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## ***Haul* as a Medium for Character Education: Building Local Wisdom through Kiai Tradition**

**Khoiriyah<sup>1\*</sup>, Jaja Suteja<sup>2</sup>, Ratna Rintaningrum<sup>3</sup>, Dewi Aprilia Ningrum<sup>4</sup>, and Yunita Abdullah Aji<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Raden Mas Said State Islamic University of Surakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Department of Islamic Guidance and Counseling, Syekh Nurjati State Cyber Islamic University of Cirebon, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Department of Development Studies, Institute of Technology Sepuluh Nopember (ITS), Surabaya, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Department of Education, Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas

<sup>5</sup>Department of Islamic Religious Education, Al-Aziziyah Islamic University of Indonesia (UNISAI), Indonesia

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### **ABSTRACT**

Religious traditions are integral to character education and the preservation of cultural values. This study examines the *haul* (annual commemoration) of Abuya Uci in Pasar Kemis, Tangerang, as a medium for shaping religious character and preserving local cultural heritage. The annual event at Al-Istiqlalayah Islamic Boarding School in Cilongok attracts tens of thousands of attendees, facilitating socio-religious interaction. The gap identified in this study is the lack of research on religious commemorations as tools for character education and cultural preservation. Using a library research approach, this study highlights how the *haul* of Kiai Uci transmits values like humility (*tawadhu'*), service (*khidmah*), love of knowledge, and social solidarity. The results suggest that the *haul* is more than a ritual; it serves as a hidden curriculum for character education and a strategic tool for preserving cultural heritage. It underscores the role of the kiai as a guardian of values, even posthumously.

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### **Correspondence Address:**

[khoiriyah@staff.uinsaid.ac.id](mailto:khoiriyah@staff.uinsaid.ac.id)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Religious traditions are essential in shaping society's social identity and spiritual character (Amin, 2020); (Karimuddin, K. 2022). One tradition that is still strongly practiced by the Muslim community in Indonesia is *haul*, which is the commemoration of the death of a religious figure. This tradition is a space for spirituality and contains values of character education, preservation of local culture, and strengthening social solidarity in society. In the context of Banten society, especially in the Pasar Kemis area, the Abuya Uci *haul* is an interesting example to study further because of the spiritual and social appeal it creates every year.

The *haul* of Abuya Uci, which is held routinely at the Al-Istiqlalayah Islamic Boarding School, Cilongok, has become a magnet for the presence of tens of thousands of pilgrims from various regions. This phenomenon reflects the community's love for the charismatic cleric figure and the formation of collective values through religious traditions. During his lifetime, Abuya Uci was known as an educator who consistently taught basic Islamic knowledge such as monotheism, fiqh, tasawuf, and nahwu through the yellow book teaching method. The continuity of these teachings did not stop after his death. Still, it was preserved as a *haul* tradition that contains dimensions of non-formal education and the formation of socio-religious character (Tuna, 2022).

Several previous studies provide a theoretical basis for the function of *haul* in society. Rusmawaty and Sultan (2024) explain that the practice of *haul* in East Kalimantan strengthens social solidarity between ethnic groups and women through the value of *betulungan*. Nisa (2024) highlights that *haul* is a symbolic reproduction space for religious power that strengthens the legitimacy of the *kiai* as a central figure in the socio-religious structure. In education, the *haul* tradition can be seen as a hidden curriculum, namely learning values through the exemplary role of figures and social experiences not written in the formal curriculum (Labib & Setiadin, 2024).

The role of the *kiai* in shaping the character of students and society has also been widely studied. Masrur (2017) and Ahmad (2021) stated that the leadership character of the *kiai* greatly determines the success of character education in Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools become a space for internalizing values through a direct approach from the *Kiai* figure to the students. This also applies in the context of *haul*, where values such as humility, service, and love of knowledge are symbolically and emotionally passed on to the congregation. The *haul* tradition serves to convey values and refresh the collective memory of the struggle of the *ulama*.

News about the *haul* of Abuya Uci, published by Detak Banten (2024), shows the extraordinary enthusiasm of the community for the commemoration. Thousands of worshipers were willing to walk and jostle to attend the event, even though they faced traffic jams and limited space. This situation is a strong indicator of the community's love for the figure of Abuya Uci, as well as showing that the *haul* tradition is not only a ritual event but also a means of preserving cultural values and a means of character education that lives amid modern society. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of the Abuya Uci *haul* tradition in shaping character and preserving cultural values in Pasar Kemis, Tangerang Regency.

The main problem in this study lies in how the *haul* tradition, especially the *haul* of Abuya Uci in Pasar Kemis, becomes an annual religious event and transforms into a means of character education and preservation of local cultural values. This phenomenon raises several important questions, such as how the educational values contained in the *haul* are transmitted to society and how the social and symbolic role of a *kiai* remains alive and even stronger even after his death.

In this context, a deep understanding of the social, religious, and cultural constructions formed through the *haul* tradition as a medium for inheriting values and character is needed.

Based on these problems, this study aims to explore and analyze the role of the Abuya Uci *haul* tradition in shaping the religious character of the community and maintaining the sustainability of local cultural values in the Pasar Kemis area. This study also aims to reveal how the figure of the kiai in the *haul* tradition is not only a spiritual symbol but also a source of cultural authority that can shape the social character of the community sustainably. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to Islamic studies, character education, and preserving culture based on religious traditions.

## **2. METHODS**

This study uses a library research method as the main approach to collecting and analyzing data (Ratnaningtyas, E. M., et al, 2023). This approach was chosen because the study focuses on understanding the phenomenon of Abuya Kiai Uci's *haul* as a religious and cultural tradition containing character education values and preserving local culture in Pasar Kemis. Data sources in this study were obtained from various relevant literature, including books, scientific articles, journals, online news, documentation of *haul* activities, and indirect interviews quoted from reliable sources. The analysis was carried out descriptively-qualitatively by interpreting the contents of the literature related to the main theme, namely the relationship between the *haul* tradition, character education, and community culture. Emphasis is placed on the study of Kiai Uci's contribution to building spiritual, moral, and social values through *haul* activities that are routinely held every year.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1. The Meaning of *Haul* in Islamic Tradition and Local Culture**

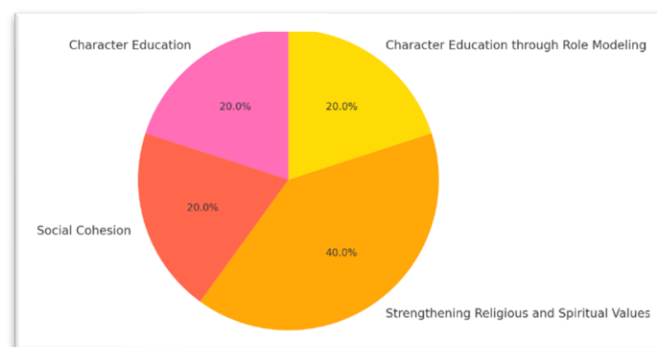
Kiai Uci, also known as Abuya Uci, is a highly influential cleric from Cilongok Village, Pasar Kemis District, Tangerang Regency. He is widely recognized as a spiritual guide and religious leader. His impact on the Pasar Kemis community is profound, particularly in shaping the character of its members through teachings centered on monotheism, fiqh, tasawuf, and nahwu science. Beyond his role as a leader of an Islamic boarding school, Abuya Uci is admired for his ability to mobilize the community through religious traditions practiced at the Al-Istiqlaliyah Islamic Boarding School. Throughout his life, Kiai Uci has introduced various non-formal educational methods that emphasize academic learning and integrate significant social and spiritual values. This approach has established him as a respected symbol of leadership within the Muslim community (Fauziah et al., 2021).

The charisma and leadership of Kiai Uci, who is full of authority, have greatly influenced the community's religious awareness, primarily through implementing the *haul* tradition, which is routinely carried out every year. The *haul* is not only an opportunity to commemorate the struggle and services of Kiai Uci but also functions as a means of reflection for the community to reflect on the Islamic values he taught. As explained by Nisa (2024), the *haul* tradition is a medium that strengthens the symbolism of the religious power of a kiai, which is passed on to the

next generation. Through *haul*, the community commemorates figures who have passed away and preserves teachings that remain relevant in their lives. In this context, the role of Kiai Uci in building a cultural network that connects religious traditions with character education becomes increasingly apparent. This shows that religious education is not only limited to formal aspects but also involves all dimensions of social life (Hasim, 2019)

The Islamic boarding school led by Kiai Uci functions as an educational institution that not only teaches religion but also focuses on the formation of the character of students based on Islamic moral and ethical teachings. As expressed by Cahyono (2016), character education in Islamic boarding schools is related to academic knowledge and the development of a comprehensive religious character. At the Al-Istiqlalayah Islamic Boarding School, character education is combined with religious education, which allows students to become individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have spiritual and moral depth. The hidden curriculum concept, which is often not taught directly, is evident in the teaching methods applied by Kiai Uci. The ethical values and life teachings taught in the *haul* tradition and Islamic boarding school education profoundly impact students and the surrounding community (Labib & Setiadin, 2024).

In addition, the *haul* tradition, which is routinely carried out at the Al-Istiqlalayah Islamic Boarding School, also functions to strengthen social and cultural integration. According to Nashihin and Dewi (2020), this tradition is a very effective tool in enhancing social solidarity and uniting various elements of society from multiple backgrounds. In this context, Kiai Uci and his Islamic boarding school play a key role in spreading Islamic values that respect religious aspects and embrace social diversity. This process is not only limited to annual ritual activities but also functions as a learning medium that broadly shapes society's character. Therefore, the role of Kiai Uci is not only limited to the spiritual aspect but also as the main driver in building a cultural education network that has a positive impact on maintaining and preserving traditional values in Pasar Kemis (Fauziah et al., 2021; Meidiana, 2024).



**Figure 1.** Distribution of Focus Areas in Character Education

Figure 1 shows the division of the main functions of the *haul* tradition that play an essential role in character education and preserving local culture. The first aspect that stands out is strengthening religious and spiritual values, with the most significant portion being 40%. This shows that *haul* is a religious ritual and an effective means to instill religious values and deepen spirituality in people's lives. The second aspect is character education through role models, which covers 20% of the total *haul* function. The figure commemorated in the *haul* event becomes an inspiring figure who can foster moral and ethical values in the community. *Haul* facilitates

learning through real examples from the lives of respected scholars or figures. The third function identified is general character education, which accounts for 20% of the population. The *haul* tradition plays a role in forming positive personalities and behaviors and educating the community to become better, more responsible, and noble individuals. Finally, *haul* as a social unifier, contributing 20%, illustrates how this tradition strengthens social solidarity and togetherness between residents, reduces social barriers, and builds strong bonds within the community.

Overall, the *haul* serves not only as a religious ritual but also as a vital forum for preserving local culture and sustainably shaping the social and spiritual character of the community.

### 3.2. *Haul* of Abuya Uci as a Medium for Strengthening Character Education and Social Values

The *haul* tradition carried out annually by the congregation and students of Abuya Uci Turtusi at the Al-Istiqlalayah Islamic Boarding School is a form of respect for charismatic clerics and a means of internalizing character values. Based on observations and media reports, there are various activities in the *haul* that are full of character building, such as dhikr and joint prayers that instill religious values and solemnity; listening to the preaching of clerics that foster respect for teachers, honesty, and the spirit of seeking knowledge; cooperation that reflects social responsibility; pilgrimage to the graves of clerics that foster spirituality and respect; and mass attendance that shows love for clerics, loyalty, and exemplary behavior. This entire series reflects religious traditions' role in shaping people's personalities collectively and culturally.

As reviewed by Hasim (2019) and Rajasyah (2023), the *haul* tradition is a legacy of Nusantara Islam that has been preserved and maintained by the pesantren community from generation to generation. In this context, *haul* functions as a space for transmitting social and spiritual values, which form the collective ethics of society. Sumadi (2017) stated that local Islamic traditions such as *haul* contain educational values that can form an attitude of tawadhu (humility), sincerity, and togetherness—essential foundations in Islamic character education. This tradition also reflects what Mawardi (2011) calls a form of trans-internalization of Islamic educational culture, namely when Islamic values are instilled through the culture and practices of everyday community life.

**Table 1.** *Haul Tradition Activities And Character Values*

No	Activities in <i>Haul</i> Tradition	Character Values Farmed
1.	Dzikir and Collective Prayer	Religious, Devotion
2.	Lestening to the Ulama's Sermon	Respect for Teachers, Knowledge, Honesty
3.	Mutual Cooperation in the Event	Responsibility
4.	Visiting the Ulama's Grave	Spirituality, Respect for Scholars
5.	Mass Participation (walking, crowded)	Love for Scholars, Loyalty, Exemplarity

Table 1 shows the relationship between various activities in the *haul* tradition and the character values formed through these activities. The *haul* tradition, a commemoration to honor the life and teachings of religious figures, plays a vital role in instilling moral and spiritual values in society. Each activity in the *haul* contributes to shaping individual character and strengthening social ties within the community. The first activity, namely dhikr and prayer together, strengthens the religiosity and submission of participants. Through this collective worship, the community is invited to get closer to God and increase their faith in worship. Furthermore, listening to the ulama's Tamiya fosters respect for teachers, expanded knowledge, and honesty, where the ulama,

as a source of moral knowledge, provides guidance that participants highly appreciate. In addition, mutual cooperation activities in events and pilgrimages to the tombs of the ulama instill a sense of responsibility and spirituality. Cooperation illustrates the importance of cooperation in achieving common goals, while pilgrimages to the ulama's tombs remind participants always to respect the ulama and deepen their spirituality. Finally, mass attendance in the *haul*, which is done by walking or jostling, shows love for the ulama, loyalty, and exemplary behavior, which are noble values in this tradition. All of these activities form positive characters that are expected to impact individuals and society as a whole positively.

The moral and spiritual values instilled in the *haul* are not theoretical but actual and directly practiced. In the context of Islamic education, Yusuf (2014) explains the importance of the practical epistemological dimension in educating the people. *Haul* is a concrete example of how experiential learning works in local culture. When the congregation jostles to attend, walks from far away, or is willing to stay awake all night to participate in the *haul*, they are indirectly trained in patience, sincerity, and loyalty to the cleric figure they admire. The formation of character through this example is firm because it takes place in a spiritual and social context that touches on emotional aspects.

In addition, the role of religious scholars' sermons in the *haul* is also the primary medium for transmitting moral values. In Luthfi (2016), Nusantara Islam combines local cultural elements with Islamic teachings in a communicative and contextual form. This is seen when Islamic messages are conveyed by scholars in the *haul* with touching language, down-to-earth historical narratives, and moral calls that are contextual to the reality of society. The oral tradition in this *haul* is religious speech and an effective cultural mechanism for forming social and spiritual awareness.

The values obtained from *haul* are not only for momentary spiritual consumption but also have a long-term character-building dimension, especially for the younger generation. As explained by Mediawati (2023) and Walad et al. (2025), Islamic boarding school education plays a significant role in transforming Islamic values into individual characters who are religious and have noble morals. The *haul* tradition is part of an unwritten social curriculum that strengthens these values collectively. Even according to Rahma et al. (2024), religious activities such as *haul* are a form of revitalization of moral and spiritual education amidst the challenges of the digital era.

In an anthropological approach, as Ismail et al. (2023) explained, the *haul* tradition can be read as a symbolic practice reproducing a system of meaning and collective identity. Therefore, *haul* is not just a ceremonial activity but reflects the relationship dynamics between religion, culture, and society. The phenomenon of mass attendance, pilgrimage, and togetherness in the *haul* is tangible evidence of the strong social cohesion formed from shared Islamic values. This is reinforced by Hanifah (2023) and Askar & Kurniawati, who see Abuya Uci's charisma and religious studies tradition as essential factors in the formation of the religiosity and moral identity of the congregation.



Thus, the *haul* of Abuya Uci acts as a unique character education medium in the treasury of Nusantara Islam. It unites spiritual education, social ethics, and respect for tradition in one ritual momentum that is rich in meaning. As a form of non-formal education, the *haul* not only strengthens the Islamic identity of the community but also forms personal character that reflects the noble values of Islam, such as humility, love for scholars, sincerity, and togetherness. In this case, the *haul* becomes a living educational practice taught, experienced, and inherited culturally.

### 3.3. The Role of *Haul* in Preserving Local Culture and Community Identity

The *haul* tradition is not only a religious commemoration of the death of a religious figure but also develops as a space for cultural expression and affirmation of the community's collective identity. In the local context, *haul* contains elements of regional culture, such as the use of local languages in the event's opening, consumption of regional specialties, and presentation of traditional arts such as *marawis*, *hadrah*, and *qosidah*. This is emphasized by Ismail et al. (2023) that the anthropological approach in the study of Islam reveals a close relationship between religious practices and community cultural expressions, including in local religious ceremonies such as *haul*.

The tradition of *haul* is a vehicle for synergy between Islam and local culture, strengthening the cultural existence that has taken root in society. In its implementation, the community is involved spiritually, socially, and culturally. Traditional music with religious nuances, the appearance of regional Muslim clothing, and a variety of local culinary delights served during the *haul* show the continuity of local cultural values within the framework of Islamic religiosity. Nashihin and Dewi (2020) stated that Nusantara Islam is a form of religiosity that accommodates local values, and the *haul* tradition is a concrete manifestation of this view.

*Haul* also becomes a space for religious, artistic expression, where local artists perform poems of praise to the Prophet and remembered religious figures, either in the form of tambourines, *qosidah*, or religious poetry. The white clothing of *haul* participants or traditional uniforms also shows religious symbolism and collective awareness of Islamic values. According to Hasim (2019), in the Buntet Pesantren *haul* tradition, for example, there has been a shift in the form of expression from what was originally only a religious ritual to a cultural event that is more inclusive and accommodating to the development of the times.

The following is a table that describes the local cultural elements involved in *haul* activities:

**Table 2.** *Local Cultural Elements in Haul Tradition Implementation*

Local Cultural Aspect	Example in <i>Haul</i> Tradition	Nilai yang ditransmisikan
Music and Arts	<i>Hadrah</i> , religious poetry, <i>qasidah</i>	Religious aesthetics, collective spirituality
Traditional Cuisine	Tumpeng, <i>nasi uduk</i> , regional food	Equality, gratitude, and social solidarity
Clothing and Symbols	Traditional Muslim clothing, white uniform, <i>peci</i>	Religious diversity, respect for ulama
Language and Speech	Local language in greetings and prayers	Afirmation of local identity, inclusivity
Religious Attributes	Posters of ulama, flags, calligraphy	Symbolic reinforcement of Islamic values

Table 2 shows the elements of local culture involved in implementing the *haul* tradition. Each aspect of local culture displayed has a concrete example in the *haul* tradition, which is then translated into values transmitted to the community. For instance, in terms of music and art, the traditions of *Hadrah* and *Qasidah Marawis*, as well as religious poetry, are not only a means of entertainment but also function to convey religious aesthetics and strengthen the collective spirituality of participants. This activity supports strengthening deep religious values through meaningful music and poetry. In addition, traditional culinary dishes such as *tumpeng* and *nasi uduk* are part of the *hauling* tradition, which unites the community and reflects the values of togetherness, gratitude, and social solidarity. These regional specialties are a symbol of the diversity and richness of local culture that is maintained. Likewise, clothing and symbols, such as traditional Muslim clothing and white uniforms worn by participants, show respect for the ulama and uniformity in the implementation of the event. Each cultural element involved in this *haul* has a role in strengthening local cultural identity and strengthening social ties among participants.

No less important is the intergenerational aspect of the *haul* tradition. The involvement of young people and students in the committee, event organizers, and the documentation and digital publication of *hauls* is a form of regeneration of cultural and religious values. Walad et al. (2025) stated that preserving religious traditions through integrating local values in religious education is important to bridge the younger generation with the roots of Islamic culture and spirituality. Thus, *haul* functions not only as a rite but also as an educational-transformative means for the next generation.

In the context of character education, *haul* provides a contextual learning space regarding Islamic values through concrete social practices. The involvement of communities across ages shows that values such as respect for ancestors, togetherness, and social responsibility can be learned directly in the context of community culture. Mediawati (2023) shows that Islamic boarding schools, as the basis for implementing *haul*, are able to transform Islamic values into real actions in society, including through traditional celebrations such as *haul*.

Finally, *haul* also shows how local Muslim communities can maintain their religious identity without losing their cultural roots. In this case, Mawardi (2011) calls this process the "transinternalization of Islamic education culture," namely, how cultural and religious values internalize each other to form social ethics. With all its complexity, the *haul* tradition has become an important medium in maintaining continuity between religious values, culture, and community identity, which are increasingly relevant amidst the dynamics of global social change.

## CONCLUSION

Commemorate Kiai Uci in Pasar Kemis is not only an annual religious ritual but also functions as an essential means of forming community character and preserving local cultural values. Through this tradition, the community commemorates Kiai Uci's struggle and gains character education in his moral and spiritual teachings, such as humility, service, love of knowledge, and social solidarity. *Haul* becomes an educational medium that touches on aspects of social life, teaching noble values directly through social and religious activities carried out together by the community.



In addition, *haul* also shows an essential role in strengthening social and cultural integration in Pasar Kemis. This tradition connects the community spiritually and strengthens social ties through various elements of local culture, such as music, culinary arts, and traditional clothing, which are also presented at the *haul* event. This shows that *haul* is a vehicle for synergy between religion and local culture, which functions as a means to maintain the community's cultural identity, strengthen social solidarity, and build sustainable cultural networks.

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