

## *Nyadran Ruwah* Tradition as a Manifestation of Rationality in Nusantara Philosophical Thought

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### Abstract

The rationality of *Nyadran* as a cultural and philosophical Nusantara phenomenon needs to be studied, including *Nyadran* at Kemloko. The research aims to explain the *Nyadran* tradition, history, and the rationality of society. The data was collected by observation, interviews, literature review. We conducted observations of *Nyadran* practitioners in Kemloko hamlet, Temanggung, Central Java, and carried out in-depth interviews using purposive sampling based on key figures involved in the implementation of *Nyadran* in Kemloko. The data were examined through the lens of cultural rationality, which combines cultural and rational choice perspectives to explain behavior in political and social contexts. The results of the study, first, *Nyadran* in Kemloko was carried out in the months of Ruwah and Rajab, the month before Ramadan, coinciding with Friday. *Kenduri Nyadran* is performed at home or tomb and its implementation develops according to community conditions. Second, *Nyadran* has existed since the pre-Majapahit era and has grown to this day. Third, the implementation of *Nyadran* is based on traditional, affective, instrumental rationality and value rationality. *Nyadran* is an act of following the traditions of parents and ancestors. Affectionately, *Nyadran* is a proof of respect, obedience and devotion, as well as self-melting in society. *Nyadran* instrumentally becomes a means of showing devotion, a means of praying, a means of socializing, and a means of entertainment. The values contained in *Nyadran* are considered not to conflict with religious values and goodness in local culture.

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## INTRODUCTION

Nusantara is rich in cultural diversity and philosophy. According to data released by the Ministry of Education and Culture ([Kemendikbud RI](#)), as of 2020, there were 1,239 cultural works that had been designated as intangible cultural heritage of Indonesia. Intangible cultural heritage categorized under traditional skills and crafts numbered 281, oral traditions and expressions numbered 167, and knowledge and practices numbered 59 ([Dihni, 2021](#)). It is this intangible culture that serves as an important material object in the development of Nusantara philosophy. As [Alfariz](#) notes, Nusantara philosophy is still seeking its ideal form ([Alfariz, 2022](#)). This search refers to the individual and collective thoughts that developed in Nusantara (pre-independence) and Indonesia (post-independence). Not only referring to the thoughts of prominent figures, on the collective side, the distinctive thoughts of indigenous communities can be traced in their implementation in traditional practices with local nuances. One of them is the tradition in the cultural universe of the Javanese people.

Among the Javanese cultures that still thrive in society is *Nyadran*. Unlike offerings, which tend to cause controversy, *Nyadran* has successfully adapted to the times and affirmed its identity as an agent of cultural identity, a vehicle for Javanese local genius. Its implementation varies depending on the background and identity of the supporting community. *Nyadran* is practiced in various places in Indonesia, especially Java. Some research findings report *Nyadran* activities in Central Java, including: Wonosobo ([Yusantari, 2017](#)), Temanggung ([Ibda, 2018](#)), Boyolali ([Riyadi, 2017](#)), and Jepara ([Afriani & Prastiti, 2020](#)). In East Java, studies on *Nyadran* have been reported in

several areas, including: Nganjuk (Fatanti & Tuti, 2020), Trenggalek (Alifiana, 2013), Sidoarjo (Al Aliyah et al., 2020; Hutama & Utami, 2018; Winisudo & Fauzi, 2021). The abundance of these studies indicates the continued vitality of the tradition, the breadth of the community that upholds it, and the high level of acceptance among the community. This also suggests the possibility of variations in its implementation, as evidenced by the wide range of contexts in which the *Nyadran* tradition exists.

For example, the term *Nyadran* is used to refer to the Larung Sesaji activity (Hutama & Utami, 2018) by fishing communities. The Kendal community in Central Java conducts the *Nyadran Laut* event by preparing offerings, staging a *wayang kulit* performance with the sacred story of *Budeg Basu* (Bedrow, 2022). In this *Nyadran Laut* event, not only are prayers conducted together, but there are also activities involving cooperation, harmony, and entertainment. Each region has its own unique implementation and detailed reasons for its conduct. Generally, the purpose is to express gratitude to God for the blessings received over the past year and to pray for safety, but the form of the activities, the procession, supporting elements, and artistic expressions may vary.

In Giyanti Wonosobo, there is still an “obligation” to perform the sacred *Lengger Punjen* dance. There is still a belief among the community that if the dance is not performed, something bad will happen. The dance is believed to be a form of communication with ancestral spirits. In addition to being performed at important events, *Lengger Punjen* must also be performed at the *Nyadran Tenongan* ceremony. The *Nyadran Tenongan* ceremony is typically held annually on Friday Kliwon during the month of Suro according to the Javanese calendar (Yusantari, 2017). Although the *Nyadran Giyanti* ritual is connected to spirits, its timing differs from *Nyadran* ceremonies in other places, which aim to honor and pray for the spirits of deceased ancestors. In the Tasikmadu Karanganyar area, *Nyadran* is instead held when a family is about to host a wedding ceremony. The focus is also on ancestors, and the ceremony is related to the graves of ancestors. The purpose is to seek blessings and approval so that the wedding ceremony can proceed smoothly. This practice is also carried out in Trenggalek, East Java (Muhsin, 2016).

In this study, the focus is on the *Nyadran* ceremony held during the month of Ruwah or Sya’ban, which is the last month before Ramadan. *Nyadran*, derived from the word “*sradda*,” is a tradition to honor ancestors, deceased parents, and activities to pray for living family members. One source explains that this tradition has been practiced by Javanese society for thousands of years, even before the arrival of Hinduism in Java (Muhsin, 2016). Thus, the *Nyadran* observed today has undergone encounters and acculturation processes with various religious traditions that have developed in Java. The fact that *Nyadran* is still practiced today shows that the community has successfully created and adjusted the rationality of the times. However, many people practice it without understanding and simply follow the tradition in the community.

Some reasons for the lack of familiarity with *Nyadran* among some communities include increased rationality, many family members working outside the region, and a lack of individuals who can explain the meaning of *Nyadran*, let alone encourage its continued practice (Fajarwati et al., 2014). A rational attitude toward culture will clash with an essentialist attitude. In this case, it can be said that rationality aligns with a functionalist attitude toward culture. According to the functionalist perspective, society and culture exist as organisms composed of interdependent parts, where each part cannot be defined separately from the whole—the unity of social and cultural dimensions (White, 1975). Therefore, because culture and society coexist in the same space, the existence of each is supported and determined by the existence of the other. In other words, culture exists because of society. Likewise, sociality is formed because of the existence of culture. An interesting phenomenon in the development of modern society is that society not only follows tradition but also has arguments for carrying out traditions according to its understanding. This means that, in addition to aligning with their understanding, the context is also shaped by the functionality of *Nyadran*, which progresses in tandem with the development of knowledge and collective perceptions about the fundamental values of human needs. This perspective naturally

contrasts with the naive essentialist view that positions *Nyadran* as a sacred value and tradition whose existence is entirely unaffected by the progression of time, including the increasing rationality of society.

Continuing the discussion above, the correlation between rationality and the spirit of preserving *Nyadran* is interesting to examine. What makes essentialist and functionalist attitudes coexist in the same context? What kind of society practices it, and what are the reasons behind the community's performance of this cultural ritual? Some people participate in *Nyadran* as a form of obedience, following their parents and traditions, without fully understanding its purpose, even though it contains values of solidarity, mutual aid, harmony, and self-sacrifice (Muhsin, 2016). Some communities participate because it involves religious activities. *Nyadran Ruwah* is even considered to have mystical elements, bringing people closer to God and nature. *Nyadran*, as a form of cultural acculturation between Javanese and Islamic traditions, demonstrates its mystical elements through activities such as *tahlil*, *yasinan*, *manaqiban*, prayers, and religious study sessions as expressions of closeness to God and social mysticism with the environment (Ibda, 2018). While *Nyadran* is often interpreted as an ancestral tradition involving reverence and veneration for the spirits of ancestors (Muhsin, 2016), this is not always the case. As a form of Javanese and Islamic acculturation, with the development of rationality and religious education, many communities try to rationalize while maintaining their culture, as is the case with *Nyadran* in Kemloko Kranggan Temanggung Village. This community was chosen because *Nyadran* activities are still thriving and lively in peace, amid the advancement of religious activities and the improvement of community education. This phenomenon is undoubtedly rooted in a certain rationality.

A study on the rationality embedded in community thinking regarding the reasons for continuing the *Nyadran* ritual was found in the *Nyadran* practices of fishermen in Bluru Kidul, Sidoarjo. The term “*Nyadran*” refers to a form of sea offering, similar to the *Nyadran* performed by fishermen in Kendal (Bedrow, 2022). There are several reasons for this: *Nyadran* is a prayer for a good sea harvest and an expression of gratitude for the sea's bounty from God for the previous year's abundance; *Nyadran* is a deeply rooted tradition; it follows the customs of ancestors; and *Nyadran* is an emotional bond among community members. The results of this study indicate a belief in the existence of God and strong social bonds, so that community members do not want to be different from their environment. *Nyadran* is also a form of gratitude to God and their ancestors who have passed them down (Winisudo & Fauzi, 2021).

Max Weber formulated a theory explaining why someone performs a social action. A social action is an action performed by an individual that involves others. Everyone performs an action for a reason that serves as its cause. Weber distinguishes types of actions based on their motives, categorized into: traditional actions, affective actions, instrumental actions, and value actions. This theory is utilized to examine the motives of individuals in reading religious texts at Islamic boarding schools (Muhlis & Norkholis, 2016). According to Susetiawan, these meaningful and varied social actions are divided into three categories: rational actions, affective actions, and traditional actions. Rational actions are divided into two categories: rationality based on value considerations, which may stem from religious, moral, or knowledge-based values, and rationality based on instrumental goals, affective actions, and traditional actions. Affective actions are spontaneous, irrational actions based on individual emotions without intellectual consideration or awareness. The important point is that there is one way to achieve the goal, while traditional actions are actions that follow customs passed down by ancestors over a long period of time. The meaning of actions depends on the subject, the subjectivity of the actor, so the meaning of actions cannot be generalized. The theoretical framework of this study was applied to research on *Nyadran* in Kemloko. Each member of the community has their own reasons for participating in social actions, including following and engaging in cultural actions.

*Nyadran* as a form of culture is a collection of ideas and human works that must be practiced in a learning process. Not only that, culture also involves all intellectual achievements and works produced. In its form, it is divided into ideal form, behavioral form, and physical form. This ideal

form is often referred to as customs or behavioral customs because of its nature of regulating the behavior of a society. Customs can specifically become a more abstract value system, norms, legal rules, and more specific regulations (Koentjaraningrat, 1990). According to several references, this abstract value system is equivalent to the terms ideology, worldview, and philosophy (Sartini & Ahimsa-Putra, 2017). Since culture has existed throughout human history, it is not static or fixed but rather dynamic, constantly evolving, and subject to change (Sutrisno, 2008). The same applies to the *Nyadran* tradition.

*Nyadran* is a cultural product that has undergone a long process, evolving dynamically in tandem with the changing ideas within society. The *Nyadran* observed today is the result of adaptations to the times. Therefore, the communities that uphold *Nyadran* culture have their own reasons for continuing to follow this custom or tradition to this day. Cultural actions in this study are understood as manifestations of philosophy, ideas, and understanding that subsequently take shape in the form of objects and cultural practices. The rationality of cultural actions refers to the reasons individuals or groups have for participating in a cultural event, namely *Nyadran*.

In contrast to previous studies that have depicted *Nyadran* primarily as a religious rite and cultural celebration bound to specific historical contexts, this study places greater emphasis on investigating the epistemic dimension of the existing *Nyadran* tradition. By highlighting the rationality embedded within a cultural framework, the study carefully positions *Nyadran* not merely as a practice sustained by its functional-spiritual dimensions, but also as one that is collectively evaluated through processes of rational justification. On this basis, we advance the thesis that the rationality of a cultural practice plays a crucial role in sustaining the very existence of a culture. Thus, this study situates *Nyadran* as cultural actions that continue to be carried out based on the rationality of the community that supports them. This study also focuses on investigating the origins of *Nyadran* and its rationality, as well as the justifications used by the community to validate the action of perpetuating the *Nyadran* tradition as a form of culture and an embodiment of the Nusantara Philosophy.

## METHODS

This research is a field study that combines elements of literature review as a basis for understanding the *Nyadran* phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The literature review was conducted to gain a general understanding of *Nyadran*, its textual origins, and how it varies, especially in Javanese society. The field study was conducted by interviewing several community leaders, conducting participant observation, interviews, and documentation carried out on March 24-25, 2022, coinciding with the *Nyadran* Setono Putih ceremony in Kemloko Village. The interviewees were community leaders, prayer leaders, religious leaders, and community members. The selection of interviewees was carried out using purposive sampling based on their expertise on *Nyadran*. The collected data was subsequently classified according to the research objectives, described, interpreted, and analyzed using the theoretical framework of cultural rationality to obtain research answers. To ensure the validity of the data and the analysis, this study conducted a focus group discussion. Finally, conclusions were drawn and the research results were presented.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Nature of *Nyadran*

From interviews and literature reviews, two different histories were found. This is related to the understanding of the community, which is passed down from generation to generation without any documentation. Meanwhile, in literature, history is written documentation obtained through anthropological research. As an anthropological and philosophical treasure, *Nyadran* can be understood as an abstract and material culture that emerged as an expression of the collective historical experience of Javanese society. Therefore, the characteristics of the *Nyadran* tradition vary according to the cultural and social values of the community. This study focuses on the *Nyadran* tradition of the Kemloko community.

For some members of the Kemloko community, *Nyadran* is a tradition passed down from their ancestors. Society and culture are the result of interaction, so for individuals who are members of the community, participating in *Nyadran* is part of living well with the community. It would be considered very strange if a person or family did not follow the community's customs. For some of the people interviewed, performing *Nyadran* is part of obedience and respect for parents and ancestors. *Nyadran* is still considered good, so it continues to be held today. It would be very joyful if the whole family could participate in performing *Nyadran* as a form of devotion to parents. This tradition is held as a form of community life and history. For many people, this awareness is referred to as “instinct,” following customs without questioning the reasons why they must be done. This includes when they perform *Nyadran* and lay out food on banana leaves. The community does not know the reason why the base and tip must be placed in a specific direction. Residents simply follow without needing to know the reason, even though there is no fear of placing them incorrectly.

*Nyadran* is an ancestral tradition that has always been practiced, but its implementation has evolved over time. For Mr. Diyono, *Nyadran* was originally a simple activity that later grew in scale. Initially, it was merely a way to prepare provisions before the fasting month of Ramadan, when the community cleaned family graves. Some households participating in *Nyadran* lived relatively far away, so they had to bring provisions. Subsequently, many people brought provisions to fill the idle time while socializing with others who had also finished cleaning graves. This simple tradition grew into a larger one, eventually becoming a tradition with specific foods such as *nasi bucu* (cone-shaped rice) served in a basket, *ayam ingkung* (chicken dish), various side dishes, vegetables, small snacks, and fruits. They eat together after praying for their ancestors and all those buried in the cemetery.

In the *Nyadran* ceremony, the special dish is *ingkung*. *Inkung* is a whole chicken cooked until it is savory and tender with spices that have been absorbed into the meat. This *ingkung* dish is more commonly found at *Nyadran* ceremonies held at home, while the chicken brought to the grave is mostly cut into pieces. One of the meanings of *ingkung* is *manekung*, which refers to a sincere prayer offered to God. In its practice, the *Nyadran* prayer consists of two parts: prayers for deceased parents and ancestors, and prayers for the safety, harmony, and happiness of the living community. One of the ancestors prayed for is the ancestor believed to have founded the village, initiating the establishment of the village where the community resides. The name of this ancestor is usually mentioned in the prayer. The community's view of the origin of *Nyadran* differs somewhat from philological research.

Based on a study of the Kakawin Banawasekar Tanakung manuscript, the history of *Nyadran* is revealed. In his literary research, Manu explains that the history of *Nyadran* dates back to the pre-Majapahit era, which was a tradition of ancestor worship. In India, this tradition is called the Sraddha Ceremony, and at that time, a similar tradition of worship developed, both in the royal court (the “Great” tradition) and among the general public (the “Small” tradition) in Java. With the introduction of Hinduism and Indian traditions to Java, this tradition of worship continued to develop under the name of the Sraddha Ceremony Tradition. The development continued until the Majapahit era, which took the form of a “New” Tradition due to the “internationalization” process of the kingdoms at that time, leading to cultural acculturation and adaptation. The tradition of worshiping and honoring ancestors continued to develop under the name Sraddha Ceremony. This tradition continued to develop, particularly in Java after the Majapahit era, and was subsequently referred to as the *Nyadran* Tradition (Manuscript, 1987). *Nyadran* is considered a form of acculturation of indigenous beliefs, Hinduism, and Islam. In its implementation, Hinduism is represented by the use of flowers and water, while Islam is represented by prayers and the mention of the Prophet Muhammad in the ceremony procession (Wajdi & Nizarudin, 2017). The adaptation of Javanese prayers into Islam is also referred to as the Islamization of village traditions (Kim, 2007). *Nyadran* is even considered to be a reinforcement of Sufi values that construct the richness of the Islamic heritage of the archipelago (Ibda, 2018). In its implementation in various regions,

even though the objectives are relatively the same, the implementation often differs depending on the strength of the elements that form the tradition and the agents of change that influence the new pattern of *Nyadran*.

### **The Rationality of *Nyadran* Cultural Traditions**

According to Weber's theory of rationality of action, there are four reasons why someone performs an action. In the context of this study, the reasons for performing an action include the actions of the community in performing cultural actions. Each person has their own reasons for participating or not participating in the implementation of a particular cultural tradition, and whether adjustments need to be made due to new understandings resulting from the development of information and knowledge obtained. Even though they all follow the same tradition, each person has their own reasons based on certain considerations. The actions taken, including those related to religion and belief, are based on accumulated thoughts that form a worldview, which, in Weber's analysis, is the most common locus that can serve as the goal of action in the religious realm (Kalberg, 1990). Although there are some discussions, including the concept of rationality itself, which seems to be an ideal-type but is actually an evaluative concept in society (Turner, 1983), Weber's theory of rationality is sufficient to frame the exploration of the reasons behind social actions, including actions in cultural interactions. Although there are several interpretations of its implementation, the author uses the following categories of rationality of action: traditional rationality, affective (emotional) rationality, instrumental rationality, and value rationality (Wallace, 1990). Although these rationalities are categorized theoretically, in reality, these aspects are interrelated.

The following is an explanation of the reasons behind the cultural actions understood by the community that supports the *Nyadran Setono Putih* tradition in the village of Kemloko Kranggan Temanggung.

### **The Rationality Behind *Nyadran***

For some people, blending into society and following existing traditions is something that does not need to be questioned. Just follow what your parents and ancestors have done. The term “*manut adat*” or “*manut adate*” may be the most appropriate way to describe this situation. Acting differently is seen as odd, so people must adapt and follow the flow of society, including participating in traditions that are still practiced within the community. Thus, participating in *Nyadran* is seen as a natural instinct. *Nyadran* is a form of obedience that often does not require rational justification. Obedience to parents and ancestors is a form of respect and devotion. They follow what their ancestors did. As descendants, the supporters of this tradition also feel they have a duty to continue this tradition, which is considered good. *Nyadran* is seen as a form of *nguri-uri*, which means continuing what their parents did. “*Nyadran* is *nguri-uri* (continuing) the tradition of our parents,” they say. The community has reasons why the legacy of their parents in the form of *Nyadran* must be preserved.

In community terminology, if this good tradition is not continued, they feel “sorry.” Here lies the emotional reason. What is meant here is “*eman*,” feeling sorry if it is abandoned and not continued. *Nyadran* is a form of respect and gratitude from children and grandchildren to their parents and ancestors. They strongly object to their parents not being respected. “It’s a pity for the parents and ancestors,” they say, if what the parents and ancestors did is not valued. According to Mrs. Koyim, what they do is a form of obedience. Why must one be obedient? Mr. Bawon and Mr. Diyono say it is because they are the reason for the existence of their children and grandchildren. They are the ones who provide the foundation for life and intelligence for their children and descendants. They are the foundation, the origin, the ones who provide the capital, the basis of life, knowledge, and wisdom so that children and descendants can enjoy the life they have today. Because of the important position of parents and ancestors, children and descendants are obligated to be dutiful. One way to show devotion is to follow the traditions without asking too many

questions about why they must be done. For Mrs. Koyim and Mrs. Mami, *Nyadran* is about following what their ancestors have done since ancient times. Not everyone knows the proper way to do this; only those who are respected follow it. In other word, “*Manut*” means to obey sincerely, without protesting or asking too many questions.

Information was also found regarding the procedure for placing banana leaves as a base for food offerings. Some people say that the tips of the leaves must be placed in a certain direction, such as west or north. They follow this without knowing why it must be done this way. For Mr. Bawon, this is a matter of custom, following the procedures exemplified by his parents since ancient times. Although there is no specific belief about the consequences of incorrectly placing the base or tip of the banana leaf, this action is followed and is a form of obedience and devotion to parents and ancestors.

For the people of Kemloko, specifically based on interviews with key *Nyadran* figures in Kemloko, the tradition developed in *Nyadran* is a good and enjoyable tradition. Good traditions need to be preserved. Honoring ancestors, praying, and sharing with one another are good deeds. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with them, and they should be preserved. However, if there are aspects that do not align with the new norms and values emerging in society, the practice of *Nyadran* must be adapted. When a cultural practice lacks rational justification or religious understanding, the community will seek alternative justifications.

For most communities in the Nusantara region, following traditions is an act of obedience. Few people understand the meaning and cultural values conveyed by the traditions. This is evident in studies on *Nyadran* in Nganjuk. The *Nyadran* activity is interpreted as an effort to preserve and maintain traditions. *Nyadran* also serves as a traditional educational tool by setting an example, as some community members do not understand the purpose of traditions and even fail to appreciate them (Triyoso & Susilo, 2021).

This act of following traditions is also supported by certain beliefs, myths, and fears that arise if a particular stage of the tradition is not followed. As in the *Nyadran Lengger Punjen* ritual, the community believes that if the ritual is not performed, disasters such as epidemics or crop failures will occur. The community believes that the spirits of their ancestors will help protect their safety (Yusantari, 2017). This community perspective aligns with Weber's observation. It is stated that in some religions, the dualistic relationship between the supernatural realm and the world develops into a tangible connection. The religious realm appears as a discrete constellation of ethical, universal, and permanent values that are internally consistent and reveal a systematic view of the universe (Kalberg, 1990). This is demonstrated by the rationality of the community in continuing to support the implementation of a tradition.

### ***Affective/Emotional Rationality of Nyadran***

As a relatively homogeneous society, following the movements of the community is important so as not to be considered “uncommon” or out of step with the community. Participating in *Nyadran* is part of how a person is considered to be part of and fully integrated into the community. *Nyadran* at the village cemetery is not mandatory for everyone, but the *Nyadran* feast at home is a kind of obligation for neighbors who are invited to always attend. This is part of social harmony and caring. Someone who never wants to gather with neighbors, including participating in the feast, will be considered strange and antisocial.

The community has its own reasons for its connection with deceased ancestors who have been buried. Group cohesion is a strong reason. Empathy for family and others is also very strong, including for those who have passed away. This is demonstrated in the way the community prepares and organizes *Nyadran*.

The preparation for *Nyadran* is done through a ceremony called *berseh*, which is cleaning the graves. The graves of extended family members are cleaned and decorated with flowers. The same goes for graves that are close to them and the surrounding area. The culture of cleaning is a Javanese tradition that appears in various forms. The goal is to purify oneself to enter a clean space

or area, with a clean heart, free from dirt or sin. According to George Quinn's report, this is manifested in the traditions of *kramas* (hair washing), *padusan*, and *megengan* (mandatory bathing and abstaining from desires before the Ramadan fast) or the existence of places and facilities for purification before entering the prayer room (Dijk & Taylor, 2011). *Berseh* is an act of purifying the heart.

After cleaning the graves, the Kemloko community usually holds a joint prayer. Specifically, the *Nyadran* prayer is performed on Fridays. At the Setono Putih Cemetery, *Nyadran* is performed on Friday Kliwon. The prayer is directed at all those buried in the cemetery, the ancestors who founded the village, the forebears, and the parents and family. The community feels “sorry” if there are people buried in the cemetery who are not visited by their families and no one prays for them. The *Nyadran* prayer is a collective prayer for all those buried in the cemetery, as well as everyone present and their families. This is also the reason why people hold the *Nyadran* feast at home.

Mrs. Im held a *Nyadran* ceremony for three deceased family members: her husband, her parents, and her in-laws, who are buried in another village far away. The *Nyadran* ceremony in her in-laws' and parents' village was held on another Friday, but Mrs. Im held her ceremony on Friday *Kliwon*. The reason is that she is concerned that in the other village, there is no one to pray for her deceased in-laws and parents.

From this explanation, it is implicitly understood that the community builds cohesiveness, empathy, and compassion for the deceased through, among other things, prayers based on the locus, the place where people are buried. That is why the *Nyadran* ceremony is supported. Another form of empathy is the tradition of collecting rice and side dishes to share with people from other villages who come to the funeral on *Nyadran* day. They seem to be less concerned about what the collected food will be used for, considering the large amount of food collected, which is enough to fill several sacks. This is certainly not just for eating, but for other needs, such as drying it for preservation or feeding livestock.

Another form of empathy and harmony is found in the *ater-ater* culture. When people who are celebrating *Nyadran* bring food to their neighbors, they say they are giving them a “taste” so that their neighbors can enjoy it too. People who celebrate *Nyadran* will give food to neighbors or relatives who are not celebrating *Nyadran*. This is a form of harmony, love, and respect for neighbors and relatives who are respected and honored.

*Nyadran*, in its various forms, is a gathering place for community members. This forum serves as a structure and mirror of the legitimacy of the social order in an egalitarian society. *Nyadran* brings together community members from various structures and communities (Yusantari, 2017). In another study, the *Nyadran Kedungombo* tradition is not only a form of respect for ancestors but also a form of social solidarity (Hasanah, 2016). In addition to being an expression of gratitude and, pragmatically, a form of traditional tourism, *Nyadran* functions as a medium of mass communication (Fatanti & Tuti, 2020). Furthermore, because its activities typically involve cooperative efforts in preparing offerings that engage many people, *Nyadran* encourages community members not to isolate themselves but to integrate into community activities (Triyoso & Susilo, 2021).

Data from the *Nyadran* tradition in Kemloko and research findings on *Nyadran* in various regions indicate that empathy, brotherhood, harmony, mutual cooperation, and community involvement are characteristics of Nusantara thinking. In addition to empathy, *Nyadran* serves as an instrument that will be further explained in another section.

### ***Instrumental Rationality of Nyadran***

From the interviews, it is evident that the *Nyadran* ceremony is wrapped in goals and motivations related to tradition, communal emotions, and a sense of personal responsibility. While the aspects of tradition and community emotion have been discussed in earlier sections, this part will explain how *Nyadran* serves as a means to fulfill personal responsibilities and release oneself from obligations.

When an individual or family carries out *Nyadran*, it is understood as fulfilling their duty as children or descendants. The responsibility of children or descendants is to offer prayers. Within the community sphere, *Nyadran* becomes a medium to fulfill this obligation. According to local beliefs, they are expected to pray for the deceased through *Nyadran* for three years or three occasions. Typically, this cycle is concluded with a *kenduri* on the 1000th day. For example, in the case of Mrs. Im, she held the *Nyadran kenduri* three times, with the final one including the offering of *Nasi Punggahan*.

*Punggahan*, derived from the word *munggah* (meaning "to ascend"), is a plate of rice served with a complete set of side dishes. This differs from regular *kenduri*, where the food typically consists of cone-shaped rice (*nasi bucu*), vegetables, and side dishes served separately. This meal marks the closing of the *Nyadran* ritual. After *Punggahan* is held, there is no longer any obligation to perform the *Nyadran kenduri*.

After performing the *kenduri* with *Nasi Punggahan*, Mrs. Im felt relieved and at peace, believing that his duty was fulfilled. She felt that she had properly prayed for the deceased and had guided the souls of his family members to the presence of God. This is the fundamental purpose of *Nyadran*: by performing it, people feel they have fulfilled their filial duties as descendants and community members. The neighbors who attend the *Nyadran kenduri* also demonstrate their role as part of the social community. This sentiment is shared by community members who still view *Nyadran* as a traditional obligation and a spiritual channel to accompany the deceased into the afterlife.

*Nyadran* is a medium to remember one's parents, embodying values of filial piety drawn from both religious teachings and local traditions, often practiced through flower offerings (*nyekar*). Beyond being a means to pray for deceased ancestors, *Nyadran* in its various forms also serves to invoke a sense of safety and protection in daily life. It functions as a way to communicate with God — to ask for help, express wishes, and hope for success in life and work (Al Aliyah et al., 2020), or to pray for abundant catches from the sea (Winisudo & Fauzi, 2021). In a more pragmatic sense, when *Nyadran* is associated with particular places such as water reservoirs or dams, it often carries an environmental preservation intent (Putri et al., 2020).

In addition to serving as an instrument for honoring one's parents and as a medium for conveying prayers and hopes to God, *Nyadran* also functions as a social medium. Some members of the Kemloko community regard *Nyadran* as an opportunity for gathering and socializing, a kind of community festival, as well as a time to rest and enjoy themselves after a full year of farming. This resonates with the experience of the Wonosobo community, where *Nyadran Lengger Punjen* also serves as a form of entertainment (Yusantari, 2017). This is evident in the increasing incorporation of artistic performances into many *Nyadran* traditions — an activity that has even developed into tourism management. *Nyadran* thus becomes a source of entertainment for local residents (Al Aliyah et al., 2020).

As time progresses, traditions continue to evolve in response to changing eras. The understanding of *Nyadran* has also developed — strengthening its sacred dimension related to divinity, while simultaneously expanding its profane dimension through tourism, as documented in this research. The sacred value of *Nyadran* has in many cases diminished, giving way to more profane expressions, particularly under the pressure of tourism development, as seen in the case of *Nyadran Tuk Tempurung* (Purwaningsih, 2017). Consequently, many traditional ceremonies, including *Nyadran*, have now become ritual expressions that tend toward secular forms (Yusantari, 2017).

### **The Implementation of the *Nyadran Setono Putih* Tradition in Kemloko**

The tradition of *Nyadran* is found in various regions, particularly on the island of Java. From the literature review mentioned earlier, this tradition is also found outside Java among migrant communities with Javanese cultural backgrounds. The forms of implementation vary widely, depending on the development of each community. Despite these variations, the core essence

remains the same: offering prayers and hopes for the well-being of the ancestors' souls and for the prosperity of the entire community.

In the Temanggung area, the practices of *Nyadran* also differ. The village of Kemloko consists of several hamlets (*dusun*), many of which have their own cemeteries. In some cases, a single cemetery serves several hamlets. The rituals are relatively similar: starting with cleaning the graves (*bersih makam*), followed by prayers, communal meals, and sometimes artistic performances or religious gatherings (*pengajian*). Each hamlet that has a cemetery usually holds its own *Nyadran* ceremony, on its own designated day.

*Nyadran* ceremonies at each cemetery are attended by local residents as well as those from outside the area whose ancestors are buried there. These ceremonies are held on Fridays that fall on specific Javanese calendar days (known as *pasaran*): Friday *Legi*, Friday *Paing*, Friday *Pon*, Friday *Wage*, and Friday *Kliwon*. These Fridays are spread over a period of 35 days. They are typically selected from the months of *Rajab* and *Ruwah* — the latter being the final month in the Javanese calendar, occurring before the fasting month of Ramadan.

This study focuses specifically on the *Nyadran Setono Putih* ritual, which is held at a cemetery located between the hamlets of Jurang and Dukuh. This cemetery serves as the burial site for residents of Jurang, Dukuh, and Senanggan in Kemloko village. The ceremony observed for this research took place on a Friday *Kliwon* during the month of *Ruwah*, just before Ramadan.

Although *Nyadran* generally follows a scheduled day, in some cases, families may perform the ritual on a different day. For instance, if a family has obligations (*tanggungan*) to conduct *Nyadran* at several ancestral cemeteries, they may combine the ceremonies into a single *kenduri* (communal feast). While this usually aligns with the *Nyadran* day in their village (e.g., Friday *Kliwon*), it may also occur on another day for practical reasons.

The Friday *Kliwon Nyadran* in Kemloko is performed in various ways, including differences in timing and location. Some residents carry it out at the cemetery, while others do so at home. The home-based *kenduri* is often held on Thursday *Wage*, the day before the cemetery-based *Nyadran* on Friday *Kliwon*. These home rituals may take place in the late afternoon, at night, in the morning, or even on Friday midday — depending on family schedules and availability.

The home-based *kenduri* is performed through a ceremonial meal. The food served ranges from traditional to modern dishes. Since many rituals coincide on the same day, it is common for multiple *kenduri* events to be held throughout the day. The main purpose of these feasts is to pray for deceased family members as well as for the well-being of the living — both within the family and the wider community.

The prayers recited during *Nyadran* can vary from one family or group to another. Some include complete recitations of selected Qur'anic chapters and verses, *tahlil* (a traditional Islamic prayer involving the repetition of phrases glorifying God), and supplications (*du'a*), while others simply offer basic prayers. However, the core intent remains the same — to pray for the souls of the deceased so they may receive forgiveness and salvation in the afterlife. For the families left behind, prayers are offered for their well-being and prosperity in both this world and the hereafter.

The way *Nyadran* is carried out reflects a strong sense of communal solidarity (*keguyuban*) among community members. There exists a kind of social obligation to attend a *kenduri* (communal meal) if it is held at someone's home. For those who are unable to attend — such as the elderly or widows — neighbors who do attend will usually bring them a portion of the *kenduri* meal. These actions beautifully portray values of togetherness, compassion, respect, and generosity toward family and neighbors. It is these positive values that arguably explain why the *Nyadran* tradition continues to thrive and evolve.

At the time this research was conducted, the *Nyadran* ceremony consisted only of group prayers held either at homes or cemeteries. On other occasions, however, the event may be accompanied by large religious gatherings (*pengajian akbar*) or traditional art performances. *Nyadran* ceremonies that include both *pengajian* and performances are considered more elaborate or festive. One of the hamlets in Kemloko that holds such celebrations is Dusun Gendungan.

Distant relatives often travel to attend these events, watch *jatilan* (a traditional Javanese trance dance), and visit relatives hosting the *Nyadran*. In this way, *Nyadran* becomes an enjoyable occasion that strengthens familial and social bonds.

There are several reasons why this tradition continues to endure. One of them is the rationality reflected in the growing critical thinking within the Kemloko community. Their understanding of *Nyadran* has developed, renewing its context alongside expanding worldviews. Therefore, it can be concluded that evolving culture—whether consciously or not—is a construction and accumulation of what the community collectively desires and agrees upon. Moreover, *Nyadran* is preserved not solely because it is a sacred ancestral tradition, but also because it continues to carry rational values that remain relevant to the community's life today.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, several conclusions can be drawn. First, *Nyadran* is carried out by the Kemloko community on specific Javanese calendar Fridays (*pasaran Jumat*) prior to Ramadan as a means of offering prayers for the souls of their ancestors and expressing filial piety. Second, information about *Nyadran* has been documented in the ancient manuscript *Kakawin Banawa Sekar Tinakung*. The seeds of this tradition have existed since the pre-Majapahit era, and its practice has evolved over time in accordance with the development of society. Third, the community performs *Nyadran* based on various forms of rationality: Traditional rationality, by following and honoring ancestral customs; Affective or emotional rationality, as an expression of love and devotion to parents and empathy toward others; Instrumental rationality, as a means of demonstrating filial respect and affirming one's identity as a member of the community; and social value-based reasoning, in that the practice of *Nyadran* is important for communal life and is considered compatible with religious teachings.

This study leaves room for further research on the position of *Nyadran* within the paradigmatic polemic between cultural essentialism and cultural constructivism. By continuing a genealogical inquiry into *Nyadran*'s place between these two paradigmatic perspectives, it is expected to both enrich and clarify our understanding of the sufficient reasons why *Nyadran* continues to be preserved amidst the currents of cultural development that coexist with the advancement of modern technology. In addition, it also aims to clarify the categorization of the sacred and the profane within the holistic structure of *Nyadran*.

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