

Research article

## Reyog, Becekan, and Cangkrukan: Culture as an Architecture of Interreligious Harmony in Ponorogo, Indonesia

Isnatin Ulfah<sup>1\*</sup>, Luthfi Hadi Aminuddin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fakultas Syariah, Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari, Ponorogo, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis Islam, Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari, Ponorogo, Indonesia

\* [isnatinulfah74@uinponorogo.ac.id](mailto:isnatinulfah74@uinponorogo.ac.id)

### Abstract

This study examines how local cultural practices in Ponorogo, East Java province of Indonesia, namely Reyog, *Becekan*, and *Cangkrukan* function as forms of social architecture that support interreligious harmony and peacebuilding. Using a qualitative field research design, this study draws on in-depth interviews, participant observations, and thematic analysis to uncover how these cultural practices foster empathy and cooperation across religious differences. Data were collected from religious leaders, cultural practitioners, and village elders representing various religious groups who were actively involved in Reyog performances, *Becekan* activities, and *Cangkrukan* dialogues. These findings reveal that Reyog serves as a symbolic architecture of unity, integrating aesthetic, spiritual, and civic expressions through interreligious collaboration; *Becekan* serves as a reciprocal ethical architecture that strengthens economic solidarity and social empathy through acts of mutual assistance; and *Cangkrukan* operates as a dialogical architecture of tolerance, fostering interreligious understanding through informal conversations. Collectively, these practices form a dynamic cultural structure in which harmony is maintained by living traditions that continue to reproduce trust and togetherness. This research theoretically expands the cultural framework as a social architecture, positioning local wisdom as the foundation of pluralism and social cohesion in Southeast Asia. Practically, it highlights the importance of revitalizing local cultural values as a community-based peacebuilding strategy rooted in empathy, participation, and interreligious solidarity.

### Keywords

Becekan; Cangkrukan; Interreligious Harmony; Reyog; Social Architecture.

### Article history

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's religious diversity has long been a source of cultural richness and potential tension, and Ponorogo regency in East Java province of Indonesia exemplifies both dimensions. The regency is renowned for its deeply rooted traditions and interreligious coexistence, but it also experiences episodes of tension and conflict between religious communities. In Klepu Village, for example, relations between Muslims and Catholics have been strained by economic and religious competition. Local religious institutions, including Dewan Pastoral Paroki (DPP) [Catholic parish council], the Infaq Management Institute (LMI) [Islamic charitable organization], and the *Takmir* Board [mosque management body], each seek to expand their influence through community empowerment programs and economic assistance. While such initiatives are aimed at social welfare, they have evolved into symbolic contests for religious supremacy, shifting the locus of competition from theological debate to economic empowerment. Tensions are rising due to suspicions of Christianization and cases of religious conversion motivated by economic vulnerability. This development has sparked concern among external Islamic organizations, such as Pondok Modern Gontor (Islamic boarding school), Hidayatullah, and DDII Surabaya (the latter two are both Indonesian Islamic propagation organizations), whose arrival in Klepu is seen by locals as a catalyst for interreligious polarization. The subsequent issuance of a religious law prohibiting Muslims from greeting Catholics during Christmas, in response to Catholics refraining from Eid visits, has disrupted the long-standing tradition of communal visitation and hospitality. As a result, what was once a harmonious interreligious relationship has become fragile, illustrating how economic and doctrinal interests can undermine peaceful coexistence and foster latent conflict.

Scholarly works on interreligious harmony in Indonesia have emphasized the importance of local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) and cultural traditions in preserving social stability. Syakur and Khoiroh (2021) revealed that rituals such as the *Mbah Moni* ceremony in Surabaya embody inclusive spiritual values that foster harmony among different religious groups. Similarly, institutional efforts such as the Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB) have promoted tolerance through structured interreligious communication and cooperation (Dadan et al., 2026; Nurdin et al., 2021; Rokhmad, 2016). These studies align with broader perspectives on interreligious harmony and pluralism, which emphasize dialogue, mutual respect, and civic engagement as key mechanisms for sustaining peaceful coexistence (Keaten & Soukup, 2009; Moreau, 2025; Pratt, 2007; Rouméas, 2015; Waters, 2023). However, these studies

tend to focus on formal and institutional mechanisms, overlooking informal cultural practices that organically sustain harmony in daily life.

From the perspective of culture as social architecture, this limitation becomes significant, as culture fundamentally shapes how communities organize social relations, construct shared meanings, and inhabit both physical and symbolic spaces (Ghaleb & Juhari, 2024; Koç et al., 2016; Peponis, 2024). Cultural practices are not merely expressions of heritage but also function as living structures that guide interaction, cooperation, and coexistence within plural societies. Cultural frameworks influence social cognition and collective identity formation, determining how individuals perceive differences and build mutual understanding (Kitayama & Berg, 2024). Moreover, heritage-based practices and spaces act as repositories of collective memory, reinforcing continuity and social cohesion across generations (De Lourdes Luz & Dos Santos, 2004; Hessam & Sotoue, 2016; Vatan, 2021). In contemporary contexts, this architectural function of culture continues to evolve through the interplay of diversity and technological transformation, where social interaction is shaped both in physical and digital environments (Bansal et al., 2025; Borgmann, 2010; Larena & Larena, 2013; Seth et al., 2023).

There is limited scholarly exploration of how art, economic reciprocity, and communal gatherings, such as *Reyog* (a traditional masked dance-drama), *Becekan* (a practice of mutual financial gift-giving), and *Cangkrukan* (informal community socializing), function as indigenous systems of peacebuilding. Although studies on local wisdom demonstrate its role in conflict resolution and social cohesion, such as the *Tepung Tawar* ritual in South Sumatra (Alfitri & Hambali, 2013) and agrarian traditions that reinforce cooperation and environmental ethics (Handayani & Suparno, 2023; Syahrin et al., 2024), these works rarely connect local practices to a broader conceptualization of cultural architecture. Local wisdom has also been shown to strengthen moral education, social empathy, and community resilience (Atahau et al., 2022; Cotte et al., 2023; Susanto, 2025; Uyun et al., 2024), yet its role as a dynamic and integrative system that structures interreligious interaction remains underexplored.

Furthermore, while interreligious engagement has been widely discussed in institutional, educational, and familial contexts (Kruja, 2022; McCarthy, 2007), and in relation to sociopolitical challenges such as religious inequality and recognition (Hunowu et al., 2025; Varayilan, 2017), fewer studies have examined how everyday cultural practices function as informal yet effective mechanisms of interreligious dialogue and reconciliation. In many cases, local traditions, such as communal rituals

and shared festivities, provide organic platforms for interaction that reduce social distance and foster mutual trust at the grassroots level (Susanto, 2025).

The research gap, therefore, lies in understanding how everyday culture operates as a social architecture of interreligious harmony, particularly in contexts where religious tensions coexist with long-standing traditions of cooperation. By integrating perspectives from cultural architecture, pluralism, and local wisdom, this study positions Reyog, *Becekan*, and *Cangkrukan* not merely as cultural expressions but as structural mechanisms that organize social life, mediate differences, and sustain interreligious harmony in a living and dynamic way.

This article aims to explore how Reyog, *Becekan*, and *Cangkrukan* play important roles in creating interreligious harmony in Ponorogo. Building upon the framework of culture as social architecture, this study conceptualizes these practices not merely as cultural expressions but as structural mechanisms that organize social interaction, shape collective meaning, and sustain coexistence within a plural society (Ghaleb & Juhari, 2024; Kitayama & Berg, 2024; Peponis, 2024). This study offers a distinctive perspective by integrating artistic performance, economic reciprocity, and everyday dialogue into a single analytical framework of cultural peacebuilding. In contrast to prior studies that emphasize institutional and formal approaches to interfaith engagement (Nurdin et al., 2021; Rokhmad, 2016), this research highlights the role of lived culture as an organic and self-sustaining system of harmony embedded in daily practices. Each of these cultural practices brings something unique: Reyog represents collective identity and moral unity through its vibrant performances (Utami, 2024; Wijayanto et al., 2024); *Becekan* highlights the importance of reciprocity and mutual support among community members; and *Cangkrukan* demonstrates how everyday life fosters dialogue and tolerance.

Furthermore, by situating these practices within the broader discourse of interfaith harmony and pluralism, this study underscores how informal interactions, grounded in empathy, mutual respect, and shared participation, can function as effective mechanisms of dialogue beyond formal institutional settings (Dwijayanto & Rohmatulloh, 2018; Moreau, 2025; Pratt, 2007; Rouméas, 2015). By examining these practices, this study aims to demonstrate that the culture in Ponorogo functions as a self-regulating system, balancing faith, economy, and morality.

In addition, drawing on the concept of local wisdom, this research argues that traditions such as Reyog, *Becekan*, and *Cangkrukan* embody indigenous knowledge systems that foster social cohesion, moral responsibility, and community resilience

(Alfitri & Hambali, 2013; Susanto, 2025; Uyun et al., 2024). The authors argue that building resilience for peace is not just about institutional efforts; it also relies on the power of cultural expressions that encourage empathy, dialogue, and a strong sense of community.

Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by proposing an integrated model in which culture operates as a living architecture of interreligious harmony, structuring interaction, mediating differences, and sustaining peaceful coexistence through everyday practices.

## 2. METHODS

This study is a field research project that aims to examine how local cultural practices, namely *Reyog*, *Becekan*, and *Cangkrukan*, function as the *social architecture* of interreligious harmony in Ponorogo, East Java. The fieldwork was conducted between May and December 2024 in several multireligious areas, including Klepu Village (Sooko District), Sampung, and Badegan. A qualitative approach was employed to explore in depth the lived experiences of local communities and the symbolic meanings embedded in these cultural practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Uwe, 2009). Through this approach, the study seeks to understand how the people of Ponorogo interpret and embody values of harmony, tolerance, and solidarity in their everyday social life.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants, including religious leaders, cultural practitioners, and village elders (Marriam & Tisdell, 2016). Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure representation from both major faith communities, Islam, Catholicism, and Buddhism as well as from individuals actively engaged in *Reyog*, *Becekan*, and *Cangkrukan* activities. The informants participated in this study are presented using pseudonyms (e.g., Pak Slamet, a Muslim community elder; Maria, a Catholic resident; and Wayan, a Buddhist practitioner) to ensure confidentiality while maintaining contextual clarity. The field data were primarily obtained through in-depth interviews, which explored participants' views on the role of culture in maintaining interreligious relations, the challenges of religious coexistence, and the social meanings of traditional practices in building solidarity and tolerance. Each interview was conducted in situ, often following cultural activities such as *Reyog* rehearsals or community gatherings, to capture the social context of interaction. The interviews were complemented by field notes, documentation of cultural events, and participant observation conducted

during community gatherings, Reyog rehearsals, and interreligious social activities. In addition, the study utilized secondary data sources, such as scholarly articles, ethnographic reports, and community archives, to perform data triangulation and enhance the validity of interpretation.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report (Aminuddin et al., 2023; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through this analytical process, three main themes emerged: symbolic unity (through Reyog), reciprocal solidarity (through *Becekan*), and dialogical tolerance (through *Cangkrukan*). These themes were then interpreted within the conceptual framework of *Culture as Social Architecture, Interreligious Harmony and Pluralism*, and *Local Wisdom and Social Cohesion*. The integration of field data and theoretical reflection provides a comprehensive understanding of how Ponorogo's cultural practices shape a living and dynamic architecture of harmony, one that is rooted in empathy, shared experience, and community participation.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### ***3.1. Reyog as a Symbolic Performance of Unity***

In the religiously plural Ponorogo society, especially in the Sooko, Sampung, and Badegan districts, where Muslim communities coexist with significant Catholic and Buddhist minorities, Reyog art has a social meaning that goes far beyond the function of entertainment. Typically performed during village celebrations, cultural festivals, and communal rituals in open public spaces such as village squares, Reyog has been present as a cultural space that fosters a sense of togetherness, strengthens social relations, and maintains a balance between religious communities. Rather than referring to any religious doctrine, Reyog as a cultural tradition embodies shared communal values, such as cooperation, harmony, and respect for differences, which are lived by the community in their daily lives. Thus, Reyog becomes an effective social medium to revive the spirit of interreligious brotherhood.

The results of field interviews conducted in Klepu Village, Sooko District, in May 2024, show that Reyog performances are always a social moment that unites citizens, where the entire community, regardless of religion, were involved in the preparation

and implementation process. An informant, Pak Slamet, a Muslim community elder, explained:

*“Setiap kali ada pentas Reyog, semua warga ikut nyengkuyung. Yang Islam, Katolik, Kristen sama-sama kerja bareng. Ada yang nyiapke kostum, ada yang masak, ada yang jagong. Ora ana bedane, sing penting rukun.”* (Pak Slamet, interview, May 2024)

[Whenever a Reyog performance is held, all residents participate in *nyengkuyung* (collective support). Muslims, Catholics, and Christians work side-by-side; some prepare costumes, some cook, and others engage in *jagong* (socializing with guests). There are no distinctions; the priority is *rukun* (communal harmony)].

Another interview conducted in Sampung with Bu Maria, a Catholic resident, confirmed a similar perspective:

*“Reyog iku nggambarne urip masyarakat. Ono sing dadi barongan, warok, jathilan, kabeh beda nanging nyawiji. Kaya urip ning kene, agama beda-beda tapi tetep siji wong Jawa.”* (Bu Maria, interview, July 2024)

[Reyog depicts community life. There are those who become the *barongan*, *warok*, and *jathilan*; all are different yet they become one. Like life here, our religions are different, but we are still one Javanese people].

An additional perspective from Badegan, Wayan, a Buddhist resident further reinforced this pattern:

*“Nalika Reyog digelar, kabeh warga melu guyub. Ora peduli agamane opo, sing penting kabeh iso kumpul lan rukun bareng.”* (Wayan, interview, September 2024)

[When Reyog is performed, all residents join in *guyub* (communal togetherness). Regardless of their religious backgrounds, what matters most is their ability to gather and maintain *rukun* (social harmony) together].

From various interviews, it appears that Reyog has become a symbolic space for expressing social equality. Every citizen, regardless of religion, has the same opportunity to be involved, whether as a player, dancer, *gamelan* beater, or event committee. This collective process gives birth to natural social interaction, fosters mutual understanding, and strengthens interreligious social networks. In addition, the symbols in the Reyog performance, such as Warok, which represents moral strength, and Barongan, as a symbol of courage, are interpreted as a reflection of social life that demands cooperation and mutual respect for different roles. In other words, the narrative structure in Reyog becomes a social metaphor for the life of a pluralistic society, where differences are not seen as a threat, but as a unifying element.

Field findings reveal that Reyog art functions as a social architecture of harmony between religious communities in Ponorogo. Through these cultural practices, people

build a collective awareness that differences in beliefs are not a reason to distance, but a foundation to complement each other. Reyog presents a fluid and inclusive interaction space, where Muslims, Catholics, and Buddhist collaborate without prejudice. The values of cooperation and friendship that grow in each performance affirm that local culture can reduce social tensions and strengthen humanitarian solidarity.

Furthermore, Reyog has become a common cultural identity that transcends religious boundaries. It is not only a symbol of Ponorogo's distinctive art, but also a symbol of interreligious togetherness that links citizens in one big narrative: living peacefully in diversity. Thus, Reyog can be understood as a tangible form of *cultural architecture of interreligious harmony*, where culture is not just an aesthetic expression, but a social system that supports the harmonious life of the multireligious community of Ponorogo.

### **3.2. Becekan as a Social Cohesion Mechanism**

In the social structure of Ponorogo society, especially in multireligious areas such as Sooko, Badegan, and Sampung, the *Becekan tradition* occupies an essential position as a social mechanism that maintains relations between neighbors and interreligious communities. *Becekan* is typically conducted during life-cycle events, such as weddings, births, circumcisions, and house construction, and takes place within household and neighborhood settings. It refers to the tradition of donating, both in the form of money, groceries, and goods, when residents hold the event. This tradition is rooted in cooperation and mutual care, two primary values in Javanese culture that emphasize social solidarity over differences in beliefs.

In a society of adherents of different religions, *Becekan* becomes a social bridge that strengthens a sense of shared belonging. Giving and receiving donations is not just an economic act, but a symbolic action that affirms the emotional attachment between citizens as a community.

From interviews with informants in Sooko, Sampung and Badegan Villages, the view emerged that *Becekan* is a tradition that knows no religious boundaries. An informant, Pak Slamet, stated:

*"Kalau ada yang punya manten, lahiran, atau khitanan, para tetangga pasti datang. Ada yang nyumbang uang, bahan makanan, atau tenaga. Agama ora dadi alangan, sing penting bantu."* (Pak Slamet, interview, May 2024).



[Whenever there is a wedding, a birth, or a circumcision, neighbors will surely come. Some contribute money, food, or labor. Religion is not a barrier; the important thing is to help].

Another informant, Bu Maria, added that this tradition is not only limited to assistance but also serves as a social moment to gather and strengthen relationships:

*"Becekan iku ora mung soal nyumbang, tapi kesempatan ngumpul, ngobrol, lan guyub. Kadang nganti melek tengah wengi supaya acara meriah."* (Bu Maria, interview, July 2024)

[*Becekan* is not just about contributing, but an opportunity to gather, chat, and be together. Sometimes [we] stay awake until midnight so the event is festive.]

An additional perspective from Badegan is provided by Wayan, who emphasized the inclusiveness of the practice:

*"Di Badegan, becekan itu sudah biasa lintas agama. Saya sebagai orang Buda juga ikut nyumbang kalau tetangga Muslim atau Kristen punya hajatan. Mereka juga begitu ke saya. Jadi kami merasa seperti satu keluarga besar."* (Wayan, interview, September 2024)

[In Badegan, *becekan* is a common interfaith practice. As a Buddhist, I also contribute when Muslim or Christian neighbors have a celebration. They do the same for me. So, we feel like one big family].

In practice, interreligious participation is evident and inclusive of multiple faiths. Catholics and Buddhists help their Muslim neighbors who have celebrations, and vice versa; Muslims also attend Catholic, and Buddhist events without questioning ritual differences. *Becekan* is also often extended to other social activities, such as helping construct houses or places of worship across religious communities. In this context, *Becekan* functions as a social glue transcending religious boundaries. A young informant in Klepu, Rudi, asserted:

*"Sekarang Becekan itu bukan cuma pas manten. Kalau ada yang bangun rumah, warga lain ikut nyumbang pasir, batu, kayu. Kalau nanti dia punya hajatan, ya dibantu balik. Begitu terus, dadi kebiasaan."* (Rudi, interview, August 2024).

[Nowadays, *Becekan* is not only for weddings. If someone is building a house, other residents join in by contributing sand, stones, [or] wood. Later, when they have an event of their own, they will be helped in return. It goes on like that, becoming a habit].

From observations in the field, this tradition runs spontaneously without any coercion or formal regulation. The social system in *Becekan* creates a circulation of goodness that continues to circulate, strengthening *social trust* and a positive sense of

interdependence. In the context of multireligious societies, this mechanism has proven effective in maintaining interreligious closeness and preventing the emergence of social distancing due to differences in beliefs.

From the results of the field research, it can be concluded that *Becekan* functions as a social architecture of interreligious cohesion that operates naturally through the daily interaction of the Ponorogo community. This tradition is not just an economic activity, but an expression of human values and interreligious solidarity. Through giving and helping each other, people build a sense of togetherness that transcends religious boundaries, making social relations warmer and more inclusive.

*Becekan* fosters a collective awareness that human relationships are more critical than belief barriers. It contains the value of reciprocity, social responsibility, and respect for togetherness. Therefore, *Becekan* is a tangible symbol of how local culture functions as a social system that supports interreligious harmony. It demonstrates that togetherness does not always have to be built through formal dialogue, but can also grow from everyday practices, such as helping neighbors, donating to celebrations, and sharing sustenance, which are done with a sincere heart and mutual respect.

In other words, in the Ponorogo society, *Becekan* is a social language of love and solidarity, which makes religious diversity not a source of division, but a meeting space that enriches common life.

### ***3.3. Cangkrukan as a Dialogical Space***

In addition to Reyog and *Becekan*, *Cangkrukan* practices also have an essential role in shaping inter-religious harmony in Ponorogo. *Cangkrukan* comes from the word *cakruk*, which means patrol post or gathering place. In East Javanese culture, *Cangkrukan* refers to informal social gatherings, typically taking place in the evening in locations such as house terraces, roadside stalls (*warung*), coffee shops, or village halls, where people engage in casual conversation. Although it appears simple, this tradition functions as a space of informal dialogue where citizens of different backgrounds, religions, professions, and ages interact, share perspectives, and build mutual trust.

For the religiously plural people of Ponorogo, *Cangkrukan* serves as a "neutral social space", where everyone can speak openly regardless of status or belief. Through small talk in coffee shops or on the side of the road, an emotional bridge is created that reduces interreligious distance and strengthens social cohesion at the grassroots level.

The results of the interviews interviews conducted in Sooko, Sampung and Badegan during evening gatherings in November 2024 show that *Cangkrukan* is not only an activity to fill free time, but also a means of maintaining interreligious social relations. A resident informant, Bu Maria, recounted:

*“Biasane nek bengi wong-wong padha ngopi ning pos ronda utawa warung. Sing teka ya macem-macem, ana sing Islam, Buddha, Katolik. Ngobrol opo wae, ora ana sekat.”* (Bu Maria, interview, November 2024)

[Usually, at night, people drink coffee together at the security post (*pos ronda*) or small stalls (*warung*). Those who come are diverse; there are Muslims, Buddhists, [and] Catholics. [They] talk about anything; there are no barriers].

This kind of interaction creates a fluid social atmosphere, where citizens can talk about everyday things, from harvesting, schoolchildren, to religious issues, in a relaxed and open way. In the context of a society that has experienced interreligious tensions, *Cangkrukan* has become a natural means of cultural reconciliation.

Another informant, Pak Slamet, a community leader in Sooko, added:

*“Dulu sempat tegang gara-gara isu kristenisasi. Tapi lewat ngobrol di warung kopi, hubungan mulai mencair. Orang-orang jadi memahami kalau sebenarnya masalah itu karena salah paham.”* (Pak Slamet, interview, November 2024)

[Things were tense back then because of issues regarding proselytization (*kristenisasi*). But through chatting at the coffee shop, the relationship began to thaw. People came to understand that the problem was actually just a misunderstanding].

This shows that *Cangkrukan* functions as a social healing mechanism. In an egalitarian atmosphere, citizens can listen to each other, negotiate differences, and find common ground without needing a formal mediator.

An additional perspective from Badegan is provided by Wayan, who highlighted the inclusivity of *Cangkrukan* as a shared dialogical space:

*“Nek nang Badegan, aku sing Buddha yo kerep melu Cangkrukan ning warung kopi. Kancaku ana sing Islam lan Kristen, kabeh iso ngobrol bareng tanpa masalah. Saka kene aku kroso luwih cedhak karo tangga-tangga.”* (Wayan, interview, November 2024)

[In Badegan, I, as a Buddhist, also frequently participate in *Cangkrukan* at the coffee shop. My friends include Muslims and Christians; everyone can chat together without any problems. From this, I feel closer to my neighbors].

In addition, *Cangkrukan* also strengthens the social capital of the community. Familiarity built through casual conversation fosters trust and empathy, crucial in maintaining harmony in a pluralistic society. Based on field findings, *Cangkrukan* is the

most effective and natural social dialogue space in strengthening interreligious harmony in Ponorogo. People build honest and pressure-free interreligious communication through informal interactions in coffee shops, patrol posts, or yards. In this context, *Cangkrukan* serves as an architecture of cultural dialogue, where familiarity, humor, and mutual respect grow organically.

This tradition suggests that interreligious dialogue does not always have to take place in formal spaces with moderators or formal forums. Conversely, casual conversations in everyday life can be a stronger foundation for the growth of tolerance and mutual understanding. *Cangkrukan* shows that social harmony in Ponorogo is built not through significant concepts, but through simple practices rooted in local culture and community togetherness.

Ultimately, *Cangkrukan* is a tangible embodiment of culture as an architecture of interreligious harmony, a social space that unites differences, fosters familiarity, and strengthens a sense of shared humanity. It is a symbol that in Ponorogo, peace is taught and lived through meaningful daily habits.

### **3.4. Cultural Wisdom as the Social Architecture**

The findings of this study reveal that local cultural practices in Ponorogo, namely Reyog, *Becekan*, and *Cangkrukan*, function as dynamic forms of *cultural architecture* that sustain interreligious harmony and social cohesion. These practices embody the essence of culture as a living structure that organizes social relations, mediates diversity, and reinforces community values. As Peponis (2024) and Ghaleb & Juhari (2024) argue, architecture, understood metaphorically as the design of shared space, reflects the moral and social fabric of a community. In this context, Ponorogo's cultural traditions act as *architectural frameworks* through which pluralism and tolerance are enacted in daily life. Each practice, whether artistic, economic, or dialogical, functions as a social mechanism that transforms difference into unity and symbolic coexistence into tangible harmony.

The role of Reyog exemplifies how performance art can operate as a *symbolic architecture of unity*. The performative collaboration of people from different faiths, Muslim, Catholic, and Buddhist, demonstrates that cultural spaces can transcend religious boundaries through collective participation. This aligns with Pratt's (2007) and Rouméas's (2015) conception of *liberal pluralism*, where shared rituals and symbols foster equality and mutual recognition rather than doctrinal competition. The Reyog

stage becomes a microcosm of civic pluralism (Waters, 2023), where diversity is dramatized as interdependence, not division. Comparable forms of performative cultural integration can also be observed in other contexts, such as communal rituals in Bali, festival traditions in India, and collective performance arts in African societies, suggesting that artistic expression widely functions as a medium for social cohesion across cultures. Similarly, the cooperative ethos embedded in *Becekan* resonates with the principles of *local wisdom* (*kearifan lokal*), where traditional reciprocity sustains social trust and prevents social fragmentation. As Uyun et al. (2024) note, moral and cultural values transmitted through everyday practices strengthen community integrity and solidarity. The ritual of giving and receiving during *Becekan* thus represents a grassroots manifestation of civic pluralism and social empathy, bridging religious, economic, and cultural boundaries through acts of mutual support.

Meanwhile, *Cangkrukan* operates as a *dialogical architecture* that nurtures tolerance through informal conversation and communal presence. The inclusive nature of *Cangkrukan* gatherings, where villagers of different faiths engage in casual dialogue, illustrates the concept of *interreligious encounter* in its most organic form. This aligns with Keaten & Soukup's (2009) and Moreau's (2025) theories of *interreligious dialogue* that emphasize relational understanding over theological argumentation. In Ponorogo, harmony is not maintained through institutional forums or religious decrees, but through continuous, everyday interactions that reaffirm social bonds. This finding is consistent with Susanto's (2025) ethnographic study in Nglinggi Village, which highlights how traditions of *guyub rukun*, togetherness and mutual respect, serve as indigenous mechanisms of conflict prevention. Moreover, this form of informal interaction resonates with broader practices such as communal coffee gatherings (*ngopi*) and other dialogical social spaces found in various societies, where everyday conversation becomes a method for building trust, negotiating differences, and producing shared understanding. Thus, *Cangkrukan* represents a living embodiment of interreligious dialogue rooted in local wisdom, turning mundane sociality into a space of moral negotiation and peacebuilding.

Collectively, these three cultural practices show that the architecture of harmony in Ponorogo is both cultural and moral, sustained by shared rituals, reciprocal relationships, and dialogical engagements. They demonstrate that culture is not a passive repository of heritage, but an active *system of social design* that shapes coexistence. The interplay between local wisdom and pluralism reinforces the notion that peace is not imposed externally but cultivated internally within community life. This supports Kitayama & Berg's (2024) argument that social cognition is culturally

organized, people's perception of others and of themselves is shaped by collective practices and shared moral codes. In Ponorogo, *Reyog*, *Becekan*, and *Cangkrukan* are not isolated traditions but interlocking structures that perform the work of what Larena & Larena (2013) call *social architecture*, spaces that enable connection, cooperation, and continuity.

Furthermore, the findings contribute to the broader discourse on local wisdom as social (Alfitri & Hambali, 2013; Handayani & Suparno, 2023; Syahrudin et al., 2024). The reciprocity in *Becekan*, the tolerance embodied in *Cangkrukan*, and the symbolic unity of *Reyog* together form a multilayered system of community ethics that aligns with the principles of *interreligious pluralism*. This suggests that the sustainability of harmony in Ponorogo depends not on external regulation but on internalized cultural mechanisms. As Bansal et al. (2025) argue, the integration of diversity within urban or rural contexts requires organic social practices that balance difference with belonging. Similar patterns can be observed in contemporary practices such as community-based philanthropy, crowdfunding, and rotating savings systems (e.g., *arisan*), which likewise reinforce social trust and collective responsibility. The moral fabric of Ponorogo's people, shaped by *kearifan lokal*, faith, and shared heritage, operates as a resilient architecture that sustains peace amid plurality.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that culture functions as a living architecture of interreligious harmony in Ponorogo, where local wisdom, communal ethics, and artistic expression converge to sustain peaceful coexistence. Rather than merely preserving tradition, *Reyog*, *Becekan*, and *Cangkrukan* operate as interconnected social mechanisms that organize interaction, distribute social responsibility, and sustain trust across religious boundaries. *Reyog* constructs symbolic unity through collective artistic expression; *Becekan* reinforces economic reciprocity and social solidarity; and *Cangkrukan* enables continuous informal dialogue that reduces tension and builds mutual understanding. These findings directly demonstrate that interreligious harmony in Ponorogo is produced through lived cultural practices, not primarily through formal institutions or doctrinal negotiation.

In summary, the case of Ponorogo reveals that peace and tolerance are socially constructed through everyday cultural interaction. By integrating symbolic performance, reciprocal exchange, and informal dialogue, *Reyog*, *Becekan*, and *Cangkrukan* collectively form a coherent and sustainable architecture of interreligious

harmony. This study answers the research objective by showing that culture functions as an active system of peacebuilding, where harmony is continuously produced, negotiated, and maintained through lived practice. This culturally grounded model offers broader relevance for understanding how plural societies can sustain cohesion through locally embedded, participatory, and adaptive forms of social organization.

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