that emerged through the process of acculturation between Islamic teachings and Javanese culture. This tradition not only serves as a

commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (Maulid), but also acts as a cultural preaching medium that embodies religious values, tolerance, mutual cooperation, deliberation, brotherhood, respect for culture, and social harmony. These values are highly relevant to the objectives of Islamic Religious Education, particularly in shaping students who are faithful, noble in character, moderate, and capable of appreciating cultural and religious diversity in community life. The synthesis of various previous studies shows that the utilization of local wisdom in Islamic Religious Education learning can enhance religious understanding, strengthen religious character, foster a tolerant attitude, and support the implementation of religious moderation. However, studies specifically examining the Sekaten culture as a source of Islamic Religious Education, particularly through comparative analysis between the Sekaten traditions in Yogyakarta and Surakarta, are still relatively limited. This research fills that gap by demonstrating that the Sekaten tradition has great potential as a culturally-based learning resource that is contextual and relevant to the lives of students. Therefore, the Sekaten culture can be integrated into the development of Islamic Religious Education learning based on local wisdom as a strategy to strengthen character education, religious moderation, and multicultural learning. This integration is expected to make Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning more contextual, innovative, and meaningful, while also contributing to the preservation of local culture as part of the national identity and strengthening the values of Islam as a blessing for the universe amidst Indonesia's diverse society.

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