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**THE CULTURAL EVOLUTION OF LOCAL ISLAMIC VALUES ON THE  
MULUDAN TRADITION IN CIREBON: A MEMETICS PERSPECTIVE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The *Muludan* is a tradition conducted by the Royal family in Cirebon Sultanate on the third month of the Islamic calendar (*Rabi' al-awwal*) to mark the celebration of the prophet Muhammad's birthday. Thousands of people from some places participate in this tradition. This paper is aimed to elaborate the cultural evolution theory (memetics) introduced by Richard Dawkins which is used to interpret the Muludan tradition as a meme. The role of the agent will be considered as a vector, not an actor. In the meantime, the *Muludan* can be defined not only as a religious ritual but also as a cultural tradition that has been practiced by the local people for hundred years. The tradition has a system of inheritance such as values, beliefs, behaviors, knowledge, passed down through cultural processes within the scope of the population and the environment. The conclusion is that the meaning behind the Muludan tradition believed by people, so that it develop day by day. They believe that they would gain God blessing (*barakah*) and Shafa'at to practice the Muludan ritual.

**KEYWORDS:** *The Muludan tradition, religious values, Richard Dawkins, Memetics, Cirebon*

**INTRODUCTION**

Mawlid marks the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. The event is marked by public gatherings of Muslims. At these meetings religious leaders make speeches about the life of the Prophet. Stories are told about different aspects of the life of the Prophet, his birth, childhood, youth and adult life. The most important part of Mawlidis focusing upon the character of the Prophet; on his teachings, sufferings, and how he forgave even his most bitter enemies. Muslims think about the leadership of the Prophet, his bravery, wisdom, preaching and his final triumph over the Meccan Muslims. Those Muslims who celebrate this festival do so joyfully. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religions/islam/holidays/miladunnabi.shtml>, 2009). Derived from the trilateral Arabic root *w-l-d*, *mawlid* means "birth". Al-Mawlid al-Nabawi al-Sharif, for example, refers to the twelfth day of Rabi' al-awwal of the Islamic calendar, believed to be the day of the prophet Muhammad's birth, and celebrated by Muslims as a holiday marked by popular festivities and state ceremonies (John L. Esposito, 1995:79).

In the Islamic literature, being derived from the root *w-l-d*, the word 'mawlid', which have lexical meanings of birth/giving birth, birth time and birth place, has almost always been used on the purpose of indicating Prophet Muhammad's birthday. In this context, mawlid ceremony in its broad sense, denotes certain activities of the meetings in order to celebrate the

day of 12th Rabi-al-Awwal, which is accepted as the birthday of the prophet of Islam (Karaduman, 2016:1). Mawlid, also spelled Mawlud, Milad or Muludan in Cirebon to commemorate the birthday of a holy figure, especially the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. Kadaruman explains that the word *mîlâd*, in Turkish, on the other hand, connotes the birth of Jesus Christ (2016:1).

Former Grand Mufti of Egypt Ali Gomaa said that “commemering the birth of the Prophet is legally based and commonly observed, as it is one of the matters which increase the love of our Prophet in the heart of poeple, children, and grandchildren. According to Islamic tradition, animals, tress, and even inanimate objects like mountains showed love for Prophet Muhammad, and he showed love for them as well. Celebrating the birth of Prophet Muhammad is a mean for Muslims to express this love and connect themselves to the life, message and character of the “Best of Creation”, as he is know (Jafar Reynold, 2017).

The Prophet Muhammad is honored in Indonesia and other Islamic nations across the world because of his ability to found Islam while overcoming intense hardships. For the case of Cirebon, the festival of Muludan to commemorate the birth of Prophet integral with the tradition and culture of the palace, and it indicates that the activity becomes part of the cultural strategy in marketing tourist products in Cirebon. The event of Muludan requires the presence of a public and festive, thus creating a local identity and attract the attention of visitors. As John L. Esposito says that people go to mawlid for different reasons – commercial, social, recreational, charity, or religious. The infirm and the disabled seek blessing and hope for healing. (1995:81).



*Egyptians celebrate the birth of Prophet – Five Photos.com*

The study of mawlid in Cirebon using document review and field research. Data were obtained from the documents and it was classified in terms of the following:

(1) The literature research. In this case the author investigates literatures p.e. journals that co-relates with celebration the mawlid in Cirebon which has relation to social-culture, particularly the contemporary culture. By this approach, the author can track the origin and the cultural evolution in celebration of mawlid which will be analyzed using memetics theory.

(2) Field Research. After literature research completed, the field research conducted. This research uses techniques of data collection and observation. In this study, observation needed to be able to understand the process of interaction in the celebration of mawlid in Cirebon in its own context. The result is setting description from object research, activities involved and the interpretation from the perspective of those who are involved in the research object observed.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Erman Harun Karaduman (September 2016) studied about mawlid entitled “The Royal Mawlid Ceremonies in the Ottoman Empire (1789-1908)” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History at the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences of İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, Ankara. He analyzes the royal mawlid ceremonies in the Ottoman Empire which are conducted by the state in the 12th day of Rabi-al-Awwal (the third month in the Islamic calendar) of each year representing the birthday of Prophet Muhammad. Along with the religious content of the ritual, the mawlid ceremony is actually one of the fundamental practices of the state protocol (*teşrifât*).

On the other hand, Deny Hamdani studied (2012) on the trend of Muslim monarch in the elaboration of mawlid performance to demonstrate their piety and power in order to gain their legitimacy in his article about “Cultural System of Cirebonese People: Tradition of Muludan in the Kanoman Kraton” on Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences (2012), Volume 4, No. 1, January-June, page 11-22. Its finding suggests that religion tends to be shaped by society rather than society is shaped by religion. The muludan tradition is capable of creating meaningful connections between the imperial cult and every segment of Cirebon people other than those Islamic modernists and Islamists who against it in principle.

Mohamad Yusuf (2015) writes his thesis on “Ritual and power: A Case study of the Muludan Ritual in the Kanoman Sultanate” at Gadjahmada University in 2005. His thesis published on AL ALBAB - Borneo Journal of Religious Studies (BJRS) Volume 2 Number 1 June 2013, page 19-31 titled “When Culture meets Religion: The Muludan Tradition in the Kanoman Sultanate, Cirebon, West Java”. His thesis is based on a fundamental question about whether any relationship between practicing the Muludan ritual and seeking power by the Kanoman Sultanate. The result shows that there is a socio-cultural relationship between the Sultan and the people during the event of the Muludan ritual. Political power, the Royal family aims to gain through conducting the Muludan tradition, does not significantly happen.

This research can be differed from the articles above is aimed to elaborate the cultural evolution theory (memetics). Richard Dawkins is the pioneer of memetics which is used as a tool to analyze the Maulid tradition which could be defined not only as a religious ritual but also as a cultural tradition that has been practiced by the local people for hundred years. The Muludan tradition as a culture has a system of inheritance.

## THE MAWLID IN ISLAMIC HISTORY AND THE MULUDAN TRADITION IN CIREBON

The history of the annual birthday celebration (mawlid or maulid) of revered persons in Muslim communities goes back to the early period of Islam when Muslims started holding sessions in which poetry and songs were composed to celebrate the birthday of the prophet Muhammad. Presently, Muslims worldwide celebrate the birthday of the Prophet (*mawlid an-nabi*) annually. For the Sunni, the Prophet's birthday is on the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal (the third month of Islamic calendar), but for the Shi'a it is on the seventeenth. The celebration is considered one of the most popular holidays in the Muslim world. For many Muslim countries, the Prophet's birthday is a nonworking holiday, especially for government offices. Although there are cultural differences in the ways people in different Muslim countries celebrate the anniversaries of holy persons, all birthday celebrations encompass spiritual, religious, social, and economic components (El-Sayed, 2015:710). In Islamic history, the earliest celebrations conducted on the occasion of the Prophet's birthday are encountered in the era of Fatimid Empire (910-1171), mostly in Egypt. Associated with the rise of wealth under their dominance over both Egypt and North Africa, Shi'ite Fatimid Caliphate began to place a great emphasis on religious festivals. Nico Kaptein, in his intensive research on the origins of mawlid ceremonies, called *Muhammad's Birthday Festival*, dates the last Fatimid resource which does not include birthday celebration of the Prophet to A.H. 415 and he assumes this date as an almost accurate *terminus ante* (1993: 23-24 in Karaduman, 2016:2).

Mawlid celebrations conducted in the period of Fatimid Dynasty are not formed as open to public. On the contrary, they are performed only with the participation of the caliph, high state officials, notables and religious officials. In Fatimid Empire, mawlid festivals –as distinct from other religious festivals- included the rite of caliph's short march and distribution of candy to the religious officials. The rough systematics of these ceremonies is as follows: At first, from morning to midday, trays of dessert –being the Chief Judge (*Kâdi 'l-kudât*) and the Head of the Religious propagation (*Dâi 'd-duât*) in the first place- are distributed to the Qur'an readers (*kurra*) and the preachers (*hatîb*) and the other religious functionaries in the 12th day of Rabi-al-Awwal. Following the noon prayer of the caliph, the Chief Judge and the other officials go to al-Azhar mosque and after a recitation of Qur'an performed here, they leave the mosque and take the road to the protocol place, called *manzara*. Meanwhile, the governor of Cairo goes *manzara* earlier in attempt to keep order of the ceremony and the caliph participates in the protocol with his cortege. The ceremony begins with a recitation of Qur'an and, after that, the preachers of al-Anwar, al-Azhar and al-Aqmar mosques consecutively read sermons. Lastly, the caliph salutes the attendee and the official ceremony finishes in this manner. (Nico Kaptein, 1997:13-15 in Kadaruman, 2016:15).

It is observed that Fatimid Empire holds mawlid ceremonies not only for Prophet Mohammed but also for his family Ali, Fatma, Hasan and Huseyn (*ehl-i beyt*). Hence the tradition of mawlid celebrations originally derives from Shi'ite principles. Primary purpose of Shi'ite Fatimid Empire's arranging mawlid ceremonies is –via praising rite of Prophet Muhammad's family- fundamentally attracting notice to the fact that Fatimid caliphs are

successors and tutelars of the family. Thus it can be claimed that despite of their religious content, from the beginning of eleventh century, mawlid ceremonies are instrumentalized with the aim of providing political legitimacy. Subsequent to that Salahuddin al-Ayyubi terminates the existence of Fatimid Empire, birthday celebrations for the family members of the Prophet are prohibited and moreover, mawlid celebration becomes an apparatus of Sunni propaganda by following states. (Nico Kaptein, 1997:67). The tradition of mawlid celebrations begins to spread rapidly over broad regions in the collapse period of Fatimid Dynasty and it becomes popular especially among Sunni states. Furthermore, some Sunni scholars totally ignore Fatimid predecessors who initiate the practices of mawlid celebrations, whereas today, the approved fact is that mawlid ceremonies are created by Fatimid Empire. At this point, Kaptein implies that these Sunni scholars intend obscure the heterodox roots of the celebration deliberately (1997: 69-73).

After Fatimid Empire, the tradition of mawlid celebrations prominently continues in the reign of Muzaffar al-Din Kokburi (d. 1232), who is the governor (*atabeg*) of Arbil Province, a brother-in-law of Salahuddin al-Ayyubi. The order of mawlid festivals during this period is simply as follows: Before the mawlid, Kokburi has high wooden constructions prepared for him and high state officials. In every day, he regularly watches musical and theatrical performances from these lodges, goes hunting and come back to the castle in a certain routine. Two days before the mawlid, flock of camels, cows and sheep are sacrificed at the largest square of the city and, being cooked, they are distributed to people. The day before, at night, a magnificent torchlight procession comes down from the fortress towards the city. Ultimately, in the day of mawlid, along with the military parade ceremony, preachers and poets displaying their performance are given robes of honor (*hil'at*) as rewards. After that, once again, tables are set for the feast to the people (Karaduman, 2016:17).

The celebration of the *mawlid* also flourished on the official level throughout the nineteenth century. A state celebration of the day was introduced in Tunis by the modernizing Bey Ahmad I (ruled 1837–55 CE). It included the illumination of minarets, the distribution of gifts and alms by the bey, and a procession of scholars and notables from the palace to the Great Mosque. The ceremony in the mosque featured a reading of a *mawlid* text by the distinguished North African Maliki scholar Ibrahim al-Riyahi (d. 1850 CE) (Katz, 2007:70). An even more elaborate celebration is described in Cairo in the reign of Khedive Tawfiq (ruled 1879–92 CE), one that apparently both continued and enhanced the practices of his predecessors. The Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid also used the Prophet's birthday as an occasion to enact his own benevolence and religious legitimacy, among other things by having candy distributed to schoolchildren and cash bonuses to personnel of the Education Ministry. Overall, in the nineteenth century the celebration of the Prophet's birthday was a widespread practice endorsed and sponsored by the mainstream religious and political establishments of the Middle East (Katz, 2007:170). The Mawlid is celebrated also in Indonesia where they have an official holiday on the occasion of the Mawlid. While this joyous Islamic holiday is known throughout the Indonesian people as Maulid Nabi that is associated with fun, happiness, and reverence to God. It is a time of happiness and reverence.



## SEKATEN AND GREBEG MAULUD

One of the most popular celebrations in Java is sekaten which held in Surakarta each year, while the Muludan held in Cirebon. Grebeg Maulud rituals takes place in Surakarta and Yogyakarta.. During this ritual, the gunungans are transported from Kasunanan Surakarta Palace to Agung Mosque. The gunungans contain agricultural produce, processed snacks, and coins. If a spectator receives any of these items during a Grebeg Maulud ritual, they believe that they will receive good fortune for the year.

The *garebeg malud* in Yogyakarta *kraton* is one example on how elements of religion and culture have been amalgamated in a very unique way. Woodward argues that “*garebeg malud*” has connected veneration of the prophet Muhammad with Javanese notions of kingship (2011:190 in Deny Hamdani, 2012:12). Grebeg Maulud ceremony has philosophical values close to the society because it relates to the history of the spread of Islam in Java.



<http://regional.liputan6.com/read/2674879/lima-kemeriah-warga-daerah-rayakan-maulid-nabi-muhammad-saw>

The tradition of Gerebeg Keres held in Mojokerto, East Java since decades. In the past they used coconut broom sticks with various food and situated inside the mosque. Since 1970-ies, the tradition has been changed to *keres* tree which has a philosophical meaning. The *keres* tree has root and branches which symbolize the *ummah* of the Prophet Muhammad whose always stand obedience in his teaching. The strong root bring value and hope that people are always in unity. Thousand of people adults and children participate in this festival believe that they would gain God blessing.



([https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20171204\\_013126-20-259902/tradisi-gerebeg-keres-memperingati-maulid-nabi](https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20171204_013126-20-259902/tradisi-gerebeg-keres-memperingati-maulid-nabi)).

## THE MULUDAN CEREMONIES IN CIREBON

The position of Cirebon in the middle of two established cultures, which is Javanese and Sundanese, has created an ambiguous cultural identity. The culture does not firmly affiliate to Javanese nor Sundanese, but some practices refer to Javanese culture, while some other things have taken from Sundanese. This ambiguous position can be identified in the use of local language, called *Bahasa Cerbon*, a language that is influenced by both Javanese and Sundanese. Based on the egalitarian and outspoken style of language, the *bahasa Cerbon* is also known as *blakasuta* (outspoken language). Ironically, when Cirebonese people met Javanese, they regard Cirebonese as Sundanese, while Sundanese assume Cirebonese as Javanese (Noer, 2009:3 in Denny Hamdani, 2012:6). This confusing response of outsiders, fortunately, does not really become serious concern of the people. In a relax way, Cirebonese can response such attitude by saying:”*apa jare kono lah!*” (It is all up to you how you assume about me). However, during the 2010 census of population, Cirebon has been categorized as one ethnic among 1,128 ethnic groups throughout Indonesia. It means that Cirebon cannot be assumed as Javanese or Sundanese anymore. The criteria of being Cirebonese are simple: those who live in Cirebon and have paternal lineage with Cirebonese who was born in Cirebon, they can be included as Cirebonese (*Radar Cirebon* in Denny Hamdani, 2012:7).

Since the 15th century until now, the image of Cirebon as a tourist destination had been strongly linked with a product of religious and spiritual: cultural performances (a variety of art and a work of art) and cultural heritage materials (palace, mosques, tombs). In Cirebon, mawlid

was institutionalized as a festival or any kind of celebration having content of entertainment (Aan Jaelani, 2017:5). Sulendraningrat explains that tradition of mawlid in the Cirebon Sultanate has been commenced since the appointment of Sunan Gunung Jati (the founder of Cirebon Kingdom) as the greatest saint in 1479 (1985:83-84) which means that the tradition has been survived for more than five centuries. According to Nurdin M. Noer, year 1479 is a historical process in Cirebon where Sunan Gunung Jati built Islamic Sultanate (2012:32) This long history of the ritual must have the meanings for the Cirebon Sultanate and people. The Muludan tradition in Cirebon is conducted by the Royal family of the 3 Sultanates: the Kesepuhan Sultanate, the Kanoman Sultanate, and the Kacirebonan Sultanate. The peak of Muludan tradition is the ritual of *Pelal (Panjang Jimat)* literally means “something that has an everlasting honor”.(Muhammad Yusuf, 2013:20).



<https://www.pikiran-rakyat.com/jawa-barat/2017/12/02/panjang-jimat-bukan-hanya-sekadar-tradisi-415016>

There are at least three reasons why the Sultan conducts the tradition of *Muludan* in Kanoman Sultanate:

1. As the manifestation of the affection to the Prophet Muhammad.
2. As the continuity and the preservation of the tradition that was introduced by the founding father of Cirebon, Sunan Gunung Jati.
3. As a medium to gather between the Sultan and the followers.

The three reasons above obviously have attracted people to come and follow the *Muludan* tradition. Thousands of people are involved during the procession rituals and they acknowledge that the Sultan is their leader, both as the religious leader, and as the tradition leader. The Sultan is acknowledged as the religious leader because he represents a person who masters in Islamic



teachings, called *Ulama*. Meanwhile, as the traditional leader, the Sultan is acknowledged as the preserver of the tradition. (Mohamad Yusuf, 2013: 29).

*Tabel 1. Memetics Cultural and Political Analysis  
of Mawlid Festival*

	Since 1479	Mawlid Festival	
When		12 Rabiul Awwal	One month before 12 Rabiul Awwal
Who		Royal family of the Sultanate	<i>Abdi dalem</i>
Whose		<i>Ziarah</i> practice, is regarded ibadah (pious acts).	<i>Ziarah</i> to the Mosque of Kasepuhan
		People come to meet Sultan and the Sultanate, <i>caos</i> tradition (open house)	People believe to gain God blessing
		Practicing <i>ziarah</i> rituals-visit to sacred tombs and mosques	<i>Ziarah</i> to Sunan Gunung Jati's tomb
What		Slametan	Pelal alit (preliminary celebration)
		Reciting Book of Barzanji	The gamelan <i>sekaten</i>
		<i>Asyrakalan</i> (reciting of the book of <i>mawlid</i> )	Panjang Jimat
		Weapon cleansing	
How		Donation Bringing Offering	Praying
		Taking back home holy water from sacred mosques Bottles of water to ask a prayer from the Sultan	Concept of <i>barakah</i>
Values Meanings		Barakah, God blessing, <i>ikhlas</i> (highly sincere)	Religious identity, respect to the Prophet, <i>salawat</i>

		<i>ukhuwah</i> (unity)	Tauhid dimension
		<i>Shafa'at</i>	
Other Aspects		Religious culture Socio-economic	Guests – social solidarity
		Collective solidarity	Sunan Gunung Jati is a role model of the unity between religious leader and political leader.

*Tabel 2. Memetics Cultural Analysis of Mawlid Festival in Capital Accumulation*

Mawlid Festival Bazaar	
Rental land	Fashions
Security fee	Household
Ticket entrance fee	Souvenirs
Parking ticket	Traditional Foods and Drinks
Electricity bills payment	Entertainment (Carnivals)
Donation	Toys

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MEMETICS THEORY**

This research is a case study of Mawlid celebration in Cirebon which used qualitative approach based on limited ethnographic method and memetics theory to get the whole understanding on the research object. The research examines how Mawlid celebration can become the basic of reproduction of traditional identity values which achieved as social movement frame in Cirebon society. Memetics is the study of memes and their transmission. It is the theory of mental content based on an analogy with Darwinian evolution, originating from the popularization of Richard Dawkins' 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*. Proponents describe memetics as an approach to evolutionary models of cultural information transfer. The perspective of Darwinism is very productive in enhancing the ethical conversations and methodical field of humanities studies. Evolution of science has led us to new questions about posthumanism. In the study of culture, the concept of memetics was proposed by Dawkins as a means of explanation to understand the replication of ideas and norms in cultural evolution. In this explanatory purpose, the expansion of its methods has implications for criticism of cultural practices base on ontological religion. Darwinism provides a way to investigate culture through extensive observation of biological phenomena, and took a deductive conclusion: that the law of evolution is certainty. Evolution is a scientific law that could make us see the reality directly. (Rocky Gerung in Eko Wijayanto, 2017:vii-ix)

The cultural transmission is not human-privilege as it is not dominated by human. Some animals specifically the social one tends to “form” culture, for example, the chirping birds. Despite the potency which enables birds to chirp is genetic, yet its skill is transmitted through

mother to the children in cultural framework. That sort of case can be analogue to human language. None the less human is the only organism who aware of meme capability in cultural evolution. (Dawkins, 1989: 189-190).

Richard Dawkins contends meme is transferable, communicable, replicative, and inherited cultural unit, for example, song, poetry, math technique, fashion mode, and another technology application. The condition is similar with gene that replicates itself into gene pool by “jumping” from one body through another through reproduction. Meme duplicates itself in meme pool by “infecting” one brain to another by imitation.

The survival value of the god meme in the meme pool results from its great psychological appeal. It provides a superficially plausible answer to deep and troubling questions about existence. It suggests that injustices in this world may be rectified in the next. (Richard Dawkins, 1976: 193)

A meme can be popular because number of factors. First, it is not debatable, for example, a prayer as meme becomes replicated as it constantly recites and seems granted. That invocation has greater chance to be believed rather than rejected. Second, it is generous in matter of time, money, and effort. Third, it feels good and comforting—no matter it is accomplished or not. Praying is oft soothing. Other words, people will keep practicing and carrying this meme forward. Particularly, when people with similar belief cooperate with each other, they will improve those infectious memes to survive, e.g. meme related into circumcision, certain-food prohibition, and dress-up regulation.

Dawkins reminds meme selfish and ruthless traits are only metaphors, yet it is fruitful metaphor.

We must be absolutely clear about what selfish means in this context. It does not mean genes or selfishness. Such genes would incline their carriers to act selfishly and that is something quite different. The term selfish here means that genes act only for themselves; their only interest is their own replication; all they want is to be passed on to the next generation (Blackmore, 1999: 5).

## **MEME AS A CULTURAL TRANSMISSION UNIT**

Aside from Dawkins there are several key figures who also contribute to develop evolution concept, one of them is Stuart Kauffman. He focuses on theory complexity for interpreting cultural symptom, where the entire cultural exegesis will encounter biased in its process. Kauffman idea is quite different with Dawkins who more into Darwin evolution theory stressing to natural selection. Nonetheless, both ideas are basically directed into single intention, which is to understand processes that work in culture.

On the account of meme in culture, Susan Blackmore contends self-replicating and *memplexes* concept. Meme as a self-replicating component is analogous to variety of computer virus—all of them have effects on ongoing process in the machine system. As responds, computer users will try to protect from virus attacks by installing antivirus. As virus and

antivirus which varies in its development meme competes. However, there are moments when variety of memes work together to form the unity caused by acculturation. In that case, *memeplex* is a set of memes present altogether for mutual benefits—“Memeplexes are groups of memes that come together form mutual advantage.”

Dawkins thinks meme can be used to describe how Darwinian principle explains idea and cultural phenomena spreading. Both genes and memes are replicators. However, gene passed down through biological reproduction, while meme is derived through process of cultural learning or imitation (mimesis). As gene that is biological transmission unit, meme is also considered as cultural transmission unit. Two of them undergo mutation, combination, and environmental selection. For instance, the fashion mode as meme, quite often we observe way of dressing is prone to be replicated or imitated thus more groups of people applying that mode into their social circle (Eko Wijayanto, 2017:40).

Meme is also one factor that has major impact of individual development in society. In human brain, memes are not only stored as information to be memorized, but they are tools of thinking. Memes take form as words, stories, fairy tales, parts of argument, or a new way we think about love, logic, even particular scientific theory. In this case we should consider three kinds of learning: individual, social, and cultural. First kind of learning occurs when individual directly adjusts to environment, for instance, Pavlov Ivan Petrovich classical conditioning. Social learning is a process aided by others. The last one is a learning process that requiring imitation ability. Cultural learning itself is able to emerge through three modes: direct imitation, aided by words, or interpersonal cooperation.

Hence we see that meme requires social life in order to experience imitation and grow in cultural sphere. It is an important factor that contributed to gene pattern which installed in individual—along with meme, gene itself is being supported in order to allude individual life (Eko Wijayanto, 2017:41).

## **DISCUSSION**

Dawkins introduces meme as the concept of cultural formation unit for completing his theory on human evolution that quite supported by gene theory. Memorable jingles or songs like religious and liturgy tune are some samples Darwin argues. Those melodies in certain moment is considered touch somebody’s feeling although it has been inherited, passed over generations, and separated from the very first generation who listens to the similar tune. In that case we can contend that person has been “infected” by meme which loaded inside the song. As a code, meme exists in the psychological level, has phenotype expression in behavior formation. Culture has a system of inheritance. Values, beliefs, behaviors, knowledge, passed down through cultural processes within the scope of the population and the environment. The process that is relevant to explain the perspective of Darwinism. Cultural change, ecological capacity and new aspirations of human beings to continue living, gain conceptual direction through Darwinism.

The date of 12 Rabi-ul Awwal of the Islamic lunar calendar is important to Muslims because the birth of the Prophet Muhammad is regarded as a great blessing for the whole of humanity. Muslims throughout the Muslim world who celebrate the festival do so joyfully. Memorable jingles or songs like religious and liturgy tune singing by reciting the book of



Barjanji in the peak of Mawlid moment is considered touch somebody's feeling although it has been inherited, passed over generations, and separated from the very first generation who listens to the similar tune. In that case we can contend that person has been "infected" by meme which loaded inside the song. As a code, meme exists in the psychological level, has phenotype expression in behavior formation.

The rhythm of classic way of *salawatan* before the prayer in the mosque of Kasepuhan as well as in the mosque of Pejagrahan. Some traditions of these mosques still strongly preserve the habit of Wali Songo (The Nine Saints) in doing religious rituals. The mosque of Kasepuhan still preserves the sermon with Arabic. Meme infects effortlessly as we have tendency to imitate others - whether the idea, thought, or people talk - as it is the first step of learning. In other words, we are used to feel comfort imitating people who are more successful lifestyle particularly in their fashion mode or business conduct. The mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* still preserves the sermon with Arabic and *adzan pitu*, a calling for prayer by seven people during the Friday prayer. This religious ritual has been started since the era of Pangeran Cakrabuwana and Sunan Gunung Jati around 5 centuries ago and it still preserve until now. The various meanings of ritual can be identified in this study of Mawlid Festival in Cirebon. The ritual of Mawlid has different meaning among the pilgrimage, that could be entertainment, bussines, community belonging and spiritual meaning.

We can explain in this case that meme infects effortlessly as we have tendency to imitate others - whether the idea, thought, or people talk - as it is the first step of learning. In other words, we are used to feel comfort imitating people who are more successful lifestyle particularly in their fashion mode or business conduct. The truth meme is essential part of human evolutionary formation. We are, by this far, is the most survived-organism because of meme enables human to manipulate environment by creating life-tools, not caused by our body-shape. In the context of Mawlid tradition in Cirebon at present, people are obedient to follow all series of the *Muludan* tradition. People believe that their involvement in the Mawlid festival could benefit to their life in the world and in the hereafter.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has shown that the celebration of *mawlid*s was primarily pioneered by the Fatimids in the 10th century. Celebrating *Muludan* festivals in Cirebon has shown distinctive manifestation from the Muslim heartlands in the Middle East. It was dominated by the Sultanate and cultivated by a wide range of members of ruling local Sultanate with political power to legitimate. From Memetic analysis, the central element of the *muludan* is the veneration of Prophet, however the tradition of *Muludan* in Cirebon reinforced the religious authority of Sultan in creating and mobilizing a massive traditional gathering which stabilize the political power of Sultan.

In contrast, the *Muludan* tends to assume that the power is just a symbolic, the reality of economic capital operates powerfully. The capital accumulation finally goes to the royal family. However, Muslims keep celebrating the *Muludan* because as a meme it brings by humans who identified themselves as Islam. It survives through ages because it helps humans cope with social

life. The Muludan brings human identity community belonging and spiritual satisfaction. People keep coming to the Muludan in order to get *barakah* and feel secure.

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