

Preserving Cultural Heritage and Social Cohesion: The Tukuder Festival at Al-Muttaqin Mosque, Kendal, Indonesia

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Abstract

The Tukuder Festival at Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque in Kaliwungu, Kendal, Central Java, Indonesia, is a vibrant example of living Islamic heritage that reinforces cultural identity, religious continuity, and community resilience. Held annually to welcome the holy month of Ramadan, the festival integrates ritual practices, traditional foodways, and intergenerational participation rooted in the values of Islam Nusantara. This study investigates how the festival transmits intangible cultural heritage, particularly through the symbolic meanings of traditional dishes such as Telur Mimi, Sumpil, and Momoh. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through participatory observation and in-depth interviews with local vendors, religious leaders, government officials, and cultural practitioners, as well as document analysis. Findings reveal that the Tukuder Festival strengthens social cohesion that fosters communal bonds. The culinary elements, deeply embedded in local religious symbolism, reflect values of purity, solidarity, and gratitude. In addition, the active role of local government demonstrates how institutional collaboration contributes to the continuity and revitalization of community-based traditions. The Tukuder Festival exemplifies how localized Islamic traditions can be maintained and revitalized as living heritage in response to changing social and cultural dynamics.

Keywords

Cultural heritage; Javanese Islamic tradition; Kendal Regency; Ramadan tradition; social cohesion

Introduction

Kaliwungu is a historically significant district in Kendal Regency, Central Java, known not only for its dense concentration of Islamic boarding schools—earning it the nickname “*Kota Santri*” or “City of Islamic Students”—but also for its rich legacy as a spiritual and cultural hub since the 17th Century (Wimrison, 2023). What makes Kaliwungu particularly unique is its role as an Islamic enclave that blends religious education, sacred pilgrimage sites, and dynamic local traditions into an integrated cultural landscape. The area is home to numerous sacred graves (*makam wali*), including those of influential Islamic figures such as K. H. Asyari and Prince Juminah, who played vital roles in the dissemination of Islam in Java and in shaping the region’s socioreligious identity. K. H. Asyari, a noble from the Mataram court from the 17th century who studied in Mecca, is credited with establishing *Langgar Al Muttaqin*—later developed into the prominent Al Muttaqin Mosque—which has since become the religious and communal center of the town (Safwaini, 2021).

Given this historical and spiritual background, Kaliwungu offers a compelling setting to explore how intangible cultural heritage continues to evolve and be recontextualized within everyday religious life. One such expression is the *Tukuder* tradition, a vibrant, community-driven celebration held annually on the eve of Ramadan. More than just a festive market, *Tukuder* serves as a moment of collective remembrance and cultural performance, where religious symbolism, culinary ritual, and public gathering converge in the courtyard of Al Muttaqin Mosque (Panzer, 2022). The selection of Kaliwungu as the focus of this study lies precisely in its capacity to function as a living heritage site, where Islamic teachings, spiritual devotion, and local cultural expression remain actively intertwined and practiced across generations (Safwaini, 2021).

In this setting, culinary traditions are central in articulating religious sentiment and communal identity. In the context of the *Tukuder* festival, foods such as *Telur Mimi* (boiled horseshoe crab eggs), *Sumpil* (sticky rice wrapped in banana leaves), and *Momoh* (steamed assorted buffalo offal) are not merely items of consumption—they are meaningful cultural signifiers (Hellman, 2008). Each dish draws from local ingredients, seasonal availability, and symbolic associations with purification, resilience, and gratitude. Their preparation and sharing in the mosque courtyard are embedded in a deeply rooted Javanese-Islamic cosmology, where food becomes a spiritual reflection and a source of social cohesion. In Kaliwungu, food rituals such as these sustain more than bodies—they sustain a sense of place, memory, and religious belonging (Geertz, 1976; Wardhani, 2023).

Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in shaping territorial identity by intertwining individual memories, fostering community cohesion, and inspiring shared narratives (Tavares et al., 2021). It influences individual identity through personal recollections and a sense of place attachment. Furthermore, cultural heritage impacts social identity by nurturing collective experiences and instilling community pride (Heersmink, 2023). This dynamic relationship highlights the significance of cultural heritage in both personal and communal dimensions, underscoring its importance in the continuous evolution of territorial identity.

Cultural heritage encompasses tangible and intangible elements that define a community’s identity and history. Tangible cultural heritage refers to physical artefacts and sites, such as buildings, monuments, and landscapes, which can be seen and touched. These physical manifestations of culture are crucial for maintaining historical continuity and providing a

sense of place (Mendoza et al., 2023). On the other hand, intangible cultural heritage includes non-physical aspects such as traditions, oral histories, rituals, and knowledge passed down through generations (Arizpe & Amescua, 2013). This type of heritage is crucial for maintaining communities' cultural diversity and identity. UNESCO (2003) defines intangible cultural heritage as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals acknowledge as part of their cultural heritage (Nic Craith et al., 2018).

Preserving cultural heritage in urban areas requires a comprehensive approach that considers both tangible and intangible elements. Urban cultural heritage preservation involves protecting historic buildings and sites while safeguarding the living traditions and cultural practices associated with these places. For instance, organizing cultural festivals and events can significantly promote and preserve intangible cultural heritage (Graham, 2002; Harrison, 2013; Kurin, 2004; Smith, 2006). These festivals unite communities, celebrate cultural expressions, and ensure the transmission of traditions and customs to younger generations.

Communities can keep their cultural heritage alive and relevant by engaging in such activities (Tavares et al., 2021). The relationship between intangible cultural heritage and urban resilience highlights how cultural practices contribute to sustainability and social cohesion in urban environments. Intangible heritage fosters community identity and continuity, which are essential for urban resilience in the face of climate change and urbanization (Aikawa-Faure, 2008; Smith, 2006; Smith & Akagawa, 2008; Tavares et al., 2021). In this context, social cohesion refers to the strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a community, which are often maintained and reinforced through collective rituals and cultural expressions (Chan et al., 2006).

The Tukuder Festival in Kaliwungu exemplifies this process by providing structured opportunities for intergenerational interaction, religious unity, and mutual economic support. By facilitating regular, inclusive gatherings rooted in shared cultural and religious values, the festival contributes to bonding social capital, a concept introduced by Putnam (2000) to describe close-knit ties that strengthen internal group solidarity, trust, and emotional support. These socially cohesive networks enhance a community's capacity to adapt, recover, and collectively respond to social and environmental stressors, thereby linking tradition not only to heritage preservation but also to the long-term resilience of urban life (Chan et al., 2006; Díaz Solano et al., 2024; Snowball & Antrobus, 2021).

Islam plays a significant role in preserving cultural heritage, both as a religion and as a tradition. Islamic practices and teachings often emphasize the importance of preserving and respecting cultural traditions and heritage sites that reflect the community's faith and history (Alshehaby, 2020). Mosques, madrasas, and other Islamic architectural structures are not only places of worship but also cultural landmarks that embody centuries of religious and artistic heritage. For example, preserving historic mosques and Islamic schools helps sustain traditional architectural styles and construction techniques, ensuring that these cultural expressions are passed down through generations (Rico, 2020).

Islamic festivals and rituals, such as *Ramadan* and *Eid* celebrations, strengthen community bonds and continuity, reinforcing cultural identity and collective memory. These events serve as occasions for transmitting traditional practices, culinary heritage, and oral histories, which are integral to the community's cultural fabric. The communal aspects of Islamic practices, such as the shared breaking of the fast during *Ramadan*, further strengthen social bonds and

cultural cohesion, thereby contributing to the broader preservation of cultural heritage (Rico, 2020).

A standout cultural heritage tradition in Kaliwungu is the Tukuder Festival, centered at the Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque. Tukuder—a local Javanese term derived from the rhythmic sound “*tuk tuk der*” produced by beating a large traditional drum known as a *bedug*—refers to the communal celebration held on the eve of Ramadan. The term also originates from the Javanese words “*tuku*” (to buy) and “*dher*”, referencing both the festive atmosphere of the food market and the symbolic beating of the drum that signals the beginning of Ramadan. This dual meaning reflects the fusion of spiritual timing and economic interaction that characterizes the celebration (Ma’sum, 2022).

The *bedug*, historically used in Javanese mosques to signal prayer times and religious events, serves as an aural marker of sacred transition, announcing the arrival of the fasting month. The Tukuder Festival is held exclusively on the eve of Ramadan, making it a highly anticipated one-day event each year. During this brief yet vibrant celebration, the mosque’s courtyard transforms into a lively communal space where local vendors sell traditional snacks and delicacies, drawing large crowds of residents and visitors alike (Ma’sum, 2022).

More than a culinary gathering, the Tukuder Festival is a living expression of intangible cultural heritage. It embodies intergenerational transmission of spiritual and philosophical values, such as gratitude, purification, and community solidarity (Foo & Krishnapillai, 2019; Smith, 2006; Smith & Akagawa, 2008). Moreover, it fosters economic vitality by attracting visitors and culinary tourists seeking authentic religious and cultural experiences (Cholil, 2018). This convergence of religious ritual, local food culture, and community interaction illustrates the enduring significance of the Tukuder tradition in shaping collective identity in Kaliwungu.

This study explores the preservation of culinary traditions, specifically those associated with the Tukuder Festival, which is uniquely held at the Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque in Kaliwungu. The mosque serves as a religious center and a historical and cultural landmark, deeply embedded in the community’s collective memory. The exclusivity of the Tukuder Festival at this mosque is rooted in its historical significance, established by K. H. Asyari in the 17th century, and its enduring role as the symbolic heart of Kaliwungu’s Islamic and social life. Focusing on this site-specific tradition, the study examines how such localized practices support cultural identity, community cohesion, and economic development. Furthermore, the research highlights the critical role of cultural heritage in fostering sustainable cultural tourism and enhancing community resilience. It also situates the festival within broader frameworks of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), contributing to interdisciplinary discussions on cultural sustainability and heritage management (Harrison, 2013; Kurin, 2004; Perry et al., 2020; Smith, 2006; Smith & Akagawa, 2008).

This comprehensive understanding offers valuable insights into mechanisms for maintaining and revitalizing traditional practices in a rapidly globalizing world, ensuring their continuity and relevance for future generations. The research addresses the following question: How does the Tukuder Festival—an exclusively local tradition found only in Kaliwungu, Kendal—influence the cultural identity and cohesion of the Javanese Islamic community in this region? What role does this tradition play in maintaining and transmitting Islamic cultural values in local communities?

While the Tukuder Festival is unique to Kaliwungu and not practiced elsewhere in Java, it reflects broader patterns of Islamic cultural adaptation in Javanese society. For example, similar Ramadan-related events such as Dugderan exist in cities like Semarang, though they are typically more festive and urban in scale. Unlike Dugderan, which is characterized by parades and public spectacle, Tukuder retains a more religious and spiritual atmosphere, rooted in Kaliwungu's identity as an Islamic town (Khaeroni, 2023; Maulana Rigitta & Auliya, 2023). Historically, traditions like *Megengan* – a better-known Javanese-Islamic pre-Ramadan ritual – also influenced the development of Tukuder (Wardhani, 2023).

Compared to earlier studies that highlight the symbolic or celebratory nature of Ramadan rituals, this research on the Tukuder Festival shows how intangible religious traditions are actively preserved and transmitted across generations. The inclusion of activities such as *Ngaji Pasaran*, which engages youth in studying classical Islamic texts and communal participation in food rituals, demonstrates how the festival serves as a living medium for intergenerational cultural continuity. *Ngaji Pasaran* is an intensive Ramadan-based religious study program in which a *kyai* teaches classical Islamic texts to students using the traditional *bandongan* method.

In this monologic teaching style, the teacher reads, translates, and explains the text while students listen and take notes, serving as a key practice of intergenerational knowledge transmission in Javanese Muslim communities. By situating religious learning and practice within the framework of community-based celebration, the Tukuder Festival reinforces Islamic identity. It ensures that younger generations inherit and embody local values, knowledge, and spiritual discipline. This study, therefore, contributes to a broader understanding of how localized traditions function as vehicles for cultural inheritance and long-term resilience within Muslim communities in Java.

Conceptualizing cultural heritage within the broader framework of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is essential for understanding its role in cultural identity and community cohesion. Intangible cultural heritage includes living expressions and traditions passed down through generations, encompassing traditional culinary arts, ceremonies, and religious rituals (Kurin, 2004; Santini et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2003; Zabulis et al., 2020). The “food heritagization” process involves transforming food, places, and practices into recognized cultural heritage, underscoring the importance of preserving culinary traditions (Hernández-Rojas et al., 2022; Matecic & Barisic, 2019; Zocchi et al., 2021).

Cultural heritage is intrinsically linked to cultural identity. Traditional practices symbolize identity, connecting individuals to their heritage through various cultural expressions that reflect philosophical and cultural values (Golinelli, 2015). These practices bridge the past and present, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity within communities. Preserving such traditions ensures that cultural values are maintained and passed down through generations, reinforcing the community's identity.

In Kaliwungu, traditions such as the Tukuder Festival hold deep cultural significance. This festival symbolizes the interplay between humans, nature, and spirituality, reflecting the community's philosophical and cultural values. The Tukuder Festival, like many traditional practices, embodies the community's relationship with their environment and spiritual beliefs, serving as a tangible expression of their cultural identity (Arsal et al., 2023; Harnish, 2021; Soini & Dessein, 2016).

Preserving these cultural traditions faces challenges such as globalization, which can lead to cultural homogenization and socio-political changes that may disrupt traditional practices.

Effective safeguarding strategies involve both legal protections and community initiatives. Legal frameworks can help protect tangible heritage sites and ensure the continuation of intangible cultural practices by recognizing them as part of the national heritage (Khazbulatov & Nurpeiis, 2012; UNESCO, 2013; Winter, 2014). Community initiatives, such as local festivals and cultural events, play a vital role in maintaining and revitalizing traditions and transmitting cultural knowledge to younger generations (Alshehaby, 2020; Panzera, 2022).

Islam Nusantara represents a unique adaptation of Islamic practices that profoundly integrates with local cultures and traditions across the Indonesian archipelago (Thohir, 2022). This distinctive form of Islam respects and incorporates the region's rich cultural heritage, creating a syncretic religious identity that reflects Indonesia's diversity (Setiawan & Stevanus, 2023). Historically, the spread of Islam in the Nusantara region began in the 13th century, facilitated by trade routes and further propagated by Sufi missionaries. Islamization involves harmonizing with local beliefs and practices (Azra, 2004). The syncretic nature of Islam Nusantara is evident in the integration of local customs, rituals, and artistic expressions with Islamic teachings (Geertz, 1976). Notably, *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet theatre), with Hindu-Buddhist origins, was adapted by Sunan Kalijaga, one of the Wali Songo (Nine Saints), for Islamic preaching (Fuadi et al., 2023).

Javanese Muslim traditions encompass a variety of ceremonies that incorporate specific local practices reflecting the community's cultural heritage. Traditional ceremonies such as Tukuder and *Megengan* (a pre-Ramadan gathering), *Slametan* (communal feasts), and the celebration of Islamic holidays like *Maulid Nabi* (the Prophet Muhammad's birthday) exemplify this integration (Geertz, 1976; Woodward, 1989). Other Javanese Muslim traditions, such as Kenduren, Sekaten, and the Grebeg Maulud festival, further illustrate the region's rich tapestry of cultural and religious practices. Kenduren is a communal feast that expresses gratitude, hope, and brotherhood, typically involving prayers and social gatherings (Saehu & Muchtar, 2023). Sekaten, commemorating the Prophet Muhammad's birth, features a week-long festival with gamelan music and various cultural activities (Kholid et al., 2022). This celebration culminates in the Grebeg Maulud procession, where offerings are presented to the people as symbols of spiritual and material blessings (Kholid et al., 2022). These traditions highlight the region's unique and intricate cultural and religious heritage (Geertz, 1976).

The architectural styles of mosques in Indonesia, such as the Demak Mosque and Kudus Mosque, blend Javanese, Hindu-Buddhist, and Islamic architectural elements, symbolizing the cultural fusion inherent in Islam Nusantara. Philosophically, traditional Islamic culture in Java emphasizes moderation, tolerance, and inclusivity, fostering peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic and religious communities in Indonesia (Muaznanah, 2006; Woodward, 1989). Additionally, these mosques' courtyards (*alun-alun*) serve as spiritual spaces for worship and communal areas for social and cultural activities. These courtyards facilitate gatherings, educational sessions, and community events, reinforcing the mosque's role as a hub for spiritual and communal life (Agustapraja & Aslamiyah, 2022; Rukayah et al., 2023; Wan Ali et al., 2020).

Javanese Muslims observe Ramadan with great reverence and enthusiasm, and the region's cultural heritage deeply enriches its practices and traditions (Ridwan & Fuad Zain, 2021; Shalihin et al., 2020). Preparations for Ramadan in Java begin with the Nyadran and Megengan traditions. Nyadran, a ritual of cleaning and praying at ancestral graves, symbolizes respect for the deceased and blends local culture with Islamic practices, enhancing social harmony and cultural continuity. *Megengan*, derived from the Javanese word "megeng," meaning "to hold back," involves communal prayers and meals to mark the upcoming fasting

month, fostering unity and spiritual readiness (Wardhani, 2023). During Megengan, traditional foods and drinks are sold by vendors in markets and public spaces, creating a lively, celebratory atmosphere (Hellman, 2008). In Kaliwungu, Kendal, this tradition is known as the Tukuder Festival, which combines the communal aspects of Megengan and Nyadran.

Tukuder serves as a liminal period where people enjoy freedom and festivities before the strict observance of fasting during Ramadan. This festival strengthens social bonds and promotes cultural tourism and economic development in the region (Priyatin & Utomo, 2022, 2023). During Ramadan, *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) hold intensive religious study sessions known as *Pasaran*, involving reciting and studying classical Islamic texts, deepening the community's religious knowledge and spiritual practice (Burga & Damopolii, 2022). Ramadan also highlights the importance of charity and community support through activities such as *zakat* (almsgiving) and providing iftar, the meal that breaks the fast, to those in need. These practices strengthen social bonds and highlight the importance of helping needy people (Fuadi et al., 2023; Shalihin et al., 2020; Thohir, 2022). The end of *Ramadan* is marked by Idul Fitri (*Eid al-Fitr*), locally known as *Lebaran*, which involves visiting relatives, asking for forgiveness, and sharing meals, symbolizing the renewal of relationships and communal harmony (Ridwan & Fuad Zain, 2021; Woodward, 1989).

The theological foundations underlying traditional practices like Tukuder reflect how Islamic teachings are interpreted within local cultural contexts. These traditions embody values such as community cohesion, spiritual readiness, and the integration of religious practices into everyday life (Nasuhi, 2017). Exploring these theological dimensions reveals how local interpretations of Islam foster a unique spiritual environment that enriches the community's daily life. Traditions such as Tukuder significantly enrich the spiritual lives of Javanese Muslims, intertwining daily activities with religious observances. These practices offer personal and communal spiritual experiences, fostering a deeper connection to faith (Hellman, 2008). By examining personal and community experiences, this analysis provides insights into how these traditions nurture a robust spiritual life.

Preserving cultural heritage, including culinary traditions, faces challenges such as globalization, natural disasters, and socio-political changes. Effective safeguarding strategies involve legal protections and community initiatives to maintain these traditions and prevent erosion (Zocchi et al., 2021). Promoting local food heritage can drive rural development and enhance social cohesion, as various initiatives worldwide demonstrate (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002; Zabulis et al., 2020). Cultural heritage plays a pivotal role in sustainable development by contributing to local economies through cultural tourism and sustainable agricultural practices. Promoting local food heritage can drive rural development and enhance social cohesion, as demonstrated by various initiatives worldwide (Partarakis et al., 2021).

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach to gain a deep understanding of the Tukuder Tradition at Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque in Kaliwungu. This method was chosen for its ability to explore the complex philosophical and cultural meanings embedded within this tradition. The primary techniques were participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Thorkildsen & Ekman, 2013).

The researcher directly participated in the Tukuder event to observe cultural practices and social interactions firsthand. This active participation provided authentic insights into how the local community practices and perceives this tradition. By experiencing the event alongside community members, the researcher could better understand the tradition's significance and impact on social cohesion.

In-depth interviews were conducted with selected participants using purposive sampling, which allows researchers to identify respondents based on their relevance and knowledge of the subject matter. Informants included traditional food vendors, festival attendees, officials from Kendal's Cultural Affairs Department, and local Islamic leaders. These individuals were chosen for their active involvement and unique perspectives on the festival's culinary and cultural heritage, economic impacts, and role in Kendal's Islamic communal life. This variety of sources ensured a rich and diverse representation of voices related to the Tukuder tradition.

The historical and theoretical context of the Tukuder Tradition was explored through the analysis of historical documents and relevant literature. This involved studying local historical records, academic literature on Javanese culture and Islamic traditions, and publications on traditional culinary practices. The analysis offered a fundamental comprehension of the tradition's origins and development. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the researcher compared and analyzed data from observations, interviews, and documents. This triangulation method helped identify similarities and differences in the data, thereby strengthening the conclusions drawn (Carter et al., 2014; Jick, 1979). The technique of thick description was employed to capture the profound meanings of the studied phenomena (Younas et al., 2023). This approach yielded detailed, rich data that portrayed the social and cultural contexts of the Tukuder Tradition, thereby enhancing understanding of its philosophical and cultural implications.

Results and discussion

The Jami Al-Muttaqin mosque and the Tukuder festival in Kaliwungu

The Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque in Kaliwungu, Kendal, established in the 17th century by Kiai Asyari, a prominent scholar from the Mataram Islamic Kingdom, has long served as the region's religious and cultural center. Originally built of wood and natural materials, the mosque has undergone several architectural renovations, culminating in its current form: a three-dome structure with towering minarets that reflect contemporary Islamic architectural aesthetics. The mosque's interior is also an important educational space, particularly during Ramadan, when it hosts Ngaji Pasaran. This practice, which became prominent in the early 20th century (c. 1919–1920) alongside the expansion of Islamic boarding schools in Kaliwungu, involves intensive study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*). Often called *pengajian kilatan* ("lightning-fast study"), these sessions condense complex religious teachings into a short period, aligning with the temporal and spiritual rhythm of the fasting month.

One *kyai* at Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque explained, "*Ngaji Pasaran is not only about studying. It is a way to prepare our hearts and minds for Ramadan. It reminds us that this is not an ordinary month – it is a sacred time when we purify ourselves and reconnect with the essence of our faith.*" In this context, the Tukuder Festival becomes more than a cultural gathering; it serves as a gateway to the

holy month, integrating learning, devotion, and tradition to comprehensively express spiritual readiness and community identity in Kaliwungu.

As shown in Figure 1, the mosque's courtyard and surrounding environment are transformed into vibrant communal spaces during the Tukuder Festival. The central courtyard is the primary site for religious performances and public gatherings. At the same time, a large open field in front of the mosque, along with the adjacent streets, is occupied by food vendors and festival-goers. This spatial expansion allows the event to accommodate thousands of attendees, turning the mosque and its environs into a focal point of spiritual celebration and cultural expression.

Figure 1: Spatial Dynamics of the Tukuder Festival at Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque, Kaliwungu, Kendal

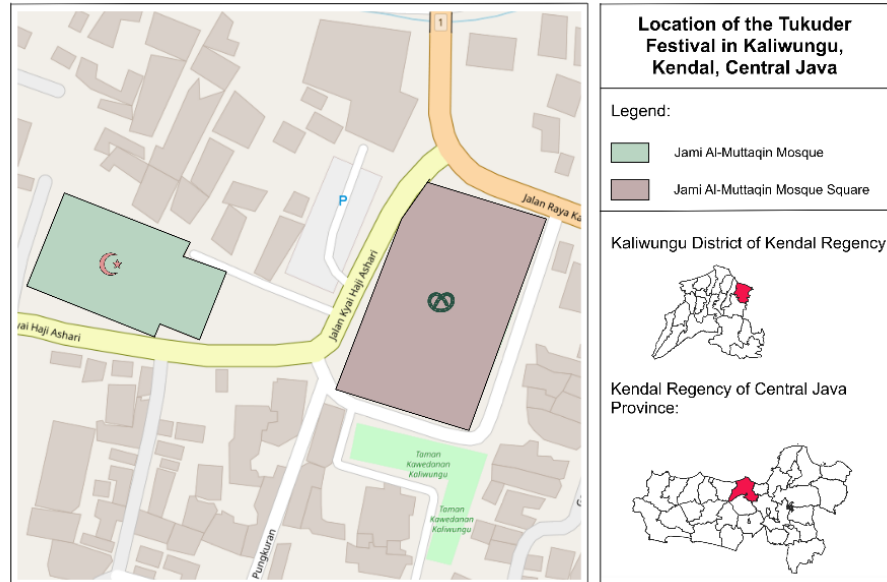


Note: Author's documentation (2024)

In addition to the outdoor festivities, the mosque's interior is also utilized for religious and educational programs during Ramadan. These include the official opening of Syiar Ramadan, a series of public religious activities marking the beginning of the holy month, and intensive Ngaji Pasaran sessions led by local Islamic scholars. These programs reinforce the mosque's function as a site of worship and as a center for Islamic learning and communal spiritual

engagement. This dual use of indoor and outdoor spaces during the Tukuder Festival highlights the mosque's comprehensive role as a religious, cultural, and educational nucleus for the community of Kaliwungu.

Figure 2: Spatial Location of the Tukuder Festival in Kaliwungu, Kendal, Central Java



Note: Created with QGIS by Authors (2024)

To further illustrate the festival's spatial arrangement, Figure 2 shows a map of the area surrounding the Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque. The map clearly shows the separation between the mosque building and the large square across the street, which serves as the leading site for public festivities, vendor activity, and communal gatherings. This spatial layout demonstrates the festival's integration into Kaliwungu's urban structure, where religious, economic, and cultural practices converge within a defined communal space.

Figure 3: Traditional *Bedug* and *Kentungan* Instruments at Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque, Kaliwungu



Note: Author's documentation (2024)

The Tukuder Festival is a notable cultural heritage event in Kaliwungu that continues to thrive as a communal expression of spiritual readiness before Ramadan. One of its enduring elements is the use of traditional sound instruments, such as the bedug and kentongan, which historically served as auditory signals to mark the arrival of the fasting month. These instruments, displayed in Figure 3, are positioned in the prayer hall of the Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque and remain a symbolic feature of religious tradition in Kaliwungu. Notably, the distinctive sounds produced when these instruments are struck – *tuk tuk* from the *kentongan* and *der* from the deep resonance of the *bedug* – inspired the name “Tukuder.” The rhythmic auditory experience marks sacred time and activates a shared cultural memory that signals the beginning of the holy month.

In recent years, this tradition has been enriched by the inclusion of drum band performances, as depicted in Figure 1, adding a vibrant, contemporary layer to the auditory celebration. The dynamic drumming now complements the deep cultural resonance of the bedug, creating a bridge between historical forms and modern expressions of celebration. This combination of traditional and contemporary elements reflects the Tukuder Festival’s continued evolution while maintaining its spiritual and communal core.

The Tukuder Festival marks the start of Ramadan while upholding and transmitting cultural and spiritual principles across generations. It reinforces community bonds and links individuals to their cultural and religious heritage through customary culinary practices and spiritual observances. Moreover, it promotes cultural tourism and contributes to local economic development, making the Tukuder Festival a vital part of Kaliwungu’s vibrant historical and cultural tapestry. The Tukuder Festival is often compared to the Dukder Festival in Semarang. While both celebrate the arrival of Ramadan, the Dukder Festival is more urban-centric, featuring night markets, vendors, and open-air movie screenings (Purnamasari, 2023).

In contrast, the Tukuder Festival in Kaliwungu emphasizes religious and culinary elements. The beating of the bedug in mosques, followed by the vending of traditional foods with deep philosophical significance, distinguishes it from the more entertainment-focused Dukder in Semarang. The area around the mosque, mainly occupied by *santri* (Islamic boarding school students) and overseen by *kyais* (Islamic scholars), fosters a robust religious ambience (Fuadi et al., 2023; Thohir, 2022). The Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque and the Tukuder Festival play significant roles in preserving and promoting Kaliwungu’s cultural and religious heritage. These traditions strengthen social and religious bonds within the community and contribute to the local economy and cultural tourism, ensuring their relevance and vitality for future generations.

As shown in Figure 4, the vibrant culinary market at the heart of the Tukuder Festival is crucial in strengthening social cohesion and sustaining the local economy. The dense crowd of visitors and residents engaging in food-related transactions illustrates how the festival is a dynamic site of cultural tourism and economic opportunity. Vendors—many of them women—showcase and sell homemade traditional dishes, transmitting culinary knowledge across generations while supporting local households financially. The presence of diverse age groups, from children to older adults, reflects the festival’s inclusive nature and functions as a space for intergenerational interaction.

Figure 4: Culinary and Communal Activities During the Tukuder Festival

Note: Author's documentation (2024)

Beyond its economic and social dimensions, the festival embodies a profound expression of gratitude and joy as it welcomes the holy month of Ramadan. The shared experience of preparing and purchasing traditional foods becomes a collective ritual symbolizing spiritual readiness, familial solidarity, and communal happiness. As one food vendor reflected, *"This is more than just selling food – we do this to celebrate the arrival of Ramadan together. It is a blessing to see people happy, sharing, and remembering what this month means."* Similarly, a resident noted, *"Tukuder brings us together – not just to eat, but to feel the spirit of the month before it even starts."* In this sense, Tukuder is more than a marketplace—a form of cultural devotion in which religious values are lived out through acts of generosity, festivity, and mutual support. This

combination of religious meaning, communal gathering, and economic exchange ensures the tradition's continued relevance and vitality within Kaliwungu's cultural landscape.

Building on this festive atmosphere, the core of the Tukuder Festival lies in the annual communal gathering held in the mosque square before Ramadan. Residents and visitors come together to enjoy traditional dishes from local vendors, such as *Telur Mimi*, *Sumpil*, and *Momoh* (Priyatin & Utomo, 2023). These foods are appreciated for their taste and symbolic meanings, reflecting values of gratitude, purification, and familial unity associated with the spiritual preparation for Ramadan in Kaliwungu. The appeal of these culinary traditions draws attendees from surrounding regions, reinforcing the town's cultural distinctiveness. Complementing the festive and culinary elements are religious educational practices rooted in *Pesantren* traditions, including *Pasaran* recitations and *santri* exchanges. *Pasaran* refers to intensive Ramadan study sessions in which classical Islamic texts are read and collectively interpreted, fostering deeper religious understanding and spiritual reflection. These integrated practices highlight how the Tukuder Festival serves as both a celebration and a reaffirmation of Kaliwungu's enduring Islamic identity and community resilience.

Traditional Culinary Delights in the Tukuder Festival

Telur Mimi, or horseshoe crab eggs, is a traditional delicacy integral to the Tukuder Festival. Harvesting these eggs is performed with great care due to the potential toxicity of the animal (Botton, 2009). Once harvested, the eggs are boiled with spices to remove any fishy odor, then mixed with seasoned, grated young coconut. However, *Telur Mimi* is not just a delectable dish; it is imbued with profound philosophical values. The eggs symbolize eternal partnership, reflecting loyalty and unity in marriage and community relationships. This significance is rooted in local legends, such as the story of Mimi and Mintuna, representing inseparable pairs like a harmonious couple.

Figure 5: Fried Horseshoe Crab and Horseshoe Crab Eggs (*Telur Mimi*)



Note: Author's documentation (2024)

In preparing *Telur Mimi*, each step carries symbolic meaning. Using local spices enhances the flavor and is believed to possess spiritual power that aids purification and strengthens social bonds. Spices such as turmeric, galangal, and bay leaves are commonly used, each with special

significance in local culture. Turmeric, for instance, symbolizes wisdom and prosperity, while galangal symbolizes resilience and strength.

Additionally, the young coconut used in the mixture symbolizes purity and new life. In many Indonesian cultures, the coconut is often used in traditional ceremonies to symbolize purity and blessing. By mixing grated young coconut with Telur Mimi, the dish not only offers a delicious taste but also conveys messages about the importance of purity and rebirth in social and community relationships.

Within the context of the Tukuder Festival, Telur Mimi plays a central role. The festival is when the community celebrates its social and cultural bonds. Traditional foods like Telur Mimi remind them of their cultural roots and reinforce a sense of togetherness. Cooking and sharing this dish is an assertive nonverbal communication, reinforcing collective values and reminding community members of the importance of loyalty, unity, and cooperation.

The legend of Mimi and Mintuna, which underpins the symbolism of Telur Mimi, tells of a male and female horseshoe crab that are always together, never separated. This story teaches the younger generation the importance of loyalty and equal partnership in all aspects of life, both in marriage and broader social relationships. Through Telur Mimi, the community enjoys a delicious dish and reinforces their cultural identity, and the values passed down from generation to generation. This dish becomes more than just food; it manifests a rich and meaningful cultural heritage (Priyatin & Utomo, 2023).

Sumpil is made from glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo leaves, forming a unique triangular pyramid shape. The preparation involves steaming the seasoned glutinous rice, wrapping it in bamboo leaves, and steaming it again until fully cooked. The triangular shape represents the vertical relationship between humans and God (*habluminnallah*) and the horizontal relationship among humans (*habluminnanas*). This reflects Islamic teachings on maintaining good relationships with God and others. In the Tukuder Festival, Sumpil symbolizes togetherness, solidarity, and deep spirituality. Sumpil is also integral to the Weh-wehan tradition, which involves food exchange among community members as a symbol of solidarity and mutual support.

Figure 6: Sumpil as a Mandatory Dish Prepared for Communal Distribution at the Tukuder Festival



Note: Author's documentation (2024)

Momoh is a specialty from Kendal, made from buffalo offal and cooked with traditional spices such as galangal, ginger, bay leaves, lemongrass, and Javanese sugar. The cooking process takes about 4–5 hours to ensure the refuse becomes tender and the spices are thoroughly absorbed. The lengthy cooking process, which requires teamwork, reflects values of patience, hard work, and community spirit. *Momoh* symbolizes the collective effort and hard work needed to achieve satisfying results, reminding the community of the importance of these values in everyday life. The name “*Momoh*” derives from the Javanese word “*emoh-emoh*,” meaning “to refuse,” reflecting the initial reaction to its strong aroma before it became a beloved dish (Indracahya, 2024).

Figure 7: *Momoh* as a Mandatory Dish Made from Buffalo Offal in the Tukuder Festival



Note: Author's documentation (2024)

Ketan abang ijo (red and green sticky rice) is a traditional snack made from glutinous rice mixed with coconut milk and served with various toppings such as grated coconut, palm sugar, and peanuts. Initially created as *Ketan abang putih* (red and white sticky rice), it was expanded to include green. The colors of *Ketan abang ijo* hold specific symbolic meanings: green for fertility, red for courage, and white for purity. This dish is often included in the Weh-wehan tradition, which involves exchanging food and symbolizes community solidarity and mutual support.

Figure 8: Traditional Serving of Ketan Abang Ijo at the Tukuder Festival



Note: Author's documentation (2024)

Jamu Jun is a traditional rice flour, coconut milk, and ginger drink. It is a part of the culinary heritage that has become rare but is still found in markets like Pasar Semawis in Semarang. This drink symbolizes integrating local traditions with modern health-conscious lifestyles, particularly appealing to younger generations. *Jamu Jun* connects to cultural roots while aligning with contemporary values of health and wellness.

Figure 9: Traditional Serving of Jamu Jun at the Tukuder Festival



Note: Author's documentation (2024)

Weh-wehan is a local tradition of food exchange among community members, observed at the onset of Ramadan and during Maulid Nabi celebrations. It is closely intertwined with the Tukuder Festival in Kaliwungu. The practice is believed to have originated during the era of Sunan Kalijaga, one of the revered Wali Songo who propagated Islam in Java by integrating Javanese cultural expressions with Islamic teachings. At its core, *Weh-wehan* reflects values of generosity, communal solidarity, and spiritual preparedness—principles that resonate strongly within Islamic ethical traditions. As one *takmir* (mosque committee member) of Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque explained, “*Weh-wehan teaches us to give sincerely, especially before fasting. It is not about how much we give, but the intention to share with neighbors and maintain harmony.*” During the Tukuder Festival, this spirit is expressed through the preparation and sharing of traditional dishes such as *Sumpil* and *Ketan Abang Ijo*, creating a communal atmosphere of gratitude, unity, and reflection as the community enters the sacred month of Ramadan.

The *Weh-wehan* tradition embodies the Islamic principles of *sadaqah* (charity), *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood), and *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification). By participating in *Weh-wehan* as part of the Tukuder Festival tradition, community members celebrate the arrival of Ramadan and reinforce their commitment to these virtues, fostering a cohesive, pious community ready to embrace the holy month's blessings and challenges. This tradition serves as a vital practice in preparing for Ramadan, strengthening social bonds, and enhancing spiritual readiness by sharing symbolic foods like *Sumpil* and *Ketan abang ijo*.

The Tukuder Festival underscores the cultural and religious significance of local traditions and the centrality of social and economic interactions in sustaining everyday community life. During the celebrations, the courtyard of Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque is transformed into a dynamic folk market where local vendors display and sell traditional foods, snacks, and handcrafted items. As one visitor expressed, “*It's not just about the food; it's about meeting people,*

feeling the spirit of Ramadan together." This statement highlights how the festival serves as a communal space where cultural celebration and social bonding converge.

This festive setting fosters a sense of communal joy and economic empowerment. One local vendor said, *"This is our busiest day of the year. We prepare weeks in advance because everyone comes to buy, celebrate, and honour the tradition."* The market thus becomes a platform for informal entrepreneurship, where many families, particularly women, generate income to support their households. The vibrancy of these exchanges reinforces community bonds and illustrates how religious celebrations like Tukuder serve as mechanisms for both cultural transmission and economic sustainability.

Philosophical and cultural significance in the Tukuder festival

The Tukuder Festival at Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque is a significant cultural heritage event that reflects efforts to preserve intangible cultural heritage (ICH), particularly through ritual practices and culinary traditions. Recognized as part of the Indonesian National Cultural Heritage of the Province of Central Java since 2016, the festival plays a vital role in maintaining and promoting Kaliwungu's unique cultural identity (Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2016).

This philosophical synthesis is especially evident in the festival's culinary dimension. Traditional dishes such as Sumpil, Ketan Abang Ijo, and Telur Mimi are expressions of local taste and symbolic representations of communal values. For example, the red, green, and white colors in Ketan Abang Ijo can be interpreted symbolically to reflect Islamic values, such as inner discipline, divine mercy, and purification of the heart, mirroring both Javanese and Islamic spiritual traditions. These values are not abstract but lived out in sharing, preparing, and consuming food together, especially in the ritual context of welcoming Ramadan. In this way, the Tukuder Festival serves as a living expression of Islam Nusantara, where ritual, food, and faith intertwine in a cohesive system of meaning passed on across generations.

Preserving traditional culinary practices is a cornerstone of the Tukuder Festival. Traditional foods such as Telur Mimi, Sumpil, and Momoh are central to the celebration and carry deep philosophical meanings. These foods are not merely items of consumption but symbols of cultural continuity and identity. The community's efforts to maintain these foods' recipes and preparation methods reflect a commitment to preserving their culinary heritage. Telur Mimi, harvested from horseshoe crabs, represents eternal partnership and unity, mirroring the community's local values of loyalty and harmony. The meticulous process of preparing Telur Mimi, from harvesting to cooking, ensures that this traditional delicacy remains a vital part of the Tukuder celebration.

Sumpil, made from glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo leaves, symbolizes the vertical relationship between humans and God (*habluminnallah*) and the horizontal relationship among humans (*habluminnanas*). This dual symbolism reinforces Islam's teachings on maintaining good relationships with God and fellow humans. Incorporating Sumpil in the Weh-wehan tradition, where food is exchanged among community members, further emphasizes the values of solidarity and mutual support. Momoh, a dish made from buffalo offal and traditional spices, symbolizes patience, hard work, and community spirit. The lengthy cooking process, requiring cooperation and dedication, mirrors the collective effort needed to preserve cultural practices and ensure they are passed down through generations.

Ketan abang ijo, traditional sticky rice snacks, are integral to the Tukuder Festival. The colors of *Ketan abang ijo* – green for fertility, red for courage, and white for purity – hold significant symbolic meanings. These snacks, often in the *Weh-wehan* tradition, represent community solidarity and mutual support. *Jamu Jun*, a traditional drink made from rice flour, coconut milk, and ginger, exemplifies the integration of local traditions with modern health-conscious lifestyles. It appeals particularly to younger generations, connecting them to their cultural roots while promoting health and wellness.

The philosophical significance of these traditional foods lies in their ability to convey and reinforce cultural values. The preparation and consumption of these foods during the Tukuder Festival serve to internalize and perpetuate the community's values of togetherness, loyalty, patience, and spirituality. The Tukuder Festival also fosters a sense of pride and identity among the people of Kaliwungu. Participating in this annual event reminds community members of their cultural heritage and the importance of preserving it. The tradition is a living link to the past, connecting current and future generations to their cultural roots.

The Tukuder Festival exemplifies key aspects of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) as defined by UNESCO (2003), including oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship (Nic Craith et al., 2018; Stefano & Davis, 2016). The stories and legends associated with traditional foods like *Telur Mimi* and *Sumpil* are passed down through generations, maintaining the community's collective memory and cultural identity. The beating of the *bedug* and other ritualistic practices during the Tukuder celebration are performing arts that convey cultural values and spiritual significance.

The community gathering for the Tukuder celebration, the exchange of food in the *Weh-wehan* tradition, and the practices of *Megengan* are social rituals that strengthen community bonds and ensure the transmission of cultural heritage. The traditional knowledge of preparing foods like *Telur Mimi* and *Momoh* reflects the community's deep understanding of their natural environment and the sustainable use of local resources. Preparing traditional foods and crafting items like bamboo leaf wrappers for *Sumpil* demonstrate the community's skills and ingenuity.

The Tukuder Festival highlights the cultural and religious significance of the practices involved and emphasizes the importance of social and economic interactions in sustaining community life. The folk market, held in the courtyard of Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque, becomes a vibrant social and economic hub during the Tukuder celebrations. Local vendors showcase their products, including traditional foods, creating a lively atmosphere that fosters community spirit and camaraderie. This market activity promotes local entrepreneurship and helps sustain the local economy by providing income opportunities for vendors and artisans.

Mosques in Java, such as Jami Al-Muttaqin, serve as religious and social centers. They are places for congregational prayers, sermons, and various religious activities. Additionally, mosques function as educational centers where the community deepens its spiritual knowledge through study groups and religious classes. In Javanese culture, mosques symbolize unity and togetherness, hosting social activities like *gotong royong* (cooperation) and local traditions celebrations. Enlivening the mosque involves maintaining and enhancing its role as a religious and social center. During the Tukuder celebration, the mosque's courtyard becomes a gathering place for the community to enjoy traditional foods and participate in religious activities. The beating of the *bedug*, marking the start of Ramadan, and

serving foods like Telur Mimi, Sumpil, and Momoh not only celebrate the holy month's arrival but also reinforce the mosque's role as a community hub. Thus, through the Tukuder Festival, the people of Kaliwungu enliven the mosque, enrich local culture, and strengthen the values of togetherness, making it a vibrant and relevant place in daily life.

The Tukuder Festival, while deeply rooted in religious observance and community cohesion, also carries significant implications for local tourism and economic development. Although centered in Kaliwungu, the festival draws visitors from Semarang, Batang, and Pekalongan areas. Residents often invite relatives and acquaintances from other towns to join the celebration, creating a vibrant communal atmosphere beyond the local scale. This expanded participation underscores the festival's potential as a regional cultural attraction, generating a multiplier effect aligned with the objectives of Indonesia's Cultural Advancement Law, which sees cultural expressions as heritage and resources for inclusive development (Republic of Indonesia, 2017).

The culinary dimension of Tukuder plays a central role in attracting visitors and fostering cultural tourism. Traditional dishes such as Telur Mimi, Sumpil, and Momoh become seasonal highlights, eagerly sought by both local attendees and out-of-town visitors. In this case, culinary heritage functions not merely as a preserved tradition but as a living heritage—actively practiced, transmitted, and reinterpreted in everyday community life. This living heritage is further strengthened through intergenerational participation and institutional support (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019; UNESCO, 2019). The Department of Education and Culture of Kendal Regency promotes culinary and cultural literacy through school-based programs that encourage students to engage with heritage elements. Meanwhile, the Office of Religious Affairs plays a key role in involving students in religious activities at Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque during Tukuder, including Quran recitation, public lectures (*tausiyah*), and participation in the Syiar Ramadan ceremony. These collaborative efforts ensure that Tukuder is preserved as a festival and internalized as a meaningful religious and cultural experience for younger generations.

As one Department of Education and Culture official remarked, *"We see the festival not just as a ritual, but as a platform for education, participation, and economic empowerment. Through promoting culinary heritage and cultural involvement, we hope to ensure Tukuder remains relevant across generations."* These efforts illustrate how the festival operates as a living heritage system—not confined to the past but dynamically engaged with the present through active community practice, youth involvement, and evolving social relevance. Overall, the Tukuder Festival exemplifies how local traditions can drive economic resilience, social solidarity, and heritage sustainability when integrated with cultural policy and community initiatives. It affirms that living heritage is not static memory but an active, inclusive process of cultural continuity, adapted to the rhythms and needs of the contemporary community.

Conclusion

The Tukuder Festival at Jami Al-Muttaqin Mosque significantly influences the cultural identity and cohesion of the Javanese Islamic community in Kaliwungu by preserving and celebrating traditional culinary practices such as Telur Mimi, Sumpil, and Momoh, which embody deep philosophical meanings. These foods and associated rituals, such as Weh-wehan and Megengan, reinforce values of loyalty, unity, patience, and spirituality, fostering a sense of togetherness and mutual support. The tradition's integration of Javanese, Arab, and

Chinese cultural elements further enriches the local heritage, making it a vital component of the community's identity. The Tukuder Festival also contributes to sustainable cultural tourism and regional economic development by transforming the mosque courtyard into a vibrant folk market, promoting local entrepreneurship, and sustaining the economy. Recognized as part of Central Java's intangible cultural heritage, the Tukuder Festival ensures that these cultural values and practices remain relevant and respected in a rapidly modernizing world.

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