

## The Strategies of *Ajengans* in Mediating Islam and Local Traditions in Rural West Bandung Regency

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### Abstract:

Islam is not present in a society empty of culture but is here to find local traditions that develop and run amid a pluralistic society so that local traditions are maintained and packaged with Islamic values. Among the local traditions still growing in the community is "incense-burning", a routine Friday night ceremony and a part of the agricultural process in Lembur Sawah Hamlet, West Bandung Regency. Using interview and observation techniques, this qualitative research described local religious leaders (*ajengan*) as cultural intermediaries between Islam as a world religion and local beliefs. The figures *Ajengans* referred to in this article are the *Kiais* (Islamic scholars) of Pesantren (Islamic boarding school) who influenced society; they had merged into Nahdlatul Ulama, culturally and structurally. The results showed that the community understood local traditions as *shari'a* that must be followed. Therefore, they represented the "*sunnah* of their ancestors," even though they did not understand the symbolic meaning of the tradition. Here, the religious scholars of Islam played a role in straightening existing traditions combined with traditions with Islamic nuances, namely, incense-burning activities in *tahlilan*, *Yasinan*, *khotmil Qur'an*, *shahriahan*, and *manakiban* events. Also, the *ajengans* played a role as role models. Finally, the primary function of *ajengans* was to preserve existing traditions as part of a willing attitude toward local culture. Here, they modified deviant local traditions with Islamic nuances that did not violate the Islamic creed.

**Keywords:** local Islam; universal religion; ancestor's tradition; symbolic meaning; religious conversion

### INTRODUCTION

Islam came to Indonesia is often imaged peacefully (*penetration pacifique*) (Bräuchler, 2022). This is marked by the non-confrontational response of the community to Islamic values; they feel that they are not disturbed by the presence of Islam (T. Rahman, 2013). The first spread of Islam to Indonesia was by

introducing Islam by wandering Sufi teachers who came from the Middle East in the 8th and 9th centuries; subsequent mass conversions occurred thanks to the efforts of these Sufi teachers (Khawaja, 2021). The process is critical in giving a distinctive color to Islam in Indonesia, namely Islam that is accommodative and inclusive—not syncretic—with local culture (Azra, 2009).

The presence of Islam in this country can, of course, be ascertained. It is, namely, in direct contact with local traditions that had long blossomed, developed, and ingrained in Indonesian society long before Islam was present, even to a certain extent the practice became a source of strength or power public trust (Miharja, 2014). Islam does not necessarily change or eliminate these traditions but maintains them until they express them with Islamic values (Truna, 2021).

Such an Islamization process looks like what Wali Songo did in spreading Islam—especially in Java by allowing what was established in society to continue and, at the same time, incorporating Islamic values slowly (Syarif, 2020). This model then produces the distinctiveness of religion (Islam) in this archipelago. The interaction between local traditions and Islam will change new practices with an acculturative model. The tradition continues and exists in people's lives.

The existence of these traditions can be through inheritance or construction (*invited*). The process of changing this tradition borrows Kleden's theory through five patterns: *first*, at the level of the value system, it is from integration, disintegration to reintegration. *Second*, at the level of the cognitive system, through orientation, to disorientation to reorientation. *Third*, from the institutional design of an organization to disorganization to reorganization. *Fourth*, at the level of interaction from socialization, dis-socialization to resocialization. *Fifth*, at the level of behavior, from acceptance behavior, rejection behavior, and new acceptance behavior (Kleden, 2020).

The dialogue between Islam and life is a reality that constantly accompanies this religion. Because it is recognized, religion (including Islam) was not born in a world empty of culture (Manshur & Husni, 2020). This has a significant role in delivering and leading to its actual development to give rise to the civilization needed by the world community. The actualization of Islam in history has made Islam unable to be opened from the aspect of locality, ranging from Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Indian, Malay, including Indonesia, with their respective characteristics (Tuoheti, 2021). Still, there is a common thread that does not and strengthens one another, namely universal values. Islamic history is diverse, but in Abd A'la's terms, it is a translation of universal Islam in the reality of human life (A'la, 2003).

In the next decade, the idea of purifying Islam from traditions (values considered un-Islamic) began to surface; both pictures and movements came from individuals and groups (Anwar et al., 2016; M Taufiq Rahman, 2011). Thus, religious (Islamic) organizations emerged that called themselves purification movements on the one hand, such as Muhammadiyah from the lightest, and transnational organizations, such as HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia), which were the most radical ones. Other religious organizations that "tend" to maintain local values with tradition and the characteristics of each, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Nahdlatul Wathan, and others. The first group is usually labeled "modern Islam." The second group is often labeled "traditionalist Islam" (Fealy, 2012; Istoria, 2011; Yilmaz & Barton, 2021).

Many researchers view traditionalist Islam, represented by NU, often referred to as "Popular Islam," as a single entity. On the one hand, traditional Islam is contrasted with pure Islam. On the other hand, it is confronted with a syncretic Islamic model. NU was present to maintain traditions as a religious organization from the beginning. With the strength of its doctrine *aswaja*, NU can adapt itself and make itself into a group that, in its religious pattern puts forward the values and practices of *tawasut* (moderate), *i'tidal* (proportional), *tasamuh* (tolerant) and *tawazun* (balance) (Siradj, 1999), by placing a balance between *naql and aql* (Hilmy, 2013; Ismail, 2020; Malik & Busrah, 2021; Najib & Fata, 2020; Ni'am, 2015).

The people of West Bandung—especially the Lembur Sawah community of West Bandung Regency- are the locus of this research study. Most NU members are loyal, pay great attention to local traditions, and adhere to *ajengan* as informal figures and actors of social change (A'la, 2003). *Ajengan*, in the view of the Sundanese – including the community – *kiai*, still occupying the upper-class social strata or often called the religious elite borrowed the Pareto language (1848-1923) (Fehige, 2011), while the community became the second-class or non-elite group (Varma, 2007).

Kiai, as charisma figures, does not necessarily erase local traditions; even at a certain level, *ajengan* often supports these local traditions' existence. Many (local) traditions still exist and function in society, such as incense burning, *numbal*, etc. This research will focus on studying practices – especially incense burning – by sharpening the problem of community perceptions of local rules and the role of *ajengan* in the struggle

between local traditions and Islamic doctrine, especially in the Lembur Sawah Hamlet, West Bandung Regency (Truna, 2021).

## METHOD

The method in this study is qualitative with a phenomenological type of research that tends to reveal and formulate field data in the form of a complete verbal narrative and describe and describe the data for later analysis. This study uses a sociological paradigm with phenomenological theory (Molendijk, 2007). The qualitative approach in this study with several considerations: *first*, this study examines the meaning of an action or what is behind individual actions. *Second*, in dealing with the social environment, the individual has a strategy to take the right action for himself, so it requires an in-depth study. *Third*, examine beliefs, attitude choices, and awareness of possible behavior using a qualitative approach. *Fourth*, qualitative research provides an opportunity to explore phenomena holistically. The phenomena studied in the field are inseparable because of actions in the area caused by one or two factors but many related factors (Natow, 2020; Sharaf Qdah et al., 2018; Zaluchu, 2020).

The data collection process was carried out through direct observation and interviews as primary data and literature data collection as a secondary data source. Observations were made by visiting the location directly, namely Lembur Sawah Hamlet, Sukaresmi Village, West Bandung Regency, to see the community's socio-religious activities. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted with village community leaders and the successor *ajengans* of the previous *ajengans* who have contributed to acculturating Islam and local culture in Lembur Sawah Hamlet. Finally, the author also had the opportunity to visit the Nurul Hidayah Islamic boarding school in Sukaresmi Village where there are manuscripts of stories about the spread of Islam in the Cianjur Coastal-West Bandung area written by Mama KH. Zarkasyi.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Case Study: Lembur Sawah Hamlet

Lembur Sawah Hamlet, West Bandung Regency, is the farthest area of West Bandung Regency, bordering Cianjur Regency. Precisely located on the border between Kampung Jati, Sukarama District, Cianjur Regency and Sukaresmi Village, West Bandung Regency, West Java. Precisely located at - 6.939162091790307-107.22271698350481 geographically. As the name implies, Overtime and Sawah are vocabularies from the Sundanese language, *Lembur* means settlements, and *Sawah* indicates rice fields. Because of that, the area is called a settlement on the side and middle of the rice fields. Rice fields and secondary crops such as corn, beans, cucumbers, beans, and eggplant surround this area. As a result, this area is inhabited by farmers, and the people depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

Historically, Lembur Sawah Hamlet was established before pre-independence Indonesia occurred. According to Abah Ateng, the village elder, the residents who inhabited Overtime Sawah were the original Sundanese of Cianjuran or the Sundanese who migrated to the coast of Cianjur to escape the *mobs* Dutch (invaders). The residents of Lembur Sawah hamlet have an independent life regarding the economy, rules, society, and culture. According to Abah Ateng, actually, from the beginning, the residents of Lembur Paddy Hamlet had embraced Islam but in practice, they still carried out rituals to honor their ancestors who had provided sustenance through agricultural products. However, since the scholars came to Overtime Sawah they corrected the understanding of Islam of the residents of the Lembur Sawah hamlet to become pure Islam worshipping Allah SWT.

The existence of Islamic da'wah that spread over time, especially in West Java, provided significant changes for the community. One of the clerics from Sunan Gunung Djati Cirebon who was sent to preach to Priangan lands, especially Bandung-Cianjur, was Mama KH. Ilyas or Mama Sukamanah. He then sent one of his favorite students named Mama KH. Zarkasyi to preach Islam to Bandung's coast and settled in the Rongga-Gununghalu area of West Bandung. One of his influences was the success in proclaiming Islam in Desa Sukaresmi—a village where the overtime hamlet of Sawah is located. The struggle of Mama KH. His students including KH continued Zarkasyi. Usman bin Damiri and KH. Ridwan Gafur who managed to "Islamicize" the entire population of Sukaresmi Village, including the Overtime Sawah Hamlet. The residents of Sukaresmi Village have assigned the title of Ajengan to all of these kiai. The title of ajengan is considered by the people of West Java to be equal to the title of kiai, but according to residents of Sukaresmi Village, this title is

considered higher than the kiai. Including the title *ajengan* is a title above the kiai by the people of Dusun Lembur Sawah.

In addition to preaching comprehensive Islam, these *ajengans* are also recorded in history as the figures who first introduced Nahdlatul Ulama to the people of Sukaresmi Village, especially the Lembur Sawah Hamlet. According to Yusuf, the services of these *ajengans* are felt for the progress of NU in Sukaresmi Village, one of which is to make Sukaresmi Village a santri village in Rongga-West Bandung. Many Islamic boarding schools have been established with NU pattern, including madrasah ibtidaiyah institutions and other institutions with NU pattern. Yusuf, the successor of *ajengan* in Lembur Sawah Hamlet, also added that the *ajengans* introduced NU to have no upheaval and conflict between culture and religion. As a result, NU in Lembur Sawah hamlet was in great demand since the beginning, especially regarding its *tasamuh* understanding because it could integrate local culture and Islam.

The most important thing in the history of the services of the *ajengans* is the elimination of animistic teachings in the Lembur Sawah hamlet to become pure Islam, no longer Islam that is united with the belief in *karuhun* or ancestral spirits. Next is a discussion about one of the traditions of the Lembur Sawah Hamlet that they have successfully purified: the teaching *ajengans* burning incense. This tradition is then combined with typical Islamic practices such as reading the Qur'an, *salawat*, and *manakiban* which are identical to Nahdlatul Ulama.

### Local Tradition of Incense-Burning

In the community of Lembur Sawah Hamlet, West Bandung Regency, there were still many people who made offerings and burned incense. This ritual is usually done every Friday night. According to Abah Ateng (interview, 2021), an elder of the Lembur Sawah hamlet, the tradition of *meuleum incense* in Sundanese terms, is called *parukuyan*, which consists of various kinds of offerings, flowers, incense to burn incense, cigars, and others. The tradition of *meuleum incense* and offerings contains the ancestors' message to always be in touch with the Creator, nature, and humans. Therefore, according to Abah Ateng, there is a unique reading ritual when incense is burned along with tobacco or recess. It aims to connect humans with nature through the practice of offerings. The *karuhun* alias ancestors have warned with many myths. Among them, wilderness or forest is inhabited by spirits. Therefore, the forest must be given offerings so that the ghosts who guard the forest do not disturb humans. Therefore, in Overtime Sawah there is a forbidden forest which is known by many watchmen who are rarely entered by local residents (Abah Ateng, interview, 2021).

In addition, the implementation of the tradition is *meuleum incense secondary* also usually carried out before the procession of planting rice or crops in the fields or planting rice in *huma*. The residents of Lembur Sawah hamlet believe that if the ritual is carried out, the *overtime karuhun* (ancestors of the place) will not disturb the plants they plant. In addition, if the process is not carried out before planting, *meuleum incense* it is possible that the residents will experience crop failure. Therefore, to complete the tradition, *meuleum incense* it is necessary to add another tradition, namely *Susuguh karuhun*. *Susuguh Karuhun* consists of seven kinds of flowers, *seven rupiahs of rujakeun, endog, fishy coffee with bitter coffee, bako, cigar, seupaheun and incense*. According to Abah Ateng, the concept of seven in traditional Sundanese society is in line with the primacy of the seven verses in Surah Al-Fatihah.

In the tradition *Susuguh Karuhun*, the seven-form flower and *tujuh-rupi rujakeun* represent the Siloka of Sundanese culture. Although stated allegorically, the offerings consisting of seven kinds reflect the unification of various elements represented through the different days of the week, namely the space and time that humans pass through with various events, along with their overall dynamics. Another siloka is reflected in the offerings of *endog* or eggs which are symbolized as the embryo of life. This Sundanese proverb is quite well known, that eggs are like the forerunner of life that should be lived with good intentions and behavior, or what is known as the Sundanese expression: *endog teh mamana, cita-cita nafas nu bakal ngadatangkeun laku lampah nu hade* (the egg is the mother, the dream of the breath that will bring good behavior) (Heryana, 2012; Kodariah & Gunardi, 2015).

While the old-fashioned *pitutur* or parental advice about the wisdom of life and the maturity of human thought, is represented in the offerings of sweet coffee and bitter coffee. These two types of offerings are in harmony with the Sundanese *Pitutur*, which reads: *sajeroning lampah nafas, pinasti ngaliwatan papait jeung mamanis nu sakuduna asak, rasa dina babatok, wening ati herang manah* (humans will not escape the ups and downs of life, processed in mind, for later fulfilled in a clear heart and a calm soul). The same for *Bako*

and *goesSurutu*: two rolls of tobacco almost always available on top of the Sundanese offerings. Some people interpret Bako and Surutu as two things *Karuhun* (ancestors) liked during his life. In the tradition of *food offerings*, each ethnic group in the archipelago inherits a different rule of offerings, both in the food type and the amount. However, offerings are generally expressed through objects or foods from the natural surroundings. One of them is *Seupaheun* or leaves of *seureuh* (betel nut) which have health benefits (Caturwati, 2019; Sumardjo, 2019).

Other offerings appear in the form of frankincense. As one of the seven offerings served during the harvest season, incense serves as a communication medium between the offering organizer and *Karuhun*. The smoke that rises from the burning of frankincense is believed to be a medium of introductory prayers for the ancestors. Haji Hasan Mustapa (Mustapa, 2022) in "*Oerang Priangan djeung Oerang Sunda*" (1913) interpreted the presence of frankincense in the *nyuguh* ritual for the Sundanese to seduce Nyai Sri Pohaci or Sang Hyang Dewi Asri, to always bless rice from the *tandur* season until the harvest season (Rohmana, 2018).

### Straightening Community Understanding

Understanding the community so they are not trapped in rituals without understanding the proper function and meaning of rituals or traditions is the task of community leaders, especially community elites and kiai who become community role models through the media. *da'wah* for example *shahriahan*, *manakiban*, and others. What has been done by *Ajengan* lately at least leads to the intended thing. The NU elites recommend that implementing the *meuleum incense* should not only be carried out when building rice planting, but also – even the most essential thing is carried out at events that can lead to many blessings such as *muludan*, *tahlilan*, and other religious practices. Likewise, things that smell wasteful are left out; for example, the offerings provided should be used as a meal or given to others as alms.

The symbolic meaning of the objects provided (offerings) in the incense-burning needs to be explained to the public, that it all contains polytheism. The ritual incense burning, which used to be held every Friday night, was later straightened out by the *ajengan* that this time would be better if it was used to read the Qur'an for example Surah Yasin and Al-Waqiah. This is also what the *ajengans* do to continue to provide understanding to the public about the importance of respecting time. That is, although there are certain times when prayers will be granted, but every human being still has to say a prayer anytime and anywhere. As a result, slowly but surely, the ritual of incense burning, usually done by giving offerings, is now being replaced with Yasinan and Tahlilan events every Friday night in mosques and madrasas. This event is held regularly every week involving all elements of the community.

Likewise, in offerings, the first thing that must be done is how the community understands the meaning of the ritual; the community is not trapped in the ritual ceremony alone, but how they understand the importance and function of the ritual. This includes how the readings in the offerings are replaced with *tahlil*, *tahmid*, and *salawat* readings and are read fluently and correctly following Arabic rules. As far as possible, *ajengan* provides an understanding to the public about the real meaning of the reading so that they become more stable and confident in the benefits they read.

Furthermore, the alignment of meaning is also carried out in the incense-burning tradition carried out by the residents of Lembur Sawah Hamlet. Previously, substances such as *karuhun* that could communicate with residents were straightened out by the *ajengans* with an understanding of monotheism or straightening God's relationship with humans. Do not forget the *ajengans* also explain the dangers of *jinn* and demons, which are sometimes used as a means of communication by the residents of Lembur Sawah Hamlet. This is wrong because it is not part of the activity to believe or worship the jinn but Allah SWT.

Another understanding that has also been clarified is about the people's belief in haunted forests or forbidden forests. Previously, they believed, based on the ancestral stories of the residents of their village that the forest at the foot of the mountain where they lived was a forbidden forest because there was a figure of *Lauk Si Rawing* who later liked to harm people who entered there without the supervision of the *kuncen* (caretaker) of the forbidden forest. Recently, this understanding has begun to disappear as the *ajengan* attempts to straighten this understanding through theological and ecological approaches. The theological approach is explained through the power of God over all of His creation, both visible and invisible. In contrast, the environmental approach is carried out with the villagers' obligation to protect the forest which the ancestors

have long guarded. This concept is then believed to be a cooperative effort for the villagers to protect their forests.

Another essential concept straightened out is related to destiny and *qada* and *qadar* in Islam. These concepts are preached with a business approach and endeavor as a field for smoothing sustenance. Even though every effort or initiative results are left to Allah, the work is the most important thing. This practice is campaigned by the *ajengans* to carry out the counter-narrative of the residents of Lembur Sawah hamlet who believe in *karuhun*, which always thwarts the harvest when the ritual is not carried incense-burning. This concept was later replaced with the obligation to pay zakat and give alms to facilitate sustenance and harvest results (Mohammad Taufiq Rahman & Anwar, 2022).

Then, so that they do not just carry out the tradition without knowing the history and normative basis of the ritual, it is only natural that the *ajengans* study and provide information about the origins of the tradition, even though the history is only based on oral stories obtained from the ancestors of the predecessor hamlets such as the concept of seven in offerings following Surah Al-Fatihah so far, there has not been found an article that explores it. Of course, the search for authentic sources of offerings with the concept of seven continues. Likewise, the normative basis for implementing offerings with the idea is whether the tradition is purely a local tradition or an Islamic tradition, or is syncretism in Geertz's terms. This is like what Ajengan Yusuf did by trying to trace the yellow books that describe the concept of the seven offerings with the letter Al Fatihah, besides that he is also accustomed to kneeling to scholars who are considered to have the high scientific capacity in his former *pesantren* and other areas (Kerley, 2022; Minkov & Hofstede, 2012; Rohmana, 2014).

### ***Providing an Example for the Community***

Effective efforts to straighten out these deviant matters, apart from recitation and *shahriahan*, were also *uswah hasanah* from the leaders. Ajengan Usman bin Damiri, for example, gave an example of the burning incense tradition carried out in conjunction with the *khotmil* Quran and *tahlil*. When he finished harvesting his rice fields, he carried out *khotmil* Quran and *tahlil* as a form of alms and a state of gratitude for the sustenance bestowed by Allah SWT. Ajengan Ridwan Gafur also made another effort by holding a *shahriahan* or *manikiban* where the event contained prayers and the reading of the manaqib of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jailani. This event is also inseparable from the procession *meuleum incense* but is accompanied by the reciting of *tawasul* to the Prophet, Companions, and scholars. The event also ended with a meal together by providing dishes similar to the offerings in the previous community belief, including cigarettes, coffee, fruits, eggs, and chicken meat snacks.

Another example set by the *ajengan* in the Lembur Sawah hamlet is protecting the environment, the forbidden forest, and other vegetation. This also marks that the *ajengan* in Lembur Sawah hamlet is a religious leader, political leader, farmer, and environmental guard. The *ajengans* and their students usually plant hard trees on vacant lands previously cleared for *ngahuma* (farming) by the residents of the Lembur Sawah hamlet. Many people slowly follow this example in the Lembur Sawah hamlet to preserve their nature. Many hard tree planting is also done around people's fields where landslides often occur; instead of giving offerings, residents are now diligently planting mango, avocado, acacia, and star fruit trees. Besides supporting the soil to prevent landslides, this plant can also be enjoyed because of its fruit.

Ajengan gives another example; the most important thing is not to judge the situation and knowledge of the villagers. The *ajengans* never stop preaching patiently and are full of struggle. Based on the story of Ajengan Yusuf, who is a descendant of Ajengan Usman, he admitted that when Abah preached, there was always a rejection accepted by both the village elders and the villagers who still firmly received belief in the ancestral traditions of the villagers. Moreover, this is even more difficult when the established traditions of the Lembur Sawah hamlets have been present long before the ulama and *ajengans* came to bring Islam to the local area. In fact, according to Yusuf, before being accepted by the community, Mama KH. Zarkasyi or his teacher Ajengan Usman was threatened with death because they were considered unwilling to recognize ancestral traditions as part of Islam.

### ***Preserving Traditions***

Islam is the religion last divine revealed by Allah through the Prophet Muhammad as the bearer of His message amid a pluralistic human life. Certainly, he is not present in a society devoid of culture, belief, and

local wisdom where Islam is located, so, like it or not, Islam must come into contact with or struggle with that culture. From the results of this contact or struggle, there may be four models of the relationship pattern between Islam and the local tradition: *first*, Islamization namely the purification of Islam by radically breaking with local traditions, thus giving birth to pure Islam (Hidayat, 2021; Peacock, 2017). *Second*, indigenization is the pattern of seeking Islam as something normative into a contextual one by accommodating local cultures without losing their identities (syncretic). *Third*, negotiation occurs when Islam and local culture are in the same position, resulting in a take-and-give (acculturative) process. Fourth is conflictual; this happens when both (Islam and local culture) are in an established position.

Old traditions as long as they do not leave the teachings of Islam do not need to be prevented, let alone eliminated, except for leaving Islam, for example containing redundant values, they need to be straightened out, how to return to Islamic teachings. The community needs to understand the nature, meaning and function of the rituals they perform slowly according to their scientific abilities and capacities. "Talk to people according to their ability". This kind of norm seems to be carried out by the *ajengans* in changing the mindset and behavior of the people.

Traditions that have been rooted in society become property and wealth of the community that need to be preserved if it is good, however, it is also necessary to find a method or the best way so that it still exists and is following the times. The rule of *al-muhafadzatu 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah* (Ulum & Munim, 2019), is one of the rules implemented by *ajengan* in modifying local traditions. The most effective means are through other traditions such as *shahriahan* and *manakiban*. These traditions are an effective means for dialogue and correcting wrong views about an ancestral culture by prioritizing together reading the holy verses of the Qur'an, hadith, prayers, and praises to the Prophet Muhammad.

Changing the traditions rooted in the community must be done carefully and gradually until the community accepts the change without feeling forced. This is what the *Ajengans* in the Lembur Sawah hamlet continue to strive for, who continue to straighten out local traditions whose seeds of activity continue to emerge along with the declining quality of crop yields and soil fertility. In addition to straightening out theologically, *Ajengan* also embraces the relevant government regarding the importance of socializing the Islamic creed and socialization of social change that is ready to lead the hamlet residents to a new, more modern life through the construction of road and electricity infrastructure.

Traditions are not only inherited but also constructed or invited. In the invited tradition, the tradition is inherited and built or a series of actions that are shown to instill values and norms through repetition, which automatically refers to continuity with the past. Thus it can be interpreted that efforts in preserving the tradition can be through inheritance and construction.

Inheritance refers to spreading traditions from time to time, while construction refers to the formation or cultivation of traditions to others. Efforts to inherit the tradition, for example by carrying out the tradition exactly as carried out by the residents of Lembur Sawah Hamlet. This is as in the tradition of incense burning; this tradition continues but is changed substantially through events such as *tahlilan*, *Yasinan*, *shahriahan* and *manaqiban* in mosques and madrasahs. These traditions use food and drink as meals for the participants when the Quran and *salawat* are recited together. Similarly, incense-burning, originally a form of human relationship with his ancestors, was replaced by the recitation of *tawassul* to the Prophet, companions, saints, scholars, and the relatives of the villagers who died. In the mosque, *tahlilan* and *Yasinan* are usually held on Friday night, so *tahlil* becomes routine. Even in educational institutions (madrasah diniyah), *tahlil* or *salawat* are often used as competition material when the institution performs *muludan* and *rajaban*.

Similarly, in some madrasahs in Dusun Lembur Sawah after Ashar, a *tahlil* event is always held by Muslim women, *fatayat*, and IPPNU, this event has become a routine for women in the madrasah. At night, usually, the men in addition to performing *khotmil* Qur'an. Events like this are an effort to inherit the tradition from one generation to the next. The event involves a diverse group of people, ranging from adults, adolescents, and even children.

While the change of tradition or construction usually introduces new values to certain practices gradually, for example, in the habit of *incense-burning*, in the past, it was typically recited the Sundanese *jangjawokan* accompanying the procession of planting rice in the fields and the *huma* (farm). Now the incense-burning event is continued accompanied by the *Yasinan* event, *khotmil* Qur'an and the recitation of *salawat*.

## CONCLUSION

The people of Dusun Lembur Sawah generally do not understand the substantive meaning of the incense burning ritual, but they perform the ritual with full awareness. They consider the ritual a "shari'a" that must be performed; otherwise, it will affect the harvest, psychologically they feel worried, and so on if they leave tradition. *Ajengan's* role as an elite group of NU in the struggle of Islam with local traditions is the community's understanding of the meaning and function of the traditions they have been implementing. Second, to be a role model for the community in carrying out the tradition following the teachings of Islam. The principle used is to allow existence to exist as long as it is not contrary to Islam and renew the tradition to follow the development of the times. Third, the tradition has taken root in society by passing on the tradition to the next generation or by reconstructing the tradition.

The following few recommendations can be made: First, to the community to understand better the meaning and function of the local traditions they have been implementing so that they are not stuck in the tradition or ritual itself. Second, to the advocates to enlighten the community by understanding the meaning, nature, and function and the normative basis of the tradition they (society) have been implementing so far. Third, to other researchers, the data obtained in this study is small due to researchers' limited time and ability. Hence, it is possible to conduct further research, especially in urban areas where people are "more advanced," whether they are still fanatics carrying out local traditions without understanding the meaning and function of the traditions in question or whether there have been significant changes in the respective religious life.

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