

THE PRACTICAL SENSE OF INTERRELIGIOUS HARMONY: SOCIAL DYNAMICS IN THE RUWATAN DESA TRADITION IN LUBUK SEBERUK VILLAGE

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Abstract

Indonesia's cultural diversity is both a source of national wealth and a potential ground for intergroup conflict. This study highlights the practice of interreligious harmony in Lubuk Seberuk Village, a community known for its religious and cultural pluralism. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using an interactive interpretive model. The findings indicate that harmony is sustained through a collective habitus embedded in everyday cultural practices. The Ruwatan Desa ritual plays a pivotal role as a space for social integration. Beyond its religious symbolism, this ritual reinforces trust, mutual recognition, and solidarity among interfaith communities. It reflects Bourdieu's concept of sens pratique, where individuals instinctively enact dispositions aligned with an ethos of harmony—not as a result of rational deliberation, but as an outcome of cultural memory and ongoing social interaction. The Ruwatan Desa demonstrates that local traditions can serve as effective instruments for fostering peace and interreligious coexistence in multicultural societies.

Keywords: *Ruwatan Desa, Sens Pratique, Interfaith Harmony, Multiculturalism, Cultural Rituals*

Abstrak

Kemajemukan budaya Indonesia merupakan sumber kekayaan sekaligus potensi konflik antarkelompok. Studi ini menyoroti praktik harmoni antarumat beragama di Desa Lubuk Seberuk, yang dikenal karena pluralisme agama dan budayanya. Dengan metode studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan dianalisis menggunakan model interpretasi interaktif. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa harmoni terpelihara melalui habitus kolektif yang tertanam dalam praktik budaya sehari-hari. Ruwatan Desa ini berperan penting sebagai ruang integrasi sosial. Lebih dari simbol keagamaan, ritual ini memperkuat kepercayaan, pengakuan timbal balik, dan solidaritas antar komunitas lintas iman. Ritual ini mencerminkan konsep sens pratique Bourdieu, di mana individu secara naluriah menjalankan disposisi yang selaras dengan etos harmoni, bukan hasil refleksi rasional semata, melainkan buah dari memori budaya dan interaksi berkelanjutan. Ruwatan Desa menunjukkan bahwa tradisi lokal dapat menjadi sarana efektif dalam membangun perdamaian dan koeksistensi antaragama di masyarakat multikultural.

Kata kunci: *Ruwatan Desa, Sens Praktis, Kerukunan Antaragama, Multikulturalisme, Ritual Budaya*

INTRODUCTION

This study explores how interfaith harmony is constructed and internalized in the daily life of the Lubuk Seberuk community, focusing on the role of social and cultural capital in shaping a communal *habitus* of harmony. Based on interviews, observations, literature, and documentation, the case study highlights how harmony becomes institutionalized over time. Data were gathered holistically (Khan, 2022) from government officials, religious leaders, and local residents.

In today's interconnected world, societies are becoming increasingly plural and multicultural. These changes affect not only demographics and cultural life, but also influence political, economic, and social dynamics (Mohamed Ghouse, 2022). While diversity is often seen as a source of strength and richness, it can also lead to tension, misunderstanding, and conflict, especially in intercultural interactions where managing perceptions, narratives, and engagement is crucial. Modern global society is marked by differences in ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and cultural backgrounds. This diversity is both inevitable and essential to global coexistence (Gaitho, 2022). As globalization connects more groups, new frameworks are needed to understand and navigate this growing plurality (Melidoro, 2020). Multiculturalism refers to the coexistence of different cultural identities within a society, while plurality highlights the presence of diverse groups with distinct worldviews, practices, and values (Arciszewska, 2023; Mazurkiewicz, 2020).

Indonesia is a clear example of multiculturalism and pluralism. With hundreds of ethnic groups, languages, and religions spread across more than 17,000 islands, managing this diversity remains a challenge. The national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), reflects an ideal commitment to pluralism. Yet, religious intolerance, ethnic tensions, and regional divides often strain intergroup relations. Sectarian conflict and communal violence highlight the difficulty of sustaining unity (Sopiyan et al., 2022). To address this, interfaith forums like FKUB (Forum for Religious Harmony) and religious leaders are often involved in conflict resolution efforts.

Research on FKUB's role in promoting interreligious harmony and conflict resolution is well-documented (Faqih, 2021; Humaizi et al., 2024; Purwandari et al., 2022). Faqih (2021) found that although FKUB was established on principles of justice and diversity, its programs often focus narrowly on worship permits, with less attention to community empowerment, tolerance, and countering radicalism. Humaizi et al. (2024) highlighted FKUB's use of digital literacy to promote religious moderation through two communication models: a linear model with FKUB as educator, and a participatory model shared via social media. Similarly, Purwandari et al. (2022) emphasized FKUB's role in uniting religious groups and resolving conflicts based on Pancasila and national values.

Studies also highlight the key role of religious leaders in fostering interreligious harmony (Amin et al., 2024; Khotimah, 2024; Majid et al., 2024). Amin et al. (2024) identified religious and traditional leaders as liaisons, negotiators, and mediators in managing interfaith relations. Khotimah (2024) emphasized their influence across social, educational, political, and economic spheres, particularly in Banyumas. Majid et al. (2024) noted that through inclusive approaches and interfaith dialogue, religious leaders serve as spiritual guides and conflict mediators amid belief and cultural differences.

Studies on inter-religious harmony in Indonesia generally still focus on institutional and formal approaches, the study of state policies and the role of religious leaders, as well as religion-based conflict resolution. Meanwhile, there have not been many studies that examine the contribution of local cultural practices or rituals, such as the village *Ruwatan*, in shaping the *habitus* of harmony in pluralistic societies. At the global level, the latest study of communal rituals has not been widely conducted. However, the study of Tibetan culture on the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism outlines the relationship between spiritual transformation, identity formation, and group imagination (Yang et al., 2025). In the study, the Dharma meeting, referred to as communal rituals, is described. Dharma encounters are understood to form the basis for collective consciousness that enhances group identity and belonging. This tradition can bring value to the knowledge of ritual practices that will keep individual and collective ownership in place (Yang et al., 2025).

This is different from the Caucasus people, who maintain the practice of circumcision as a meaningful practice producing life values (Iagafova, 2021; Jia, 2021; Musaeva & Solovyova, 2022). Local cultural practices, whether still practiced or currently being studied, serve as the national or

ethnic identity (Abdallah, 2022; Farnsworth et al., 2021; Iagafova, 2021; Jia, 2021; Musaeva, 2024; Ramírez, 2021). These practices are also being explored as a strategy to preserve cultural heritage and environmental sustainability. In Indonesia, the village *ruwatan* is one of the cultural practices that is preserved and performed. In addition, there are still many cultural practices that have maintained their originality while also adapting to contemporary contexts. One of the cultural practices in Kampar, Riau (one of the provinces in Indonesia), is the Siwang ritual as part of the Semai custom in Kampung Bukit Terang, Kampar, Perak (Jalaludin & Abdullah, 2020). The Grub Bah Lut group continues to perform the Siwang tradition at government and private events. However, it differs from the tradition of *ruwatan desa* practiced in Lubuk Seberuk Village. In addition, few studies have examined the contribution of local cultural practices, such as *Ruwatan Desa*, to shaping a *habitus* of social harmony.

Pierre Bourdieu (1972–1990) introduced the concept of *habitus*, defined as a system of cognitive and emotional dispositions shaped by repeated social experiences (Mary, 1987). *Habitus* enables individuals to think, feel, and act in ways that reflect underlying social structures. It is not consciously controlled but formed over time through interaction with one's environment (Bourdieu, 1977a). One study applying Bourdieu's concept explored how Christians relate to contemporary worship music, showing its connection to generational *habitus* (Benjamins, 2025). According to Bourdieu, *habitus* reflects lived reality and social history rather than abstract theory. It guides behavior, thought, and decision-making—often unconsciously (Ritzer & Goodman, 2003). He described this as *practical sense*, “a quasi-bodily grasp of the world... a feel for the game,” where individuals act appropriately without deliberate reasoning (Bourdieu, 1977b; Mary, 1987). In this way, *habitus* functions like a social instinct, shaped by one's cultural and social capital.

The fostering of harmony within a social field is shaped by the type and amount of capital an actor holds. Social capital enables cooperation through networks of trust, while cultural capital fosters mutual understanding through shared values (Ceci et al., 2020). These capitals help actors navigate social dynamics and influence collective outcomes. Harmony, in this view, emerges not from individuals alone, but from the alignment between their *habitus*, available capital, and the social field they inhabit.

In addition to Lubuk Seberuk Village, South Sumatra, the research site for this article, other areas in Indonesia also exhibit a *habitus* of peace, such as Nalen Hamlet in Watuagung Village, Central Java. The study in Nalen Hamlet found that the *habitus* of interreligious harmony can manifest organically, without external coercion, reflecting strong community autonomy in the formative process (Muhsin et al., 2024). However, the *habitus* of peace in Nalen Hamlet tends to be situational and is not rooted in the preservation of local cultural traditions passed down from one generation to the next. This contrasts with *Ruwatan Desa* in Lubuk Seberuk Village, embedded in Javanese cultural tradition, which has historical roots in the agrarian belief systems of the archipelago.

This article seeks to describe the cultural practice of “*Ruwatan Desa*” as part of the *habitus* of the Lubuk Seberuk Village Community, based on diversity. The practice of *Ruwatan Desa* in Lubuk Seberuk Village offers an insight into how this *habitus* can promote religious harmony. In addition, this article seeks to describe the form of collaboration of the Seberuk Village Community to maintain the *habitus* of *Ruwatan Desa*.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper explores how interfaith harmony takes root and thrives in Lubuk Seberuk Village, located in the Lempuing Jaya District of Ogan Komering Ilir Regency. Designed as an in-depth case study, the research employs a qualitative approach, allowing voices from the ground to shape the narrative. The study captures the intricate dynamics of communal life and religious coexistence through a combination of interviews, direct observations, document analysis, and literature review.

Interviews were conducted holistically (Khan, 2022), engaging a diverse group of informants, including provincial and district government officials, village leaders, religious figures, and community members. These interactions offered a layered understanding of institutional roles and lived experiences that sustain social cohesion.

Once collected, the data underwent interactive analysis, encompassing reduction, presentation, and conclusion-drawing techniques (Miles et al., 2018). This analytical framework empowered the researchers to engage deeply with participants' perspectives, unraveling the subtle cultural patterns and emotional nuances embedded in daily interactions. By employing an emic lens, the analysis remains grounded in the community's worldview, letting their beliefs, values, and realities speak with clarity and authenticity. The result is not just a descriptive account, but a resonant portrayal of harmony shaped from within.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Religious Life of Lubuk Seberuk Village

Lubuk Seberuk Village is located in the Ogan Komering Ilir area, South Sumatra, which historically and culturally is under the strong influence of the traditions and values of Palembang people. Due to its proximity to the center of the Palembang Sultanate and migration routes, its citizens, consisting of Javanese, Balinese, Lampung, and local ethnicities, adopt some of Palembang's customs, such as *Ngobeng* (the tradition of eating together) and *Sekapur Sirih* (dance of welcoming guests). The integration of Palembang culture into local practices in Lubuk Seberuk illustrates the cultivation of the *habitus* of interreligious and ethnic tolerance, which then becomes the practical sense of its citizens.

Cultural acculturation in South Sumatra, more specifically in Lempuing Jaya District, can be traced back to the government's transmigration initiatives in the region. In fact, the transmigration was not limited to South Sumatra Province, but also several provinces in Sumatra. Between 1905-1931, approximately 27,338 residents were moved to the island of Sumatra (Andriawan, 2019). This movement expanded significantly after 2004 (Sari, 2025), following the enactment of regional expansion, which certainly affects Lempuing Jaya District and its villages. Transmigration in Lempuing sub-district lasted from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, aiming to create new agricultural land (especially rubber) and improve the population's socioeconomic welfare. The transmigrants, both officially sponsored and spontaneous, came from Java and Bali, and settled through various phases of development periods (Repelita or *Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun* or Five-Year Development Plan) (Prasetyowati, 2024). These dynamics have contributed to the cultural and demographic heterogeneity of Ogan Komering Ilir Regency, including Lempuing Jaya District.

Lubuk Seberuk is one of the villages in Lempuing Jaya District with a heterogeneous society. Based on the village monograph and information from the secretary of Lubuk Seberuk Village, the people of Lubuk Seberuk Village consist of various religions (Islam, Christianity, Catholic, Hindu, and Buddhism) and ethnicities (Javanese, Balinese, Malay, Minang, Komering, and Ogan). The village provides houses of worship for four religions: a mosque, a church, a temple, and a vihara (Lubuk Makmur). Based on data from the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) Office of Lempuing Jaya District, the religious composition of the village is predominantly Muslim (90%), followed by Hindu (5.5%), Christian (2.4%), Catholic (1.6%), and Buddhist (0.1%), as seen in Table 1.

Table 1.
Population Data
Religious Affairs Office of Lempuing Jaya District Ogan Komering Ilir Regency 2014

No.	Village	Religious Adherents					Total
		Islam	Catholic	Christian	Hindu	Buddhism	
1	Lubuk Seberuk	6019	108	166	369	10	6672
2	Muara Burnai I	7289	-	356	15	-	7669
3	Muara Burnai II	8971	-	85	165	10	931
4	Lubuk Makmur	4032	81	69	7	17	4206
5	Sunagi Belida	5600	-	8	-	-	5608
6	Mukti Sari	1662	10	24	-	12	1708
7	Lempuing Indah	1094	10	4	5	4	1117
8	Tania Makmur	1532	13	15	514	-	2074
9	Rantau Durian I	6397	39	16	-	-	6434
10	Rantau Durian II	2567	39	126	1377	-	4109

11	Tanjung Sari I	2053	13	27	105	5	2203
12	Tanjung Sari II	2865	52	13	-	-	2930
13	Purwoasri	2065	-	-	-	-	2065
14	Sukamaju	1326	13	24	9	-	1372
15	Sukajaya	835	21	4	264	-	1124
16	Rantau Durian Asli	2750	-	-	-	-	2750
Jumlah		57035	355	940	2830	58	61218

Source: Religious Affairs Office of Lempuing Jaya District

However, researchers were unable to obtain the latest data on the religious demographics of Lubuk Seberuk Village in Lempuing Jaya District. However, the heterogeneity of the village appears to be reflected in the presence of the houses of worship representing five major religions, excluding Confucianism. The data is illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2.
Places of Worship Data in Lempuing Jaya District (2021)

No.	Desa	Islam	Kristen	Katholik	Hindu	Buddha
1	Lempuing Indah	6	0	0	0	0
2	Mukti Sari	7	1	0	0	0
3	Sungai Belida	22	0	1	0	0
4	Lubuk Seberuk	32	4	1	6	0
5	Muara Burnai II	27	0	0	0	0
6	Tania Makmur	2	1	1	2	0
7	Muara Burnai I	17	3	1	0	0
8	Rantau Durian II	6	2	1	14	0
9	Rantau Durian I	13	1	0	0	0
10	Suka Maju	4	1	0	0	0
11	Suka Jaya	3	1	1	1	0
12	Tanjung Sari II	3	1	1	0	0
13	Tanjung Sari I	5	1	0	1	0
14	Purwo Asri	5	0	0	0	0
15	Lubuk Makmur	11	0	0	2	1
16	Rantau Durian Asli	1	0	0	0	0

Source: Ogan Komering Ilir Regency BPS Data

In Table 2 above, out of the 16 villages, Lubuk Seberuk Village is the one that provides the most houses of worship. This data is closely related to Table 1, which shows that the village's population includes religious groups other than Islam, making Lubuk Seberuk one of the villages with such representation.

According to Mr. Nyoman Mudita, Secretary of Lubuk Seberuk Village, interreligious harmony in the village has been well-established and peaceful for decades. He noted that there has never been a communal conflict between religious groups, affirmed by Mr Handoyo confirmed the statement of the Secretary of Lubuk Seberuk Village (personal communication, September 1, 2019, updated June 5, 2025). Mr Handoyo recalled that when they settled in Lubuk Seberuk Village in 1979, the village was still empty land and wilderness. Then, the immigrants, primarily from Belitang, opened and worked on the land. Belitang is a sub-district in East Ogan Komering Ulu, one of the transmigration areas from the islands of Java and Bali. The relationship between immigrants of different religions and ethnicities has been well-established and harmonious. They are not only Muslims but also Christians, Catholics, Hindus, and Buddhists.

Interreligious cooperation in the village is actively practiced. This can be seen in the shared social service activities, such as mutual support during the construction of houses of worship. For example, when Muslims build a mosque or prayer room, non-Muslims contribute by providing labor or donating building materials. Likewise, when non-Muslims build their houses of worship, Muslims also offer physical and non-physical assistance. The statement was confirmed by the chairman of the Lempuing Jaya District Interfaith Forum (FSUB), Ustazd Jamaludin (Islam), accompanied by deputy chairman Handoyo Nono (Christian) and members Imam Royani (Islam), Mesrun (Buddhist), Kusmijan (Christian), in a meeting with researchers at the Lempuing Jaya District KUA Office (FSUB & KUA Lempuing Jaya, personal communication, July 30, 2019,

updated June 7, 2025).

The tradition of interfaith cooperation in Lubuk Seberuk Village has flourished harmoniously for decades. A key factor sustaining this coexistence is the mutual respect and admiration shared among followers of different religions. According to the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs No. 9 and No. 8 of 2006 concerning the Establishment of Houses of Worship, every religious group in Indonesia has the right to establish places of worship as long as they meet administrative and social requirements. In practice, however, the implementation of this regulation often faces challenges, particularly in areas where religious minorities encounter sociopolitical resistance or spatial limitations. Despite these barriers, in Lubuk Seberuk Village, Hindus are permitted to build personal shrines (*sanggah*) within their homes as an expression of religious devotion. This reflects a contextual adaptation of the right to religious freedom and place of worship, aligning with both the spirit of the regulation and the communal commitment to interfaith harmony. The acceptance of *sanggah* in private residences also illustrates how local *habitus* and mutual respect can serve as mediating forces that enable inclusive religious expressions even in the absence of formal religious infrastructure.

The tradition of visiting members of other religious communities during major celebrations, such as Eid al-Fitr, Christmas, Waisak, Nyepi, and others, has been practiced since they built Lubuk Seberuk Village. This sentiment was expressed by one of the elders or community leaders of the village, Mr. Sukro (Hindu), who has lived in Lubuk Seberuk since 1976. According to him, the interreligious relationship in the village remains harmonious, with no history of conflict. Mutual respect and appreciation are core values that they uphold to maintain religious harmony. For example, during Hindu observance of Nyepi, non-Hindus are not forced to follow the restrictions of Nyepi because Nyepi is known to be a tradition that is mainly practiced in Bali.

In community activities, inter-religious communities do not discriminate based on religion. For example, whether a Muslim, Catholic, Christian, Hindu, or Buddhist can be elected as a village head. One of the former heads of Lubuk Seberuk Village, I Nyoman Putu (now deceased), was an influential and respected community figure or *primus inter pares* (first among equals). He was of Hindu origin, playing a key role in uniting the community. Under his leadership, Lubuk Seberuk experienced significant progress, including the development of school buildings, madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, and places of worship (S. Sukro, personal communication, September 2, 2019, updated June 8, 2025).

Ruwatan Desa in Lubuk Seberuk Village

The *Ruwatan Desa* tradition is actually carried out by most of the villages within the Lempuing Jaya District. However, the high level of religious and cultural diversity in Lubuk Seberuk Village attracted the attention of researchers to explore how this tradition relates to interfaith harmony. The *Ruwatan Desa* tradition is understood as a village purification ritual similar to the *Ruwatan* tradition in Javanese-Malay culture. This tradition is carried out every 1st Muharram, or most Javanese people call it the night of *Satu Suro*. As a local tradition, *Ruwatan Desa* not only reinforces spiritual beliefs but also strengthens interreligious bonds and fosters communal harmony. In Javanese spiritual tradition (*kejawen*), *Satu Suro* holds deep symbolic meaning, often associated with cleansing and protection. Similar traditions are preserved by historical institutions such as the Surakarta Sunanate, the Yogyakarta Sultanate, and the Elders of Cirebon, where the ritual includes the ceremonial washing of heirlooms and palace objects.

At the *Ruwatan Desa* event, religious leaders gather and hold a joint prayer in the village hall with the community according to a predetermined schedule. Following entertainment for the villagers, the committee has a *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet) performance. According to religious leaders affiliated with the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FSUB), this tradition is local wisdom in the Lempuing Jaya District. The *ruwatan* tradition aims to avoid danger and misfortune, as well as obtain salvation (Rukiyah, 2017). In Javanese culture, the concept of *ruwatan* comes from a myth, "*kamasalah*" or "*salah kedadén*", referring to misfortune resulting from an improper or taboo relationship that violates ethical norms (Rukiyah, 2017).

The tradition is not unique to Lubuk Seberuk village, as the *ruwatan* tradition is also part of rituals practiced in other South Sumatra areas (Kusmadi, 2025). Given that the Sumatran region is rooted

in Malay cultural heritage, cultural acculturation is a common and accepted phenomenon. Evidence of acculturation is the recitation of Islamic prayers and multi-religious content reflecting a fusion of religious and customary elements. Another clear indicator is the active participation of individuals from different faiths, who contribute to the event as part of the broader village community.

The practice of *Ruwatan Desa* in Lubuk Seberuk Village has become the community's *habitus*, contributing significantly to the village's enduring social harmony. Due to its peaceful coexistence, this village has been designated a prototype of religious harmony in South Sumatra. The village meets the criteria of a harmonious village: religious heterogeneity, minimal conflict, and peaceful conflict resolution (islamsantun, 2022). Furthermore, the village's harmonious atmosphere is supported by the inclusive and tolerant attitudes of its residents, indigenous and migrants (Hamidah et al., 2018). Thus, *Ruwatan Desa* functions not only as cultural heritage but also as a mechanism for maintaining social integration and intercultural dialogue.

The *Ruwatan Desa* ceremony is a longstanding tradition passed down through generations in Lubuk Seberuk and its neighboring villages within Lempuing Jaya District, where the majority are of Javanese descent. The event begins with a prayer by religious leaders. Each religious leader prays in their respective places of worship. Muslims gather at the mosque/mushalla, Christians at the Church, Hindus at designated street corners, and Buddhists at the Vihara. The entire community enthusiastically supports the event, which culminates in a traditional *wayang kulit* performance. The *dalang* (puppeteer) plays a central role, leading the ritual with prayers and incantations rooted in Javanese tradition. After the ritual, the puppeteer continues the full performance, serving as entertainment and as a symbolic enactment of communal cleansing and renewal.

The *Ruwatan Desa* ceremony in Lubuk Seberuk Village generally follows a consistent structure, with some adjustments depending on the situation. It typically takes place between the 1st and 10th of Muharram. The process begins with the village officials forming a main organizing committee. It is responsible for coordinating all aspects of the event (see Figure 3 below). The committee oversees scheduling, reaching out to key figures, including religious, traditional, and community leaders, preparing food, and arranging entertainment.

Each group plays a specific role. For example, religious leaders lead prayers according to their respective faiths; traditional leaders provide input on the ceremonial procedures; community leaders offer reflections during the evening before the entertainment begins; and the residents contribute by preparing meals and organizing performances, such as traditional dances, music, and *wayang kulit*.

The overall implementation of *Ruwatan Desa* preparation can be summarized in five main stages. *First*, food offerings preparation includes *tumpeng rice*, fruit, and traditional dishes. *Second*, interfaith prayers and recitations include Quranic readings and *salawat*. *Third*, cultural performances consist of processions, traditional music, and local dances. *Fourth*, symbolic rituals reflect unity and collective gratitude through ceremonial presentation. *Fifth*, communal feasting and cooperation are where all participants share food to reinforce bonds and solidarity.

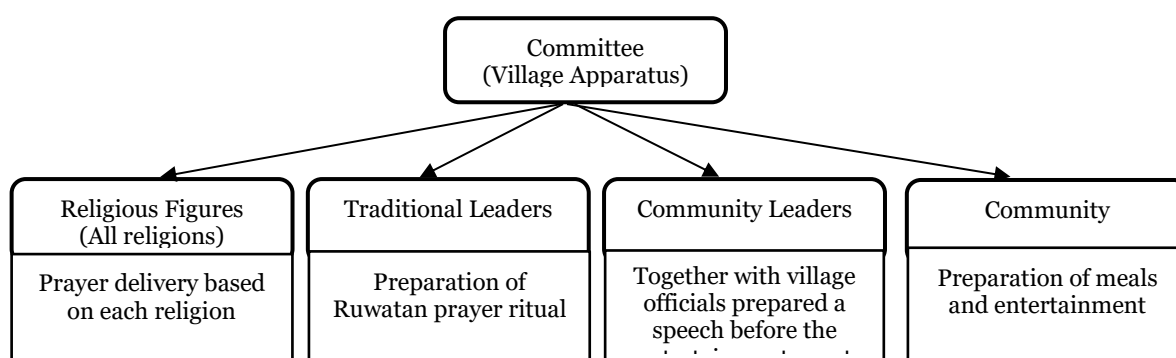


Figure 2.
Implementer of Village Ruwatan in Lubuk Seberuk Village (Source: researcher's data)

The *Ruwatan Desa* ceremony typically takes place from morning until evening (see figure 4 below). In its development, the *Ruwatan Desa* in Lubuk Seberuk Village has evolved. The most recent practice extends the events over two days, held between the 1st and 10th of Muharram.

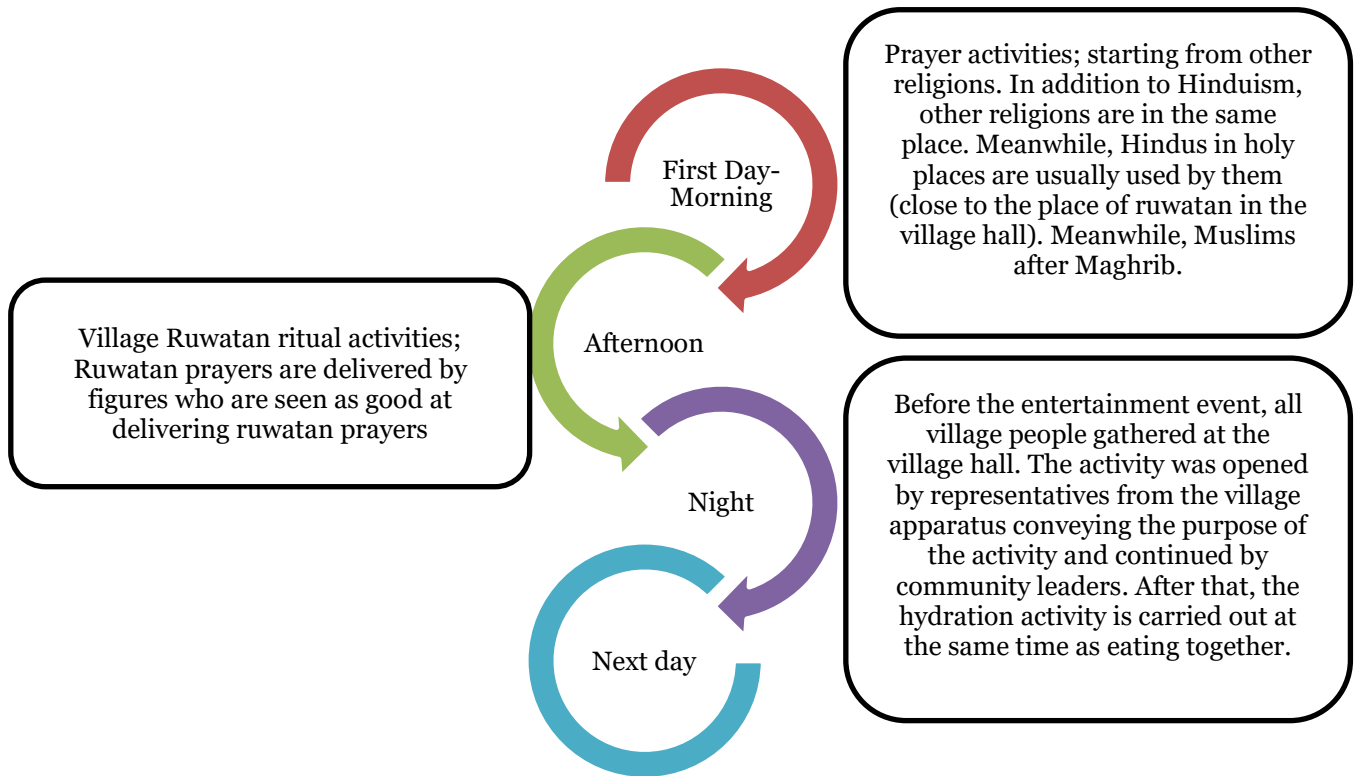


Figure 3.
Ruwatan Desa Process (Source: researcher's data)

In the past, the prayer rituals were conducted sequentially and inclusively, beginning with prayers according to Islamic teachings and continued by representatives from other religions. Over time, however, this structure has changed; Muslim prayer takes place on the first day, shortly after the *Maghrib* prayer (I. Rohani, personal communication, June 10, 2025). All other rituals, except for those Hindu community, are now conducted in a shared public space, typically in the village hall, serving as a central site for the *ruwatan* ceremony. This shared setting reflects the model of interfaith participation grounded in mutual respect and equal standing within a common social space.

The Hindu participants perform their prayers in the designated shrine commonly used for their religious activities. The location is not far from the main area of the *Ruwatan*. This separate space is not a form of exclusion, but a gesture of respect for the sacredness and a unique structure of Hindu rites. Thus, the organization of the prayer segment in the *Ruwatan Desa* not only symbolizes interreligious harmony but also exemplifies a flexible and dialogical social mechanism. This indicates that diversity is not forced into uniformity by the principles of tolerance and respect for the religious autonomy of each group.

In this context, the act of leading prayers holds both spiritual and symbolic importance. The community leaders appointed to recite prayers do not always come from formal religious authorities, but rather those who are socially recognized as having a certain *habitus*—that is, a pattern of disposition formed from experience and consistent appreciation of local culture—so that they are considered worthy and legitimate to lead the prayer.

Referring to Pierre Bourdieu's theory, these individuals hold what is referred to as *symbolic capital*, a form of power derived from the social recognition of their status, moral authority, and perceived spiritual capacity. Their ability to recite prayers, understand the symbolic meaning in the *ruwatan* tradition, and their social position in society make them dominant cultural actors in the *arena* of ritual implementation. In this arena, the act of prayer readings is not merely a religious activity,

but also an expression of symbolic capital that affirms their social standing and legitimizes their influence in communal cultural practices.

Thus, the recitation of prayers in *Ruwatan Desa* can be interpreted as a social practice that reproduces the structure of cultural power in society. Through this process, the symbolic capital held by certain figures not only strengthens their legitimacy in the eyes of the public but also contributes to the sustainable preservation of local cultural values. This ritual, therefore, is inseparable from the social reproduction mechanism that makes *ruwatan* an arena where values, power, and cultural identity are constantly negotiated, strengthened, and transmitted.

The initial series of *Ruwatan Desa activities* in Lubuk Seberuk Village—which began with remarks from village officials, moral messages by community leaders, and ended with a meal session together—not only functioned as a mere ceremonial part, but also reflected the social structure and dynamics of symbolic power at work in the ritual space. In the framework of Pierre Bourdieu's theory, this activity can be read as a form of praxis (*field*), which is a social space where various actors compete and work together using multiple forms of *capital* to maintain or improve their social position.

The remarks from village officials, for example, reflect the use of symbolic capital that comes from formal positions in government structures. Meanwhile, community leaders who convey moral messages utilize cultural capital in the form of mastery of local knowledge, customary values, and community beliefs, which are then converted into symbolic capital through collective recognition. In this context, who is given a space to speak and how they speak is a form of symbolic strategy in maintaining their social authority in the presence of the public.

The accompanying meal session showed how social capital—in the form of a network of relationships and attachments between individuals—is reproduced through the practices of local community *habitus*, such as the values of mutual cooperation, egalitarianism, and hospitality. The moment of eating together is not just the fulfillment of biological needs, but a form of social praxis that reflects the collective disposition (*habitus*) that has been formed through long historical experience. In this context, social relations are strengthened; social positions are subtly confirmed; and community cohesion is strengthened through non-explicit but highly effective symbolic mechanisms. Thus, the opening of the *Ruwatan Desa* is not only meaningful as the beginning of the event structurally, but also a cultural moment that mobilizes various forms of capital in the social arena, where values, power, and community identities are negotiated and reproduced.

From the series of *Ruwatan Desa*, the *habitus* aims to strengthen social relations between communities. In the procession, it is also clear to depict the role of actors in the village, such as religious leaders, traditional leaders, village heads, interfaith youths, women, and children. The participation of these social actors further strengthens the function of the *habitus* of *Ruwatan Desa* in Lubuk Seberuk Village can be a medium for preserving harmony between religious people and their levels of society.

While *Ruwatan Desa* has become a unifying force for many residents in Lubuk Seberuk and across Lempuing Jaya District, it does not enjoy unanimous acceptance. A segment of the community has expressed concerns regarding certain ritual elements of the event; specifically, the recitation of the *ruwatan* prayer by a *dalang* (puppeteer) and the use of incense. Some have viewed them as conflicting with Islamic monotheistic teachings of *tauhid* and potentially bordering on *kufir* (unbelief). Critics argue that spiritual invocations, especially those performed in public religious rituals, should be led by recognized religious authorities rather than cultural figures such as puppeteers, more so when these are accompanied by symbolic elements like incense, which they perceive as esoteric or syncretic.

From a cultural standpoint, the indigenous communities of Lempuing Jaya, particularly the Ogan and Komering ethnic groups, often view *Ruwatan Desa* as a tradition rooted in Javanese culture, introduced and maintained by Javanese transmigrants. For many locals, the adaptation to this practice represents a negotiation between respecting local customs and accommodating external cultural influences. This tension illustrates the slow and often complex process of cultural convergence in multi-ethnic regions.

Nevertheless, a significant portion of the population acknowledges the positive sociocultural

impact of *Ruwatan Desa*, especially in fostering interfaith dialogue and communal solidarity. In the context of Lempuing Jaya's ethnoreligious diversity, such traditions are seen by many as strategic instruments for peacebuilding. However, theological objections, particularly from segments of the Muslim population, continue to surface, reflecting the delicate balance between cultural expression and religious orthodoxy in pluralistic societies.

The *Ruwatan Desa* tradition in Lubuk Seberuk is not merely a ritual performance, but a living social institution that encapsulates profound symbolic and communal meanings. As a medium of interfaith harmony, the ritual functions as a shared space where diverse religious groups, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist, come together in a spirit of cooperation. Its open and inclusive format creates a neutral ground for fostering mutual respect, shared values, and collective participation.

Beyond its religious dimension, *Ruwatan Desa* also serves as a powerful instrument for reinforcing collective identity. Through annual participation, villagers from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds develop a shared sense of belonging rooted in local tradition. The ritual becomes a symbolic expression of pluralism, where diversity is not merely tolerated but actively integrated into the community's cultural narrative.

Moreover, *Ruwatan Desa* reflects an enduring commitment to preserving local wisdom. As a cultural heritage passed down across generations, the ritual embodies traditional knowledge and ancestral values. It demonstrates an ability to adapt to contemporary social realities, incorporating modern elements and broader participation, without compromising its essence. In this way, *Ruwatan Desa* stands as both a mirror of the past and a framework for shaping a cohesive, inclusive future.

Practical Sense of *Ruwatan Desa* as a Foundation for Interreligious Harmony

The *Ruwatan Desa* ritual in Lubuk Seberuk Village represents more than a traditional ceremony; it embodies a form of practical sense rooted in the *habitus* of interreligious harmony that the community has deeply internalized. Practices such as interfaith mutual assistance, collective participation in ritual preparations, and deliberation-based decision-making reflect actions guided not by formal instruction but by embodied and intuitive dispositions. These practices demonstrate that harmony in this context is not a mere normative ideal; it is a lived, automatic orientation toward inclusive coexistence.

The ritual's endurance illustrates how cultural capital, such as cooperation, respect for tradition, and communal ethics, has been transformed into functional social capital. This social capital manifests in dense networks of trust and collaboration among religious groups, which are not regulated through formal contracts but maintained through the repetition of socially meaningful practices that generate a shared sense of belonging and mutual obligation.

The seamless execution of the *Ruwatan Desa* ritual, where different religious groups conduct prayers in their respective places of worship before jointly participating in cultural performances, exemplifies what Bourdieu refers to as practical logic. Here, behavior arises not from explicit reasoning but from internalized cultural knowledge, allowing community members to act appropriately and in harmony within a pluralistic setting. This practical sense, as a bodily know-how or "feel for the game," becomes the invisible mechanism through which interreligious peace is continually enacted.

Within the social *field* of religious and cultural interaction, various forms of capital, particularly cultural and social capital, are deployed and exchanged. The cultural capital of the Javanese community includes ritual knowledge, symbolic practices (such as incense offerings and wayang kulit performances), and a strong sense of communal heritage. Meanwhile, social capital is evident in the networks of intergroup solidarity that enable sustained collaboration.

Actors such as religious and community leaders cultivate symbolic capital by embodying moral authority and interreligious respect. Figures like I Nyoman Putu exemplify individuals whose *habitus* aligns with pluralistic values, allowing them to strategically convert cultural and symbolic capital into mechanisms for reinforcing harmony. Their leadership is not imposed but emerges organically from the community's collective recognition and trust.

Symbolic rituals and material collaboration, such as the collective construction of houses of worship across religious lines, serve as tangible expressions of *habitus* in action. These acts are not calculated decisions; rather, they are outcomes of a practical sense that informs villagers' intuitive understanding that such cooperation is not only necessary but appropriate. Thus, interfaith harmony in Lubuk Seberuk is not imposed from above, but reproduced organically through dispositional practices embedded in everyday life.

This *habitus* is continuously reinforced and transmitted through leadership figures who embody the shared ideals of mutual respect, inclusivity, and togetherness. As Bourdieu argues, while structural conditions shape *habitus*, it also has the potential to transform those structures, especially when it is supported by adequate forms of capital and situated strategically within a particular social *field*.

CONCLUSION

The Ruwatan Desa ritual in Lubuk Seberuk Village exemplifies a culturally embedded mechanism for sustaining interfaith harmony and reinforcing collective identity within a pluralistic society. Far beyond its ceremonial aspects, this annual event operates as a dynamic site of social integration where diverse religious communities converge in shared cultural participation while maintaining the integrity of their respective beliefs. The persistence and broad communal support of this tradition, despite minor dissent, affirm its vital role in preserving local wisdom and fostering resilient interreligious relationships. Grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, this study interprets Ruwatan Desa as a manifestation of *habitus* that continuously shapes and is shaped by the lived experiences and dispositions of the local community. The ritual functions as a site where cultural, symbolic, and social capital are mobilized and exchanged among actors, allowing for the reproduction of social cohesion and symbolic authority. In this context, the ritual does not merely reflect an existing social order, but actively contributes to the ongoing construction of a shared sociocultural narrative rooted in tolerance, mutual respect, and sustainable peace.

Ultimately, Ruwatan Desa demonstrates the capacity of local cultural practices to mediate complex social realities, serving as both a symbolic and practical instrument for inclusive community-building in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic context. This research thereby underscores the importance of engaging local traditions as vital components in broader discourses of peacebuilding and cultural resilience. This study underscores the strategic relevance of cultural rituals, such as Ruwatan Desa, as non-formal yet powerful instruments in promoting interfaith harmony, social integration, and local cultural resilience. Consequently, policymakers at various levels, such as village, district, and province, should reconsider the epistemic boundaries between religion, culture, and governance. Integrating community-based cultural expressions into official development frameworks, particularly within peacebuilding and religious moderation programs, offers an inclusive model for plural societies.

Policies that support cultural revitalization, religious tolerance, and grassroots participation can be more effective when aligned with locally embedded practices and values. Furthermore, by acknowledging the role of symbolic capital and *habitus* in shaping harmonious coexistence, policies can shift from merely managing diversity to actively cultivating intercultural solidarity and social trust.

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