



The Symbolic Meaning Of The Ruwat Sukerta Tradition In Gemekan Village, Sooko District, Mojokerto Regency

Uqtarina Husni Mu'awanah^{1*}, Suwardi Endraswara², Doni Dwi Hartanto³

Corresponding Author's e-mail : uqtarinahusni.2025@student.uny.ac.id

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Abstract

The Ruwat Sukerta tradition is a Javanese culture heritage maintained by the community of Gemekan Village, Mojokerto Regency as a ritual to ward off misfortune. This study describes the procession, analyzes the symbolic meaning of ubarampe and sesaji, and reveals the embedded cultural values. A descriptive qualitative method was employed through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The procession consists of two stages; preparation and penjamasan. The ubarampe include kembang setaman, sajen sanggan, water from seven springs, jajanan polo pendem, gumandul kesampar kesandung, tumpeng pepek, bubur panca warna, and jajanan pasar, each carrying denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings. Culture values identified include safety, life balance, mutual cooperation, respect for ancestors, and spirituality.

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Introduction

Culture is a manifestation of human thoughts, ideas, and creations throughout the history of civilization. Culture has a wide scope, which includes knowledge systems, beliefs, art, and norms or

¹ Yogyakarta State University, Jalan Colombo No. 1, Karangmalang, Caturtunggal, Depok, Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta, 55281, Indonesia

² Yogyakarta State University, Jalan Colombo No. 1, Karangmalang, Caturtunggal, Depok, Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta, 55281, Indonesia

³ Yogyakarta State University, Jalan Colombo No. 1, Karangmalang, Caturtunggal, Depok, Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta, 55281, Indonesia

rules that are the foundation of social life (Kuswandi, Sulistiyo, & Syawaludin, 2023) Apart from being an ancestral heritage, culture also continues to evolve according to the development of the times which is the identity of a society. Referring to the ideas conveyed by Koentjaraningrat (Setiawan, 2018) explains that the term culture is basically rooted from the root word culture, which comes from the Sanskrit language, namely buddhayah. The word is the plural form of buddhi which has the meaning of mind or reason. Therefore, culture can be interpreted as a spirit that contains elements of creation, taste, and karsa. On the other hand, culture can be understood as a real product of these three elements. There are seven cultural elements that are classified by Koentjaraningrat, namely the religious system, the order of community organizations, the knowledge system, the linguistic aspect, the art, the livelihood system, to the technological system and equipment facilities (Olang, Oktaviani, & Oktaviani, 2021). The seven elements are interconnected and form a whole system. This shows that culture is not a part that can stand alone, but a unit that works together.

One of the forms of culture is tradition. Referring to Poerwadarminta's thoughts (Latif, Gunawijaya, & Nurbaeti, 2023) explained that tradition is a system of beliefs and habits of society that is passed on continuously between generations. Traditions are inherited by ancestors from generation to generation as a form of identity that can distinguish one group from another. Tradition is not only a form of static relics of the past, but a legacy that lives by continuing to transform and adapt to the life of modern society without losing its ancestral values (Syafitri & Hakim, 2025). The statement emphasizes that the key to the preservation of a tradition lies in the active role of the next generation in carrying out the values contained in it. The preservation of a tradition is also a form of respect for ancestors, as well as a forum to establish harmony and harmony between residents (Haryanto, 2021). A tradition still survives and is carried out by the community because it has a value of benefit for the community that supports it. Traditions can be carried out by individuals or groups of people. In Javanese society, tradition discusses the life cycle of human life, from the womb to no longer life. One of the traditions found in Mojokerto Regency is the Symbolic Meaning of the Ruwat Sukerta Tradition in Gemekan Village, Sooko District, Mojokerto Regency.

The Ruwat sukerta tradition is a ritual of self-cleansing or self-purification that aims to repel reinforcements from all calamities or bad luck that are believed to be attached to a person. Etymologically, ruwat comes from the word ngruwat or ngruwut which has the meaning of releasing or purifying a person from bad luck, curses, or things that can hinder the blessings of life (Putra & Arsyad, 2023). The community believes that by carrying out the tradition of ruwatan along with a series of prayers and offerings or ubarampe used, it can make life smooth and avoid unwanted disasters. Not only as an ancestral inheritance, but as a way to make the mind more peaceful in living daily life. This is in line with the thinking (Mazid, Prasetyo, & Farikah, 2020) which states that the values of local wisdom are still relevant as a form of peace of life in overcoming people's concerns about a disaster.

A symbol can be interpreted as a form or object that represents something rather than the physical form of the object itself. According to the view (Smith, 2020) Symbols have a function as a link between invisible values and tangible forms, so that a person becomes aware of their social and cultural environment. In daily life there are various kinds of symbols, ranging from spoken words, objects or objects, to body language. From the various forms of these symbols, what is called with symbolic meaning was born. Symbolic meaning is the meaning or value of an object regarding something outside of its physical manifestation. The two cannot be separated because symbols are symbols that are in physical form while symbolic meaning is the meaning contained in them. This is in line with the opinion (Palippui, 2026) Symbols are signs that represent something and its meaning appears through interpretation by human interaction.

The researcher used Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics. Semiotic theory is a method to interpret the meaning of a sign, which is divided into three, namely denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation can be interpreted as the true meaning or physical form of a sign, while connotation is an additional meaning that exists due to the influence of emotions, feelings, and culture of the community which ultimately forms a myth that is believed by social society. In line with Smith's (2021: 45) view, Roland Barthes' semiotics is very effective in seeing a culture not only seen literally, but also storing ideological values and myths in it.

Research on the Symbolic Meaning of the Ruwat Sukerto Tradition in Gemekan Village, Sooko District, Mojokerto Regency is motivated by the phenomenon of fading local traditions that are increasingly less known by the younger generation. In the midst of the trend of modernization that continues to develop to this day, many Javanese cultural ritual practices are slowly starting to be abandoned because they are considered archaic or irrelevant to today's life. Even though it contains noble values that are very meaningful. Therefore, this research is present with the aim of revealing the symbolic meaning contained in the Ruwat Sukerta tradition. The researcher hopes that through this study, future generations can better know, understand, and apply these noble values in their daily lives.

There is a harmonious research, namely research by (Kuriandini & Artono, 2021) which examines the Ruwatan Nuswantara Tradition in Mojokerto Regency in the period 1959-2019. The study discusses the Ruwat Agung Nuswantara Majapahit Tradition in Mojokerto Regency from a historical perspective, namely researching changes in the process of implementing traditions from 1959 to 2019. The research focuses more on a large scale, namely collective ruwatan which is mass in nature and has become an annual agenda of regional tourism. This makes the realm of discussion more to the socio-cultural aspect in macro terms and changes in the procession from time to time. However, the research has not touched on the practice of ruwatan in the personal and domestic realms, namely the tradition of ruwat sukerta which is carried out individually or independently. In addition, the research has also not analyzed in depth the symbolic meaning of ubarampe or equipment used in the implementation of the ruwatan tradition, as well as the cultural values contained in it.

The researcher examined the Ruwatan Tradition which was carried out individually precisely in Gemekan Village, Sooko District, Mojokerto Regency, starting from the preparation stage before the procession began, the route of the suwatan ruwat procession, to the procession after the ruwatan tradition was carried out. The novelty of this research lies in three main things. First, the object of the study is personal or individual ruwatan that takes place in the domestic realm, not mass ruwatan that is public ceremonial, so as to provide a deeper perspective on how this tradition is lived and carried out in the community. Second, this study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to dissect the symbolic meaning of each ubarampe used in the ruwatan procession, an approach that has not been applied to the study of the ruwatan tradition in the Mojokerto area before. Third, this research specifically explores the cultural values contained in the Ruwat Sukerta tradition. This not only documents the practice of the ritual, but also enriches the understanding of the local wisdom of the Javanese people.

Method

This research uses a qualitative type of research with a descriptive approach. The qualitative descriptive approach aims to present a systematic, factual, and accurate picture of a particular phenomenon or object. Align with views (Abdussamad, 2022) Qualitative research is a method to study an object, where the data produced is not through calculation or statistical procedures, but in

the form of descriptions or descriptions. In the data collection process, the researcher uses the purposive sampling technique, which is a way to determine the research subject based on certain objectives or considerations, not based on regions or strata (Scott, 2017). Informants were selected based on criteria that were in accordance with the research objectives and had sufficient knowledge to obtain in-depth data. Data collection was carried out through observation methods, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Additional data collection methods were applied by examining various relevant supporting literature to deepen the discussion of the tradition.

The resulting data was then analyzed using Roland Bartes' semiotic theory. Roland Bartes' semiotic theory can reveal that an image contains a meaning, from this process a 'myth' is created that can affect a person's perspective (Hakim & Monalisa, 2022). The researcher used a data validity test using source triangulation. Triangulation of sources by (Nurrahmi & Syam, 2020) It is a technique to test the correctness of information that has been obtained by comparing data from various perspectives, so that the data does not only rely on one source but through comparisons between research instruments. With the triangulation of data sources, the data presented has a high level of credibility and can be scientifically accounted for.

Results and Discussion

1. Results

a. Procession of Ruwat Sukerta Tradition

The Ruwat Sukerta tradition carried out in Gemekan Village, Sooko District, Mojokerto Regency consists of four interrelated stages: preparation, jamasan or siraman, slametan, and wayang kulit performance. These findings were obtained through direct observation and in-depth interviews with Ki Dalang Seno Aji as the ritual leader and the family of Nadia Eka Safitri as the ruwatan participant. The preparation stage is conducted one day before the ruwatan procession. At this stage, the family prepares all ritual necessities under the guidance of Ki Dalang Seno Aji, who leads the ruwatan process for Nadia Eka Safitri. The preparation begins with cleaning the entire house area. In Javanese tradition, cleaning the house before a ritual aims to remove negative energy and unpleasant emotional traces from the household space. After the house is cleaned, yellow janur decorations, commonly known as tarub or bleketepe, are installed. The yellow janur is not merely decorative, but also serves as a symbolic announcement to the local community that the family will hold an important ceremonial event, namely a ritual procession intended to ward off misfortune.

The preparation process is carried out collectively through the spirit of mutual cooperation among local residents. Neighbours and close relatives come to the organiser's house to help prepare the ritual needs. Women generally take responsibility for preparing food in the kitchen, while men arrange seats, set up tents, and prepare the equipment used in the ruwatan procession. This collective involvement shows that the Ruwat Sukerta tradition is not only a private family matter, but also a communal event that strengthens social bonds among villagers. In addition, the preparation of ubarampe is supervised directly by Ki Dalang Seno Aji to ensure that all ritual requirements follow the established pakem and that no element is omitted. The ubarampe includes water taken from seven different sources, namely Petirtaan Jolotundo, Trowulan forest water, Sumber Tuwo, Sendang Sumur Sakti, Sumur Pas, South Coast seawater, and first rainwater. Other ritual elements include kembang setaman, sajen sanggan, polo pendem, polo gumandul, polo kesampar lan kesandung, and various other offerings. Ki Dalang Seno Aji checks each component carefully, because the absence of one ritual element is believed to reduce the completeness and validity of the ruwatan.

The jamasan or siraman stage is the core procession of the Ruwat Sukerta tradition. In Gemekan Village, this procession is held at night, starting at around 19.00 WIB. The ritual begins with an opening by the pambiwara or traditional master of ceremony, who conditions the atmosphere to become calm and solemn. The pambiwara then reads the order of the event and explains the purpose of the ruwatan procession to the family and residents in attendance. This opening marks the transition from an ordinary social atmosphere to a sacred ritual atmosphere. Before the siraman begins, the family performs sungkeman as a request for blessing. The procession begins with the child's parents performing sungkem to the grandparents as a symbol of respect for lineage and a request for blessing from the family elders. After that, the child who is being ruwat performs sungkem to the parents. This intergenerational sungkeman carries a deep philosophical meaning, namely the cleansing of emotional barriers between generations before physical purification begins (Setyawan, 2020).

After the sungkeman procession, the child is guided to the siraman area. Under the direction of Ki Dalang Seno Aji, the parents mix water from seven different sources and add kembang setaman consisting of roses, jasmine, and ylang-ylang. The mixture of seven-source water and flowers symbolises the hope that the child's good name will remain fragrant in the future. The siraman is first performed by the grandparents and then continued by the parents. After the watering procession is completed, Ki Dalang Seno Aji recites a prayer that is followed by the child. The ritual is then closed by gently waving manggar over the child's body after it has been dipped into the prayed-over flower water. This stage is followed by the cutting of a small portion of the child's hair by the dalang. The hair is collected on banana leaves and later larung or washed away into the river. This act symbolises the removal of misfortune, the release of all forms of sengkala, and the rebirth of a purified human soul.

Slametan becomes the closing stage of the main Ruwat Sukerta procession. The family prepares a meal for the residents who attend the ritual. Before the meal begins, Ki Dalang Seno Aji leads a prayer as an expression of gratitude to God Almighty for the completion of the ruwatan procession. Slametan also functions as a social space that strengthens friendship and solidarity among local residents. After all stages of the ruwatan are completed, the event is closed with a wayang kulit performance featuring the Murwakala story. This story must be performed in full without omitting any part, because each scene contains prayers and mantras that are considered essential to the ruwatan. The performance begins with the genealogy of Batara Kala, whose imperfect birth is linked to the uncontrolled desire of Batara Guru. This section reminds the family and audience of the consequences of losing self-control and inner balance. The climax of the performance appears in the manifestation of Batara Wisnu as Dalang Kandabuwana. In this context, the dalang is not merely an artist, but also acts as a spiritual figure who holds ritual authority over the salvation and purification of the human soul.

b. Ubarampe Offering Traditional Ruwat Sukerta



Figure 1. Garden Flowers
(Source: Personal Documentation)

Table 1. Denotative, Connotative, and Mythical Meanings of Kembang Setaman in the Ruwat Sukerta Tradition

Denotation	Konotasi	Myth
A collection of fresh flowers of various types and colors neatly arranged and grouped according to their color clusters in a rectangular wooden tray. The types of flowers include roses, white training flowers (<i>jasminum sambac</i>), and ylang flowers (<i>cananga odorata</i>).	Kembang setaman connotes the beauty of ethics and harmony in diversity	Traditional people believe that the fragrance of the garden flowers is a bridge or spiritual communication. Garden flowers mixed with water for the jamming procession are believed to be able to fade, neutralize, and break the chain of negative energy that binds a person's fate, so that they can return to a fit or clean condition and be free from all calamities. The fragrant aroma is also believed to be able to make the social environment proud.



Figure 2. Sajen Sanggan
Source: Personal Documentation

Table 2. Denotative, Connotative, and Mythical Meanings of Sajen Sanggan in the Ruwat Sukerta Tradition

Yes	Ubarampe	Denotation	Konotasi	Myth
1.	Plantain	Two ripe colored plantain combs (setangkep) are arranged in a circle in a container	The hope is that humans will get glory, nobility, and high degrees like a king.	It is believed that the king's piang is a rejection of logs and can bring an aura of leadership as a provision for life.
2.	Whole coconut	One whole coconut that has not been peeled is placed in the middle	It is connoted as a form of determination, purity of soul, and mental readiness in facing the dynamics of life	It is believed that the water in the coconut is intact and serves as an antidote to poison and as a form of cleansing from sengkala.
3.	Air own	A traditional water container made of clay	The jug as a container of water symbolizes the nature of coolness and clarity connotes the importance of controlling lust and emotions, so that all actions are based on a cold mind and a clean heart.	It is believed that the jug water has the magical power of sending charms (breaking the reputation)
4.	Squirt	A small container of banana leaves containing a free-range chicken egg. Nginang equipment such as betel leaves, jambe, gambier, and tobacco. Makeup accessories, such as glass, combs, and powder.	Chicken eggs are connoted as a form of origin for the beginning of a new and holy life. The completeness of nginang is connoted as social unity and harmony, that each bitterness is a manifestation of different backgrounds that must be merged into a whole unit. Glass is connoted as an act of self-introspection from past mistakes, combs are connoted as an act of arranging tangled thoughts, powder is connoted as a form of displaying self-image and	Cok will be trusted as a medium of respect for the ancestors so as not to interfere with the course of the ruwatan tradition, it is believed to be a treat or spiritual dish favorite of the leluur provided so that the holy spirits can be present to give blessings and protection, and the completeness of makeup is believed to be a means of healing oneself inwardly so that the aura of purity can come out and be clean from all negative energies.

5.	Three-Dimensional Flowers	There are three types of flowers, namely red roses, white jasmine, and ivory white cantile buds	character in society. Telon flowers are connoted as a form of sincerity of intention (roses), purity of inner birth (jasmine flowers), and hope that prayer and salvation are always closely attached or kumantil in the heart (cantil flowers).	Telon flowers that have a distinctive aroma are believed to be a magical bridge that brings human prayers to the spiritual dimension, as well as an alluring scent to bring positive energy.
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Figure 2. Water 7 Source
Source: Personal Documentation

In the jamming procession, one of the most important and mandatory elements is 7-source water. The water of the 7 sources is taken from seven different places. The selection of water sources or water sources is determined based on historical value, the level of sacredness, or the cultural proximity of the community to the surrounding nature. The 7 sources are from the Jolotundo reservoir, the water of the Trowulan forest, the source of tuwo, the source of the sendang sumur sakti, the source of the well pas, the seawater of the south coast, and the first rainwater.

Table 3. Denotative, Connotative, and Mythical Meanings of Seven-Source Water in the Ruwat Sukerta Tradition

Denotation	Konotasi	Myth
Seven jugs containing water from seven different springs were placed on a small round table made of rattan.	The number seven is connoted as the hope of the presence of <i>pitulungan</i> (help), <i>pitutur</i> (noble advice), and <i>piwulungan</i> (life teachings). The 7 sources of water are connoted as a form of inner cleansing, purification of intentions, and clarity of mind. This is a moral teaching that	The Javanese people believe that sacred springs or springs when put together can have magical powers. Water from seven different sources is believed to be able to ward off all forms of misfortune and drive away misfortune, so that a person who is ruwat is protected

human beings who want to improve their fate must start by purifying their hearts, purifying their minds from malice, and returning to nature. from all obstacles, is always given salvation by God Almighty, and gets a smooth flow of sustenance.



Figure 3. Polo Bowls, Polo Bowls, Polo Bowls and Bowls

Source: Personal Documentation

Table 4. Denotative, Connotative, and Mythical Meanings of Polo Pendem, Polo Gumandul, and Polo Kesampar lan Kesandung in the Ruwat Sukerta Tradition

Denotation	Konotasi	Myth
A tray containing various types of produce that is processed by boiling. There are several food categories, namely polo pendem (tubers that are hidden in the ground, such as taro, sweet potatoes, cassava), polo gumandul (plants that hang on trees, such as yellow pumpkin), polo kesampar and stumbling (food crops that creep on the surface of the ground, such as peanuts).	Polo pendem is connoted as a form of the value of <i>humility</i> or humility and a reminder of the origin of human beings or <i>sangkan paraning dumadi</i> , which teaches people not to be disobedient. Polo gumandul is connoted as a form of dependence on human life to the Creator, namely as a reminder for humans to always "depend" on God for all their hopes and fates. Polo Stumping and stumbling are connoted as a form of prudence in maintaining speech and behavior to others.	People believe in the myth that sengkala can come from any direction, either from things that are hidden in the past, that hang in the future, and that creep around the current human environment. Sengkala that is holding sustenance below will be eliminated by the power of polo pendem, the bad luck that looms over the head is neutralized by the polo gumandul, and the obstacles of life's journey are banned by polo slapping.



Figure 4. Tumpeng Pepek
Source: Personal Documentation

Table 5. Denotative, Connotative, and Mythical Meanings of Tumpeng Pepek in the Ruwat Sukerta Tradition

Denotation	Konotasi	Myth
A tumpeng surrounded by a variety of side dishes on a trash container based on banana leaves. There are pieces of grilled chicken, milkfish, round eggs and yellow seasoned tempeh, tofu, fried noodles, dried tempeh, fried sambal, as well as urap vegetables with grated coconut.	The shape of the rice that is constricted upwards annotates Javanese monotheism and spirituality centered on God Almighty. Meanwhile, the word <i>pepek</i> has a complete meaning, namely abundant and various types of side dishes that annotate the readiness of the human mind in facing the complexity of earthly life. Side dishes arranged in a circular manner symbolize social harmony, where the different elements of society (symbolized by the variety of side dishes) must remain united around a common axis of goodness.	People believe that tumpeng <i>pepek</i> is not just food, but a replica of the universe. Cone rice is a depiction of a mountain, while the side dishes around it represent the entire contents of the earth, both land animals, aquatic animals, and plants. If all the elements of nature (land, water, air) have been symbolically presented in one unit, they will receive the blessing of the ruler of the ancestral realm to restore the curse of misfortune to safety, prosperity, and an abundance of sustenance for a person who is converted.



Figure 5. Five Color Porridge
Source: Personal Documentation

Table 6. Denotative, Connotative, and Mythical Meanings of Five-Coloured Porridge in the Ruwat Sukerta Tradition

Denotation	Konotasi	Myth
The five-color porridge is served separately into square-sized transparent plastic mica containers arranged on a woven bamboo trash. There are several colors such as white, yellow, brown, and black. Some of the porridge is sprinkled with fresh white coconut grated.	White jenang is connoted as inner purity as well as the seed of the father or semen, while brown or red porridge derived from tamarind sugar is connoted as the blood of the mother. The combination of these two elements of color so that humans always remember their biological and spiritual origins, and respect the parents who are the intermediaries of existence in the world. These colors are also connoted as a form of lust inherent in humans, which must be controlled under the control of absolute lust or white as its axis.	The community believes that the four sedulur (four passions/elements) are "fed" or respected through the symbolization of this five-colored porridge, then the invisible forces around humans will not disturb, but will support and bless the safety of the victims in living life.

**Figure 5.** Market Snacks

Source: Personal Documentation

Table 7. Denotative, Connotative, and Mythical Meanings of Market Snacks in the Ruwat Sukerta Tradition

Denotation	Konotasi	Myth
A variety of snacks are sold in traditional markets and placed on the garbage. Market snacks that include a combination of semi-traditional foods such as jipang snacks wrapped in clear	The diversity of flavors, colors, and types of market snacks notes the contents of the earth or the hustle and bustle of life in a world full of dynamics, and is a symbol of the sincerity of	The Javanese people believe that the misfortune or misfortune of life is born as a result of an imbalance between the human living space and the spiritual space. Meanwhile, the

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 (Mu'awanah et al. 2026)

plastic, along with a variety of modern snacks produced by the factory packaged in colorful plastic sachet packaging.

parents to share blessings with others.

market is considered the center of the vortex of life energy, crowds, and the turnover of sustenance that never dies. Market snack offerings are believed to be a symbol of energy reintegration, so that all forms of misfortune can be replaced by the turnover of good fortune and smooth sustenance.

2. Discussion

a. Ruwat Sukerta Procession as a Structured Ritual System

The results of the research on Ruwat Sukerta in Gemekan Village are not just ceremonies that are carried out spontaneously, but a structured and consistent ritual system. There are four stages in the procession of the ruwat sukerta ceremony, namely preparation, jamming, slametan, and puppet performances which form a cycle which in ritual anthropology studies is called the *rite of passage*, which is the process of transitioning a person's status from a condition that is considered dangerous to a condition that is safe and socially accepted. Arnold van Gennep in his early concept divided *rites of passage* into three phases, namely *separation* (separation), *liminality* (threshold), and *incorporation* (reunification). This structure is clearly seen in the Ruwat Sukerta tradition where the preparation stage, namely the cleaning of the house, represents the phase *separation*, Jamming and Cutting Hair Fill Phase *liminality* where the subject is between two states, while slametan serves as a phase *incorporation* which affirms the return of the individual into the community with a renewed status. This is in line with the findings (Nurazizah, 2022) which concludes that transitional rituals in Javanese society consistently follow these three phases, where slametan plays a role as an irreplaceable mechanism of social affirmation.

Ki Dalang Seno Aji as a practitioner not only positions himself as an artist, but also as a figure of ritual authority who mediates the relationship between the human world and the spiritual world. (Wicaksana & Wicaksandita, 2023) observing that in the Javanese puppet tradition, a puppeteer plays a dual role, namely as a movers of the performance and on the other hand also as a prayer leader who bears responsibility for the harmony of human relations with the universe. This duality of roles is evident in the procession of Ruwat Sukerta, especially when Ki Dalang Seno Aji recites mantras from the Murwakala play to ward off the threat of Batara Kala who lurks for the safety of the Sukerta.

b. The Meaning of Semiotics in Roland Barthes' Theory Analysis

Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis of the type of ubarampe used in the Ruwat Sukerta tradition reveals that each ritual object does not function only as a physical object, but as a *sign system* that works on three layers of meaning simultaneously. Roland Bathes' approach that distinguishes between denotation (literal meaning), connotation (associative meaning), and myth (naturalized ideological meaning) proves relevant to dissect the complexity of Javanese symbolism. For example, the number of flowers in the garden is analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory will produce a multi-layered structure of meaning, where at the level of denotation the flowers are a group of fresh flowers such as roses, jasmine, cantil, and ylang that are used for the procession of jamming, at the level of connotation representing the multitude of names, the beauty of ethics and the harmony of life, but at

the level of myth the fragrance of flowers is believed to be a medium A bridge of spiritual communication that connects the human dimension with the ancestral world. The mechanism of the transition from connotation to myth by Rolan Barthes is referred to as the naturalization of ideology (Bartes, 1957). Where in the Ruwat Sukerta tradition, spiritual beliefs rooted in the construction of past cultures are re-presented in the midst of the people of Gemekan Village as if it were something natural, absolute and universal.

In line with the study of Setiawan and Kurniawati (2021) which researched the symbolism of offerings in Javanese traditional ceremonies in Yogyakarta, it was concluded that the symbol system in rituals is not just a static code language, but a dynamic instrument to transmit cultural values across generations. Furthermore, Fitriani (2024) emphasized that ubarampe in Javanese rituals functions as a cultural text that is loaded with cosmological narratives, so that its reading requires a *multilayered approach* as explained in Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis knife, so that the meaning behind the structure of the sign is not reduced.

In this study, the uniqueness of the cultural text can be seen in the classification of the types of earth or palawija, namely polo pendem, polo gumandul, polo kesampar stumble. Through the eyes of Roland Barthes, these signs do not only show the type of food crop, but are a representation of the Javanese philosophy of life. The polo pendem that grows in the ground is interpreted as a reminder of origin and humility, the polo gumandul that hangs from a tree symbolizes man's dependence on God, while the polo of slaps that creep on the surface of the ground is a reminder of prudence in association. The classification of palawija is not arranged randomly, but uses spatial logic, namely the direction of the bottom (pendem), upper (dependent), and surrounding (stumbling block). This is connoted as the direction of the coming of sengkala that can lurk humans from various corners of life. This representation is in line with the thought of Clifford Geertz (1960) which is referred to as *weltanschauung* or a cohesive worldview, where the cosmos, nature, and human life must be seen as a unit of interconnected ecosystems and must be kept in balance.

c. Cultural Values Contained in the Ruwat Sukerta Tradition

The value of safety is the core of the implementation of the Ruwat Sukerta Tradition because it aims to free individuals from threats and dangers, both physical and spiritual. The value of salvation in this tradition is not simply interpreted as freedom from danger, but an effort to purify oneself to free a person from sukerta or everything that has the potential to bring misfortune to life. This protection is manifested through a spiritual network, including the performance of the Murwakala play which symbolically functions as a shield to neutralize the threat through the figure of Batara Kala. Through the procession of ruwatan, humans strive to ask for protection from God Almighty so that the journey of life in the future will always be given safety, peace, and harmony. The concept of balance or harmony is a fundamental value in the Javanese view of life known as *harmony* and *slamet*. Ruwat Sukerta is a concrete effort to restore the balance between the human world and supernatural forces that are believed to have been disturbed by a person's sukerta condition. This value of balance is also reflected in the use of various paired elements and sacred numbers in rituals, which demonstrate a deep understanding of the duality and harmony of the universe.

The implementation of Ruwat Sukerta clearly displays the value of mutual cooperation which is one of the main identities of the Javanese people, especially rural communities. The preparation of ubarampe and offerings involves the active participation of neighbors and villagers without expecting material rewards. Slametan which ends the ruwatan procession is a manifestation of the spirit of sharing and togetherness. The value of mutual cooperation in ruwatan shows that the community views the individual not as an independent entity, but as an integral part of the larger social unity. As

in the perspective of Emiel Durkheim, ritual processions like this serve to strengthen mechanical solidarity, namely social bonds built on the basis of common values and common identity.

Nugroho and Puspitasari (2022) in their research on the social function of communal rituals in East Java found that the active involvement of community members in the preparation of traditional ceremonies significantly strengthens the social capital of the community, including interpersonal trust and reciprocity norms. The findings are also in line with the tradition of ruwatan carried out by residents in Gemekan Village, where the preparation of Ruwat Sukerta moves all levels of society organically, not because of formal obligations but because of the internalization of deep-rooted values of morality.

The Ruwat Sukerta tradition is a form of respect for the ancestors who have inherited this tradition as a form of local wisdom in facing life's challenges. By continuing to carry out ruwatan, the people of Gemekan Village show their appreciation for the cultural heritage of their ancestors while affirming their cultural identity. The value of this respect is also reflected in the respectful treatment of elders, locksmiths, and puppeteers who are considered as heirs and guardians of the sacred knowledge of the ruwatan tradition. The value of respect for ancestors can be seen in the sungkeman procession. Sungkeman is not just a gesture of physical respect, but a practice that actively reproduces the age hierarchy and recognition of the wisdom of previous generations. Aziz (2023) explains that these kinds of practices play an important role in maintaining the continuity of cultural knowledge transmission amid the increasingly rapid flow of modernization, a function that is increasingly relevant when many local traditions face the threat of extinction.

Behind all its symbolism and ritual processions, Ruwat Sukerta contains a deep spiritual value about man's relationship with God Almighty. The prayers that are offered, the offerings that are offered, and the mantras that are recited are all expressions of man's recognition of his limitations and dependence on a higher power. This spiritual value shows that the Ruwat Sukerta tradition is not just an animistic practice, but has undergone a process of syncretism that integrates divine values that come from various layers of cultural and religious influences that have colored Javanese society.

From the perspective of spiritual values, Ruwat Sukerta reflects a long process of syncretism between animist beliefs, dynamism, the influence of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islamic values. Like the Murwakala play which is rooted in Hindu mythology about Batara Kala, but in practice in Gemekan Village it has been integrated with prayers with Islamic nuances and ends with slametan which is a typical tradition of the Javanese Muslim community. This kind of syncretism in research by Hermansyah and Rahayu (2024) in the study of Javanese Islamic rituals in East Java is not ambiguity or contradiction, but a cultural adaptation strategy that allows a tradition to remain alive and relevant in the midst of changing religious contexts of its people.

Conclusion

The tradition of Ruwat Sukerta in Gemekan Village, Sooko District, Mojokerto Regency is not just a ritual heritage that is carried out because of hereditary customs. More than that, the tradition is a cultural system that contains ancestral values of life balance, humility, respect for God Almighty, and togetherness that continues to be cared for and implemented by the local community. Through the approach of Roland Barthes, this study shows that each ubarampe holds a deep layer of meaning, ranging from physical meanings that can be seen, cultural values that are connotated, to cosmological beliefs that have been integrated into people's lives. However, this study has a number of limitations, namely that this study was only conducted at one location and one Ruwatan event, so the findings produced do not necessarily represent the overall practice of Ruwat Sukerta in the wider Java region

because each region can have different processions and ubarampe. This study has also not delved deeper into how the child who is raped feels before and after the rapan procession. Therefore, further research is expected to expand the scope of the study area so that comparisons between regions can be carried out more systematically. In addition, a long-term ethnographic approach that involves more than one observation will greatly enrich the understanding of the dynamics of the Ruwat Sukerta tradition over time.

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