

The Islamization of Traditional Arts: Transformation of *Reyog Ponorogo* in the Context of Javanese Cultural Identity

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Abstract: Islamization has been one of the dominant discourses in the Ponorogo region, shaping various aspects of social and cultural life. The traditional art of *Reyog Ponorogo* represents a local cultural practice that cannot be separated from this discourse. This study aims to examine the influence of Islamization discourse on the traditions of *Reyog Ponorogo*. The research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach and a critical paradigm. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman. Michel Foucault's discourse theory (1926–1984) serves as the primary analytical framework. The findings reveal that Islamization discourse in Ponorogo has significantly transformed the values embedded in *Reyog Ponorogo* and shaped public perceptions of traditional culture. This transformation is evident in the modification of song lyrics, costume design, ritual offerings, and the *gemblak* tradition. Furthermore, Islamization has influenced how *Reyog Ponorogo* is practiced within the broader context of cultural development and preservation. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of shifting cultural identity in Ponorogo and demonstrates the relevance of Foucault's theory in analyzing the dynamics of religious discourse. The originality of this research lies in its application of Foucault's discourse theory to the transformation of *Reyog Ponorogo*, a perspective that has not been systematically explored in previous studies.

Keywords: Cultural identity; discourse of Islamization; Foucault's theory; *Reyog Ponorogo*.

Abstrak: Islamisasi merupakan salah satu diskursus dominan di wilayah Ponorogo yang membentuk berbagai aspek kehidupan sosial dan budaya. Kesenian tradisional *Reyog Ponorogo* merupakan praktik budaya lokal yang tidak dapat dipisahkan dari diskursus tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menelaah pengaruh diskursus Islamisasi terhadap tradisi *Reyog Ponorogo*. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif dan paradigma kritis. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif yang dikembangkan oleh Miles dan Huberman. Teori diskursus Michel Foucault (1926–1984) digunakan sebagai kerangka analisis utama. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa diskursus Islamisasi di Ponorogo telah secara signifikan mentransformasi nilai-nilai yang melekat dalam *Reyog Ponorogo* sekaligus membentuk persepsi masyarakat terhadap budaya tradisional. Transformasi ini tampak pada modifikasi lirik lagu, desain kostum, ritual persembahan, serta tradisi *gemblak*. Lebih jauh, diskursus Islamisasi juga memengaruhi praktik *Reyog Ponorogo* dalam konteks pengembangan dan pelestarian budaya. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai pergeseran identitas budaya di Ponorogo serta memperlihatkan relevansi teori Foucault dalam menganalisis dinamika diskursus keagamaan. Keaslian penelitian ini terletak pada penerapan teori diskursus Foucault terhadap transformasi *Reyog Ponorogo*, sebuah perspektif yang belum pernah dieksplorasi secara sistematis dalam studi-studi sebelumnya.

Kata kunci: Identitas budaya; Diskursus Islamisasi; Teori Foucault; *Reyog Ponorogo*.

1. Introduction

Reyog Ponorogo is one of Indonesia's most renowned cultural heritages, particularly in East Java. It is not only recognized as a performing art rich in cultural values but also as a symbol of the identity of the Ponorogo community (Fisabilillah, Darmadi, Yunitasari, Rengganis, & Dayanti, 2022). This art has existed for centuries and continues to evolve from generation to generation, becoming an inseparable part of the life of Ponorogo people (Warsini, 2022). With its dynamic dances, distinctive *gamelan* music, and magnificent costumes, *Reyog Ponorogo* serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium conveying moral and historical messages (Riyadi, Pramono, & Haryanto, 2023). According to data published by the Department of Culture, Tourism, Youth, and Sports (*DISBUDPARPORA*) of Ponorogo District, in 2021 alone the region recorded 460 *Reyog* art groups, five mini *Reyog* groups, and 36 *Reyog thek* groups (Disbudparpora, 2023).

In the socio-cultural context of Ponorogo, these changes cannot be separated from the influence of Islam's entry into Javanese society. Over time, Islamization became one of the dominant discourses shaping various aspects of life, including traditional arts (Rofiq, 2020). The Islamization process in Indonesia, particularly in Java, has been ongoing for centuries and has significantly influenced local culture. Javanese people, who previously adhered to indigenous beliefs as well as Hindu-Buddhist traditions (Pramono, 2006), gradually embraced Islam, which eventually became the majority religion in the region.

The discourse of Islamization has influenced not only belief systems and religious practices but also efforts to adapt multiple aspects of life, including traditional arts, to align more closely with Islamic values. In this case, traditional arts such as *Reyog Ponorogo* were not immune to this influence (Mudhofir & Mujib, 2021). The transformation of *Reyog Ponorogo* demonstrates how the hegemony of Islamization discourse reshaped traditional cultural elements (Hafis, 2023). Moreover, the increasingly dynamic nature of social change makes the challenge of preserving *Reyog Ponorogo* even greater (Yulia, 2024).

Recent scholarship on *Reyog Ponorogo* underscores its complex position as both a cultural heritage and a living socio-economic practice deeply embedded in the identity of East Java's Ponorogo Regency. Setyawan et al. (2021) reveal how *Reyog* has become a visual and symbolic marker of regional branding, representing the creativity and identity of Ponorogo through its distinctive costumes and performance aesthetics. Beyond its symbolic importance, the art form also contributes to the local creative economy, though economic benefits remain unevenly distributed among stakeholders, while entrepreneurs in related industries gain disproportionately higher profits (Damanuri & Futaqi, 2025). From a philosophical standpoint, *Reyog's* attributes and symbols embody multiple layers of meaning that vary among practitioners and audiences, sometimes sparking debates over authenticity and cultural ownership (Wijayanto & Kurnianto, 2018; Wijayanto, Kurniawan, & Harmanto, 2018). More recent studies explore *Reyog* as a site of gender expression, interpreting its performances as spaces for negotiating masculinity and identity within Javanese social norms (Suprpto & Simamora, 2025), while others highlight the urgency of preserving *Reyog* amid globalization and transnational migration that have led to claims of cultural appropriation abroad (Sunarti & Fadeli, 2021). Collectively, these works position *Reyog Ponorogo* as a dynamic cultural arena where artistry, economy, identity, and power intersect—yet few have examined how Islamization as a discursive force has redefined its meanings, rituals, and social functions in contemporary Ponorogo society.

Parallel to studies on *Reyog*, broader research on the intersection of Islamic values and traditional arts in Indonesia offers diverse perspectives on how religion reshapes local cultural expression. Studies on *wayang kulit* and *ronggeng* performances highlight how Islamic educational values are transmitted through narrative art forms, functioning as informal yet powerful tools of moral instruction (Asrori, Asy'arie, Yusup Sofian, Syakir Hidayat, & Suja, 2025; Foley, 2015). Meanwhile, research on the *Sorong Serah Aji Krame* tradition in Lombok and Javanese *singir* poetry underscores how oral traditions serve as vehicles of moral education, emphasizing virtues such as humility, gratitude, and piety (Wieringa, 2004; Zulkarnain, Nasrulloh, & Kholis, 2025). These works collectively affirm that traditional arts across Indonesia operate as mediating spaces where spirituality, ethics, and aesthetics converge; however,

they tend to focus on descriptive moral functions rather than the deeper mechanisms of discourse, power, and identity that govern these processes of Islamization.

A complementary strand of literature further examines the institutional dimension of Islamic education, particularly its role in bridging religious values and modern social realities. Scholars such as Suyatno et al. (2022) and Mardatillah et al. (2025) argue that progressive Islamic pedagogies in Indonesia have evolved toward transformative models that balance faith, national identity, and intellectual creativity. Yet, despite this growing body of scholarship, the relationship between Islamic educational discourse and the reconfiguration of traditional arts remains underexplored. Few studies have critically analyzed how religious norms and institutional authority shape artistic adaptation and moral regulation within Islamized performance traditions such as *Reyog Ponorogo*. This gap highlights the need for a discourse-based approach that conceptualizes Islamization not merely as cultural accommodation but as a mechanism of power and knowledge that reorganizes social meaning and redefines cultural identity within Indonesia's broader historical transformation.

Despite the growing body of scholarship addressing both the cultural transformation of *Reyog Ponorogo* and the integration of Islamic values into Indonesian traditional arts, a critical theoretical gap remains in understanding Islamization as a dynamic discourse of power rather than merely a process of cultural adaptation. Most existing studies emphasize descriptive aspects—such as moral education, cultural preservation, and artistic modification—without interrogating the ideological structures and mechanisms through which religious discourse shapes cultural legitimacy and social identity. There is limited exploration of how Islamization functions as a regulatory force that disciplines aesthetic expression, redefines sacred symbolism, and restructures community perceptions of tradition within a moral-theological framework. Consequently, the intersection between religious authority, local cultural agency, and the politics of identity in *Reyog Ponorogo* remains under-theorized. Addressing this gap requires a discourse-analytic approach, grounded in Michel Foucault's theory of power/knowledge, to uncover how Islamization operates not only as belief or ritual reform but as a hegemonic practice that reconstitutes cultural meaning and reshapes Javanese identity in contemporary Ponorogo society.

Building upon the identified research gap, this study aims to critically analyze how the *Reyog Ponorogo* tradition has been transformed under the influence of Islamization as a discursive formation that regulates cultural practice and moral meaning. It specifically examines how Islamic discourse reconstructs the artistic, ritual, and symbolic dimensions of *Reyog*, and how local communities negotiate these transformations to sustain cultural continuity while adhering to religious orthodoxy. By situating *Reyog Ponorogo* within Michel Foucault's framework of *power/knowledge*, the research seeks to uncover the mechanisms through which religious authority, social morality, and artistic expression intersect in shaping contemporary Javanese cultural identity. The study contributes both theoretically—by extending discourse analysis to the study of Islamized traditional arts—and practically, by offering insights for policymakers and cultural institutions in developing strategies for the preservation of local heritage in contexts of religious and social change.

Based on the transformations occurring in *Reyog Ponorogo*, this study argues that there is a close relationship between the process of Islamization—manifested through religious preaching, local cultural policies, and the reinterpretation of traditional values—and the changes in cultural elements embedded in this art tradition. The discourse of Islamization in Ponorogo has altered traditional elements of *Reyog*—such as song lyrics, costumes, rituals, and the *gemblak* tradition—so that they increasingly reflect Islamic values within traditional art. These changes are not merely ritual and symbolic but also reconstruct local cultural identity through hegemonic discursive mechanisms. This argument is reinforced by Michel Foucault's discourse theory (Foucault, 1982), which explains how discourse functions as an instrument of power/knowledge that shapes social practices and public perceptions. In this light, the Islamization of *Reyog Ponorogo* should be understood not simply as cultural adaptation but as a discursive practice that disciplines, reorganizes, and redefines the cultural identity of the Ponorogo community.

In addition to Foucault's discourse theory, this study draws on performance theory to understand *Reyog* as a social drama in which ritual, religion, and identity are continuously negotiated. From the

perspective of cultural identity theory (Hall, 1993), the transformation of *Reyog* under Islamization reflects processes of re-signification, where traditional symbols are reinterpreted to align with dominant religious discourse. This multi-theoretical lens allows a deeper understanding of how *Reyog* operates simultaneously as performance, heritage, and discourse of power.

2. Method

The units of analysis in this study consisted of three levels. First, individuals, namely *Reyog* artists, community leaders, and religious leaders with in-depth knowledge of *Reyog* traditions. Second, cultural practices, which included songs, costumes, rituals, and the *gemblak* tradition. Third, cultural artefacts such as historical texts and recordings of *Reyog* performances. This broad unit of analysis provided a comprehensive foundation for understanding how the discourse of Islamization shaped both actors and cultural elements in *Reyog Ponorogo*.

This research employed a qualitative method with a descriptive approach based on a critical paradigm (Sugiyono, 2019). The choice of this method was motivated by the need to explore in depth the dynamics of transformation in *Reyog Ponorogo* within the discourse of Islamization, particularly to capture its social, symbolic, and cultural meanings that cannot be reduced to numerical data. The study was conducted in the Ponorogo region, which is the cultural basis of *Reyog* art and the locus where Islamization discourses have historically intersected with local traditions.

The data used in this research were derived from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data included in-depth interviews with informants, participant observations during *Reyog* performances, and field notes from the researcher. In addition to textual and archival data, this research also incorporated oral histories and local narratives obtained through interviews with traditional storytellers (*panjak*) and custodians of *Reyog* heritage in Ponorogo. These oral sources provide valuable insights into how the legend of Bathoro Katong is transmitted, remembered, and interpreted within the community, bridging the gap between historical historiography and living tradition. Secondary data were obtained from historical texts, community records, and documentation of *Reyog* performances collected by the local arts community. The combination of primary and secondary data enriched the analysis and allowed the researcher to examine the phenomenon from multiple perspectives.

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques. Observation was conducted during *Reyog Ponorogo* performances to capture the dynamics of artistic expression in natural settings. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants representing diverse perspectives within the *Reyog* community, including *Reyog* artists (Rido Kurnianto, KRAT Gondo Puspito H, Mbah Bikan Gondowiyono, Mbah Ghani, and Miskan), as well as religious and community leaders (Al-Ustadz Dinul Mukti and Al-Ustadz Dinul M.). Interviews also included traditional storytellers (*panjak*) and custodians of *Reyog* heritage to capture oral transmissions surrounding Bathoro Katong and *Reyog*'s evolving meanings. These individuals were purposively selected because they represent different social, religious, and cultural positions—ranging from *santri*-based performers and traditional *warok* figures to local cultural custodians—thus providing a comprehensive understanding of how Islamization influences both the artistic practices and symbolic meanings of *Reyog*. A semi-structured interview guide was used to ensure depth and flexibility in participants' responses. Documentation involved the analysis of manuscripts, archival materials, and audio-visual recordings of *Reyog* performances. These combined techniques were designed to enable triangulation and ensure that the coverage of the phenomenon was comprehensive.

The data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of four stages. The first stage, data collection, involved gathering information through observation, interviews, and documentation. The second stage, data condensation, included coding, categorizing, and extracting key themes from the interview transcripts and field notes. The third stage, data display, employed descriptive narratives and tables to systematically organize and present the data. The final stage, verification, was carried out through triangulation of data sources, collection methods, and informants to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. To further strengthen the validity of the data, several strategies were applied. Extended engagement in the field allowed the researcher to

build trust with informants and gain deeper insights. Persistent observation ensured careful documentation of events and practices. Triangulation was applied across data sources, data collection techniques, and informants to maintain consistency and reliability. These strategies collectively reinforced the credibility of the research and provided a robust foundation for interpreting the findings. Through this methodological framework, the study systematically examined how the discourse of Islamization has transformed Reyog Ponorogo's traditions and reconstructed local cultural identity. The analysis was interpreted through Michel Foucault's discourse theory as the main analytical lens to understand how discourse functions as a mechanism of power and knowledge in shaping cultural practices.

3. Results

Religiosity of the Ponorogon Community and the Discourse of Islamization

Ponorogo is a regency in East Java Province, Indonesia, covering an area of 1,371.78 km² with a population of 975,858 people (Disbudparpora, 2023). In the past, Ponorogo was known as Wengker, a name associated with a negative stigma since *wewengkon kang angker* means a frightening or haunted area (Moelyadi, 1986). This haunted impression was linked to the geographical conditions of Ponorogo, which is surrounded by Mount Willis in the east, the Seribu Mountains in the south, and Mount Lawu in the west. Such topography made Wengker relatively remote and often a refuge for criminals who practiced mystical traditions (Nurdianto, 2019).

The Dutch Resident in Madiun, Lucien Adam, also highlighted the unique characteristics of the Ponorogo people in 1938. Adam noted that the Javanese community in Ponorogo had distinct traits compared to neighboring regions. According to him, Ponorogo people were more independent, self-confident, tough, brave, reckless, temperamental, and more inclined to migrate (*merantau*) than most Central Javanese communities. This observation reinforces the idea that Ponorogo has possessed a distinctive socio-cultural identity since the past (Sugianto, 2024).

Over time, with the entry of various religions, the lives of the Ponorogo community experienced significant transformation. Data from Dispendukcapil (2024) show that the majority of the population adheres to Islam (970,098 people), followed by Catholicism (2,499 people), Christianity (2,855 people), Hinduism (56 people), Buddhism (288 people), and others (62 people). The dominance of Islam is evident in daily practices such as *pengajian* (Qur'anic recitation gatherings), *tahlilan* (communal prayers), and the celebration of Islamic holidays. Nonetheless, tolerance toward followers of other religions remains evident. It is important to note that the narrative of Bathoro Katong and the origin of Reyog Ponorogo occupies a liminal space between folklore and historiography. While local oral traditions frame it as a sacred legend explaining the coming of Islam, historical records reveal a more complex process involving cultural adaptation and political negotiation. This study treats such narratives not as literal history but as discursive construct.

Historically, the role of Raden Bathoro Katong was crucial in the Islamization process of Ponorogo. He openly declared himself a Muslim and sought to encourage the Ponorogo people, who initially followed Hindu-Buddhist traditions, to embrace Islam (Mudhofir & Mujib, 2021). Bathoro Katong's strategies for Islamization were layered and contextual, tailored to the conditions of Ponorogo society at that time. The first strategy was cultural, in which Bathoro Katong sought to preserve the traditional art of Reyog—a performance that had existed since the Wengker Kingdom—while gradually incorporating Islamic elements into it. Alongside this adaptation, he also created a new form of performing art called *Jemblung*, which served as a medium for Islamic preaching (*dakwah*). *Jemblung* is a form of traditional oral performance combining storytelling, chanting, and rhythmic percussion using bamboo or simple instruments. Unlike Reyog, which relies on visual spectacle and symbolic dance, *Jemblung* emphasizes narrative and moral instruction, allowing Islamic values to be conveyed through didactic tales and religious parables. Historically, *Jemblung* was developed as a complementary art form to Reyog—while Reyog retained its visual and ritualistic appeal to the local audience, *Jemblung* provided a more accessible verbal and spiritual channel for the spread of Islam. Both arts, therefore,

became interlinked within the cultural Islamization of Ponorogo: Reyog was adapted, and *Jemblung* was innovated, together reflecting Bathoro Katong's dual approach of preservation and transformation in the Islamization process (Rofiq, 2017).

The second strategy was educational, through the establishment of mosques and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) as centers of both worship and learning. These institutions functioned not only to teach Islamic theology but also to nurture moral discipline and social ethics aligned with local traditions. Through the *pesantren*, Islamic scholars and students (*santri*) engaged with cultural expressions such as Reyog by promoting reinterpretations that aligned artistic creativity with Islamic values—replacing ritual offerings with collective prayers and refining song lyrics with moral messages. This educational network mirrored the broader strategy of the Wali Songo across Java, who emphasized cultural accommodation and gradual transformation rather than confrontation (Mudhofir & Mujib, 2021). In this way, religious education became the intellectual backbone of Islamization in Ponorogo, complementing the cultural strategy that worked through art and performance.

The third strategy was through marriage alliances. Raden Bathoro Katong married five women from noble backgrounds: Princess Adi Kaliwungu from Demak, a princess from Bagelan, a princess from Pamekasan in Madura, Niken Gandhini—the daughter of Ki Ageng Kutu, and Princess Kuning from Wonokerto (Purwowijoyo, 1978a, 1978b). These marriages expanded his kinship networks, producing descendants who later became *kyai* (Islamic scholars), local leaders (*lurah*), and community figures who facilitated the spread of Islam in Ponorogo. The fourth strategy involved political maneuvers, employing both self-defense and alliances. Bathoro Katong was supported by two loyal figures, Patih Selo Aji and Ki Ageng Mirah. To strengthen integration with the local population, they adopted pseudonyms: Bathoro Katong as *Among Rogo*, Selo Aji as *Among Nyowo*, and Ki Ageng Mirah as *Among Jiwo*. Finally, persuasion was a hallmark of Bathoro Katong's approach. He respected Hindu-Buddhist communities, including monks and priests, allowing them to practice their faith without coercion. This non-confrontational and tolerant stance made his Islamic preaching more widely accepted among the people of Ponorogo (Rofiq, 2017).

Transformation of Reyog Ponorogo Song Lyrics in the Discourse of Islamization

The first aspect of transformation in the traditional art of *Reyog Ponorogo* can be observed in the song lyrics usually performed by choirs or *wiraswara* during *Reyog* performances. Prior to the discourse of Islamization introduced in Ponorogo by Raden Bathoro Katong, the lyrics of *Reyog* songs were heavily influenced by Hindu traditions. They often conveyed spiritual messages and mythological narratives that depicted harmony between humans and cosmic forces, as well as expressions of gratitude, prayers, and worship directed toward deities and kings as embodiments of divine power in poetic compositions (Damayanti, Muafiah, & Dias Safira, 2021).

The transformation of *Reyog* song lyrics within the context of Islamization is evident from observations, interviews with artists, and documentation of performances in Ponorogo. Data show that the lyrics in *gendhing Reyog* have shifted significantly from Hindu-Buddhist influences to Islamic nuances. For instance, according to Rido Kurnianto, an expert on the historical development of *Reyog Ponorogo*, several verses that once mentioned Sang Hyang Widi as a symbol of divine power were later replaced with the term Allah or Gusti Allah to reflect Islamic belief while maintaining the poetic structure of the lyrics. As he explained in the interview:

The old verses in *Reyog* used to praise Sang Hyang Widi, but after Islam spread in Ponorogo, those words were changed into Gusti Allah. The meaning remains about divine power, but it now fits the belief of most performers (Rido Kurnianto, Personal Communication, December 6, 2024)

This shift indicates how linguistic adaptation became a form of cultural negotiation, allowing the *Reyog* tradition to sustain its spiritual symbolism while aligning with Islamic theology. Additional evidence comes from Al-Ustadz Dinul Mukti, a leader of the *Reyog* community at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Campus 2. He emphasized that musical elements conflicting with Islamic teachings were either replaced, removed, or excluded from performances within the *pesantren* context (Al-Ustadz

Dinul Mukti, Personal Communication, December 15, 2024). Likewise, Kanjeng Raden Aryo Tumenggung (KRAT) Gondo Puspito H, a prominent observer of *Reyog*, noted that the transformation of lyrics was a conscious effort by *santri* communities to preserve *Reyog* as a cultural heritage of Ponorogo while ensuring conformity with Islamic values. He added that since some elements of earlier songs contradicted Islamic teachings, such transformations were inevitable and natural (Kanjeng Raden Aryo Tumenggung (KRAT) Gondo Puspito H, Personal Communication, at Sanggar Sarotama, December 14, 2024). Table 1 illustrates this transformation with a comparison of lyrics between the Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic eras:

Table 1. Comparison of Reyog Lyrics in the Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic Eras

Hindu-Buddhist Era	Islamic Era
"Sang Hyang Widi ... Mahadeva"	"Gusti Allah ... Maha Agung"
"Lord Vishnu, protector of the universe"	"O Allah, You are the protector of nature"

This transformation is further supported by interviews, "...For example, certain *senggakan* (songs or poems) were infused with Islamic educational values..." (Rido Kurnianto, Personal Communication, December 6, 2024).

...In terms of music, we have taken a firm stance that any language or meaning conflicting with Islamic teachings, particularly those involving shirk or associating Allah with others, must be replaced, removed, or avoided altogether, and this has been agreed upon by the supervisors in this pesantren... (Al-Ustadz Dinul Mukti, Personal Communication, December 15, 2024).

...Regarding music in *Reyog*, after the Islamization movement in Ponorogo, the art underwent transformation, especially among *santri* communities deeply rooted in Islamic teachings. This is natural, as long as the intention is to preserve *Reyog Ponorogo* as a form of art. Moreover, *Reyog* is dynamic and has always evolved with the times... (KRAT Gondo Puspito H, Personal Communication, December 14, 2024).

The transformation of *Reyog* lyrics also reflects an essential change in the messages conveyed through this art form. While earlier lyrics included praise and prayers directed toward Hindu deities, the reformed lyrics emphasize Islamic messages, such as affirmations of the oneness of Allah and the promotion of Islamic moral values. This transformation goes beyond replacing terms in song lyrics; it demonstrates how *Reyog Ponorogo* has adapted to the religious shifts in Ponorogo society as it transitioned from Hindu-Buddhist beliefs to Islam.

Several distinct patterns emerge from this transformation. First, there is the substitution of religious terminology, where references to *Sang Hyang Widi* or *Lord Vishnu* were replaced with *Allah* or *Gusti Allah*. Second, Islamic supplications were inserted into the lyrics, such as "*Ya Allah, have mercy on us*", thereby highlighting Islamic values within the performance. Third, moral values were reinterpreted rather than replaced. While earlier lyrics within the Hindu-Buddhist framework already contained ethical and spiritual teachings—such as harmony, devotion, and respect for cosmic order—the Islamization process redirected these themes toward Islamic virtues like justice (*adl*), patience (*ṣabr*), and gratitude to God (*shukr*). This shift did not negate the moral essence of the earlier tradition but recontextualized it within an Islamic theological worldview.

This transformation demonstrates the broader Ponorogo community's collective effort—involving both traditional artists and *santri* groups—to preserve local traditions while adapting them to the discourse of Islamization. The process reflects a negotiated cultural synthesis rather than a complete replacement of older values. The lyrical modifications not only align *Reyog* with Islamic teachings but also reshape public perceptions of *Reyog* as a spiritually meaningful and culturally legitimate art form within an Islamic context. Consequently, *Reyog Ponorogo* functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium for transmitting religious values, reinforcing the emotional connection between the community and its cultural heritage. This process signifies integration rather than eradication, merging new values with old traditions to create a unique harmony between art and religion.

Transformation of Costumes and Accessories in Reyog Ponorogo within the Discourse of Islamization

The second dimension of transformation in the traditional art of *Reyog Ponorogo* is evident in the costumes and accessories worn by its dancers. These transformations reflect the adaptation of this traditional art form to Islamic values that have become increasingly dominant in Ponorogo society. Prior to the discourse of Islamization, dancers in *Reyog Ponorogo* commonly wore revealing costumes that exposed parts of the body, a practice that contradicted Islamic teachings, which emphasize the covering of the body for both men and women (Rido Kurnianto, Personal Communication, December 6, 2024).

Following the spread of Islamization, however, these costumes were modified to be more modest. Female dancers began to wear long cloths or veils to cover their hair, while male dancers replaced bare-chested performances with more modest clothing or flesh-colored attire. This transformation is rooted in the Islamic injunctions to cover the body, as prescribed in *Surah Al-Ahzab* (33:59) and *Surah An-Nur* (24:31). Beyond its religious significance, this change illustrates how Islam shaped ethics and standards of modesty within the performance arts (Ramadani, Dwi, & Narulita, 2023). Following the spread of Islamization, however, these costumes were modified to be more modest. As illustrated in Figure 1, *Jathil* dancers now wear long cloths or veils that cover their hair, while Figure 2 depicts earlier performances with revealing costumes influenced by pre-Islamic aesthetics. The visual contrast between Figures 1 and Figure 2 underscores the redefinition of bodily aesthetics from sensual display to the embodiment of Islamic modesty.



Figure 1 Jathil dancers in Reyog Ponorogo performing in more modest costumes



Figure 2 Jathil dancers in the Reyog Ponorogo performance wear more revealing costumes

The discourse of Islamization also influenced the addition of symbolic accessories in Reyog performances. For example, pearls or beads were attached to the beak of the peacock mask (*barongan*) to symbolize *tasbih*—objects frequently used in *dhikr* or remembrance of Allah. The structural form of the *dhadhak* or peacock *barongan* also underwent modification. Before Islamization, its shape resembled a Hindu-Buddhist stupa, but later it was redesigned to resemble the dome of a mosque, thereby making Islamic values more visually prominent (Rido Kurnianto, Personal Communication, Ponorogo, December 6, 2024; Mbah Ghani, Personal Communication, Plunturan, December 14, 2024).

The modification of visual and symbolic attributes within *Reyog Ponorogo* performances further demonstrates how religious discourse was translated into artistic form. This transformation is not limited to masks or musical instruments but extends to the embodiment of individual characters, where costume design reflects spiritual discipline and moral alignment with Islamic teachings. The adaptation of heroic figures—once portrayed with grandeur and sensuality—has been reinterpreted through modest attire and restrained gestures to convey humility and ethical virtue. **Figure 3** exemplifies this change through the depiction of the *Klonosewandono* character, whose costume embodies both traditional elegance and Islamic propriety.



Figure 3 Klonosewandono character dancer wearing a more modest costume

The embodiment of Islamic modesty extends to the *Klonosewandono* character, shown in **Figure 3**, whose attire now covers the body fully, including the use of long sleeves and layered fabric that conceals physical contours. This visual adjustment signifies more than aesthetic alteration—it represents the incorporation of ethical and spiritual consciousness into artistic identity. The transformation aligns with the Qur'anic injunctions on *aurat* as stated in *Surah Al-Ahzab* (33:59) and *Surah An-Nur* (24:31), underscoring how performers internalize religious values in their bodily presentation. Through this integration, *Reyog Ponorogo* evolves into a performance that simultaneously preserves local heritage and manifests Islamic moral discipline within the visual language of traditional art.



Figure 4 Symbolisation of beads on the peacock's beak as *tasbih* for remembrance

In addition to costume adaptation, symbolic ornamentation in *Reyog Ponorogo* also embodies the integration of Islamic spirituality into visual form. The shift from decorative to devotional symbolism can be clearly observed in the *barongan* or peacock mask, where Islamic values are materialized through subtle yet meaningful modifications. Figure 4 illustrates this transformation, showing pearls or beads attached to the peacock's beak to represent the *tasbeih*, an object used in *dhikr* or remembrance of Allah. This addition transforms the mask from a purely aesthetic feature into a spiritual signifier, emphasizing mindfulness and divine remembrance within the performance. The incorporation of *tasbeih*-like elements not only redefines the mask's visual language but also reflects the deeper theological transition of *Reyog Ponorogo* from ritual spectacle to a medium of moral and religious expression.

The transformation of sacred symbolism within *Reyog Ponorogo* also extends to the visual structure of its principal mask, the *dhadhak merak* or peacock mask, which serves as the central icon of the performance. This modification illustrates how theological reinterpretation manifests not only through meaning but also through physical form. The shift in the mask's design reflects an intentional rearticulation of cosmological references—from pre-Islamic spiritual imagery toward Islamic architectural symbolism. The following images, Figures 5 and Figure 6, provide a visual comparison of these changes across time, showing how aesthetic forms were reconstructed to align with Islamic religious sensibilities while preserving the grandeur of traditional craftsmanship.



Figure 5. The shape of the *dhadhak merak* mask which resembles a mosque dome



Figure 6. The shape of the *dhadhak merak* mask, which resembles a temple stupa

Figure 5 depicts the *dhadhak merak* mask redesigned to resemble the dome of a mosque, symbolizing the unity of God and serving as a visual marker of Islam's dominance in the region's artistic consciousness. In contrast, Figure 6 presents an archival image of the earlier mask form resembling a Hindu-Buddhist stupa, an emblem of cosmic order in the pre-Islamic era. The juxtaposition between Figures 5 and 6 highlights the profound visual transition in *Reyog Ponorogo*, wherein Islamic theological values replaced older cosmological symbols. This structural evolution signifies not merely aesthetic innovation but the embodiment of a discursive process that redefined sacred art through the lens of monotheism.

The visual evolution of the *dhadhak merak* mask laid the foundation for broader symbolic reinterpretations within the *Reyog Ponorogo* tradition. This shift demonstrates that Islamization extended beyond costume and visual design into the deeper semiotic framework of the performance, influencing how objects, sounds, and movements were imbued with religious meaning. Building upon these transformations, Bathoro Katong further institutionalized this integration by embedding Islamic significance into other performative elements thereby ensuring that every component of *Reyog* functioned as both cultural expression and medium of spiritual reflection.

Bathoro Katong further reinforced these transformations by embedding Islamic meanings into various objects within *Reyog* performances. The gamelan instruments themselves were reinterpreted through Islamic terminology. For instance, *kendhang*, the central drum in *Reyog*, was associated with the Arabic word *qoda'a*, meaning "to restrain," symbolizing the Islamic teaching that human desires must be controlled. *Ketipung*, a smaller drum, was linked to the Arabic *katifun*, meaning "gift," to emphasize that every human act, whether good or bad, receives a divine recompense (Mbah Ghani, Personal Communication, Plunturan, December 14, 2024). *Kenong* was associated with the Arabic *qona'a*, meaning "acceptance of destiny," reminding performers and audiences alike of the necessity of submitting to Allah's will. Similarly, *terompet* (trumpet) was connected to the Arabic *shuwarun*, meaning "reminder," symbolizing the trumpet of the angels that will sound on the Day of Judgment. *Angklung* was derived from the Arabic *anqul*, meaning "transition," representing humanity's responsibility to move from wrongdoing toward righteousness (Wijayanto & Kurnianto, 2018).

Islamic interpretations were also attached to the accessories worn by *Reyog* performers. *Penadon*, the traditional garment worn by dancers, was linked to the Arabic *fanadun*, meaning "weakness," symbolizing human imperfection and the need to seek God's forgiveness. *Udheng*, a head covering worn by dancers, came to signify humanity's responsibility to encourage goodness throughout the universe. *Koloran*, an accessory worn by *warok* dancers, was derived from the Arabic *ushusun*, meaning "rope" or "bond," symbolizing the expectation that humans maintain familial ties and remain connected to God (Warsini, 2022; Wijayanto & Kurnianto, 2018).

Table 2 summarizes these major contrasts, illustrating how clothing, mask design, and accessory symbolism evolved from Hindu-Buddhist cosmology to Islamic moral and spiritual frameworks.

Table 2. Differences in Costumes between Reyog in the Hindu-Buddhist Era and after Islamization

Hindu-Buddhist Era	Islamic Era
Male and female dancers' costumes were more revealing	Male and female dancers' costumes were more modest
The shape of the peacock mask resembled a temple stupa	The shape of the peacock mask resembled a mosque dome
There was no symbolization of beads or rosaries on the peacock's beak as prayer beads for dhikr	Addition of symbolism of beads or chains on the peacock's beak as prayer beads for dhikr
Interpretation of devices or accessories with an approach rooted in local wisdom values	Interpretation of devices or accessories with an approach rooted in Islamic values

The findings from interviews with artists, religious leaders, and performers consistently confirm that the transformation of *Reyog Ponorogo* was a deliberate act of cultural negotiation between tradition and Islamic morality. As explained by Rido Kurnianto, "In terms of clothing, adjustments have also been

made to align with Islamic attire..." (Personal Communication, Ponorogo, December 6, 2024). His statement emphasizes that costume reform was not a passive adaptation but an intentional reorientation of aesthetic norms guided by religious principles. The same process of *acculturation*, he added, occurred in stage properties and ornaments, including *"the addition of prayer beads on the bird's beak, functioning as a symbol of remembrance in the Islamic perspective, and the shape of the beak was changed from a Hindu-Buddhist stupa into a mosque dome."*

This observation is corroborated by Mbah Ghani, who recalled that such symbolic transformations began in the late twentieth century: *"Around the 1980s, after I returned from Suriname to practice Reyog, I had the idea to change it into a mosque dome... there were beads on the peacock's beak, which were said to symbolize prayer beads"* (Personal Communication, Plunturan, December 14, 2024). His reflection reveals how local custodians internalized Islamic imagery as part of a broader effort to reframe the sacred aesthetics of *Reyog*.

From an institutional standpoint, Al-Ustadz Dinul M from Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor highlighted that modest dress had become an ethical standard: *"Covering the aurat is obligatory; therefore, dancers wear trousers and long-sleeved shirts, including characters such as Klonow Sewandono and Bujang Ganong"* (Personal Communication, December 15, 2024). This testimony demonstrates the pedagogical influence of Islamic education in shaping artistic discipline within pesantren-based *Reyog* communities.

Furthermore, according to performer Wisnu HP, these adjustments were broadly accepted among young artists: *"From my perspective as one of the performers, I have no problem with the changes, because ultimately the main goal is to preserve the culture... these two elements were combined, resulting in modifications to the costumes in this art"* (Personal Communication, Ponorogo, December 9, 2024). His statement encapsulates the dialogic synthesis between preservation and reform—the hallmark of *Reyog Ponorogo's* ongoing Islamization.

Therefore, the transformation of costumes and accessories in the traditional art of *Reyog Ponorogo* reflects the adjustment of local traditions to Islamic values that developed in the Ponorogo region. This adjustment aligns with Islamic teachings regarding the obligation to cover *aurat*, as mentioned in the Qur'an, *Surah Al-Ahzab* (33:59) and *Surah An-Nur* (24:31). In addition, accessories such as beads (*merjan*) on the *barongan* were added to symbolize *tasbeih* as a tool for *dhikr*, while the shape of the mask was changed from resembling a Hindu-Buddhist stupa to a mosque dome by Raden Bathoro Katong to reinforce Islamic symbolism in *Reyog*. Furthermore, Islamic meanings were also embedded in traditional *Reyog* musical instruments (*gamelan*) and in the various accessories worn by the dancers.

Based on the collected data, several transformation patterns can be identified. The first is the *Body-Covering Pattern*, in which all costumes, especially those worn by female dancers, now cover the body more modestly and in accordance with Islamic values. The second is the *Accessory Modification Pattern*, where ornaments previously bearing Hindu-Buddhist religious symbolism were replaced with more neutral or Islamic designs, indicating the influence of Islam on traditional *Reyog*. The third is the *Respect for Local Values Pattern*, where modifications were made without eliminating *Reyog's* local and traditional characteristics, such as the use of *batik* cloth and local Ponorogo motifs.

The transformation of costumes and accessories in *Reyog Ponorogo* plays an important role in enhancing public acceptance of this traditional art, particularly in increasingly religious environments. More modest costumes have ensured that *Reyog* remains relevant and accepted by Islamic communities, thereby allowing it to continue to be preserved. Moreover, this transformation demonstrates *Reyog's* capacity to adapt without losing its identity as Javanese cultural heritage. Socially, these changes foster greater inclusivity, strengthen *Reyog's* position as an integral part of Ponorogo's cultural identity, and create a new harmony that resonates with modern society, while reinforcing its dual role as cultural art and as a medium for conveying religious values.

Transformation of Offering Rituals and the Gemblak Tradition in Reyog Ponorogo

In the third section, the transformation of traditional *Reyog Ponorogo* is evident in the *gemblak* tradition and the offering rituals performed before the traditional performances. The term *gemblak* refers to a boy under the age of fifteen who was raised by a *warok* (traditional healer) in Ponorogo and

was considered handsome. This practice stemmed from the prohibition on *warok* engaging in sexual relations with women, leading them to raise *gemblak* in order to maintain their supernatural powers. Within the local community, this was considered a normal tradition, as *gemblak* were trained by the *warok* to later become Jathil dancers (Wiranata & Nurcahyo, 2018). As expressed by informants, *gemblakan* and *warokan* were perceived as two entities yet one; inseparable, like the peacock and the tiger, with the *gemblak* symbolized as the peacock and the *warok* as the tiger (Mbah Ghani & Bikan Gondowiyono, Persoal Communication, Plunturan, December 14, 2024).

According to an interview with KRAT Gondo Puspito H, a leading figure in Reyog Ponorogo art, the *gemblak* were young boys asked to help meet the daily needs of the *warok*, who in practice limited their interaction with women to preserve their mystical powers (KRAT Gondo Puspito H, Persoal Communication, Sanggar Sarotama, December 14, 2024). Over time, the *gemblak* tradition became stigmatized due to public misunderstanding and accusations that it deviated from the expected behavior of the *warok*. In particular, allegations emerged regarding homosexual relations between *warok* and *gemblak*. However, such claims were unsubstantiated and should be considered false. As revealed in an interview with Mbah Miskan, a former *gemblak* in his youth, he firmly denied the existence of homosexual relations, arguing that such claims were far from reality (Mbah Miskan, Persoal Communication, Ngadirogo Wetan, December 15, 2024).

This view was reinforced by Mbah Bikan Gondowiyono, a *warok* elder who had previously taken a *gemblak*. He explained that the duties of a *gemblak* extended beyond sexual matters and instead included daily tasks such as preparing coffee, arranging equipment for travel or performances, massaging the *warok* when tired, and similar responsibilities. He further noted that *gemblak* received compensation in the form of livestock, the amount of which was determined by an agreement before a boy consented to become a *gemblak* for a *warok* figure (Mbah Bikan, Persoal Communication, Plunturan, December 14, 2024).

Due to such rumors, the *gemblak* tradition among *warok* declined, particularly as education levels rose and religious knowledge in Ponorogo increased as a result of Islamization discourse. Consequently, the *gemblak* tradition has disappeared from the community, especially among *warok*. In addition to these religious and cultural factors, economic considerations also contributed to its decline, since the cost of livestock used as compensation became increasingly high and the requirements imposed by youths before agreeing to become *gemblak* became more demanding (Mbah Bikan Gondowiyono, Persoal Communication, Plunturan, December 14, 2024).

The offering ritual, meanwhile, functioned as an effort by the community to avoid obstacles that might arise during the performance and to seek harmony between the human and spiritual realms. As illustrated in Figure 7, a village elder is shown conducting a ritual offering (*sesaji*) before a traditional Reyog Ponorogo performance. This practice symbolically acknowledged (*ngajeni*) the presence of spirits believed to guard the *barongan*—not as an act of worship, but as a gesture of respect intended to maintain cosmic balance and prevent disturbances during the show. The offerings, which typically included rice, roasted chicken, *pisang raja* bananas, *parem*, and *sego kokoh*, were believed to bring blessings and protection to the dancers, the audience, and the host who invited the performance (Utari & Prastiawan, 2019). For generations, the ritual procedure remained largely unchanged and was usually led by an experienced village elder, reflecting the enduring pre-Islamic worldview that integrated reverence for ancestral spirits with communal artistic practice.

The transformation of Reyog Ponorogo is also reflected in the changing role of ritual specialists and the diminishing presence of sacred ceremonies once central to performances. Figure 7 portrays a village elder conducting a ritual offering (*sesaji*) before a traditional performance—a practice intended to honor spiritual guardians believed to protect the *barongan*. This image captures the pre-Islamic cosmology that viewed offerings as acts of respect rather than worship. However, as Islamic teachings prohibiting *syirik* (polytheism) became more deeply internalized, such rituals were gradually abandoned. In contemporary practice, these offerings have been replaced by collective prayers aligning spiritual preparation with Islamic monotheism.



Figure 7. Village elders performing a ritual offering (Dwi Surya, 2014)

However, with the success of Islamization in Ponorogo led by Raden Bathoro Katong, combined with Islamic teachings that forbid polytheism and associating partners with Allah (*syirik*), as emphasized in the Qur'an (*Surah Luqman*, 31:13), the practice of offering rituals significantly declined and is rarely found in society today (Mbah Bikan Gondowiyono, Personal Communication, Plunturan, December 14, 2024). This shift is also reflected in institutions such as Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 2, where, according to Al-Ustadz Dinul Mukti, the offering rituals accompanying performances were abolished from the very first Reyog event at the boarding school. The reason was that such rituals contradicted Islamic teachings, particularly the prohibition against both minor and major forms of *syirik*. Instead, prior to each performance, collective prayers were conducted using supplications derived from Islamic teachings (Al-Ustadz Dinul Mukti, Personal Communication, PM Gontor 2 Campus, December 15, 2024).

The success of Islamization in Ponorogo, initiated by Raden Bathoro Katong, brought a profound transformation in ritual and social practices surrounding Reyog performances. The once-common offering rituals (*sesaji*)—involving roasted chicken, *nasi buceng*, *pisang raja*, and incense—gradually disappeared as Islamic teachings against *syirik* (polytheism) became dominant. As explained by Mbah Bikan Gondowiyono, “The offerings usually included roasted chicken and nasi buceng, then pisang raja, then bunga telon, and then incense...” (Personal Communication, Plunturan, December 14, 2024). However, he noted that such rituals are now rarely performed because “they contradict religious teachings.” This statement was echoed by Al-Ustadz Dinul Mukti from Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 2, who emphasized that “from the beginning of the performance until now, there have been no offering rituals, and they are not allowed... as a replacement, a collective prayer before the performance is sufficient” (Personal Communication, December 15, 2024).

A similar transformation occurred in the *gemblak* tradition. Historically, *gemblak* were young boys who accompanied *warok* masters and assisted them in daily life. As described by KRAT Gondo Puspito H, “The *gemblak* or *gemblakan* was a young man... who served the *warok* by fulfilling all his needs, but not in a romantic or sexual sense. In addition, the *gemblak* would receive compensation from the *warok* based on an agreement made before becoming a *gemblak*” (Personal Communication, Sanggar Sarotama, December 14, 2024). Likewise, Mbah Miskan, a former *gemblak*, recalled, “When I used to be a *gemblak*, I made coffee, gathered grass for livestock, and so on. Claims about sexual relations are not true” (Personal Communication, Ngadirogo Wetan, December 15, 2024).

Over time, the increasing penetration of Islamic teachings and formal education redefined the moral boundaries of such traditions. As religious awareness deepened, the *gemblak* practice was gradually abandoned and replaced by female dancers (*Jathil*) dressed modestly according to Islamic norms. This shift illustrates how moral discourse—anchored in Islamization—functioned as a form of *moral normalization*, reconstructing gender roles and redefining cultural legitimacy in Reyog performances.

The transformations in both the offering rituals and the *gemblak* tradition illustrate how Islamization reshaped the moral, ritual, and symbolic dimensions of *Reyog Ponorogo*. These changes were not abrupt ruptures but gradual negotiations between inherited local customs and the growing dominance of Islamic discourse. Through these processes, practices once rooted in mysticism and ancestral reverence were redefined within a framework of Islamic monotheism and moral propriety. Consequently, the spiritual orientation of *Reyog* shifted from the veneration of supernatural entities toward devotion to Allah, while social practices such as *gemblakan* were reformulated in accordance with emerging ethical standards. The following table summarizes the key dimensions of this transformation, contrasting the traditional forms of *Reyog Ponorogo* with their reconfigured expressions under the influence of Islamization.

Table 3. Ritual and Tradition Transformation

Aspects of Tradition	Before Islamisation	After Islamisation
<i>Gemblak</i>	Young men dancing Jathil, special relationship with <i>warok</i>	Declining and no longer practiced, Jathil dancers replaced with women
Offerings Ritual	Offerings to ancestral spirits, consisting of rice and roasted chicken, <i>pisang raja</i> , <i>parem</i> , <i>sego kokoh</i> , and others	Elimination of ritual offerings and replaced with collective prayer before the performance
Spiritual values	Focus on mysticism and supernatural powers	Emphasis on prayer and seeking protection from Allah

Based Table 3, the transformation of the *gemblak* tradition and offering rituals in the traditional art of *Reyog Ponorogo* reflects an adaptation to Islamic values. The *gemblak* tradition, once considered a sacred component of *Reyog Ponorogo*, was gradually abandoned due to negative stigma and its incompatibility with Islamic teachings. Similarly, the offering rituals once conducted prior to performances as acts of respect toward *barong* spirits have significantly diminished. This shift was pioneered by Raden Bathoro Katong and reinforced by Islamic teachings that prohibit *syirik*, as explained in the Qur'an, particularly *Surah Luqman* verse 13, thereby leading to the decline and near disappearance of these ritual practices in Ponorogo communities.

In the process of transformation, several patterns can be identified. First is the elimination of the *gemblak* tradition, where boys who once performed Jathil were replaced by female dancers under the condition that they dress modestly in accordance with social and religious norms. Second is the abolition of offering rituals, in which elements of offerings to ancestral spirits or sacred animals were regarded as acts of *syirik* and subsequently replaced by Islamic prayer traditions. Third is the integration of Islamic values, where all activities preceding *Reyog Ponorogo* performances now include collective prayers among dancers and musicians before the performance begins.

The transformation of the *gemblak* tradition and offering rituals represents a significant cultural shift in *Reyog Ponorogo* as it adapts to the contemporary social and religious context of the community. On the one hand, these changes allow *Reyog* to remain relevant and accepted by the Muslim community in Ponorogo. On the other hand, the disappearance of elements such as *gemblak* and ritual offerings reduces certain sacred aspects inherent in the original *Reyog* tradition. Nevertheless, this adaptation demonstrates the cultural flexibility of Ponorogo in preserving *Reyog* as a cultural heritage while creating harmony with the dominant religious values.

4. Discussion

The findings of this research demonstrate that the discourse of Islamization has significantly transformed the traditional art of *Reyog Ponorogo* in four major aspects: song lyrics, costumes and accessories, offering rituals, and the *gemblak* tradition. The transformation of lyrics reflects a shift from Hindu-Buddhist cosmology toward Islamic theocentric expressions. The modification of costumes and accessories shows a visible adaptation to Islamic teachings on modesty and sacred symbolism. Ritual

offerings, once central to honoring spirits, have been replaced by collective prayers, reflecting Islamic monotheistic values. Lastly, the *gemblak* tradition—previously embedded in the social and spiritual fabric of *Reyog*—gradually disappeared, stigmatized as incompatible with Islamic morality and reshaped by increasing religious awareness. Together, these findings confirm that Islamization not only altered external forms of *Reyog* but also restructured its symbolic and cultural identity.

The transformation of *Reyog Ponorogo* as identified in this study can be explained by the dynamic interaction between religious discourse, local cultural agency, and institutional power. The discourse of Islamization did not occur in isolation but was continuously produced and reinforced through multiple channels—religious preaching (*dakwah*), education within *pesantren*, and state-supported cultural policies promoting Islamic morality in public life. These mechanisms collectively generated a hegemonic framework in which Islamic values became the dominant reference for defining acceptable forms of cultural expression. Within this framework, traditional elements of *Reyog*—its songs, costumes, rituals, and social practices—were gradually reinterpreted to fit the moral logic of Islam, transforming the art form from a site of mystical and syncretic symbolism into one of religious conformity and ethical pedagogy.

This process aligns with Foucault's concept of discourse as an instrument of *power/knowledge* that operates to normalize behavior and reorganize social meaning (Foucault, 1982). The Islamization of *Reyog Ponorogo* functioned as a disciplinary discourse that reshaped the community's perception of art, morality, and spirituality. Through religious authority and social internalization, Islamic teachings were not merely imposed but absorbed into daily cultural practices, producing a new sense of legitimacy around what is considered "pure," "moral," and "acceptable" performance. Consequently, the shift in song lyrics and costume modesty reflects how discursive power regulates bodily expression and artistic representation, while the disappearance of offering rituals and the *gemblak* tradition demonstrates how power operates through exclusion—silencing elements incompatible with the moral order of Islam.

At the same time, this transformation cannot be viewed solely as top-down domination; it also reflects local negotiation and adaptation. The community of artists, *warok*, and religious figures collectively contributed to a hybrid cultural formation that allowed *Reyog* to survive within an Islamic context. From the perspective of performance theory, *Reyog Ponorogo* serves as a form of "social drama," wherein ritual and identity are continuously renegotiated to maintain coherence between cultural heritage and religious piety. The selective retention and reinterpretation of traditional symbols—such as the *dhadhak merak* mask or the rhythmic patterns of the gamelan—illustrate the community's capacity to preserve aesthetic continuity while embracing new theological meanings. From the lens of cultural identity theory (Hall, 1993), this ongoing process represents *re-signification*—a transformation in which symbols are not erased but redefined to align with the dominant discourse. In this sense, Islamization operates both as a moral correction and a cultural rearticulation, producing a "new tradition" that embodies religious virtue without losing its regional authenticity. Thus, the relationship between Islamization and cultural transformation in *Reyog Ponorogo* is causal yet dialogical: religious discourse disciplines and reorganizes traditional art, while local cultural actors reinterpret and re-embed Islamic meanings within their performative identity. This interplay explains why the Islamization of *Reyog* has not led to its disappearance but to its reinvention as a living heritage that reflects the continuous negotiation between faith, art, and power.

The findings of this study both align with and extend previous research on *Reyog Ponorogo* and the broader Islamization of Javanese culture. Earlier works, such as those by Setyawan et al. (2021) and Wijayanto et al. (2018), focused primarily on *Reyog* as a regional cultural symbol and explored its philosophical and aesthetic dimensions, including costume symbolism and visual identity as instruments of local branding. Other studies emphasized its economic and social functions (Damanuri & Futaqi, 2025) or gender constructions embedded within the dance (Suprpto & Simamora, 2025). While these works contributed valuable insights into the cultural and socio-economic relevance of *Reyog Ponorogo*, they largely neglected the theological and ideological dimensions of transformation—particularly how religious discourse influences the reinterpretation of symbols, rituals, and identities

within the art form. The present study addresses this gap by analyzing the Islamization of *Reyog* not merely as a surface-level cultural adaptation but as a discursive process that redefines moral legitimacy, artistic boundaries, and social identity through the internalization of Islamic teachings.

In comparison to broader research on Islamic values in traditional Indonesian arts (Asrori et al., 2025; Foley, 2015; Zulkarnain et al., 2025), the present study moves beyond the descriptive and pedagogical framing that characterizes much of the existing literature. Previous research demonstrated that Islamic ethics and educational values such as *akhlak*, *aqidah*, and *ibadah*, were integrated into art forms like *wayang kulit*, *ronggeng*, and *singir* poetry as moral tools for education and acculturation. However, those studies tended to treat Islamization as a harmonious cultural synthesis rather than as a complex field of negotiation and power. By applying Foucault's concept of *power/knowledge*, this study contributes a critical perspective that views the Islamization of *Reyog Ponorogo* as a disciplinary discourse that regulates aesthetic practice, social behavior, and cultural authority, thereby exposing the underlying dynamics of control and normalization within this transformation.

Furthermore, this research diverges from general studies on the Islamization of Java, which often highlight macro-historical narratives of religious expansion, trade networks, and political integration (Ali, 2011; H. Setiadi, 2021; Susilo & Syato, 2016). While those works elucidate the structural and geopolitical foundations of Javanese Islam, they do not address how Islamization manifests at the microcultural level through performative arts and local ritual practices. This study thus offers a novel contribution by situating *Reyog Ponorogo* as a case of localized Islamization. Through a multidisciplinary synthesis of Foucault's discourse theory, performance theory, and cultural identity theory (Hall, 1993), this research introduces a new analytical framework for understanding how Islamization operates simultaneously as a mechanism of religious power, a process of cultural negotiation, and a strategy for identity reconstruction within contemporary Javanese society.

Historically, the results highlight both the continuity and rupture of tradition in response to Islamization. The continuity lies in the preservation of *Reyog* as a cultural performance despite the decline of certain elements such as *gemblak* and offerings. The rupture, however, is evident in the discursive redefinition of sacredness—from mystical reverence toward spirits and deities to monotheistic devotion to Allah. This reflects the dynamic negotiation between maintaining local identity and embracing Islamic values, showing how Islamization did not erase *Reyog* but restructured its symbolic and ritual content to align with the majority's religious worldview. The Islamization of *Reyog Ponorogo* mirrors broader patterns observed in the Islamization of traditional arts, where Islamic spiritual and philosophical principles gradually reshaped artistic forms and meanings. Similar to the integration of *nur* (light), geometry, and sacred symbolism into Islamic art (Baslough, 2020; Hasti, 2020), *Reyog's* transformation replaced Hindu-Buddhist symbols with Islamic markers, such as shifting the peacock mask from a stupa shape to a mosque dome and substituting deities' names with Allah or Gusti Allah. This adaptation exemplifies the cultural and historical processes by which Islamic discourse interacts with local traditions, blending preservation and innovation. In this sense, the case of *Reyog* aligns with findings that Islamization redefines both the aesthetic and pedagogical functions of art while maintaining its role as a medium of collective identity and spiritual expression (Dhuhri, 2018; Muhammad Uzair Ismail, 2024).

Socially, the transformation reflects a negotiation between cultural preservation and religious conformity. By modifying lyrics, costumes, and rituals, communities ensured that *Reyog* remained acceptable to Muslim audiences, allowing the art form to survive in a changing society. This illustrates that the process of Islamization did not necessarily erase cultural heritage but redefined it in ways that aligned with Islamic values while retaining its role as a communal performance. The Islamization of cultural performance more broadly shows similar dynamics across regions. Muslim communities have integrated Islamic principles into traditional arts, creating what some scholars describe as *halal arts* that emphasize ethical forms of expression while still engaging with contemporary aesthetics (Jouili, 2016). In Java, gamelan and dance performances have long been adapted for Islamic celebrations, highlighting the localization of Islamized performance (Daniels, 2009; Sunardi, 2013). Likewise, dances such as *Rodat* in Bali and *Nasep* music in Thailand demonstrate how artistic practices are preserved by embedding

Islamic educational, cultural, and moral values within them (Binson, 2022; Ni Made, 2019). These cases parallel the transformation of *Reyog Ponorogo*, where the Islamization of lyrics, costumes, and rituals served as both a survival strategy and a rearticulation of identity, ensuring that traditional performances remained relevant in a Muslim-majority society.

Ideologically, Islamization rearticulated the meaning of *Reyog*, positioning it as a vehicle for Islamic moral values rather than as a site of syncretic spirituality. This shift reflects broader patterns of the Islamization of cultural identity, where local traditions are redefined through the lens of Islamic ethics and theology. In Ponorogo, *Reyog* was not abolished but reshaped—lyrics, costumes, and rituals were modified to align with Islamic principles, thereby transforming its symbolic framework. This echoes findings in other contexts where globalization and religious discourse have pressured communities to renegotiate cultural identity, often leading to the erosion of mystical and syncretic elements in favor of monotheistic devotion (Nurullah, 2008; Thompson, 2019).

At the same time, this process demonstrates cultural hybridization rather than outright replacement. The Islamization of *Reyog* incorporated Islamic values while preserving local aesthetics and performance structures, similar to how Islamic traditions in Bali or Aceh adapt to local cultural settings without losing their Islamic orientation (Basyir, 2019; Syawaludin, 2018). Thus, *Reyog* became a symbolic expression of Muslim identity in Ponorogo, embodying both cultural preservation and religious conformity. In this sense, Islamization of *Reyog* mirrors wider dynamics of identity politics and cultural negotiation, where Islamic values reframe traditional practices as morally acceptable, socially legitimate, and ideologically aligned with dominant religious discourses (Aji & Yunus, 2019; Schmid, 2015).

The implications of these transformations reveal both functions and dysfunctions. Functionally, Islamization enabled *Reyog* to endure by aligning it with the dominant religious values of Ponorogo, thereby preventing its decline or rejection by Muslim communities. It also enhanced the inclusivity of *Reyog*, as the elimination of controversial practices such as *gemblak* reduced social stigma. However, dysfunctions are also evident. The loss of ritual offerings and *gemblak* diminished some of the original sacredness and symbolic richness of *Reyog*, creating a gap between its historical identity and its contemporary form. Moreover, the dominance of religious discourse risks narrowing the interpretive possibilities of *Reyog* as a plural cultural heritage. This phenomenon mirrors a wider pattern in cultural heritage studies, where the disappearance of practices, whether through religious reform, modernization, or external pressures, leads to the erosion of intangible cultural identity. Similar to how floods, conflicts, or urbanization have destroyed heritage sites and practices in other contexts (Deschaux, 2017; Thuc, Van Nguyen, Ha Duy, & Nguyen Van, 2024; Zakaria, 2019), the decline of ritual offerings and *gemblak* in *Reyog* illustrates how socio-religious transformation can act as an internal driver of heritage loss.

At the same time, the case of *Reyog* underscores how the Islamization process, while ensuring religious conformity, contributes to what heritage scholars describe as the gradual “thinning” of symbolic depth. As with other cases of intangible heritage threatened by modernization and shifting values (Bigambo, 2021; Fiorentino & Vandini, 2024), the loss in *Reyog* is not merely aesthetic but also social, as it disrupts the cultural cohesiveness that once bound performers and audiences. This dual process of preservation and loss highlights the paradox of heritage under religious discourse: while the art form survives, its interpretive plurality and mystical resonance are diminished, echoing global concerns about safeguarding heritage at risk from cultural homogenization and socio-political pressures.

To address these dysfunctions, several action plans can be proposed. First, cultural preservation policies should emphasize documentation of original *Reyog* practices, ensuring that historical knowledge of *gemblak* and ritual offerings is not erased but contextualized as part of heritage. Second, education and cultural programs should frame *Reyog* as both an Islamicized performance and a historical tradition, fostering balanced appreciation. Third, collaboration between cultural institutions, religious leaders, and artists is needed to maintain *Reyog*’s relevance while safeguarding its historical

plurality. In this way, the adaptation of *Reyog* to Islamization can continue to strengthen its identity as a cultural heritage of *Ponorogo* without erasing its complex historical layers.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the Islamization discourse in Ponorogo has significantly shaped the transformation of *Reyog Ponorogo* as a traditional art form. The main findings demonstrate that Islamization has redefined elements of *Reyog*, including the modification of song lyrics from Hindu-Buddhist references to Islamic values, the adaptation of costumes and accessories to align with Islamic teachings on modesty, and the reinterpretation of rituals and the elimination of the *gemblak* tradition to prevent practices considered inconsistent with Islamic beliefs. These transformations reveal both continuity—where *Reyog* persists as a cultural performance—and rupture—where its sacredness has shifted from mystical reverence toward spirits and deities to monotheistic devotion to Allah.

The scholarly contribution of this research lies in applying Michel Foucault's discourse theory to analyze the Islamization of *Reyog Ponorogo*. By doing so, the study highlights the role of discourse as a mechanism of power/knowledge that disciplines and reorganizes cultural practices. This approach not only deepens our understanding of how religious discourse shapes cultural identity but also enriches broader debates on the Islamization of traditional arts in Indonesia. Furthermore, the study adds new perspectives to existing literature by emphasizing the negotiation between cultural preservation and religious conformity, showing how local traditions adapt in response to dominant religious ideologies.

Nevertheless, the research acknowledges several limitations. The focus on specific aspects—lyrics, costumes, and rituals—means that other dimensions, such as economic commodification or contemporary reinterpretations of *Reyog* in digital media, remain unexplored. In addition, the reliance on qualitative interviews and observations restricts the ability to generalize findings beyond the Ponorogo context. Future research could expand the scope by employing comparative studies with other regions or incorporating digital ethnography to examine how Islamization discourse continues to shape traditional arts in the modern era.

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