

Sedekah, Slamet, Sertifikat: Layered Halal in Javanese-Islamic Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

Halal is commonly framed as a technical-regulatory category concerned with certified food, cosmetics, and financial products. Yet in Java, and in Yogyakarta in particular, the boundary between the permissible (halal) and the impermissible (haram) has long been negotiated not only through fatwa and certification bodies but through local wisdom embedded in ritual, performance, and communal life. This article aims to examine how halal values are internalized, performed, and reproduced through Yogyakarta's Javanese-Islamic traditions, focusing on four interrelated domains: the palace ceremonies of Yogyakarta's Sekaten and *Sedekah Gunungan*, the *Slametan* (the communal ritual meal), Traditional Markets and Local Cuisine, and the Indonesia Halal Policy and Institutionalization of Local Wisdom in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. It asks how these local, ritual-based expressions of propriety relate to, and are increasingly layered under, the formal halal certification regime administered by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH). To answer this question, the study adopts a qualitative case study design combining documentary research with an ethnographic, insider (emic) standpoint: the author, a native of Yogyakarta with lifelong participation in the rituals discussed, integrates reflexive observation and informal, everyday conversation accumulated through years of residence with a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature on Javanese Islam, halal certification, and halal tourism. The findings show that Yogyakarta exhibits what can be termed an "emic halal" consciousness, a lived, syncretic sensibility that predates and continues to run alongside the formal certification regime, and that this consciousness offers both opportunities and challenges for contemporary halal governance, tourism branding, and cultural heritage preservation.

Keywords:

Halal; local wisdom; Javanese Islam; Yogyakarta.

Introduction

Between *Sedekah, Slamet, and Sertifikat*: Halal in an Era of Standardization

Indonesia holds the highest Muslim population worldwide which has led to Halal economic development becoming a central element of the country's national development strategy. The research area covers multiple sectors which include food and beverage operations and cosmetic production and fashion industry and financial services and tourism activities (Adinugraha & Shulthoni, 2024; Fauzi, 2023; Qizam et al., 2025). The academic and policy research on Halal in Indonesia mainly studies the economic and regulatory dimensions of Halal operations. The Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia - MUI) and the Halal Product Assurance Agency (Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal - BPJPH) provide Halal certification which consumers need to understand before they decide how much to spend on certified products (Ahmed et al., 2019). The international market competition of Indonesian Halal export products and tourist destinations exists through their ability to compete on a global scale (Rasyid & Hatta, 2025). The research provides vital insights about Indonesian Halal operations yet scientists face a danger of studying Halal only through legal systems which would prevent them from understanding how Muslim communities in Indonesia practice their faith. The

literature base contains vital resources but it creates a risk of viewing halal as an administrative legal document which lacks connection to the cultural environment where most Indonesian Muslims practice their religion.

Anthropologically, however, halal is better understood as a broader ethical and cosmological category that governs not only what may be eaten but how food, offerings, and communal life are properly conducted. This is especially visible in Java, where centuries of interaction between pre-Islamic Hindu-Buddhist and animist traditions and successive waves of Islamization produced a distinctive religious style that scholars have variously described as syncretic, acculturative, or a “temporary truce” among divergent orientations (Beatty, 1999; Geertz, 1960; Woodward, 1989). Given that Yogyakarta is the location of the Yogyakarta Sultanate (Kasultanan Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat) and is widely known as a protector of Javanese court culture, it provides an excellent opportunity to explore how Halal values can be integrated into the local traditions and wisdom of the community instead of being externally enforced upon them (Arrahman & Yanti, 2022; Kuncoroyakti, 2018).

Fiqh, Fieldwork, and the Missing Middle Ground

Existing scholarship, however, leaves a significant gap. Most academic and policy research on halal in Indonesia examines its economic and regulatory dimensions, treating halal primarily as a certification outcome rather than as a lived religious and cultural practice, which risks reducing halal to an administrative category detached from the cultural environment in which most Indonesian Muslims actually practice their faith. At the same time, a rich anthropological literature on Javanese Islam, from Geertz's classic typology of *abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi* orientations through Woodward's and Beatty's competing accounts of syncretism, and extended by historians such as Ricklefs, Dijk, Pranowo, and Stange, has theorized in detail how Islamic and local Javanese elements interact, yet this literature has rarely been brought into direct conversation with halal studies specifically (Beatty, 1996, 1999; Dijk, 2013; Geertz, 1960; Maulana, 2018; Pranowo, 1991; Ricklefs, 2006; Stange, 2009; Woodward, 1989). A growing body of halal tourism research recognizes local wisdom as a resource for branding halal destinations, but generally stops short of asking what halal itself looks like when it is lived, materially and communally, rather than merely certified (Adinugraha & Sartika, 2022; Adinugraha & Shulthoni, 2024; Arrahman & Yanti, 2022; Fischer, 2011; McGuire, 2008; H. Utami, 2011). Nor has this topic been approached from the reflexive, insider standpoint that recent anthropological method calls for, in which a researcher's own lived participation in a religious community is treated as a legitimate source of ethnographic insight (Ahimsa-Putra, 2012; Clifford & Marcus, 2010).

The anthropological study of Javanese Islam has long been shaped by the debate between Clifford Geertz's classic typology of *abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi* religious orientations and later critiques offered by scholars such as Mark Woodward and Andrew Beatty. Geertz described Javanese religion as a layered synthesis in which Islamic elements coexist with, and are often subordinated to, older animist and Hindu-Buddhist substrates, with the communal ritual meal known as the *slametan* positioned as the core integrative ritual of the *abangan* variant (Geertz, 1960). Woodward challenged this reading, arguing that Javanese religious practice is better understood as a coherent, internally Islamic mystical tradition (Sufism) in which local idioms are vehicles for, rather than dilutions of, Islamic meaning (Woodward, 1989). Beatty, in turn, proposed a more processual and locally attentive account, describing the *slametan* as a site of a “temporary truce” among divergent religious orientations rather than evidence of a single unified worldview, a reading later revisited by Maulana in an explicit comparison of Geertz's and Beatty's positions (Beatty, 1996, 1999; Maulana, 2018).

Beatty's ethnographic elaboration of this “temporary truce” is worth dwelling on briefly, because it speaks directly to the question of halal addressed in this article. In his detailed account of a Banyuwangi *slametan*, Beatty shows that participants of markedly different religious orientation are able to sit at the same ritual meal and derive different, even incompatible, meanings from the same dishes and prayers, without the event collapsing into conflict or requiring doctrinal agreement (Beatty, 1999). What holds the occasion together, in his account, is not shared belief but shared participation in a correctly conducted, properly provisioned meal.

This observation anticipates the argument developed later in this article: that the propriety, and by extension the halal status, of food in Javanese ritual life is secured relationally and performatively, through correct communal conduct, rather than through prior doctrinal consensus among participants.

Historians of Javanese Islamization complicate the picture further. Ricklefs described the pre-modern religious landscape of Java as a mystic synthesis in which Islamic identity, Sufi mysticism, and continued respect for local spirits coexisted without contradiction for ordinary Javanese Muslims, a synthesis that only began to fracture into more polarized categories, at what Ricklefs calls the historical “birth of the abangan” under the pressures of colonial-era religious reformism (Ricklefs, 2006). Dijk similarly emphasizes that the historical spread of Islam (*dakwah*) in the archipelago relied heavily on existing indigenous cultural forms as vehicles of transmission rather than replacing them outright, while Pranowo documents how rural Javanese communities actively construct and reconstruct what counts as Islamic tradition through everyday practice rather than simply inheriting it from religious authorities (Dijk, 2013; Pranowo, 1991). Stange extends this picture into the modern *kejawan* (Javanist mystical) movements, showing that the negotiation between Javanese and Islamic identity remains an active, unfinished project rather than a historical relic (Stange, 2009).

Toward a Lived Halal: Aims and Questions of This Study

This article therefore asks two related questions, first, how are halal aspects expressed, negotiated, and reproduced through Yogyakarta's local wisdom and traditions as documented in the existing scholarly literature; and second, how does this documentary picture align with, complicate, or deepen what an insider-researcher observes and experiences in everyday participation in that same cultural world? The article is structured as a qualitative case study that combines documentary research with ethnographic reflexivity, intended to consolidate current scholarship, ground it in lived cultural texture, and generate a research agenda that can guide further, more systematic fieldwork in Yogyakarta.

The article applies a cultural-anthropological approach to study this subject while also building upon the expanding field of halal research which includes tourism and marketing and Islamic economics studies. The research field of halal tourism has expanded to include studies from Setanggor, Lombok, and multiple Javanese regions which show a regional development trend (Adinugraha & Sartika, 2022; Adinugraha & Shulthoni, 2024; Arrahman & Yanti, 2022; H. Utami, 2011). The research shows that local traditions which used to be seen as irrelevant to halal management now serve as essential elements which validate and market halal tourism locations. The research approach in this article follows Ahimsa-Putra's recommendation for anthropologists to study active religious practices which believers of a religion personally experience (Ahimsa-Putra, 2012).

Halal as Vernacular Translation: The Argument

This article does not attempt to adjudicate the Geertz, Woodward, nor Beatty debate. Instead, it treats the debate itself as evidence that halal-related conduct in Java cannot be read off from formal *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) alone; it must be situated within a layered field of meaning in which cosmological purity (*slamet*, safety or well-being), social harmony (*karukunan*), and Islamic permissibility (halal) frequently overlap and reinforce one another. Local wisdom, in this sense, functions as a vernacular translation mechanism, it takes normative Islamic categories such as halal and haram and embeds them within pre-existing frameworks of ritual propriety, communal obligation, and cosmic balance, producing practices that are experienced by their participants as simultaneously Javanese and Islamic. This pattern recurs across Java beyond the specific case of the *slametan*, studies of the *rasulan* harvest-thanksgiving tradition, of broader processes of Islamic-Javanese cultural acculturation, and of ecologically embedded local wisdom in Hindu-Javanese-influenced settlements such as Cetho Hamlet all describe local custom as a carrier of ethical content that is continuous with, rather than opposed to, Islamic norms (Ali Ikhsan et al., 2018; Laili et al., 2021; Sartini et al., 2023).

Methods

This article adopts a qualitative case study design (Yogyakarta as the bounded case) that integrates two complementary strands of data generation, documentary research and ethnographic reflexivity. The documentary strand consists of a systematic thematic review of peer-reviewed journal articles, ethnographic monographs, and institutional/policy sources concerning Javanese Islam, local wisdom, and halal governance, selected according to their direct relevance to Yogyakarta or closely comparable Javanese localities. The ethnographic strand consists of the author's own reflexive observation and informal, unstructured conversation accumulated over years of lived participation in Yogyakarta's ritual, communal, and market life, used here not as a substitute for structured fieldwork but as a supplementary, experience-near layer that helps to contextualize, corroborate, and occasionally complicate the documentary record. This combination is commonly described in qualitative methodology as an ethnographic-documentary approach, documentary sources establish the wider scholarly and historical record, while ethnographic reflexivity grounds that record in the texture of lived practice as it is actually experienced by a participant-member of the community under study.

This design carries several limitations that should be stated explicitly. First, because the ethnographic strand rests on the observations and recollections of a single author, the account is inevitably shaped by that author's particular social position, generation, family background, and religious orientation within Yogyakarta's Muslim community, and cannot be assumed to represent the full range of perspectives held by other residents. Second, the informal conversations drawn upon in this article were not subjected to member-checking, the practice of returning interpretations to research participants for confirmation or correction, which is widely regarded as a key criterion for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research, as a result, the interpretations offered here reflect the author's own reading of these exchanges rather than a validated, shared understanding with the interlocutors involved (Lincoln et al., 1985). Third, and relatedly, findings grounded in one individual's lived experience cannot be generalized to Yogyakarta's Muslim community as a whole, which is itself internally diverse in terms of religious orientation, generation, class, and neighborhood context; the ethnographic material in this article is therefore best read as an illustrative, situated perspective that complements the documentary record, not as evidence of a uniform or majority local viewpoint. These limitations do not invalidate the insider standpoint adopted here, but they do mean that the study's conclusions should be treated as a starting point for further, more systematically triangulated fieldwork rather than as a settled empirical account.

To make the integration of these two strands transparent and, as far as possible, replicable, this article follows an explicit analytic hierarchy rather than treating documentary and reflective material as equally weighted or freely interchangeable. The documentary corpus was treated as the primary evidentiary base: sources were first thematically coded, following the general procedure of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006), into the four empirical domains examined in this article, and every substantive claim presented as an established finding is grounded in, and traceable to, this coded documentary record. The reflective, ethnographic strand was then integrated into this coded structure following the logic of data triangulation set out by Denzin, in which two distinct sources of data bearing on the same phenomenon, here, the documentary literature on Yogyakarta's Javanese-Islamic traditions and the author's own reflective, lived observation of that same cultural world, are read against one another to assess where they converge and where they diverge, rather than being merged into a single, undifferentiated account (Denzin, 2017). Convergence, where the author's lived experience matched a pattern already established in the documentary record, was treated as strengthening confidence in that pattern and is used in the text to add descriptive, experience-near texture to an already-documented finding. Divergence, where lived experience appeared to complicate, extend beyond, or sit uneasily against the documented account, was not resolved in favor of either source by default; instead, such points are flagged explicitly in the text as open tensions between documentary and lived accounts, and are treated as questions for future, more systematically triangulated fieldwork rather than as settled findings.

Critically, the reflective strand was not used to generate freestanding interpretive categories independent of the documentary record: where a pattern was noticed only in personal experience and could not be checked against any documented source, it is identified explicitly as a reflective observation rather than presented as an established finding. This procedure, documentary evidence as the evidentiary backbone, reflective observation triangulated against it and clearly labeled wherever it converges, diverges, or stands alone, is intended to make visible, and therefore assessable, precisely where the article's insider standpoint shapes its interpretations, addressing the risk of unexamined subjectivity that reflexive, insider-positioned research is otherwise vulnerable to.

Results and Discussions

Yogyakarta's Sekaten and Sedekah Gunungan

The Special Region of Yogyakarta holds a unique place within Indonesia. As the location of an active royal court, the region retains a dense concentration of Javanese cultural practices, many of which are associated with Islamic teachings (Kuncoroyakti, 2018; Putri & Siswadi, 2024). The Yogyakarta Sultanate was founded in the mid-1700s; its ceremonies are often based upon Islamic beliefs and commemorations, particularly those of the Prophet Muhammad (Septyaningrum, 2016). Furthermore, Yogyakarta is a popular destination for tourists of various interests, including those interested in Islamic and halal tourism; the local government has promoted the region's halal industry (Arrahman & Yanti, 2022). One of the region's most important ceremonies is the Sekaten Ceremony, which is held within the Yogyakarta palace to honor the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. This ceremony is seen as a foundational example of the Islamic acculturation of the Javanese people. The ceremony culminates in the Grebeg Maulud procession, during which large structures made of rice and agricultural goods, called *gunungan*, are carried from the palace to the Grand Mosque, and then distributed to the people (Daryanto, 2015; H. Utami, 2011). Receiving a portion of the *gunungan* is believed to bring blessings; the construction of the *gunungan* itself is seen as an act of charity that follows Islamic teachings (Kuncoroyakti, 2018; Pratisara, 2021).

From a halal-studies perspective, the Grebeg Maulud *gunungan* is significant precisely because its permissibility is never in question: it is constructed entirely from unambiguously halal agricultural produce, distributed as a form of communal charity, and consumed as a source of spiritual rather than merely nutritional value. In other words, the ritual encodes halal consumption not as a certification outcome to be verified but as an assumed baseline within an economy of blessing. Analysts of the ritual communication of the Grebeg and Sekaten ceremonies note that the rituals serve to communicate a variety of messages: *dakwah*, the legitimization of the king, and social integration among the various religious groups within the city of Yogyakarta (Kuncoroyakti, 2018; Rahmawati & Yasir, 2024; Zahrah et al., 2025). These analyses indicate that the ritual, which adheres to halal requirements, functions as a unifying force for the city's residents rather than as a policing mechanism of the religious boundaries between them. Putri and Siswadi analyze the ritual in the context of the nation-building narrative of Indonesia, seeing the ritual as a reflection of the vision of Ki Hajar Dewantara for the nation (Putri & Siswadi, 2024). Similarly, Pramusinto and Wahono and Khadafi and Harahap note the ritual's role in maintaining cultural identity in the face of globalization and the commercialization of Indonesian tourism (Khadafi & Harahap, 2024; Pramusinto & Wahono, 2020). These perceptions of the ritual align closely with Luthfi's discussion of the ritual within the context of Islam Nusantara, noting that permissibility within the ritual is determined by the ritual itself rather than by any document-based verification of the ritual's permissibility (Luthfi, 2016). This dynamic, as will be discussed in later sections of this article, is being supplemented by formal certification of rituals like Sekaten within Indonesia, albeit in an uneven fashion across the country.

Slametan

Outside of the palace grounds, the *slametan* ritual meal is one of the most widespread expressions of Javanese religiosity. The *slametan* is a ritual meal that is performed to mark life-

cycle events, harvests, and other moments of transition within the community. In the villages surrounding Yogyakarta, for instance, *slametans* are performed during rituals like *merti dusun*, *nyadran*, and *wiwitan*. Ethnographic and religious studies of these rituals indicate that the *slametan* is a ritual space in which elements of Islam and Javanese tradition are fused together. The *slametan* traditionally includes elements of Islamic practice, such as the recitation of the Qur'an, *tahlil*, and prayers, alongside Javanese practices of neighborliness (*guyub rukun*) and communal efforts (*gotong royong*) (Geertz, 1960; Maulana, 2018; Woodward, 1989). Similar harvest rituals, like the *rasulan*, involve similar elements of Islamic and Javanese traditions (Laili et al., 2021; Sartini et al., 2023). Furthermore, studies of Islamic-Javanese cultural acculturation indicate that these feasting rituals serve multiple purposes: to express gratitude to God, to promote social cohesion within the community, and to implicitly require that the food consumed during the ritual is halal, ensuring the ritual's spiritual purpose is fulfilled.

Crucially, the food served at a *slametan* is expected, as a matter of unstated but firm custom, to be halal and to be prepared and shared according to norms of ritual cleanliness and proper intention. Because the *slametan* is fundamentally a mechanism for producing communal safety and blessing (*slamet*), any perceived impurity in the food offered would be understood to compromise not just individual piety but the collective well-being the ritual is meant to secure. In this sense, halal in the *slametan* functions less as an external checklist than as an internalized precondition for the ritual's spiritual efficacy, a point that the historical accounts of Ricklefs and Dijk help to explain: because Islam was historically transmitted through, rather than against, existing communal ritual structures, the ethical seriousness that once attached to pre-Islamic feasting was carried over and re-anchored in Islamic terms of halal propriety and religious intention (*niat*), rather than being replaced by an entirely new framework (Dijk, 2013; Ricklefs, 2006).

Traditional Markets and Local Cuisine

In the past, traditional Yogyakarta meals and market foods have been distributed on the principle of community trust rather than through any certificates. Studies on halal certification of these local products prove that in cases when they receive formal halal certification, it acts not as a tool to overcome the issues of perceived impurity but rather works as a means for adding value. It assures modern consumers, enhances the market reach, and strengthens marketing of local food products, although it introduces new costs and hassles for small producers (Fauzi, 2023; Rusdan & Najwa, 2025). This confirms the conclusion made by Ahmed in his comparative research on Muslim countries, indicating that willingness to pay for halal certified products is influenced both by the level of trust to the certification process and by the understanding of religious obligation (Ahmed et al., 2019).

Recent empirical research on small-scale food producers elsewhere in Indonesia lends further support to this reading. Oemar conducted a survey-based study of micro and small food enterprises in West Java, where they found that most producers already had a reasonably strong awareness of halal principles and genuinely valued halal food production. Yet many had not registered for formal certification. This was not because they doubted the propriety of their own products. Rather, they saw the registration procedure as complicated, costly, or bureaucratically unclear, especially compared with the informal trust they already had with their existing customers (Oemar et al., 2022). This finding supports the interpretation offered here, for many small producers, the practical barrier to certification is procedural rather than ethical. The food is already, in the producer's and community's own understanding, unambiguously halal. Traditional Yogyakarta vendors selling *gudeg*, *jajanan pasar*, and other market foods are, in principle, now within the scope of this expanding mandate. Even so, many continue to operate, as they long have, on the basis of communal reputation alone.

A 2025 study using the analytic network process examined halal certification barriers among Indonesian MSEs. Its findings support this procedural, rather than doctrinal, account of resistance to certification. Fathoni identify three main barriers preventing Indonesian micro and small enterprises from obtaining halal certification, financial constraints, regulatory complexity, and limited awareness (Fathoni et al., 2025). They find that three interventions are most likely to

increase uptake, reducing certification fees, simplifying bureaucratic procedures, and expanding targeted education programs. None of these barriers concerns the substantive halal status of the food itself. All of them concern the practical accessibility of the verification apparatus layered on top of it. This distinction matters for how Yogyakarta's traditional food economy should be read. Low certification rates among *gudeg* and *jajanan pasar* vendors are best interpreted as a symptom of procedural friction within the formal system. They are not evidence of ambivalence about halal propriety within the local food culture itself. As this article has shown, that local food culture already regulates itself through other, older mechanisms.

This dynamic between Javanese traditions and Islamic elements within the *slametan* ritual reflects a broader tension within Indonesia's halal industry. Local food systems in Indonesia are based upon wisdom traditions that implement and understand halal logic in ways that are appropriate for their communities. In contrast, the national halal certification system uses a standardized logic that is suitable for the certification of foods that are distributed to a broad and diverse market (Qizam et al., 2025). Within Yogyakarta, for example, regional government policies on the halal industry indicate that the region has not implemented any halal-specific regulations of its own. Instead, they rely upon the regulations of the national government but promote Yogyakarta's unique cultural heritage as the basis of their halal tourism industry (Arrahman & Yanti, 2022).

Indonesia Halal Policy and Institutionalization of Local Wisdom

Yogyakarta is one of the places mentioned in the talks about Indonesia's halal tourism along with Lombok and Aceh as it includes Islamic heritage sites, halal food, and Javanese Muslim cultural events including Sekaten (Adinugraha & Shulthoni, 2024; Hennida et al., 2024). Research in the governance of halal tourism in Indonesia has shown the existence of the gap in formulating halal tourism policies as they are generally coming from national and regional level administrations with no significant involvement of either local communities or custodians of local wisdom (Adinugraha & Shulthoni, 2024; Bazin et al., 2025; Syamsurrijal et al., 2023). This local, relationally anchored model of halal propriety stands in instructive contrast to the globalized halal market Fischer describes in his study of Malay Muslim consumption in London and Malaysia, in which halal increasingly functions as a standardized, state-authorized label detached from any particular community's face-to-face trust networks and instead verified through audit, logo, and supply-chain documentation (Fischer, 2011). Yogyakarta's ritual and market-based halal practices have not been replaced by this global logic, but they are increasingly layered underneath it, as national certification requirements, tourism branding strategies, and international halal-market competitiveness goals extend into domains, such as neighborhood food stalls and palace ceremonies, that were never designed around the audit-based verification Fischer describes.

The existing gap has direct implications that affect Yogyakarta. Halal tourism programs at the village level in other parts of Indonesia, such as Setanggor village in Lombok, demonstrate that the adoption of halal values can be done in steps without dismantling the identity of local communities. One way of how local practices like ancestor grave pilgrimage, recital activity (*yasinan*), and local music (*gendang beleq*) could be incorporated in halal tourism practice is where it was the people's initiative to incorporate halal value to their practices rather than the imposition of such customs from outside parties (Adinugraha & Sartika, 2022; H. Utami, 2011; Widiawati & Fitriyani, 2020). The same phenomenon is found in other places, such as in Lombok with the emergence of Islamic tourism in Lombok and halal tourism opportunities of Nusa Tenggara Barat and its impact on the community's livelihood in Aceh after the establishment of halal tourism development there (Bazin et al., 2025; Gumanti et al., 2025; Syamsurrijal et al., 2023; Wahyuni & Rahmawati, 2021). Research on the rural tourism development in Yogyakarta has shown that sustainable rural tourism development can only be made possible based on existing local wisdom and traditional practices (Patriadi et al., 2015; Vitasurya, 2016; Widjaja, 2021).

Applying this lesson to Yogyakarta suggests that the region's halal tourism competitiveness depends less on retrofitting Javanese court and village traditions to fit a generic halal-tourism template, and more on recognizing that many of these traditions, including Sekaten,

Grebeg Maulud, and the *slametan*-based village rituals practiced across the region, already articulate a coherent, locally legitimate halal sensibility that can be foregrounded rather than reengineered. Drawing the four domains together, this article proposes the concept of emic halal to describe the lived, internally generated sense of dietary and ritual propriety that operates within Yogyakarta's Javanese-Islamic traditions, as distinct from the ethic, standardized halal defined by certification bodies. The term deliberately echoes Ahimsa-Putra's call for an anthropology of religion attentive to how practitioners themselves experience and articulate their own tradition, rather than one that measures local practice primarily against external textual or legal norms (Ahimsa-Putra, 2012).

First, emic halal is relational rather than purely individual, permissibility is judged partly through the trustworthiness of the person preparing or offering food, a neighbor, a market vendor with a known reputation, a royal court performing *sedekah* by the event of Sekaten and Grebeg Maulud's *gunungan*, rather than solely through an external document. This relational quality is visible across every domain examined here, from the palace's ritual guarantee of the *gunungan*'s propriety to the informal vendor trust that continues to govern most everyday food purchases in Yogyakarta's traditional markets, a pattern that my own recollections of market shopping, offered reflexively rather than as systematic data, consistently reinforce (Kuncoroyakti, 2018; Pratisara, 2021; Rusdan & Najwa, 2025). Second, emic halal is cosmologically integrated: halal status is bound up with broader Javanese concerns for social harmony (*karukunan*), safety (*kaslametan*), and correct intention (*niat*), rather than functioning as an isolated legal-technical category (Beatty, 1999; Maulana, 2018; Woodward, 1989). Third, emic halal is performative and pedagogical: halal-consistent ethics are transmitted through ritual participation (Sekaten, *slametan*) as much as through formal religious instruction (Daryanto, 2015).

This three-part characterization of emic halal can also be read as a specific, food-centered instance of what McGuire calls lived religion, a mode of religious practice that resists containment within institutional doctrine and instead emerges through embodied, everyday, and often improvised practice (McGuire, 2008). Understood this way, emic halal is not a deviation from, or a folk simplification of, formal fiqh; it is simply what halal looks like when it is lived rather than merely legislated, produced through the accumulated texture of ritual participation, market relationship, and communal memory rather than through a single authoritative text or certificate.

The coexistence of emic halal and the formal BPJPH/MUI certification system is not necessarily antagonistic. As the literature on halal food certification and halal tourism policy in Indonesia suggests, formal certification is most readily embraced by local communities when it is understood to reinforce, rather than replace, pre-existing local wisdom-based notions of trust and propriety (Fauzi, 2023; Qizam et al., 2025). For Yogyakarta, this implies that halal governance and cultural heritage policy would benefit from more deliberate coordination, heritage preservation programs for Sekaten, Grebeg Maulud, and village ritual traditions could be explicitly linked to halal-tourism branding, while halal certification outreach for small and traditional food producers could be designed to build on, rather than override, the communal trust mechanisms that already regulate local food propriety (Adinugraha & Shulthoni, 2024; Gumanti et al., 2025; Rusdan & Najwa, 2025).

These findings also point toward a concrete policy opportunity. Indonesia has a free, self-declare halal certification pathway known as SEHATI (Sertifikasi Halal Gratis). It was designed specifically to lower the financial and procedural barriers (Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal, 2026; Fathoni et al., 2025). This pathway is well suited to the kind of small, trust-based food producers discussed in this article. Targeted SEHATI outreach could be extended to Yogyakarta's traditional market vendors and household-scale producers of *gudeg*, *jajanan pasar*, and other heritage foods. This would let formal certification build on existing communal trust networks instead of replacing them. In this way, the coordination this article has called for, between emic halal and the formal BPJPH/MUI system, could be put into practice.

Conclusion

This article has argued that halal aspects in Yogyakarta are not confined to the certificates issued by MUI and BPJPH but are deeply embedded in local wisdom and tradition, expressed through palace ceremonies such as Sekaten and Grebeg Maulud's *gunungan*, communal rituals such as the *slametan*, and the everyday moral economy of traditional markets and cuisine. Recognizing this emic halal consciousness offers a more anthropologically grounded foundation for halal governance, cultural heritage policy, and halal tourism development in Yogyakarta than a purely regulatory-economic framing can provide.

These conclusions should be read in light of several explicit limitations. First, this article rests on a single-author autoethnographic standpoint: the reflective, experience-near material woven throughout the analysis reflects one researcher's particular social position, generation, and religious orientation within Yogyakarta's Muslim community, and was not, and could not be, checked against the perspectives of other community members. Second, the study did not incorporate triangulation with other informants; the informal conversations drawn upon in earlier sections were not subjected to member-checking, meaning the interpretations offered here remain the author's own reading rather than a validated, shared understanding confirmed by the interlocutors involved. Third, the study's scope is limited to a single case, Yogyakarta, chosen for its unusual density of living Javanese-Islamic court culture; this bounded-case design was appropriate for the exploratory, theory-generating aims of this article, but it means the concept of emic halal proposed here has not been tested against other Javanese or Indonesian localities and should not yet be treated as generalizable beyond the setting in which it was developed.

These limitations point toward a concrete agenda for future research, one that can operationalize the aim, stated at the outset of this article, of generating a research agenda to guide further, more systematic fieldwork in Yogyakarta. Future studies should, first, conduct structured, multi-informant fieldwork, using semi-structured interviews and, where appropriate, focus group discussions, with a purposively diverse sample of Yogyakarta residents spanning different religious orientations (*santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi* backgrounds), generations, and neighborhoods, to test whether the emic halal consciousness identified here is widely shared or varies systematically across these groups. Second, future work should incorporate member-checking, returning provisional interpretations to research participants for confirmation, correction, or elaboration, to address the validity limitations inherent in the single-author reflective approach adopted in this article. Third, comparative case studies extending this framework to other Javanese localities with different religious and political histories, such as Surakarta, Cirebon, or Banyuwangi, would allow researchers to assess whether emic halal is a distinctly Yogyakarta phenomenon tied to its status as a sultanate, or a broader pattern across Javanese Muslim communities. Finally, future research should examine emic halal longitudinally, tracking how the balance between locally lived halal practice and formal BPJPH/MUI certification shifts over time as Indonesia's mandatory certification regime continues to expand into small-scale and traditional food economies.

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