

Revitalizing Religious and Cultural Harmony through Prophetic Art: A Study of *Gelaran Parowulan* in Tegal

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ABSTRACT

This study examines *Gelaran Parowulan*, a grassroots cultural movement in Tegal, Indonesia, as a practical manifestation of prophetic art. Prophetic art refers to the integration of spiritual, ethical, and transformative values into artistic expression to promote social change. Using a descriptive phenomenological approach, this research investigates how *Gelaran Parowulan* utilizes traditional art forms—such as poetry, puppetry, and dance—to communicate Islamic teachings while addressing contemporary socio-political issues. The findings reveal three key dimensions: first, the use of art as a medium for socio-political critique; second, the aesthetic embodiment of religious experiences that emphasize inclusivity and compassion; and third, the realization of Islam’s principle of *raḥmatan li al-‘ālamīn* (mercy to all creation) in fostering solidarity among diverse communities. By reinterpreting da’wah as a dynamic and accessible practice, *Gelaran Parowulan* demonstrates the transformative potential of art in bridging religious and cultural divides while revitalizing local traditions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The dissatisfaction of artists and cultural activists in Tegal with the rigidity of modern Islamic preaching (da'wah) and the stagnation of traditional cultural institutions gave rise to *Gelaran Parowulan*. This grassroots movement, rooted in local traditions, rejects formal organizational structures and fosters inclusivity through collaborative artistic expressions, including poetry, puppetry, dance, and music. Unlike conventional arts organizations, *Gelaran Parowulan* emphasizes shared values over hierarchical systems, creating a space for free and transformative expression.

The emergence of *Gelaran Parowulan* reflects broader societal dynamics in Indonesia, particularly the tension between institutionalized religion and local cultural traditions. Religion and culture, as Tibbi (1999) argues, are interdependent forces that must adapt to societal transformations. However, in Indonesia, the dominance of a "monolithic view of Islam" (Israr, 1978) has often marginalized indigenous practices and disrupted the dynamic interplay between religion and culture. This marginalization has eroded traditional arts and alienated communities from their cultural roots, contributing to a sense of spiritual and cultural disconnection (Ismail & Asso, 2024; Lukens-Bull, 2023).

Historically, Islam in Indonesia has been propagated through cultural mediums, as exemplified by the Walisongo's use of *wayang* (shadow puppetry), literature, and music to embed Islamic teachings within Javanese traditions (Kharis, 2020). Sunan Kalijaga's adaptation of *wayang* integrated Islamic narratives into stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana, making these performances vehicles for spiritual messages while preserving local artistic forms (Dalimunthe, 2016; Yatim, 1996). These methods not only illustrate the harmonious relationship between religion and culture but also highlight Islam's adaptability in engaging diverse communities.

In contrast, contemporary da'wah often lacks this cultural resonance. The prevailing paradigm of da'wah—which confines itself to pulpit preaching and ritual formalism—has struggled to address the complex socio-cultural dynamics of modern society (Saleh et al., 2022). This rigidity has diminished the effectiveness of da'wah in fostering meaningful engagement with diverse audiences, particularly younger generations who are increasingly exposed to globalized cultural values. Dermawan et al. (2002) note that da'wah today is perceived as monotonous and detached from the realities of society, reducing its relevance and impact. As Don Cupitt observes, when religious language becomes overly regulated and disconnected from lived experiences, it risks losing its vitality and transformative potential (Graham & Smith, 2023; Paputungan, 2016).

In this context, *Gelaran Parowulan* emerges as a counter-narrative to the stagnation of both da'wah and cultural activism. By integrating traditional art forms with contemporary socio-political critique, it redefines da'wah as a dynamic, inclusive, and creative practice. The movement emphasizes the principles of *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn* (mercy to all creation), which advocate for compassion, inclusivity, and community solidarity. Through its performances, *Gelaran Parowulan* seeks to bridge the gap between religion and culture, revitalizing both as interconnected forces that address societal challenges.

Central to understanding *Gelaran Parowulan* is the concept of prophetic art. Kuntowijoyo (2005) defines prophetic art as art that integrates values of transcendence, humanization, and liberation to inspire social transformation. It serves not only as a medium for spiritual expression but also as a tool for addressing societal issues and fostering justice. In the context of *Gelaran Parowulan*, prophetic art manifests through performances that critique socio-political realities, such as governance inefficiencies, cultural stagnation, and religious formalism. These performances aim to inspire collective reflection and action, aligning with the Qur'anic ethos of promoting justice and mercy (Q.S. al-Maidah [5]:8; Q.S. an-Nahl [16]:90).

This approach distinguishes *Gelaran Parowulan* from other cultural movements by embedding Islamic teachings within creative expressions that resonate with local traditions. For instance, through poetry, puppetry, and music, the movement conveys values of forgiveness, compassion, and solidarity, fostering a sense of spiritual and cultural renewal among its participants and audiences. Such practices align with the principles of *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn*, which advocate for inclusivity and harmony in pluralistic societies (Ali, 2022).

While previous studies have explored the role of performing arts in Islamic propagation, they often overlook the intersection of prophetic art, socio-political engagement, and the lived realities of diverse communities. For instance, Pinto et al. (2012) examined Sufi rituals in Aleppo through an ethnographic lens, while Huriyudin (2014) analyzed Islamic values in West Java's cultural arts using Ismail al-Faruqi's art of tawhid. Mahatma & Sari (2021) focused on the embodiment of religious symbols in the *Syahadatain* group in Cirebon, and Riyadi et al. (2022) highlighted the values of tolerance in performing arts in Kendal, Central Java. While these studies provide valuable insights, they do not address the unique contributions of grassroots movements like *Gelaran Parowulan*, which integrate prophetic art with socio-political critique and community empowerment. Moreover, recent research on the curation of Islamic art highlights the challenges of preserving the religious dimension within cultural expressions, particularly in contexts influenced by secularism and orientalism (Gonzalez, 2022). These challenges underscore the importance of movements like *Gelaran Parowulan*, which reaffirm the spiritual and cultural dimensions of Islamic art in local and contemporary contexts.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring three key dimensions of *Gelaran Parowulan*: (1) the communal bonds and reciprocal relationships among its members, (2) the meanings embedded in their artistic expressions, and (3) the manifestation of *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn* in their activities. Using a descriptive phenomenological approach, this research examines how *Gelaran Parowulan* functions as both a medium of da'wah and a tool for socio-cultural transformation. By situating *Gelaran Parowulan* within the broader discourse on religious expression and prophetic art, this study contributes to the growing scholarship on the role of art in fostering interfaith dialogue, promoting tolerance, and addressing contemporary socio-political challenges. It underscores the transformative potential of prophetic art in revitalizing the spiritual and cultural dimensions of Islamic propagation, particularly in pluralistic and modern societies.

2. METHODS

This study used descriptive phenomenology (Englander, 2012) to examine the religious expressions of participants in the *Parowulan* event in Tegal. This approach was chosen for its ability to uncover lived experiences and interpret deeper meanings from participants' narratives and actions. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, active participation observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants, including artists, cultural activists, and audience members, focusing on their motivations, perceptions, and reflections. Observations of seven *Gelaran Parowulan* performances provided insights into community dynamics and spiritual dimensions, while document analysis of event materials and content created by participants contextualized the findings.

Data for this study were collected through a combination of in-depth interviews, active participation observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with *Gelaran Parowulan* members, including artists, cultural activists, and audience participants, to explore their motivations, perceptions of religious expression, and reflections on their involvement. Questions such as “What motivates you to participate in *Gelaran Parowulan*?” “How do you interpret the religious messages conveyed through the performances?” and “In what ways do you think this community influences your spiritual life?” guided the interviews. All sessions were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and thematically analyzed to capture the essence of participants' lived experiences (Seidman, 1991). Alongside interviews, the researcher engaged in active participation observation by attending several *Gelaran Parowulan* performances, documenting the interactions, artistic expressions, and emotional atmospheres. Detailed field notes were taken to record the sequence of events, key performance themes, and audience responses. This immersive approach provided an insider perspective on the dynamics of the community and the spiritual dimensions of their artistic practices (Davies, 2022). Additionally, historical records, community publications, event flyers, and participant-created content such as poetry, monologues, and performance scripts were analyzed to contextualize the religious and cultural narratives within *Gelaran Parowulan*.

To ensure validity and reliability, the study employed triangulation by cross-referencing data from interviews, observations, and documents. Reflective note-taking minimized researcher bias, and member checking verified the accuracy of interpretations (Miles et al., 2014). Following Husserl's (1982) principles of phenomenology (Husserl, 1973), personal biases were curbed to authentically capture participants' lived experiences. Themes were identified through horizontalization, categorization, and synthesis, which revealed key aspects such as socio-political critique, aesthetic spirituality, and the embodiment of *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn*. Ethical considerations were upheld by obtaining consent, maintaining anonymity, and ensuring voluntary participation. By integrating multiple data sources and using a rigorous analytical framework, this study offers a holistic understanding of *Gelaran Parowulan* as a medium of prophetic art and religious expression, highlighting its transformative potential in addressing socio-cultural challenges.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Overview of *Gelaran Parowulan*

The term *Gelaran Parowulan* began to appear in 2021 after many other terms were used in Tegal cultural performances and stages. Even -as a dynamic character of artists-*Tegalan* art activists organized activities in the form of podcasts with the term *Odumuk* (two-face chat). At the same time, they routinely practiced preparing themselves before a formal performance at a cultural studio in Slawi. However, it was finally agreed upon in the same year as *Gelaran Parowulan*. This organic, non-structured community accommodates individuals such as poets, puppeteers, preachers and art groups.

Apas Khafasy, who refers to himself as *Manusia Nol* (Human Zero), as one of the initiators, said the name *Gelaran Parowulan* has a philosophical meaning. This term consists of two words, *gelaran* and *parowulan*, which are taken from the Javanese language as a form of identity of the origin of the art activists in it. *Gelaran* means to roll out or spread out; spread out (mats and so on). *Parowulan* is derived from *paroh* which means half; part; half, the other side (of an item divided into two) and *wulan* which means month.

"*Parowulan*", which means the moon that is split in two, means that there are two sides to humanity, light and darkness. Light means guidance from God and darkness because of following lust. Every human has the potential for good and bad and every second human struggles with two potentials, with lust and *irsyād* (God's guidance)."

The people in *Gelaran Parowulan* agreed that this forum for art and culture activists would not have an organizational structure. Apas Khafasy said,

"Creating an organizational structure will actually be rigid and sometimes shift responsibilities to each other. We run based on the same anxiety and sincere intentions. If we have a sincere heart, *Gelaran Parowulan* will always exist even though there is no leader in it. Anyway, we just keep going, *istikamah*."

He continued that the *Gelaran Parowulan* stage consists of 4Ps: *penggagas* (initiator), *pamoang* (performer), *pemantik* (speakers), and *pandonga* (prayer reader). All four elements are present in every celebration that is conceptualized voluntarily and free of charge. This means that anyone who wants to perform and anyone who wants to host is allowed. Every time the event is held, it opens with the recitation of *tahlil* and prayers, followed by remarks from the host. The core performance in *Gelaran Parowulan* is an art performance and dialog entitled '*Guras*' (*gendhu-gendhu rasa- Sharing feelings and thoughts*). The *Guras* session raises various themes related to religion, philosophy, and culture, especially in the Tegal areas (A. Khafasy, personal communication, February 5, 2024).

Two or three days before the start of the event, representatives of *Gelaran Parowulan* activists usually visit the host. *Anjangsana* (visit) aims to conceptualize the event that will be held. In addition to *anjangsana*, *Gelaran Parowulan* also often opens stalls such as used clothes, fresh vegetables, barbershop services, all of which are free. *Manusia Nol* said that every time the *Parowulan* event is held, it is uncertain what will be performed because there is no official invitation. They themselves will come voluntarily and are ready to perform. The host of *Gelaran Parowulan* does not even know how many people will attend. However, *Manusia Nol*,

as the communicator, usually gives a range of participants (A. Khafasy, personal communication, February 5, 2024).

Based on the research conducted by the researcher, there are several findings related to prophetic art contained in "*Gelaran Parowulan*", as follows:

Table 1. *Several findings related to prophetic art contained in "Gelaran Parowulan"*

No	Values	Performance Form
1.	Socio-Cultural and Political Critique	Criticism of the government that does not pay attention to the development of arts and culture and religion; criticism of stagnant Islamic art activists; freedom of opinion; succeeded in inviting officials to go down to the art community.
2.	Aesthetic Expression of Religious Experiences	Pray to the prophet (<i>shalawat</i>) with interesting arrangements; monologue and poetry readings containing religious messages; storylines from bamboo puppets containing religious philosophies; <i>Kuntulan</i> dance accompanied by religious music.
3.	Spirit of Islam <i>rahmatan li al-'ālamīn</i>	A place for friendship; equality and cooperation among cultural actors of " <i>Gelaran Parowulan</i> "; social service for fellow humans; sincerity and sincerity in organizing Islamic propagation through arts and culture; building religious harmony.

3.2. Socio-Cultural and Political Critique

The emergence of *Gelaran Parowulan* exemplifies what Habermas (1984) terms communicative action, where social movements arise through informal communications that gradually coalesce into organized resistance against systemic colonization of the lifeworld. Beginning with informal smartphone communications and small-scale activities such as monologue performances, poetry readings, puppet shows, and religious discussions, the movement evolved through what Tarrow (2022) identifies as the key stages of social movement formation: from initial mobilization to sustained collective action (Cortés-Ramos et al., 2021). This evolution reflects Della Porta and Diani's (2011) concept of network-based mobilization, where shared grievances transform into collective identity and action.

The movement's critique of institutional stagnation can be analyzed through Meyer and Rowan's (1977) institutional theory framework, which explains how organizations often prioritize ceremonial conformity over effective action. This is evident in the case of *Dewan Kesenian Tegal* (DKT), whose limited impact exemplifies what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) term institutional isomorphism—where organizations become increasingly similar in structure but potentially less effective in function. The delayed publication of their December 2023 film competition until February 2024 illustrates what Scott (2014) describes as decoupling between formal structures and actual practices (*Dewan Kesenian Kab Tegal*, 2024).

Similar institutional challenges affect religious organizations like LESBUMI-Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), whose exclusive approaches to cultural events align with Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital being used to maintain social distinctions (Huang, 2019). Their January 2024 book review event demonstrates (PCNU Tegal Kota, 2024) what Fraser identifies as the limitations of bourgeois public spheres that fail to achieve true inclusivity (Fraser, 1990).

Gelaran Parowulan's flexible organizational approach represents what Eyerman and Jamison (1998) term cognitive praxis, where social movements serve as creators of new knowledge and cultural transformation. Nurul Balfas's critique of bureaucratic rigidity echoes Touraine's analysis of how social movements challenge institutional power through alternative organizational models (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008). This approach aligns with what Snow and Benford (2000) identify as frame alignment, where movements connect their activities with broader cultural values and social justice concerns.

The movement's engagement with local political figures, including village and sub-district heads who participate in performances, exemplifies what Tilly describes as repertoires of contention—innovative forms of political participation that challenge traditional power structures (Hunger & Lorenzini, 2020). However, their experience with unfulfilled promises from council members demonstrates what Piven and Cloward identify the risks of institutional co-optation of grassroots movements (Lima, 2021). *Gelaran Parowulan's* commitment to freedom of speech, grounded in 28E(3) of the 1945 Constitution, reflects what Melucci (1996) terms challenging codes—where social movements contest dominant cultural and political narratives through symbolic action. *Manusia Nol's* emphasis on constructive criticism aligns with Benhabib's (1996) concept of deliberative democracy, where public critique serves as a vital component of democratic practice.

Through its artistic expressions, *Gelaran Parowulan* exemplifies what Rancière (2010) terms the politics of aesthetics, where art becomes a medium for reconfiguring the distribution of the sensible. The movement's success in fostering grassroots engagement while maintaining independence from bureaucratic processes demonstrates what Santos (2016) describes as epistemologies of the South—alternative forms of knowledge and social organization that emerge from marginalized communities. This approach to cultural activism aligns with what Yúdice (2004) identifies as the expediency of culture, where cultural practices become vehicles for social transformation and political resistance. The movement's integration of prophetic art principles (Firmanto & Yunani, 2022 with contemporary social critique creates what Taylor (2003) calls social imaginaries collective understandings that enable new forms of social practice and organization. Their non-hierarchical structure and emphasis on open participation exemplifies what Young (2010) terms inclusive democracy, where differences are acknowledged and celebrated rather than suppressed. This analysis reveals how *Gelaran Parowulan* transcends mere cultural expression to become what Fraser identifies as a counter-public - an alternative sphere for discourse and social transformation (Venema, 2024). By combining artistic innovation with social critique, the movement demonstrates the potential of what Castells (2015) terms networks of outrage and hope, where cultural activism becomes a catalyst for broader societal change.

3.3. Aesthetic Expression of Religious Experiences

The aesthetic expressions within *Gelaran Parowulan* represent what Eliade terms hierophany - the manifestation of the sacred through cultural forms (Emine Öztürk, Mehmet Berktaş, 2023). Drawing on Turner's (1969) concept of *communitas*, these artistic expressions create liminal spaces where religious experience transcends ordinary social structures through monologue-poetry readings, *geguritan*, *wayang pring*, *gamelan* music, and traditional dances. This multifaceted approach aligns with Geertz's (1973) understanding of religion as a cultural

system, where symbolic forms serve as both models of and for religious experience. The integration of various art forms demonstrates what Smart (1996) identifies as the experiential dimension of religion, where spiritual meanings are embodied through artistic practice (Abd Muis et al., 2023).

The textual analysis of religious performances in *Gelaran Parowulan* reveals what Ricoeur (1981) terms the surplus of meaning in religious discourse. For instance, *Manusia Nol's* monologue of divine forgiveness exemplifies what Rappaport identifies as the performative dimension of religious ritual (Pesonen, 2022):

<i>Maafkan lahir batin hamba yang selalu khilaf dan nista</i>	Forgive me physically and mentally, who always misbehave and disgrace
<i>Maafkan kami mata, yang selalu melihat hal-hal yang buruk dan kabur</i>	Forgive our eyes, which always see things that are bad and blurred
<i>Maafkan kami tangan, bila selalu merampas</i>	Forgive our hands, if they are always grabbing
<i>Maafkan kami kaki, bila selalu melangkah pada hal-hal yang sesat</i>	Forgive our feet, if they always step on things that are misguided
<i>Maafkan kami telinga, bila selalu mendengar hal-hal yang tidak baik</i>	Forgive our ears, if they always hear things that are not good
<i>Maafkan kami bibir, bila selalu menggunjing kesalahan dan aib orang lain</i>	Forgive us lips, if we always gossip about other people's faults and disgrace.
<i>Maafkan kami...</i>	Forgive us.

This performance embodies what Bell (2010) terms ritualization, where ordinary actions are transformed into vehicles of spiritual significance. The repetitive structure of seeking forgiveness for different bodily actions reflects what Asad (1993) identifies as the disciplinary practices through which religious subjects are formed. Through the lens of Butler's performativity theory, these recitations constitute acts of religious subject formation, where identity is constructed through repeated performative utterances (Hey, 2006).

The contribution of artists from neighboring regions, particularly in their Eid al-Fitr performances, demonstrates what Tweed describes as "crossing and dwelling" - the way religious practices both establish belonging and transcend geographical boundaries (Tweed, 2009). The *geguritan* (poem):

<i>Ing sisih kulon, nglega cahya mbranang</i>	In the west, a red light is seen.
<i>Ngeterake rina mapak wengi</i>	A sign of day meeting night.
<i>Suara azan mbuka rasa Saknalika gumrekah ati kang rengka.</i>	The sound of the call to prayer opens the heart, Instantly gladdens an unsettled heart.
<i>Liwati dina-dina kang sepa</i>	Through the bland days, many temptations,
<i>Kebak panggoda Jembare jagat, gilare urip, sakdawane pikir, sakjeroning rasa</i>	The vastness of the universe, the cleanliness of life,
<i>Ing dina kang suci idulfitri</i>	The length of thought, the depth of feeling.
<i>Lumbere pangapura marang sak pada</i>	On the holy day, Eid al-Fitr, Overflowing forgiveness for fellow humans,
<i>Dusa-dusa kinapura</i>	
<i>Banjire pangapura saka Gusti Kang Maha Kuasa</i>	Sins forgiven, the flood of forgiveness from God Almighty.

This excerpt demonstrates how traditional poetic forms, such as *geguritan*, are revitalized in *Gelaran Parowulan* as vehicles for spiritual and cultural expression. By blending local dialects and religious themes, these performances foster a deep connection between the audience and their cultural-religious heritage. This poetic expression exemplifies what Ahmed (2014) terms the "cultural politics of emotion," where religious feelings are articulated through local aesthetic forms. The use of traditional Javanese poetic structures aligns with what Mahmood identifies as the embodied practices through which religious virtues are cultivated (Winchester, 2008).

Another unique feature of *Gelaran Parowulan* is the use of *wayang pring*, a bamboo-based puppetry art form. Ki Widodo, a prominent puppeteer, explains that his motivation stems from the concept of "*eling marang peparang*" (remembering God's gift). Through his performances, he emphasizes gratitude for all of God's provisions, including seemingly trivial blessings. This medium not only preserves traditional art forms but also serves as a powerful tool for embedding religious teachings into the collective memory of the audience.

The aesthetic dimension of *Gelaran Parowulan* is further enriched by traditional dance forms such as Kuntulan and *Topeng Endel*, accompanied by Javanese tambourine and gamelan music. Each performance integrates religious messages with local wisdom, demonstrating the adaptability of Islam in addressing contemporary challenges. According to *Manusia Nol*, every individual possesses an inherent artistic soul, regardless of their background. "God loves beauty, and God Himself is the Most Beautiful," he remarks, emphasizing the divine nature of artistic expression.

Retno, another key activist in *Gelaran Parowulan*, underscores the importance of aligning da'wah with the needs of the times while preserving local traditions. She notes that younger generations, though technologically savvy, often lack a substantive understanding of their cultural heritage. For Retno, the aesthetic revival of religious experiences through art is crucial in bridging this gap. Every movement, composition, and poetic recitation in *Gelaran Parowulan* reflects a rich interplay between local wisdom and universal religious values (R. Kusri, personal communication, February 5, 2024).

In summary, the aesthetic expressions in *Gelaran Parowulan* are deeply rooted in the participants' spiritual experiences. By intertwining local cultural traditions with Islamic teachings, the movement creates a unique space where art serves as both a medium of da'wah and a means of personal and communal reflection. These performances not only preserve and innovate traditional art forms but also offer a contemporary model for integrating religion and culture. *Gelaran Parowulan* exemplifies how aesthetic expressions can transcend boundaries, fostering a spiritual connection that resonates across generations and communities (Cho & O'Connor, 2024).

3.4. Spirit of Islam *Rahmatan li al-‘Ālamīn*

Gelaran Parowulan embodies the essence of Islam as *rahmatan li al-‘ālamīn* by fostering inclusivity, mutual respect, and egalitarianism (Arif, 2021). According to *Manusia Nol*, one of the movement's prominent figures, *Gelaran Parowulan* transcends religious and social boundaries by embracing all members of society during its performances. He emphasizes that every individual has an inherent artistic soul, making everyone a valued participant in the community. This inclusivity reflects the Qur'anic message in Surah al-Hujurat [49]:13, which encourages humanity to celebrate diversity and build partnerships across differences.

The spirit of compassion and solidarity is evident in the movement's response to societal challenges, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Sudibyo YS, a key participant, explains, *Gelaran Parowulan* was initiated to address the struggles faced by local communities, such as declining economic opportunities for microbusinesses and artists. The group deliberately avoids formal funding mechanisms, opting instead for voluntary contributions. “If the stage is clean, it does not smell of KKN (corruption, collusion, nepotism), and the group benefits voluntarily,” Sudibyo notes, highlighting the ethical foundation of their activities. This commitment ensures that the movement remains independent and rooted in sincerity (N. Sudibyo YS, personal communication, May 12, 2024).

The practical manifestations of *rahmatan li al-‘ālamīn* within *Gelaran Parowulan* include acts of service and generosity. For instance, the community organizes free stalls offering vegetables, clothing, haircuts, and shoe polishing during their events. These services are provided by both core members and volunteers, creating an environment where giving and receiving transcend social hierarchies. On performance nights, audiences consist of individuals from all walks of life—children, teenagers, adults, and the elderly—demonstrating the movement’s ability to bridge generational and societal divides. For *Manusia Nol*, this inclusivity represents Islam's mercy, which transcends primordial boundaries and fosters a shared sense of humanity.

The movement’s inclusivity extends beyond religious affiliations, embracing members from diverse faiths and beliefs, including Christians, followers of Kejawen (Javanese spiritual traditions),¹ and practitioners of *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi* traditions. This pluralism reinforces the spirit of brotherhood as participants gather on equal footing, united by a shared commitment to artistic and cultural expression. Gender equality is also upheld, with men and women participating proportionally in performances and organizational roles, reflecting the egalitarian values espoused in Surah Āli ‘Imrān [3]:103 and an-Nisā’ [4]:124.

More than just a gathering of art communities, *Gelaran Parowulan* serves as a meeting of ideologies and experiences. *Manusia Nol* describes this as “connecting clumps of knowledge” between artists and the public, fostering mutual learning and collaboration. Through *anjangsana* (meetings and visits), members engage in informal exchanges that strengthen communal bonds and provide opportunities to practice and innovate Islamic teachings through art and cultural creations. This ongoing interaction ensures that the movement remains dynamic and responsive to the evolving needs of its community.

The teachings of Islam are embedded in the practices and messages of *Gelaran Parowulan*. Members draw on Qur'anic principles, such as those found in Surah an-Nahl [16]:97, which emphasize the virtues of mutual assistance, respect for others, and spreading peace. These values are reflected in their social services, which extend to hosts, local houses of worship, and residents in the areas where performances are held. The movement also critiques superficial religiosity and formalism, emphasizing substance over symbolism in both religious and cultural practices. This critique is poignantly expressed in *Manusia Nol*'s monologue entitled "*Tuhantu*":

¹ One of the artists who is a member of *Gelaran Parowulan* calls himself a believer in Kejawen Maneges.

*Aku muak bersujud bersama para tokoh,
jika sajadah dan sorban jadi ukuran
keimanan.*

*Aku ogah bertasbih bersama para tokoh,
jika dasi dan kursi jadi ukuran kehormatan.*

*Tuhan, aku terluka oleh keindahan firman-
Mu yang dipersengketakan orang-orang.*

*Doktrin di mimbar-mimbar liang lahat, di
mikrofon-mikrofon bergaung-bergaung
terdengar provokator kegaduhan,*

tuhantuhantu...

Di mana... ke mana.

I'm sick of bowing down with the leaders if
prayer rugs and turbans are the measure of
faith.

I'm reluctant to glorify with the leaders if ties
and chairs are the measure of honor.

God, I am hurt by the beauty of Your words
that people dispute.

The doctrine in the pulpits of the grave, in the
microphones echoing, sounding the
provocateurs of chaos.

tuhantuhantu

Where... where.

Through this performance, *Gelaran Parowulan* challenges the deification of outward symbols in religion, advocating instead for an authentic spirituality grounded in compassion and ethical conduct. This stance resonates with the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), which emphasize the importance of respecting guests, maintaining good relations with neighbors, and spreading peace. The spirit of Islam as *rahmatan li al-‘alamīn* is deeply woven into the fabric of *Gelaran Parowulan*. The movement exemplifies how religious values can be actualized through inclusive practices, artistic expression, and community service. By rejecting formalism and prioritizing sincerity and mutual respect, *Gelaran Parowulan* offers a living model of Islam's universal message of mercy, transcending boundaries of faith, culture, and social status. This unique approach not only preserves traditional arts but also demonstrates their relevance in addressing contemporary societal challenges, making *Gelaran Parowulan* a beacon of hope and harmony in a pluralistic world.

3.5. Manifesting Prophetic Values through the Aesthetic and Religious Expressions of *Gelaran Parowulan*

The aesthetic and spiritual expressions within *Gelaran Parowulan* reveal a profound integration of art and religious experience. These expressions, rooted in subtle and stirring emotions, serve not only to refresh the soul but also to foster a deeper understanding of Islamic values. This dual impact—emotional and intellectual—has shaped the imaginative thinking and collective awareness of the community members involved. In Islamic philosophy, such aesthetic experiences with spiritual dimensions lay the foundation for meaningful engagement with the world (Iswahyudi, 2019). The art forms presented in *Gelaran Parowulan*, including poetry readings, monologues, and puppet shows, provide a unique platform for conveying Islamic messages. For instance, the poetry recitations emphasize the divine attributes of mercy and forgiveness, encouraging audiences to embody these values in their interactions. According to Hanafi (Hanafi, 1994), the attributes of God not only signify spiritual awareness but also serve as a call for human beings to manifest these qualities in their daily lives, making God's presence tangible on earth.

The reinterpretation of Qur'anic verses in *Gelaran Parowulan* performances further illustrates its prophetic essence. For example, Q.S. Hūd [11]:61, which underscores humanity's mandate to prosper the earth, is translated into artistic practices that promote environmental

stewardship and social justice. The activists' roles as *khalīfah fī al-ard* (stewardship) are evident in their support for small traders, their efforts to maintain harmony within the community, and their dedication to uplifting the marginalized (*mustad'afīn*). These acts align with Q.S. Sād [38]:26, which calls for balance and justice in human affairs.

In addition to its theological grounding, *Gelaran Parowulan* employs art as a medium for socio-political critique. Activists often use performances, such as monologues and pop-up show, to address issues like governmental inefficiency, stagnation among artists, and the rigidity of certain religious practices. These performances not only criticize but also offer constructive solutions, aligning with the essence of prophetic art, which aims to illuminate pathways toward justice and equity (Block, 2008).

The framework provided by Wach (1949) helps analyze the religious experiences in *Gelaran Parowulan*. First, the community embodies its religious beliefs through artistic expressions, including poetry, puppetry, and discussions that reflect Islamic values. Second, these experiences are translated into action, as seen in their commitment to supporting local communities and fostering inclusivity. Third, *Gelaran Parowulan* creates a sense of fellowship by uniting diverse groups in a shared cultural and spiritual space. This triad—belief, action, and fellowship—demonstrates the holistic integration of religion into the community's artistic and social practices. Wach also outlines four criteria for structured religious experiences, all of which are present in *Gelaran Parowulan*. The movement begins as a response to societal and spiritual stagnation, addressing a pseudo-reality by invoking an absolute reality of divine mercy and justice. Its artistic expressions evoke collective emotions and align with shared values, enabling members to gather voluntarily and work collaboratively. The intensity of their religious expression is distinct, reflecting their identity as cultural and spiritual activists. Finally, their performances, though simple and voluntary, carry profound religious messages that resonate with local cultural traditions.

Prophetic art, as articulated by Kuntowijoyo (2006), demands transcendence beyond mere artistic expression. It calls for an engagement with societal issues, creating a bridge between divine revelation and human action. *Gelaran Parowulan* fulfills this mandate by integrating Qur'anic and Hadith teachings into its performances, presenting them in accessible forms that resonate with contemporary audiences. For example, their focus on non-violence, tolerance, and the accommodation of local traditions reflects a moderate approach to religious expression, aligned with the principles of *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn* (Hamdani et al., 2023). Husserl's (1973) phenomenological framework further illuminates the experiences within *Gelaran Parowulan*. The concept of *Lebenswelt* (life world) emphasizes the subjective realities of the participants, shaped by their historical and cultural contexts. By grounding their artistic practices in lived experiences, *Gelaran Parowulan* activists offer a dynamic interpretation of religious life that evolves in response to societal challenges. This approach not only preserves traditional art forms but also imbues them with contemporary relevance.

In conclusion, the prophetic art of *Gelaran Parowulan* serves as a powerful example of how aesthetic and religious expressions can converge to address social, spiritual, and cultural needs. Through its integration of Islamic teachings, artistic innovation, and community engagement, the movement exemplifies the transformative potential of prophetic art. Its practices inspire a deeper reflection on the role of religion and culture in fostering justice, compassion, and solidarity in a pluralistic society (Salapudin et al., 2021). *Gelaran Parowulan*

holds significant potential for further transformation and development, particularly in expanding its influence beyond Tegal. To sustain its mission as a prophetic art movement, it is essential to establish more structured yet flexible mechanisms for collaboration while maintaining its grassroots spirit. Strengthening educational components, such as workshops on Islamic values through art, could engage younger generations more effectively. Additionally, fostering strategic partnerships with local and national stakeholders can amplify its reach, ensuring broader social impact and cultural preservation.

John Dewey (1934) argued that art is not merely an aesthetic experience but a powerful medium for cultivating moral imagination and social empathy (Ruoppa, 2019). By integrating Dewey's emphasis on the transformative power of art, *Gelaran Parowulan* could further refine its approach, emphasizing how artistic expressions can bridge cultural and religious divides. This perspective supports the movement's potential to inspire inclusive dialogue and promote societal harmony while reinforcing its role as a catalyst for cultural and spiritual renewal. Tariq Ramadan (2010), a contemporary Muslim scholar, emphasizes the importance of cultural creativity in expressing Islamic values in ways that resonate with diverse audiences. He highlights that art can serve as a bridge between tradition and modernity, enabling communities to adapt to contemporary challenges while remaining rooted in their spiritual foundations (Saumantri, 2023). *Gelaran Parowulan* could embrace this vision by using its artistic platform to promote universal values such as justice, mercy, and solidarity, ensuring that its prophetic mission remains relevant in an increasingly globalized and pluralistic society.

CONCLUSION

Gelaran Parowulan demonstrates how prophetic art can serve as a bridge between religion, culture, and society. By integrating local traditions and Islamic teachings, it provides a platform for meaningful engagement with diverse audiences. The movement challenges conventional da'wah methods, offering a more inclusive and accessible approach to disseminating Islamic values. Through its performances, it not only addresses spiritual needs but also fosters socio-political awareness and action, making religion relevant to contemporary challenges.

The movement's emphasis on inclusivity and community service reflects the Islamic principle of *rahmatan li al-'ālamīn*. By welcoming participants of different faiths, cultures, and backgrounds, *Gelaran Parowulan* creates a space for mutual understanding and solidarity. Its practices transcend rigid formalism, prioritizing sincerity and creativity to inspire both personal and collective transformation.

This study underscores the potential of prophetic art to address modern societal issues while preserving cultural heritage. *Gelaran Parowulan* exemplifies how art can be a tool for spiritual renewal, social critique, and the promotion of harmony in a pluralistic society. As such, it offers valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners seeking innovative ways to integrate religion and culture in addressing societal challenges.

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