

The Tingkeban in Temanggung from an Anthropological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Tingkeban Ritual is one of the Javanese cultural traditions that continues to be preserved by communities in Temanggung Regency, particularly within the life-cycle rituals related to pregnancy. This tradition functions not merely as a ceremonial practice, but also embodies philosophical, religious, and social values that reflect the Javanese worldview. This study aims to analyze the meanings and functions of the Tingkeban Ritual from an anthropological perspective, with a focus on ritual symbolism and its relevance to the social and religious life of the community. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretative method. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, religious figures, and community members involved in the ritual, as well as documentation studies. The data were analyzed qualitatively using a symbolic interpretive approach to uncover the philosophical meanings embedded in ritual elements such as rujak, nasi tumpeng, and ayam ingkung, and their relationship to religious values and social concern. The findings indicate that the Tingkeban Ritual contains philosophical values emphasizing hope for safety, balance, and blessing, while simultaneously strengthening social relations and community solidarity. This tradition also represents a dialectical process between local Javanese culture and Islamic religious values, functioning as a medium for cultural and spiritual education within the community. Thus, the Tingkeban Ritual serves not only as a form of cultural heritage but also plays a significant role in maintaining identity, social harmony, and the sustainability of Javanese cultural values in Temanggung.

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Introduction

The tingkeban ritual is one of the important traditions in Javanese culture that has been preserved to the present day, including in Temanggung Regency. Generally performed during the seventh month of pregnancy, tingkeban is not merely a ceremonial practice, but embodies deep symbolic, religious, and social meanings. This tradition reflects the Javanese way of understanding pregnancy as a sacred transitional phase, filled with hope yet also uncertainty, which therefore requires symbolic reinforcement through cultural rituals passed down from generation to generation. From an anthropological perspective, tingkeban can be understood as a rite of passage that marks a woman's change in social status toward motherhood. The ritual incorporates various symbols—such as ritual bathing (siraman), the number seven, prayers, and community participation—that function to maintain social order, strengthen solidarity, and instill Javanese cosmological values. Through these symbols and ritual practices, the people of Temanggung negotiate relationships between humans, nature, ancestors, and transcendent forces within a local cultural framework.

Nevertheless, amid modernization, globalization, and the strengthening of Islamic religious practices, the tingkeban ritual has undergone dynamics and transformations. The Prophet Muhammad is regarded as a central figure and role model who, in conveying the Islamic message, built communication with various ethnic groups (Yahya, 2016). As a result, certain elements of the tradition have been adjusted, reinterpreted, or even eliminated, while others are maintained as markers of cultural identity. This condition raises anthropological questions regarding the function, meaning, and relevance of the tingkeban ritual in contemporary Javanese society, particularly in Temanggung. Therefore, an anthropological study of tingkeban is important to understand how this tradition contributes to cultural continuity, constructs social meaning, and negotiates changing values in present-day Javanese society.

In the performance of this ritual, several stages are carried out, including ritual bathing (siraman) and slametan prayers. Tingkeban practices vary from one region to another. In some areas, the ritual is performed when the fetus reaches four or seven months of gestation, involving not only considerations of pregnancy age but also distinct ritual procedures. In certain traditions, a person recites supplications at the end of the ceremony while removing

banana leaves from inside the house, symbolizing the hope for a peaceful and smooth birth. For instance, the tingkeban procession in Karanglo Village, Kupen, Pringsurat, includes ancestral remembrance or tahlilan, concluded with prayers and communal dining, which has become a customary practice in the village. Variations in tingkeban rituals across regions and social groups are influenced by strong external cultural interactions between different areas. Historically, the Islamic missionaries known as the Walisongo—including Maulana Malik Ibrahim (Sunan Gresik), Raden Rahmat (Sunan Ampel), Raden Makhendum Ibrahim (Sunan Bonang), Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat), Ja'far Shadiq (Sunan Kudus), Raden Paku or Ainul Yaqin (Sunan Giri), Raden Syahid (Sunan Kalijaga), Raden Umar Sa'id (Sunan Muria), and Syarif Hidayatullah (Sunan Gunung Jati)—played a significant role in disseminating Islam through approaches rooted in local culture (Yahya, 2016). In practice, some communities perform the tingkeban ritual based on Islamic values, while others maintain it as a customary tradition not explicitly derived from Islamic legal prescriptions, although Islam itself does not prohibit such traditions. Culture, in this sense, constitutes the totality of human creativity, intention, and sensibility, encompassing knowledge, belief systems, art, law, morality, customs, and all capabilities acquired by humans as members of society (Machmudah, 2016)

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach within a cultural anthropology perspective to examine the meanings, values, and social functions of the Tingkeban ritual as a living cultural practice in Javanese society, particularly in Karanglo Hamlet, Kupen Village, Pringsurat District, Temanggung Regency. The research adopts a descriptive–interpretative design aimed at systematically describing the ritual process and interpreting the philosophical, religious, and symbolic meanings embedded in ritual elements such as rujak, nasi tumpeng, and ayam ingkung. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with traditional and religious leaders as well as community members, and documentation studies. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using symbolic interpretive analysis, supported by data triangulation to ensure validity, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the relevance of the Tingkeban ritual in Javanese cultural, religious, and social life.

Results

Conceptual Clarification

From an anthropological perspective, the tingkeban tradition can be understood as a rite of passage, as proposed by Arnold van Gennep. The seventh month of pregnancy represents a liminal phase, marking the transition from an ordinary woman to a prospective mother. Ritual sequences such as siraman (ritual bathing), brojolan, and the symbolic use of food function as cultural mechanisms to manage the biological and social uncertainties accompanying pregnancy. Through these symbols, Javanese society structures the natural experience of pregnancy into a system of meaning that can be socially understood, accepted, and controlled. Anthropologically, tingkeban also reflects what Clifford Geertz describes as a cultural symbol system—namely, a set of symbols that shape moods, motivations, beliefs, and value systems within society. The water used in siraman, the number seven, and community involvement are not merely ritual practices, but symbolic expressions that affirm the Javanese worldview regarding harmony between humans, nature, and transcendent forces. This tradition functions as a means of cultural legitimization for hopes of safety and cosmic order, while simultaneously reinforcing psychological security for the expectant mother and her family.

In practice, the performance of tingkeban rituals in different regions or communities may be grounded in Islamic values, although the customary aspects of the ritual are not directly based on formal Islamic legal prescriptions. Nevertheless, Islam does not prohibit this tradition. Culture itself is the totality of human creativity, intention, and emotion, encompassing knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morality, customs, and all abilities acquired by humans as members of society (Machmudah, 2016).

Furthermore, tingkeban serves as a mechanism of social integration. From a functionalist anthropological perspective, such rituals maintain social cohesion by involving kinship networks and the local community. The presence of neighbors, extended family members, and traditional leaders indicates that pregnancy is not viewed merely as a private matter, but as a collective social event. Thus, tingkeban not only preserves cultural continuity but also reproduces social values such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong), solidarity, and the sustainability of Javanese cultural identity amid social change.

The Tingkeban Tradition in Pringsurat, Temanggung Regency

The tingkeban tradition practiced by some Muslim communities in Java represents an effort to nurture and educate the unborn child upon reaching seven months of pregnancy (Ayunda, 2022). As God's most perfect creation on earth, humans inherently depend on one another in social life and cannot live in isolation. This interdependence gives rise to social

interaction, which energizes and sustains social relationships.

The tingkeban tradition is a form of social interaction involving multiple community groups, highlighting mutual dependence among individuals. As a manifestation of cultural and religious acculturation, tingkeban continues to be practiced by residents of Karanglo Hamlet, Kupen Village, Pringsurat District, Temanggung Regency. The gathering of community members at the host's house symbolizes interpersonal interaction, fostering social bonds and expressions of collective care. The residents of Karanglo Hamlet continue to perform tingkeban as an expression of gratitude for the blessing of pregnancy. This practice reflects strong social concern and solidarity. The host invites community members to participate in the kenduri (communal feast), which is warmly received by the villagers. Thus, tingkeban embodies not only religious dimensions but also social values such as empathy, social responsibility, belief in moral reward, mutual respect, self-control, and humility.

Community cooperation is evident when neighbors assist the host by contributing prepared food. The communal attendance and respectful participation in the ritual reflect social welfare consciousness within the community. The distribution of food such as rujak, nasi tumpeng, and ayam ingkung represents almsgiving (sedekah) as an expression of gratitude to Allah SWT for the gift of pregnancy. In Javanese culture, such ritual sequences function not merely as tradition, but as a medium for transmitting philosophical and religious values (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). This tradition remains a powerful symbol of social care and solidarity in Karanglo Hamlet, strengthening communal bonds and reinforcing a shared sense of belonging.

Discussion

The Tingkeban Tradition in Javanese Society

Tingkeban is a Javanese tradition conducted during the seventh month of pregnancy, particularly for the first child. Each region possesses unique characteristics in its ritual processes. In Karanglo Hamlet, the ritual includes several ceremonial stages alongside a kenduri or slametan. The tingkeban tradition is carried out when the fetus reaches approximately seven months of gestation and is usually embedded within a communal feast (Hartatiningsih, 2022). This tradition continues to be practiced, particularly among Javanese communities categorized as abangan (Geertz, 1960), including those in Karanglo

Hamlet. The ritual is intended as a supplication to Allah SWT for the well-being of both mother and child, hoping for a smooth childbirth and physical perfection for the newborn. Although ritual procedures vary across regions depending on local beliefs, tingkeban remains a hereditary tradition preserved due to its strong humanitarian and social values. Ritual components include bathing ceremonies, coconut-splitting rituals, communal feasts, recitation of tahlil, and readings of manaqib or Barzanji.

Relevance of Religious Values and Social Care in the Tingkeban Tradition

An analysis of religious values within the tingkeban tradition in Karanglo Hamlet reveals a strong relationship between religion and culture. Although tingkeban is not explicitly prescribed in the Qur'an or Hadith, it persists as a cultural practice enriched with Islamic values. Religion provides moral guidance, while culture emerges from human creativity and reason. As noted by Gus Dur, although religion is not culture, it can manifest in cultural forms; culture thus becomes an expression of religious life. Field observations indicate that the tingkeban tradition embodies religious dimensions such as faith (aqidah), religious practice (sharia), and moral conduct (akhlaq). The recitation of manaqib—stories of Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani and Barzanji narratives of the Prophet Muhammad SAW strengthens religious consciousness and devotion among community members. Despite not being mandated by Islamic scripture, tingkeban continues to be practiced due to its historical role as a medium of Islamic propagation by early scholars and saints (wali). The tradition also conveys ethical values, emphasizing cleanliness, humility, and proper conduct during prayer and communal gatherings. Thus, tingkeban reflects the harmonious integration of religion and culture, both of which serve complementary roles in guiding human life.

Conclusion

One of the main elements of the tingkeban ritual is rujak, traditionally made from pomelo and cucumber. According to Kiai Rusdan, rujak symbolizes hope for a smooth pregnancy and childbirth, as well as a prosperous life for the child. Its combination of sour, fresh, and slightly bitter flavors represents the complexities of human life, which must be faced with patience and sincerity. Tumpeng rice and ingkung also carry profound symbolic meanings. The ingkung, presented with folded limbs, symbolizes total submission to God,

humility, and a plea for divine forgiveness. This philosophical meaning emphasizes the importance of obedience, gratitude, and self-awareness before the Creator. More broadly, the tingkeban ritual in Karanglo Hamlet holds strong relevance to religious and social values, particularly within the context of Islamic education. The tradition functions as a medium for internalizing faith, piety, and noble character for both the hosting family and the community. Through collective prayer, food sharing, and social togetherness, tingkeban serves as a form of cultural education that instills gratitude, social care, and moral responsibility. Consequently, tingkeban not only preserves local cultural identity but also acts as a means of character education aligned with Islamic principles.

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