

## **Exploring Sprituality in Grave Pilgrimage: The Case of the Berbah Community at the Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo Cemetery**

**Fitria Nur Barokah<sup>1</sup>, Moh. Khoiruddin<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

Email: [fitrianurbarokah@gmail.com](mailto:fitrianurbarokah@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*This study explores the religious and cultural significance of pilgrimage practices among the Berbah people at the Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo Cemetery in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It aims to examine how pilgrimage practices continue to be observed in contemporary Yogyakarta despite the city's increasing modernization. Limited scholarly attention has been paid to understanding the significance of the continued practice of grave pilgrimage in this country, so this research attempts to capture the lived experiences of local communities using a descriptive qualitative case study approach. The data were collected through participant observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, allowing for a rich contextual understanding of the phenomenon. This study found that pilgrimage to the cemetery has a deep spiritual meaning for the Berbah people, manifested in three main dimensions: (1) achieving peace of mind through sacred relationships, (2) becoming more aware of human death and impermanence, and (3) clarifying and strengthening one's purpose in life. These aspects contribute to a higher sense of direction and serenity in the lives of pilgrims, as they believe that pilgrimage invites divine blessings that guide them towards a more meaningful and focused existence.*

**Keywords:** Spirituality; Grave Pilgrimage; Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo Cemetery

## Introduction

Culture is a central topic in the study of community lives, as it arises from the continuous everyday interaction among individuals within social groups.<sup>1</sup> Humans, as inherently social beings, do not exist in isolation. Instead, they engage in dynamic relationships with others.<sup>2</sup> Through these interactions, communities collectively develop and sustain diverse cultural practices, values, and belief systems. Indonesia has multifaceted traditions, and cultures continue to develop and adapt with relevance and vitality in contemporary and future Indonesian society.<sup>3</sup>

According to J.W. Ajawaila, local culture is the hallmark of the culture of local community groups.<sup>4</sup> In the case of Indonesia, local cultures are generally heterogeneous, shaped by the diverse ethnic groups spread across the archipelago. These traditions formed the foundation of values upheld by the local communities up to today. One of the most deeply rooted and widely embraced values in Indonesian communities is spirituality, which serves as a means of drawing closer to God. One of the most common

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<sup>1</sup> Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism Perspective and Methods*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ Prentice Hall.

<sup>2</sup> Durkheim, É. (1914). The dualism of human nature and its social conditions. In K. H. Wolff (Ed.), *Emile Durkheim, 1858–1917: A collection of essays with translations and a bibliography* (pp. 325–339). New York: Harper & Row.

<sup>3</sup> Koentjaraningrat. (2015). *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*. Jakarta: PT Rineka Cipta, p. 157.

<sup>4</sup> Balqis Fallahnda. (2021). “Mengenal Budaya Lokal: Konsep dan cirinya” *Republika*, March 4, 2021, p. 6.

practices to gain it is through pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage is not only a symbolic journey but also a tangible action and cyclical phenomenon in human life, often driven by fear and anxiety, which lead people to perform certain ritual activities with devotion.<sup>5</sup> This belief reflects the deep human desire for spiritual connection and certainty in the face of life's uncertainties. Pilgrimage traditions have consistently influenced human behavior throughout history, shaping personal faith and communal identity. In this case, pilgrimage is not limited to Muslims only. Followers of other religions worldwide also use similar practices to express reverence and spiritual longing.<sup>6</sup> It shows how pilgrimage is a universal cultural bridge connecting people across different faiths and beliefs.

In the Javanese context, the practice of pilgrimage originated from a tradition known as the Javanese religion or *Kejawen Islam*,<sup>7</sup> a belief from the Hindu-Buddhist concept that tends towards the mystical mixed into one and developed in the religion of Islam. This syncretic belief system integrates elements of Hindu-Buddhist mysticism with Islamic teachings. This blend of traditions has created a unique spiritual culture that values sacred journeys to ancestral or sacred places as a form of devotion and inner reflection. One of the most popular sites to visit for pilgrimage is a cemetery, specifically tombs of past respected religious figures.

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<sup>5</sup> Suraini. (2018). "Pilgrimage Culture at the Tomb of Dato Tiro Bulukumba District", Thesis of the Faculty of Adab and Humanities UIN Alauddin Makassar, p. 86.

<sup>6</sup> Nur Wahid. (2018). "The Tradition of Pilgrimage to the Tomb of Bathara Katong the Founder of Islamic Civilization in Ponorogo", *JADECS*, Vol 3 No.1, April 2018, p. 10

<sup>7</sup> Koentjaraningrat. *Kebudayaan Jawa*, Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1994, p. 312.

This practice influences the pilgrims' way of life, which can be seen as a form of behavior shaped by cultural and religious values. This behavior is not random. They are often ritualized and meaningful, deeply rooted in spiritual symbolism. The concept of fairies or invisible spiritual beings, for example, is closely related to events interpreted as significant behaviors within the framework of these cultures. The term “behavior” itself, as used by sociologist Max Weber, refers to actions that have subjective meaning to the individual who performs them. In this way, pilgrimage and related practices are not just traditions but intended behaviors based on a rich tapestry of beliefs, intentions, and meanings. Meanwhile, Weber uses the word “behavior” to describe actions that, according to the perpetrator, have a subjective meaning.<sup>8</sup>

One of the bustling sacred tombs as a cultural object of pilgrimage on the island of Java, namely the cemetery of Sulthoni Wotgaleh, better known as Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo cemetery, is located in Noyokerten, Sendangtirto, Berbah, Sleman. It is to the south of Adisucipto Airport Yogyakarta. Inside the Wotgaleh burial complex's walls is a semi-open mosque named the Wotgaleh mosque, and a dome contains the burial of a saint. It is considered sacred by the local community and broader society, particularly because it is the resting place of Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo and his mother, Ratu Giring. In addition, next to the mosque was a well-built building from the time of Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo.<sup>9</sup>

Wotgaleh Cemetery is a famous pilgrimage site that attracts many visitors, especially on spiritually significant nights such as Friday night Kliwon, Monday Kliwon, and Tuesday night Kliwon,

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<sup>8</sup> Binti Maunah. 2009. *Tradisi Intelektual Santri*. Yogyakarta: Teras, p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> Prabowo. (2019). "Cerita Mistis Makam Purboyo", in News Okezone.com, October 9, 2019, p. 5.

based on the Javanese calendar. On these nights, hundreds of people gather at the site, creating a unique atmosphere full of reverence and devotion. Visitors to the tomb do so with various intentions—not only to pray and perform traditional pilgrimage ceremonies but also to engage in meditation, self-reflection, or even acts of penance.

Based on the observations, Muslims dominate the Sendangtirlo Berbah community, but visitors from various religious and spiritual backgrounds also often participate in this practice. It is also learned that the pilgrims are not limited to the local community. Many travel a very long distance to visit Wotgaleh. Hajj pilgrims come from various parts of Central Java, East Java, and West Java, as well as from areas far beyond the island, such as Aceh. The cemetery also welcomes international visitors, including those from neighbouring countries such as Malaysia and Thailand, highlighting its broader spiritual significance and the enduring appeal of this sacred site across cultural and national boundaries. Despite this diversity, Islamic beliefs and practices greatly influence how pilgrimages are understood and performed within society. It was a sign of gratitude to their ancestors who came before them.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to serving as a tool of regional identifiers, local cultures and traditions carry profound philosophical and social significance that must be understood and appreciated. These values are reflected in rituals, traditional ceremonies, and daily practices emphasizing harmony, respect, and gratitude. Understanding and practising these aspects of culture strengthens our sense of identity and fosters a deeper connection to our heritage and the divine. We contribute to our community's cultural sustainability and spiritual

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<sup>10</sup> M. Soehada. (2008). *Orang Jawa Memaknai Agama*, Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana, p. 83.

well-being by appreciating the rich local culture. It reflects the community's effort to honor the legacy and spiritual contributions of those who significantly shaped their beliefs and values.

The author chose to conduct this research based on the strong presence of pilgrimage culture in the tomb of Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo, which is part of the Wotgaleh Cemetery complex. In this kernel place, the tradition of pilgrimage remains embedded in the life of the local community. It continues attracting many people from Sendangtirto Village and the surrounding area. The site becomes very busy on spiritually significant nights such as Friday night Kliwon, Monday Kliwon, and Tuesday Kliwon. This phenomenon is so interesting because it is practised by ordinary farmers and villagers and supported and revitalized by local officials. With its blend of religious devotion and cultural heritage, this living tradition encourages the author to investigate and explore the deeper spiritual beliefs underpinning it within the Berbah community.

## **Method**

This is a descriptive qualitative case study, and the data were collected through participant observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher observed the people and activities in the Wotgaleh complex, particularly the Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo cemetery in Berbah Sleman Yogyakarta. This research was conducted naturally, without intervention, to maintain the authenticity of the participants' voices and experiences.

The research subject was the local community, especially those who frequently visited the tomb and some pilgrims from out of town. In addition, it also involves the taker of the Sulthoni Wotgaleh mosque, especially the caretaker of the tomb, who lives

daily at the Wotgaleh complex. The primary data in this research were derived from direct interviews with the pilgrims and the caretakers.<sup>11</sup> In addition, secondary data were obtained from relevant journal articles, especially by Indonesian researchers, news articles, pamphlets and notices found around the Wotgaleh Cemetery, and information from the local government's official websites, books, and others.

During the participant observation, the researcher tried to create a casual conversation in order to minimize the barrier between the researcher and the respondents. Researchers could see and feel how the community understands pilgrimage traditions through this method. The researcher also observed the daily activities of the local visitors to get a more holistic picture of the community. Furthermore, in analysis techniques, the researcher used the method introduced by Miles and Huberman: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.<sup>12</sup> As mentioned above, this research used several stages to analyze all the data obtained from the field.

## Result and Discussion

The deep reverence in the grave pilgrimage to Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo cemetery in Berbah is primarily directed toward the late Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo himself, a respected figure believed to have played a vital role in the spread and development of Islam during the Mataram Kingdom era. His spiritual influence and leadership continue to inspire devotion, and his tomb has become a sacred site for prayer, reflection, and connection with the past. For the local people, visiting his resting

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<sup>11</sup> Andi Ibrahim et.al. (2018). *Metode Penelitian*. Makassar: Gunadarma Ilmu, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup> Emzir. 2012. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif: Analisis Data*. Jakarta: Rajawali Press, p. 129.

place is more than a symbolic tradition—it is a way to reconnect with their roots, uphold religious identity, and seek blessings through the spiritual lineage that ties them to the early generations of Islamic practitioners. The pilgrimage culture, therefore, is a living tradition that intertwines faith, history, and cultural memory in the everyday life of the Sendangtirto Berbah community.

Kanjeng is a name given to the sons of the palace, such as “Kanjeng Raden Tumenggung,” meanwhile for female palace children is “Princess Kanjeng Raden Roro,” While the name Panembahan is a title given to Raden Mas Damar or Purboyo because he once sat as king when Sultan Agung was still a child. Panembahan title because he was also worshipped as a king; Purboyo’s name is a title when he became commander 4 (four kings) or generation, which means wise, with the real name mas damar. His childhood name was the pseudonym Jaka Umbaran.<sup>13</sup>

The community performs different pilgrimage practices, each shaped by local traditions and personal spiritual needs. One common form involves doing tirakat—spiritual exercises of self-control and reflection—over three to seven days while fasting. During this time, individuals also perform rituals that they believe can bring blessings, good luck, and even fulfil particular life desires or goals. These rituals often include prayer, meditation, and silent contemplation in holy places, reinforcing the deep connection between physical journeys and inner spiritual experiences. At its core, pilgrimage serves as a wasilah, or spiritual means, through which people seek to relieve anxiety, fear, and the burden of worldly worries. It offers a sense of emotional release and divine connection, giving pilgrims a renewed sense of peace and purpose. For many, this practice becomes a way to reset their

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<sup>13</sup> The resources are based on the results of an interview with Mr Asrori, the head of Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo Cemetery, on May 10, 2021.



inner state, regain spiritual balance, and get closer to the divine, transcending the noise and chaos of everyday life.

In addition, the community's hajj pilgrimage is also part of the routine agenda, which is routinely celebrated every week and often enlivened by both residents and visitors from outside the region. These gatherings are a moment of spiritual devotion and serve as a cultural event that brings people together across geographical boundaries. The series of rituals involved in this weekly pilgrimage is diverse and meaningful, including practices such as tahlil (collective prayer), the recitation of Surah Yasin, and tirakat, all of which are believed to have a positive impact on one's spiritual strength and inner peace. These rituals are performed individually and communally, strengthening bonds within the community and fostering a sense of shared spiritual purpose.

Pilgrimage practices usually occur at Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo's holy tomb in Berbah, Sleman, Yogyakarta. Both the site keepers and pilgrims show a strong enthusiasm and commitment to preserving and participating in these religious and cultural traditions. Their devotion becomes most noticeable during certain nights considered sacred or hospitable when the atmosphere becomes more solemn and spiritually charged. This consistent dedication reflects the importance of enduring pilgrimage in nurturing personal faith and collective identity within the community.

Indeed, each action of an individual could make a change or have an impact based on what he does, regardless of the positive or negative impacts. The impact will then be built on trust, confidence, and loyalty to what he is doing.<sup>14</sup> The pilgrimage

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<sup>14</sup> Chazizah Gustian. (2018). "Kekerasan Simbolik Berita Kriminal di Media Massa", dalam al- Banjari, 17(2) December, p. 5.

culture is no exception, which is often a mandatory agenda for some people, based on particular intentions, goals, and efforts in achieving what they want; regardless of whether it is religious/sacred or material in nature, everything is based on certain desires and goals such as smooth fortune, fulfilled wishes/prayers, getting a mate, especially trying to get closer to God.<sup>15</sup> Those are some reasons why the pilgrimage culture is closely related to the behavior of people's lives in various places, including what happened at the Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo cemetery.

According to Herbert Mead, everyone defines every social and physical object based on their needs.<sup>16</sup> The community believes that this pilgrimage has a significant impact on their life journey. This means that individuals do not just respond to objects or experiences passively; instead, they give meaning to them depending on how the objects serve their personal, social, or spiritual purposes. For example, in the context of pilgrimage, a tomb or sacred site is not just a physical space—it becomes a symbol of faith, history, and meaningful ancestral relationships.

Based on the interviews with the respondents during the field trip to this site, the researcher found that the pilgrims are drawn to these sites because they experience fulfilment in emotional, spiritual, and communal needs. They find deep spiritual meaning, particularly in three facets: achieving peace of mind through sacred relationships, (2) becoming more aware of human death and impermanence, and (3) clarifying and strengthening one's purpose in life. Thus, the meaning of any object or ritual is formed through the lens of personal experience and social

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth K. Nottingham & Abdul Muis Naharoang. (1994). *Agama dan Masyarakat*. Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo Persada, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> George Ritzer. *Teori Sosiologi*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012, p. 596.

interaction, as suggested by Mead's symbolic interactionism.

### **Achieving Peace of Mind Through Sacred Relationships**

In the pilgrimage culture, many individuals find experiences and transformations that they have never encountered before. Those who consistently participate in spiritual activities in Wotgaleh—such as tahlil, praise, recitation, and joint prayer—often report significant positive changes in their lives. This ritual is performed sincerely and is accompanied by personal desires and hopes, creating a significant spiritual atmosphere. Among the many benefits they experienced, the most basic and widely felt was a sense of inner peace—peace of mind that emerged directly from their devotion and spiritual effort.

“I’ve been here almost every day, brother, since 2009; what is more, my house is close, so I always try to pray and recite the Qur’an at this place; this is where people who are close to Allah, their mother, do not be surprised if only things change if we are consistent here. I am sure I am not the only one who feels that other people must, too; life feels calm, and things go smoothly, like I am not too insistent on the affairs of this world, brother; what is more, this world is just a deposit for a moment. It may be a blessing from us reciting, reciting, and blessing to do good deeds in this location.

According to the confession of Mr. Sarwaka, who has consistently visited Wotgaleh for several years while doing various things that they believe can positively impact their life, he also felt inner peace within his soul. All of that was done based on his awareness of the impact since he visited the Wotgaleh Location. According to Al-Ghazali, peace of mind is a condition with spiritual nuances and can bring peace to a strong, essential, and

eternal soul because the calming bond comes from God.<sup>17</sup> However, peace of mind is not fixed and permanent. It is a psychological achievement after a specific process or effort that can revive that feeling in the soul of every perpetrator.

The pilgrimage practice in Wotgaleh itself symbolizes community ritual practice, represented by their understanding of blessings and benefits. According to Herbert Mead, every individual remembers and bases their understanding of this world on everything that has proven to be a positive influence in life, and they will also change every action or even social behavior that does not positively impact their life.<sup>18</sup> This idea aligns with Mead's symbolic interactionism theory, which emphasizes how individuals shape their behavior based on the meanings they derive from social interactions. When people find specific experiences, rituals, or relationships beneficial, those elements become internalized and affect how they perceive themselves and their place in the world. Instead, behaviors or actions that lead to discomfort, failure, or adverse outcomes are more likely to be changed or abandoned. This dynamic process highlights the importance of reflection and interpretation in human development and social behavior.

In this regard, religion is essential in offering peace and tranquillity to the human soul through the various rituals and teachings it upholds. This religious practice is symbolic and a meaningful pathway connecting individuals to the Divine and a more profound sense of inner peace. Through prayer, reading, reflection, and pilgrimage, religion provides comfort and certainty

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<sup>17</sup> Abd Syakur, *Metode Ketenangan Jiwa*, Yogyakarta: Fajar Pustaka Baru, 2001, p. 220.

<sup>18</sup> George Ritzer, *Teori Sosiologi dari Sosiologi Klasik Sampai Perkembangan Terakhir Post modern*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012), pg. 600.

in times of uncertainty, offering guidance and strength for life's challenges. For many believers, these rituals are more than just routine obligations—they are a source of spiritual nourishment that helps maintain emotional and psychological well-being.

Beyond the general sense of peace it offers, the practice of pilgrimage, in particular, profoundly impacts those involved in it. Pilgrimage invites individuals to leave their daily routine and face the deeper realities of existence, including the inevitable death. When pilgrims visit the tombs of ancestors or revered religious figures, they are reminded of the temporary nature of life and return to the Creator. This awareness often inspires gratitude, humility, and a high urgency to live a more meaningful and purposeful life. In this way, pilgrimage becomes a form of worship and a spiritual awakening that influences one's behavior, mindset, and moral outlook.

### **Becoming More Aware of Human Death and Impermanence**

Pilgrimage to the cemetery, according to the view of Islam, is a good deed. In addition, the Prophet Muhammad SAW made a pilgrimage to the graves of the Uhud martyrs and the graves of the Baqi experts, so it is clear that pilgrimage is considered a sunnah, which means that if it is done, it will get a reward. If it is left, it will not get punishment. Apart from that, it turns out that pilgrimage can give awareness to the perpetrators about life other than this world, namely death or the grave, which also positively impacts the perpetrators in social and religious life. Religion functions to fulfil specific needs for survival and maintenance.<sup>19</sup>

According to Herbert Mead, each bases his actions on what benefits him in the social and supernatural spheres, such as this

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<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth K. Nottingham, *Agama dan Masyarakat*. Abdul Muis Naharong (Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada, 1994), pg. 34.

pilgrimage practice. The practice of pilgrimage positively impacts the perpetrator because it is also a social action that can build interaction and communication. From Mead's perspective, individuals interpret and give meaning to their experiences through social interactions, shaping their behavior. Pilgrimage, in this context, becomes a spiritual journey and a social action in which people engage with others, share beliefs, and reaffirm collective values. Shared rituals and communal atmospheres strengthen social bonds, creating a sense of unity and belonging that strengthens individuals' spiritual and emotional well-being. Thus, pilgrimage is a personal spiritual pursuit and social experience reflecting Mead's identity and behaviour formation theory through meaningful interactions.

Pilgrimage contains various meanings and symbols. It can provide moral, social, and religious awareness based on understanding the meanings and symbols encountered.<sup>20</sup> The physical symbol in the form of a tomb and individual interactions with other individuals in the pilgrimage room are also interpreted as good behavior to improve self-quality and become a better person. This culture is present in social life, is constructed in the way of thinking for individuals, and is carried out sustainably; all of that also starts from how they see their ancestors, who are honorably remembered for their services as long as they live.

“What we do in this world is nothing but our provision in the afterlife and how we will be remembered in our families and society. I think Purboyo is one of the most successful people; why is that? During his life, he became a useful person for this nation. So that is what we are looking for, Mas; how will we die and be remembered as

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<sup>20</sup> Najitama, “Ziarah Suci dan Ziarah Resmi” (Makna Ziarah pada Makam Santri dan Makam Priyayi) IBDA: Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Budaya, Vol. 11, No. 1, 4 January 2013, p. 3.

useful people for this country.”<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, grave pilgrimages are often performed at the ancestral graves of family members and religious leaders, serving as a way for individuals to honor and emulate the struggles and achievements of these figures throughout their lives.<sup>22</sup> By visiting these sacred sites, pilgrims not only express respect to those who came before them but also seek to be inspired by the perseverance, faith, and devotion shown by these people. In the case of the pilgrimage to Wotgaleh, the community used this tradition to emulate the efforts of those who had worked to spread Islam, continuing the legacy of religious devotion and cultural resilience. This pilgrimage is seen as an act of preserving history—one that encapsulates spiritual and cultural values passed down from generation to generation. The historical significance of this ritual serves as a symbol of life, reminding people of the importance of understanding and interpreting their shared heritage in a way that is in harmony with contemporary values.

Therefore, the actions taken by people today are symbolic manifestations of the collective meaning they associate with this tradition. Through participating in these rituals, pilgrims engage in a shared interpretation of history, embracing the symbolism embedded in the pilgrimage process. This shared understanding creates a positive movement, affecting their immediate surroundings and inner selves. These practices’ spiritual and psychological impact cannot be underestimated, as they foster a sense of communal unity and individual reflection. Through pilgrimage, individuals align their actions with a deeper purpose,

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<sup>21</sup> The Interview with Mr. Ahmad as Pilgrimage Kanjeng Panembahan Purboyo Cemetery, May 5, 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Moch. Nur Ilham, "Social Practices of Youth Community Grave Pilgrimage during the Pandemic in Nganjuk", *Journal of Education and Social Religion* Vol. 7 No. 1 July 2021, p. 9.

contributing to the well-being of their community while nurturing their own spiritual growth. Ultimately, the symbolic meaning inherent in these actions creates a continuous cycle of positive transformation, both externally within the community and internally within the soul of the pilgrims.

Apart from that, it can also be understood that all of this is an expression of the meaning that has developed among pilgrims towards the pilgrimage activities carried out by the pilgrims. They do the same in the background of the various symbols present in it.<sup>23</sup> This is also motivated by how they interact and think. George Herbert Mead said that an individual is influenced by his or her social environment through community interactions, which would later shape his or her thoughts and perspectives.

### **Clarifying and Strengthening One's Purpose in Life**

In addition to offering peace of mind and fostering awareness of the impermanence of life, pilgrimage can significantly improve one's life direction and purpose. Pilgrimage is more than just a religious obligation—it is a deeply reflective and spiritual journey that invites individuals to slow down, break away from everyday distractions, and reconsider their path in life. Individuals are drawn into moments of introspection through the sacred rituals, prayers, and meditative atmosphere accompanying the pilgrimage. This process allows them to reevaluate their priorities, assess the alignment of their goals with their values, and begin to realign their actions with a deeper spiritual vision. In this way, pilgrimage acts as a checkpoint, encouraging repentance, renewal and clarity about one's earthly responsibilities and eternal

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<sup>23</sup> M. Misbahul Mujib, "Tradisi Ziarah dalam Masyarakat Jawa: Konstelasi Kesalehan, Identitas Keagamaan dan Komersial", *Ibda'* 14 (2016): 205-25.



aspirations.

As this sacred journey unfolds, pilgrims often gain greater self-awareness and a deeper understanding of their true identity. Rituals – rich in spiritual meaning and layered with centuries of tradition – serve as a gateway to profound self-discovery. In these moments of quiet reflection, individuals face their weaknesses, recognize their limitations, and gain insight into their inner selves. This encounter with oneself is not only humbling but also empowering. Pilgrimage helps people see beyond the superficial identities formed by society and instead connect with their essential being—which is always in touch with the Divine. Through this awareness, pilgrims begin to understand their role in the larger spiritual narrative and their potential to grow in virtue, wisdom, and faith.

Ultimately, pilgrimage becomes more than just a momentary act of devotion—it develops into a powerful catalyst for lasting personal transformation. It offers an opportunity to abandon negative habits and worldly distractions and to embrace a more deliberate and spiritually grounded life. With every step and every prayer, pilgrims travel in and out, nurturing hearts that seek peace and souls that long for divine closeness. Therefore, the transformative effects of pilgrimage go far beyond physical acts; It reshapes one's worldview, renews faith, and inspires a more profound commitment to living a meaningful and spiritually fulfilling life.

“This pilgrimage is very useful for us because we know more and more about our abilities, that humans are weak, and that they always need God's help as the ruler of nature. Here we recite and do good deeds, of course, we will participate in something good too and also remember the bad things we have done, from there we can't go back to

those bad things again, we also have to realize that all humans will die, so we have to understand what we were created for and where are we going.”<sup>24</sup>

Mr Asrori conveyed the profound impact and benefits of pilgrimage on his life, explaining how being involved in a series of pilgrimage rituals has allowed him to understand life's purpose. As he contemplated the pilgrimage, he realized that human beings, in their inherent imperfections and weaknesses, were created with a constant need for guidance and support. This awareness reinforces the importance of seeking help, asking for divine guidance, and staying close to God. Through this ritual, rich in symbolic meaning, he has appreciated a deeper spiritual consciousness that gradually nourishes the soul and mind. The pilgrimage becomes a powerful reminder of human frailty and dependence on higher powers, encouraging individuals to reflect on their lives and renew their commitment to their faith.

The symbolic impact of the pilgrimage goes beyond mere ritual. It provides deep insights into the human psyche, helping individuals recognize their own flaws and limitations. As Asrori notes, this reflective practice allowed him to understand himself better and become more attuned to life's moral and spiritual aspects. The pilgrimage ritual, which involves holy prayer, reading, and meditation, guides the heart towards an awareness of right and wrong. They serve as a moral compass, urging individuals to discard negative behaviors and thoughts and shifting their focus to actions that align with their faith and values. Through this spiritual journey, pilgrims are encouraged to abandon distractions and negative influences and instead dedicate their energy to activities that promote personal growth and contribute to

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<sup>24</sup> The Interview with Mr. Asrori as manager of Wotgaleh Cemetery, December 6, 2022.

a better life.

In addition, pilgrimage offers more than just an intellectual or emotional understanding of one's life purpose; It is a transformative experience that touches the essence of the human spirit. As a direct participant in the pilgrimage, Mr. Asrori described how this practice allowed him to experience firsthand the intangible yet significant benefits of such spiritual devotion. Through her journey, she has felt increased clarity and peace, not only in her mind but also in her heart. These invisible benefits truly distinguish the pilgrimage experience, as they go beyond external actions and rituals, touching the soul in ways that redefine priorities, relationships, and, ultimately, their approach to one's life. According to Herbert Mead, it is the completion or final act of things he considers through the stages of impulse, perception, manipulation, and the completion to get what he wants.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, the pilgrimage culture, which is the interaction of religion, culture, and local traditions, has become an activity that has a very fundamental value in the activities and breath of every society. Why not, with pilgrimages in the form of rituals and a series of worships in which it is proven to have a significant influence on the physical, mental, and also the human psyche, with various awareness created because of which interpretations and various symbols in it. The culture of pilgrimage becomes an activity that must be maintained to protect the physical, mental, and psychic of man and how he knows himself and is closer to his Creator.

## Conclusion

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<sup>25</sup> George Ritzer. *Teori Sosiologi dari Sosiologi Klasik Sampai Perkembangan Terakhir Post modern*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012, p. 608.

Pilgrimage is a form of worship that provides spiritual and inner peace to those who do it. By performing a series of rituals such as Qur'an recitation, tahlil, praise, and communal prayer, individuals often experience a sense of spiritual connection and profound emotional clarity. These practices serve as acts of devotion and reflection, allowing pilgrims to take a break from their mundane routine and refocus their hearts and minds. Consistent involvement in these sacred rituals has positively changed a person's attitudes, mental well-being, and overall outlook on life.

Beyond structured rituals, the interactions that occur during the pilgrimage—either between individuals or through symbolic and nonverbal communication within the sacred space of the tomb—also have significant meaning. The presence of the grave serves as a poignant reminder of human death, reinforcing the awareness that every soul has a limited time in this world and that death comes without warning. This constant memory fosters humility, strengthens one's resolve to live a purposeful life, and encourages a greater focus on personal and spiritual goals. In addition, for the site keepers and the local community, pilgrimage is seen as a form of worship and a way to honour and preserve the heritage of their ancestors, bringing peace to the living and the dead through ongoing blessings and spiritual connections.

Reviving and maintaining the culture of pilgrimage is a worthwhile effort to prevent the erosion of traditions that play an important role in instilling Islamic values within the framework of local cultural expression. The pilgrimage culture reflects a vertical spirituality connecting individuals to God and horizontal values strengthening social bonds and community solidarity. These spiritual and social messages are essential to maintaining a morally harmonious and morally harmonious society. Thus, protecting pilgrimage traditions is not just about preserving cultural heritage.

It is also about maintaining the essence of religious practice and social unity, ensuring that the community continues to live with purpose, peace, and faith.

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### **The Interview References**

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