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Muslim Community's Interest towards the Rambut Gimbal Ritual in Dieng

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Abstract: *Rambut Gimbal* rituals in Dieng have occurred for a long time. Residents in the Dieng and its surroundings, including Muslims, enthusiastically organize and follow the *ruwat ritual*. This study describes the interest of the Muslim community in organizing and following the ritual of *ruwat rambut gimbal* and the factors that encourage it. The data collection in this study is by in-depth interviews and observations. In-depth interviews were conducted with the community members who participated in the *ruwat*, the organizers, and the person who did *ruwat rambut gimbal*. Observations were made in the implementation of the *ruwat rambut gimbal* rituals before the COVID-19 pandemic. The selection of informants using the snowball technique and the results of data collection were analyzed qualitatively. Community interest in the *ruwat rambut gimbal ritual* is influenced by the urge to earn income, entertainment/tourism facilities, preserving traditions, and local government support. While the factors for organizers and actors include belief in ancestral spirits, the fate of children, and traditions without regard to Islamic teachings that they know as Muslims..

Keywords: *ruwat; gimbal; muslim; interest*

A. INTRODUCTION

Obedience to Allah's commands and prohibitions is manifested in physical and spiritual activities. Certain religious activities are repeated over a long period by a group of Muslim communities. This forms customs in the form of traditions that are determined and influenced by various social and cultural factors that already exist and apply in society.

There is tradition (*'urf*) from the perspective of *fiqh* that are *s{ahih* and *fasid*. *S{ahih* tradition are not in conflict with religion, manners, and ancestral

culture. *Fasid* customs are contrary to religion, national law, and manners (Syarifudin, 2008: 416-17).

Every event in the community has its legal provisions (Yasid, 2019: 10) including the tradition that gives birth to traditions. According to Edward Shils, tradition is everything that is preserved from the past to the present (Alexander, 2015: 1-28). The tradition of *ruwat* in Java has been going on for a long time and has been preserved from generation to generation. Before Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism entered Java, Javanese



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people had long followed Hinduism and Buddhism so that the tradition of worshiping the gods was so attached (Relin, 2014: 15). The worship is actualized through various rituals that become traditions. Ritual traditions in Javanese society include the ruwat tradition. The ruwatan ceremony has taken place in various cities in Java, including in Yogyakarta, Jakarta, and Surabaya. This shows that ruwat is still attached in the concept of Javanese people's trust with a variety of motivations to do so (Wardayati, 2015: 1).

The ruwat tradition is implemented by community members and the government in Banjarnegara, Purbalingga, Banyumas, and Cilacap. From the preliminary study, the various purposes of ruwat include (a) thanksgiving to God, (b) repelled from spirit disturbances, (c) eliminating sukerta in children, (d) asking for safety from Batara Kala, (e) welcoming one suro, (f) preserving traditions, and (g) tourism promotion. Ruwat activities are also carried out by local governments when celebrating regional birthdays.

One of the ruwat is child ruwat. Ruwat for children is carried out in Dieng Banjarnegara through an annual activity, namely ruwat rambut gimbal. This Ruwat is dedicated to ancestral spirits even though the organizers and performers are Muslims. Ruwat Rambut Gimbal is supported by the Banjarnegara Regency Government and is an annual agenda in Dieng.

Ruwat rambut gimbal is dedicated to ancestral spirits and is practiced by Muslims in Dieng. How is the interest in the dreadlocks treatment in Dieng and the factors that influence the organizers and performers?

Several studies have revealed that ruwat is motivated by certain values or life situations and carries out certain beliefs

that can be contrary to Islamic values. Probonegoro wrote the conclusion of his research that ruwat is a cultural behavior because humans can no longer solve worldly problems. History shows that at certain times in Java, life's hardships and despair caused people to flee from the man-made real world, to another world where cultural events were treated as natural events (Probonegoro, 2008: 1-26). Wahyudi's research in Pekalongan shows that the ruwat sedekah laut is a ritual as an expression of gratitude to God and as a symbol that has value in fishermen's lives as well as attractive tourism objects for the community (Wahyudi, 2011, 262-270). Research by Dahniar in South Malang concluded that the Kejawen family considered the ruwat tradition not to be a barrier for them to keep practicing the traditions they believed in and had no choice to keep their Kejawen traditions pure without mixing with Islamic teachings. The combination of Kejawen and Islamic traditions is ambivalent because Islam forbids the worship of anything other than Allah, and ruwatan specifically asks Batara Kala for safety (Dahniar, 2017: 144-154). While this research focuses on the interest in the ruwat rambut gimbal for the community and the factors of implementing the ruwat rambut gimbal on the organizers and performers.

B. MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Ruwat Traditions

The word *ruwat* means *luar saka panenung (wewujudan sing salah kedaden), luar saka ing beban, lan paukumaning dewa*. Ruwatan means *slametan* (gratitude). *Ruwatan* comes from the word *ruwat*. The word ruwat has symptoms of metathesis language from the word *luwar* which means free. *Diruwat* means to be released or

released. The condition of being free from the punishment or curse of a god that causes harm, calamity, or distress. The implementation of the ritual is called *ngruwat* or *ruwatan* (Poerwadarminta, 1939: 534).

The oldest written evidence is shown through the writing of the word *ruwat* on the ancient *lontar* leaves of the IX century Ramayana during the ancient Mataram period. At the time of the Kediri Kingdom, the word *ruwat* or *lukat* which meant to remove or relieve suffering was also found in various sacred palms (*lontar*) such as the *Hariwangsa lontar* and *Sumanasantaka*. During the Majapahit era, the term *ruwat* was found in literature works *kakawin* (poems and *kidung* (songs) such as *Kakawin Kunjarakama*. Visual evidence of *ruwat* was carved on several temple walls in East Java, namely the Surawana and Tigawangi temples in Kediri, East Java. The most classic evidence of *ruwat* is that taken from the sacred *kidung* (song) *Sudamala* during the Majapahit period in the mid XIV century (Wardiyati, 2015: 1).

Ruwat is brought from Hindu and Buddhist culture. After Islam entered Java, there was a change in *ruwat* with an Islamic perspective, even though from the appearance aspect, the implementation of *ruwat* was still the same as its origin. There is an opinion that Walisongo composed *ruwatan* so that *ruwat* is a syncretism of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, although at this time there is no difference between *ruwat* according to its origin and Walisongo's composition (Pamungkas, 2008: 4).

Ruwat is part of the Javanese tradition to honor the noble ancestors and they do not dare to leave this

tradition for the safety of their family who is experiencing *sukerta* (success). *Ruwatan* tradition is defined as a way to overcome or avoid an inner difficulty (*ngudari ruwet renteng*). According to Palgunadi, the *ruwatan* ritual aims to provide instructions on how to maintain or care for something so that its condition becomes better or at least it is well maintained (Relin, 2015: 17).

Several factors have led to communities to continue to preserve these activities because they are afraid of *kuwalat* (cursed) or being cursed, and a form of respect and gratitude to Dewi Sri as a mediator for the creator of nature for the natural resource from the earth (Abadi and Soebijantoro, 2016: 82-93). Besides that, the ancestors have directed through tradition to the next generation to preserve nature and the earth in various ceremonies at the individual, group, regional, and even state levels (Lelono, 2015: 145-162).

Ruwat is carried out by all religious adherents as long as they believe in *kejawen*. *Kejawen* is the ancestral culture of the Javanese people related to the *Jawi* religion. Religion is inferior to *ruwat* and religion only regulates human problems in the world. While *kejawen* and *ruwat* regulate the problems of the world and the afterlife. This *Ruwat* existed before religions existed in Java (Relin, 2015: 16-17). For example, the *Ruwatan Bumi* ceremony is usually held in the *Suro* month on the Javanese calendar in Winongo Village, Manguharjo District, Madiun City, which is a Javanese tradition inherited from the Mataram kingdom with a Hindu pattern (Abadi and Soebijantoro, 2016: 82-93).

2. Methods

The research paradigm is from a social fiqh perspective and an

anthropological perspective with an ethnoscience paradigm. The social fiqh paradigm identifies the phenomenon of religious behavior in the social and cultural context without ignoring the principles of sharia. The ethnoscience paradigm is a paradigm in cultural anthropology developed by Goodenough (Goodenough, 1956: 195-216) to find out phenomena that are important according to the community and the management of these phenomena by the community itself, the classification of phenomena that lead to the rules and norms applied, and the meaning of phenomena that have become a tradition of cultural products. The phenomena in this study are the *ruwat* phenomenon by the Javanese people who partially adhere to the *kejawen* teachings and are fully Muslims.

The approach in this study uses a phenomenological approach. *Ruwat* activity is seen as a phenomenon that has become a tradition and is interpreted by them with various aspects and dimensions of their lives. Therefore, the phenomenological approach is used to understand how humans construct important meanings and concepts within the framework of social relationships and their lives. This approach describes the meaning of life experiences for individuals into concepts they believe in and focuses on individual experiences as universal descriptions (Creswell, 2007: 57).

Methods of data collection in this research are by observation, interviews, study documentation. Observations were made on the implementation of *ruwat rambut gimbal* in the village of Dieng Kulon. In-depth interviews with organizers, performers, and community members who participated in the *rambut gimbal ritual*. The organizer is the informant in charge of organizing

the *ruwat rambut gimbal* as part of the Dieng Cultural Festival. The perpetrators include traditional leaders, the child with *rambut gimbal*, and their companions who are directly involved in the *ruwat rambut gimbal* ritual. Community members who follow the ritual include residents and local tourists from various regions who come during the ritual.

Informants were taken with a saturated sample of 8 informants from the community who were interested in *ruwat rambut gimbal* and 5 informants from the organizers and 4 informants from the performers of *ruwat rambut gimbal*. There are 4 informants from interested community members who came from Dieng, and 4 other informants were local tourists from outside Dieng Kulon. Organizer informants are 4 informants from the local committee and 1 government official informant. Also 2 *ruwat* performers informants from Dieng Kulon residents and 2 informants from outside Dieng Kulon but originally Dieng Kulon residents.

The analysis technique goes through steps where each step is not always a sequence of processes, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. After presenting the data, data interpretation is implemented to be able to get a conclusion.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Dieng Plateau

The Dieng Plateau is a fertile area and is located in an active volcanic mountain area. The name Dieng comes from the Kawi language: "*dī*" which means "place" or "mountain" and "*hyang*" which means god. So Dieng

means the mountainous area where the gods and goddesses reside. This ruwatan activity has become one of the routine agendas in the Dieng Culture Festival which has been held regularly for the last 9 years (BPPI, 2021).

The Dieng Plateau is located in the Batur District and part of the Pejawaran District, Banjarnegara Regency and Kejajar District, Wonosobo Regency and the southern part of Pranten Village, Bawang District, Batang Regency. The tourist area is in the area of Dieng Kulon Village, Banjarnegara Regency, and Dieng Village, Wonosobo Regency. The altitude of the plain is between 1,600 to 2,100 m above sea level with the direction of surface flow to the southwest towards the Serayu River valley. The air temperature during the day is between 12°C to 20°C and at night between 6°C to 10°C. The air temperature reaches 0°C in the early hours of the dry season in July and August. The subtropical climate in the Dieng Plateau can cause frost which the locals call *bun upas* (poison dew) because it causes damage to agricultural crops. (Wikipedia, 2021)

Dieng Kulon village has an area of 1.97 km² or 4.32% of the entire Batur District. The altitude is 2,143 m above sea level. The total population is 3,961 people (BPS Banjarnegara, 2021:8). The population recorded on the ID card (KTP) as Muslim is 3,947 people (99.65%) and 14 people are non-Muslim (0.35%) (Pemerintah Desa Dieng Kulon, 2021:12). In this village, the ritual of

ruwat rambut gimbal is held as part of the Dieng Culture Festival which is held every year.

2. *Ruwat Rambut Gimbal*

a. Beliefs in *Ruwat Rambut Gimbal*

The people of Dieng believe that the girl with rambut gimbal¹ is the incarnation of Nyai Dewi Roro Ronce (wife of Kaladete) who is the servant of the ruler of the South Sea of Nyai Roro Kidul. If the child is male, the people of Dieng believe that they are descended from Kaladete who lived in the 14th century. Kaladete is believed to be the ruler of the Dieng plateau which now resides in Telaga (Lake) Balekambang.² Children's hair will turn gimbal (dreadlocks) if they are considered mystically chosen by Kaladete.

The people of Dieng believe that *rambut gimbal* (dreadlocks) are a gift from their ancestors and must be cut, which is then *crossed (dilarung³)* at Telaga Balekambang (Balekambang Lake) as a sign of gratitude. This tradition has been brought about for decades. *The rambut gimbal* (dreadlocks) are still attached to the descendants of Dieng residents even though they have moved to other areas.

Dreads (*rambut gimbal*) grow unnoticed by children and their parents. Dreads usually do not

¹ Dreads (*rambut gimbal*) are hair that grows frizzy or the hair are stick together into clumps that are relatively difficult to comb. Frizzy condition is not always since the hair grows, but since it grows normally and when it reaches a certain length it becomes frizzy.

² Balekambang Lake is located next to the Arjuna Temple Complex in Dieng Kulon Village, Bantur District, Banjarnegara Regency. This lake

is an ancient lake with an area of about 10 hectares which used to function to accommodate wastewater so as not to inundate the Arjuna Temple complex.

³ *Dilarung* is crossed away until carried away by the movement of water and or submerged or not visible on the surface of the water.

grow from birth and become dreadlocks from the age of one year. Before becoming dreadlocks, children are usually sickly and have seizures. But as soon as the dreads grow, it doesn't hurt anymore. Dreadlocks are believed to be the best cut when children are 3 years old.

b. Ritual of *Ruwat Rambut Gimbal*

Before the procession begins, the dreadlocked (*rambut gimbal*) child's family will invite village leaders and the dreadlocks child to make a pilgrimage to the ancestral grave. The goal is to ask for permission so that the ruwatan event can run smoothly. *Ruwat rambut gimbal* will also be treated according to the *weton* of the child's birth.

Dreadlocks children (*anak gimbal*) submit a request as a condition for cutting dreadlocks (*rambut gimbal*). Requests according to the child's will, for example, money, certain foods⁴ or game tools, and others. Preparation before the procession includes food and equipment. The food will be served in the form of *buju* rice, *ingkung*, and *rakan*.⁵ There are five kinds of *buju* prepared, namely *buju robyong*, *buju* necklace (*kalung*), *buju* mortar (*lumpang*), *buju rosulan*, and *buju* red rice (*beras merah*). The *buju robyong* is made uniquely accompanied by skewer food decorations such as satay. *Buju Robyong* is a symbol of

dreadlocks (*rambut gimbal*). This dress is decorated irregularly which means a symbol of humans to always be aware of the obstacles they face. The equipment prepared are whitening (*kapur sirih*) and jug (*kendi*).⁶ A jug (*kendi*) to put the cut dreads (*rambut gimbal*).

Dreadlocks (*anak rambut gimbal*) children are made up in such away. The traditional leaders recite prayers and mantras while tying the heads of each child with dreadlocks (*rambut gimbal*) using a white cloth. The dreadlocks child was paraded to *Plataran Dharmasala* using a golden chariot. Meanwhile, the officials rode horses to escort a group of dreadlocked children who rode four golden chariots. The group headed to *Plataran Dharmasala* to do *jaman*.

Jaman is a process that is believed to purify oneself. The traditional holders (*pemangku adat*) prepare holy water. The water is taken from two sacred springs (*mata air*), namely the Sedayu spring (*sendang*) and the Maerokoco spring (*sendang*). Then the traditional holders removed the cloth covering the heads of the dreadlocked children and splashed holy water on the heads of each of the dreadlocks.

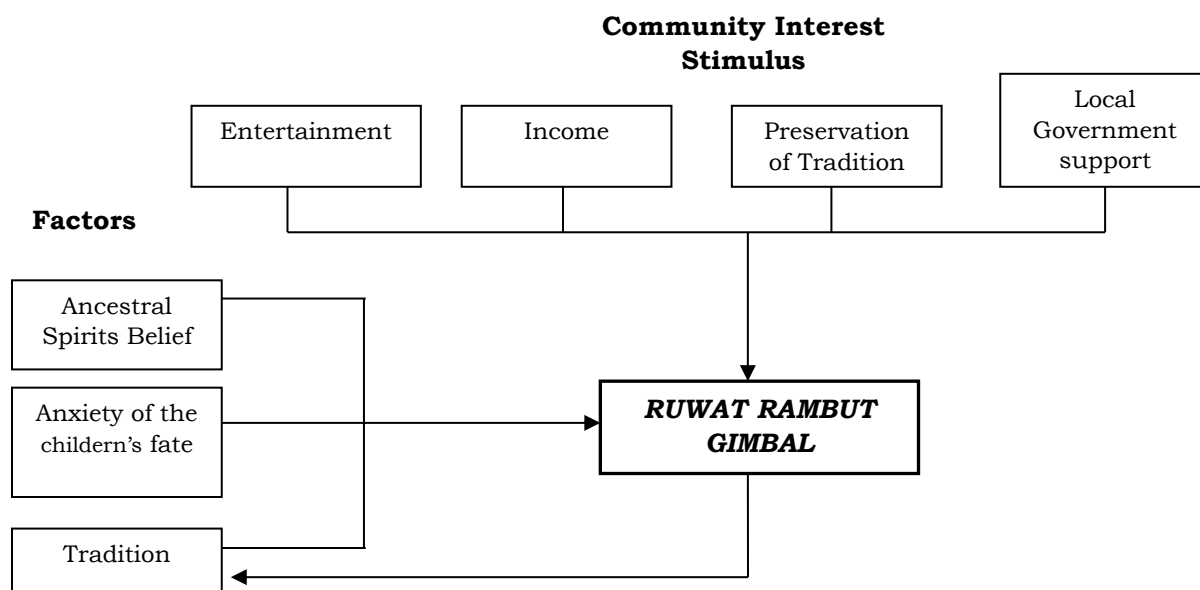
Next, the dreadlocks went to the Arjuna Temple (*Candi Arjuna*) area to occupy the main stage, which was wrapped in black cloth

⁴ For example, three *tampah* (containers) of traditional snacks. *Tampah* is a container made of bamboo with a wide round shape.

⁵ Rice that is shaped into a cone and surrounded by side dishes and placed in a container is called a *buju (tumpang)*. One chicken that is cooked and steamed still in the form of one

chicken is called *ingkung*. *Rakan* is cake sold at local traditional markets.

⁶ jug (*kendi*) is a container made of soil with a smaller top for a handle and an elongated water outlet.



as a place for cutting dreadlocks. Various offerings are on the right side of the stage. The offerings consist of nine kinds of tumpeng rice and 18 types of local drinks. There are mountains of Javanese rice cake (*ketupat*) in the number according to the year the *Ruwat* procession is carried out.

The ritual is led by a traditional leader by making a prayer. It started with *Mbah* Sumanto who said the prayer. Traditional leaders have previously performed austerities through sleepless activities from Wednesday to Sunday. On Thursday and Friday, traceback (*napak tilas*) to 37 locations by sowing flowers. This hermitage aims as a form of asking for health and safety. The traditional leader then begins shaving the dreads starting from

one child first and so on by saying a prayer.⁷

The child's dreads are then stored in a pottery container (*tembikar*)⁸. Then put in a jug. The hair in the jug is then dilarung or crossed into the water at Lake (*Telaga*) Balaikambang. This lake is the residence of *Kaladete*, the ruler of the Dieng Plateau. Lake Balaikambang water is believed to flow to the south coast.

Fig. Community Interest Stimulus and Factors Implementing *Ruwat Rambut Gimbak*

3. Community Interests and Factors Implementing *Ruwat Rambut Gimbak*

Public interest in the activities of *ruwat rambut gimbak* is classified into four types, namely interest driven by entertainment motives, income,

⁷ The prayer when shaving dreadlocks, "*Ya marani nira maya, yes silapa palasia, jamiroda doramiya*". (Begging to be kept away from anyone who will do evil, people who cause hunger actually feed, those who like to force actually give

freedom)".

⁸ Pottery (*tembikar*) is made of ceramic into a relatively small container.

preserving traditions and government orders. Ruwat dreadlocks become an annual tourist attraction in Dieng. The limited variety of entertainment in Dieng has led to an interest in doing activities based on belief and mysticism. The concept of entertainment according to the Dieng community is characterized by the gathering of many people in one place, spending money to buy something and food, the existence of objects that are seen, and one's social impression in society. Social impressions can reflect a person's socioeconomic strata. The more often you visit places of interest, the more you create the impression of a higher socioeconomic strata.

For sellers, with the activity of *ruwat rambut gimbal*, they can earn money. The number of people who come allows merchandise to get sold. Sellers tend not to care about the type and value of activities that are placed as objects of entertainment. *Ruwat rambut gimbal* event visitors from various regions grow the lodging business in the form of hotels, guest houses, and houses for rent.

The interest in preserving traditions is believed by certain members of the community. Older people, Javanese adherents, and local culture enthusiasts tend to preserve traditions and respect their ancestors. This interest is inseparable from the social status as a figure or informal leader in society. Interest in continuing to preserve these activities for fear of being cursed or cursed (Abadi and Soebijantoro, 2016:82-93).

Mastership of past knowledge including *kejawen* makes a person has a respected position, at least valued differently from other members of the community. This knowledge is reflected

in daily behavior by practicing ancestral values and teachings even though their religious status is listed as Islam in their ID Card (*KTP*). According to Suprayogo (2016), this kind of Islam or *abangan* by the community is called "*Islam KTP*". The practice of *kejawen* values is sought to be understood and practiced for their descendants, although the younger generation has a relatively low interest in ancestral values and teachings, and is more interested in things that are not in contact with traditional values and activities. According to Relin (2015:28), *ruwat* is carried out by all religious adherents who also believe in *kejawen*. Religion is seen only to regulate human problems in the world. While *kejawen* and *ruwatan* regulate the problems of the world and the afterlife.

The Banjarnegara Regency Government has made the *ruwat rambut gimbal* as an annual tourist event in Dieng, Bantur District, Banjarnegara Regency. As the local government's agenda, the government's mobilization is so intensive and extensive. Legality and government support including financing provide a strong impetus for the community to enliven the *ruwat rambut gimbal* rituals. Aspects of Islamic faith are ignored and emphasize aspects of cultural heritage. The presence of the Banjarnegara Regency leadership in the ritual of *ruwat rambut gimbal* legitimizes this activity regardless of the religion of the organizers and performers of *ruwat rambut gimbal*. According to Lelono (2015: 145-162) ancestors have been directed through tradition to future generations to preserve nature and the earth in various ceremonies at the individual, group, regional, and even state levels.

The factors that encourage and affect the implementation of *ruwat*

rambut gimbal on the organizers and performers include belief in ancestral spirits, anxiety about the children's fate, and traditions. Belief in ancestral spirits includes *kejawen* beliefs for respect for ancestral spirits and the wrath of ancestral spirits to a person or community. The ancestral spirit is a mystical figure who is respected from generation to generation. According to Koentjaraningrat (1984: 337-338), ancestral spirits in the context of *kejawen* rests on beliefs about death. People have a Kamarupa consisting of the body (*selira*) and desires. The body moves because of energy and spirit (*atma*), desire (*kama*), lust (*prana*), reason (*manas*), intelligence (*menasa*), and soul. When the body dies and the body begins to decay, the *atma*, *kama*, *prana*, *manas*, *manasa* and soul leave the body on the third day of death.

The ancestral spirits in this context are Kaledete and his wife Nyai Dewi Roro Ronce. Children with dreadlocks (*rambut gimbal*) are believed to be Kaledete's chosen children, who will then be giving a *ruwat* ritual to cut their *rambut gimbal* to be thrown into the water to the south sea. *Ruwat* is a must for parents of children and local traditional leaders. If the dreadlocks (*rambut gimbal*) are not cut by *ruwat*, the ancestral spirits can be angry whose form of anger is not known. According to Relin (2015: 17) people who believe in it do not dare to leave this tradition for the safety of their families who are experiencing *sukerta*.

By doing *ruwat rambut gimbal*, it is believed that the child will avoid calamity for the rest of his life. The upcoming calamity is a strong concern for parents and local residents whose children grow dreadlocks (*rambut gimbal*). The fate or future of children is believed to be determined by Kaledete

and not God even though they embrace Islam. The *ruwatan* ritual aims to provide instructions on how to maintain or care for something so that its condition becomes better or at least is well maintained (Relin, 2015:16-17).

Belief in tradition for the organizers and performers of ruwat is placed as an absolute attitude. The myth of Kaledete is believed to be passed down from generation to generation. According to Herusatoto (2019: 2), traditions can be formed because of the background of belief values that come from myths, among others. There is no reason or justification whatsoever for them not to do ruwat rambut gimbal. According to Suseno (2001: 12), belief is true if it can help to achieve peace, tranquility, and inner balance. This psychic condition is indicated by all the elements creating a harmonious unity of experience or between the elements being compatible (*sreg*). To carry out the ritual of ruwat rambut gimbal, everything is prepared ahead of time. The preparation includes the mental readiness of the child and his parents, tools, materials needed in the ritual, and maintenance of the infrastructure or the place where the ruwat ritual takes place. The implementation of ruwat rambut gimbal is a must for the Dieng community as a tradition. According to Grabum, tradition is a cultural aspect that is maintained and does not disappear in changing situations (Grabum, n.d.: 6-15).

From the interest of the community and the factors to implement ruwat rambut gimbal for Muslims, it can be considered from the fiqh aspect to formulate the ruwat rambut gimbal with Islamic value. According to Qardhawi (1997: 29-37) consideration is needed to avoid deviations. Jurisprudence fiqh plays an important role in (a) giving

consideration between the various benefits of various prescribed goodness, (b) giving consideration between various forms of damage, harm, and crimes that are prohibited by religion, and (c) providing consideration between benefit and damage, between good and evil when these two contradictory things meet each other.

D. CONCLUSION

Ruwat Rambut Gimbang in Dieng has been going on for a long time. This ritual has become a tourist activity and is an annual agenda for the Banjarnegara Regency Government. Public interest in the ruwat dreadlocks ritual is influenced by the urge to earn income, entertainment/tourism facilities, preserving traditions, and local government support. While the factors for organizers and performers are belief in ancestral spirits, the fate of children, and traditions without paying attention to Islamic values that they know as Muslims. Further research is needed on the ritual of *ruwat rambut gimbang* for Muslims and the need for a *ruwat* reconstruction that does not violate Islamic *aqidah*.

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