



Original Article

Ritual Communication Behind Nyerabi Tradition (Symbolic Quran Recitation of the Wali Nyatok Preaching at Rembitan Ancient Mosque, Lombok)

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Abstract:

Nyerabi is a special ritual for the Islamic community in Rembitan. In this research, we will review the meaning and traditions of nyerabi in the ancient mosque of Rembitan Village, Pujut District, Central Lombok Regency. This research aims to determine the symbolic meaning and traditions of the Rembitan Village community in the form of rituals. In particular, later the results of this research can be described in terms of its aims and objectives. This research uses descriptive qualitative methods. Data collection techniques using observation, interviews and documentation. This research will provide understanding and knowledge about the Nyerabi ritual tradition and the use of symbols and cultural and religious elements in the Nyerabi ritual tradition.

Keywords: Tradition, Nyerabi, Semiotics



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Introduction

Religion and culture are very difficult to separate in people's lives. In Indonesia, culture must be implemented in people's lives. A question arises: "Does religion follow culture?" Or "culture follows religion?" In the reality of society in Indonesia, this question is "difficult" for us to answer. In one case, in the month of Dasan Agung, the child circumcision event is accompanied by the culture of dancing around on the streets In Pure Lingsar, Maulid Adat Bayan or Paraffu in Bima, we cannot deny that as Muslims, sometimes this "deviates" from Islamic teachings, but that is the reality in society. According to [Sumarto, \(2017\)](#) religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that connect humans to the order/command of life. Many religions have sacred narratives, symbols, and histories intended to explain the meaning of life and the origins of life or the universe. People derive their morality, ethics, religious laws, or preferred lifestyle from their beliefs about the cosmos and human nature.

The existence of identity owners is always tied to society in general. Cultural

understanding gives rise to other ways of religious practice. Religion and culture in people's lives are real manifestations of people's lives. It is not wrong, as Clifford Geertz said that "culture is a system of meanings and symbols which are structured in the sense in which individuals define their world, express their feelings, and provide their judgments; a historically transmitted pattern of meaning is realized in symbolic forms through how people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge and attitudes towards life; a collection of symbolic tools for regulating behavior, extra somatic sources of information ([Kuper, 1990](#) :[Suprpto, 2020](#)).

Culture comes from the Sanskrit language, namely "buddhayah," which is the plural form of "buddhi, " meaning mind and reason, so culture is defined as things related to the human mind and reason. In English, culture is called culture, which comes from the Latin word Colere, namely cultivating or doing. Culture is a way of life that is developed and shared by a group of people and passed down from generation to generation. According to Koentjaraningrat, culture is the whole of humans based on their behavior, and the results they must obtain with learning are structured in community life. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, culture means the results of human struggle against two strong influences, namely nature and time (nature and society), which is proof of the triumph of human life to overcome various obstacles and difficulties in life and livelihood to achieve safety and happiness which ultimately is orderly and peaceful. According to Dr. Mohammad Hatta, culture is the living creation of a nation. According to the KBBI, culture results from human activity and inner creation (reason), such as beliefs ([Karolina & Randy, 2021](#)).

From the various views and understandings of the experts above, we can understand that culture is an act or practice in certain activities that contains values and norms for a group of people's lives. Apart from that, there is a culture of "Rembitan" society, which takes the form of rituals to cover vows as a form of gratitude for the vows that have been fulfilled. The ritual is called Nyerabi. The Nyerabi culture practiced by the Rembitan people is passed down from generation to generation as a ritual process that is believed to impact their lives positively. According to [Setiyani, \(2021\)](#) every religious adherent must be able to place themselves as part of the diversity of people who cannot be equated or differentiated. Humans are creatures of God, and the creator nature has the same rights as adherents of other religions to appreciate or enjoy the universe. No one can stop religious rituals because rituals are a form of a person's spiritual expression. The implementation of rituals is accompanied by prayers or mantras recited by religious adherents as an expression of request, hoping for forgiveness so that their lives will be safe in this world and the hereafter. According to [Suprpto, \(2020\)](#) ritual is also interpreted as "a way of behaving or a series of actions which people regularly carry out in a particular situation, because it is their choice to do so." that is, a ritual is a way of behaving a series of actions that people regularly carry out in certain situations has become a habit.

Nyerabi is a series of rituals for the people of Rembitan Village, Pujut District, Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. Nyerabi is carried out in the Ancient Mosque. As we know, the ancient mosque is one of the historic mosques left by Wali Nyatoq, which is thought to have been built in the 17th century. Judging from its location, the ancient Rembitan mosque is located in the highlands of the mountains. It symbolizes height and holiness and makes it easier for people to access information from that place. Nyerabi is a ritual cleansing oneself from paying vows and "debts" of dreams or promises. This tradition occurs when there is an intention or a vow, and a referee

from the dream carries out the Nyerabi. This ritual is carried out only on Wednesdays at the ancient mosque in Rembitan village, Pujut sub-district, Central Lombok district. Apart from that, the Nyerabi ritual is also an opportunity to "water oneself" (to easily obtain sustenance) so that wasilah carried out with the Nyerabi ritual can provide a family with good fortune. Another aim of the ritual of Nyerabi is to keep the life lived away from disaster, danger and evil and to provide protection and help from Allah through the "Wali Nyatok".

From the explanation above, the researcher wants to focus on ritual communication through symbols practiced in Nyerabi culture. This research was conducted to examine the intellectual development of the practiced Nyerabi culture.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic communication method by going directly into the field. The subjects of this research are traditional actors and figures in ethnographic studies, while the object of research is the Nyerabi tradition. Ethnographic research is based on the reality of society, which requires techniques that can describe these social realities in real terms. Observation also allows researchers to appreciate reality and complex cases because they are directly in the midst of society and interact with it ([Manan, 2021](#)). The ethnographic model is research that describes culture as it is. This model attempts to study cultural events, which presents the subject's view of life as an object of study. Ethnography usually aims to describe a particular culture holistically, namely cultural aspects, both spiritual and material ([Endraswara, 2006](#)).

In this research, we will use ethnographic communication methods. Before Dell Hymes popularized communication ethnography, speaking ethnography was previously referred to as providing oral communication. Ethnography of communication becomes broader because it not only covers oral communication modes but also involves written and non-verbal communication such as body language (gestures), body movements or signs, and paralinguistics ([Pambayun, 2013](#)). The data collection technique in ethnographic research is its ability to provide a direct picture of conditions in the field. Ethnographic research is carried out based on the reality in society, and this, of course, requires techniques that can describe this social reality in real terms. The observation also allows researchers to appreciate the reality and complex cases because they are directly in the midst of society and interact with them ([Manan, 2021](#)).

In collecting research data using an ethnographic model, researchers use certain steps such as First observation and determining informants. In determining informants, researchers first identify the target group to be researched and ask permission from interested and competent parties. Second, interviews with informants, interviews in this research were carried out by researchers to obtain complete data because in conducting interviews, the data obtained by researchers is complete and accurate; this is necessary to find out so that researchers can later explain the research results narratively. Third, Photography and Videography. A researcher who stores ideas in visual form or diagrams to explain the process focuses and motivates a team (discussion or research) with a vision map; the researcher has created a great communication method. Because 80 percent of humans are visual thinkers, using visuals in photos and videos will attract the attention of people who see them ([Pambayun, 2013](#)). This is also very important because evidence in the form of images or videos is needed for the completeness of the research results. Pictures and videos can also provide repeated explanations to recall what

happened that the researcher might have forgotten.

Results

Ritual Practices in Communication Perspective

Ritual is related to spiritual beliefs and beliefs with a purpose ([Situmorang, 2004](#)). Rituals have the meaning of self-strengthening, which shapes individual behavior to collaborate with other communities to make religious rituals a success and a symbol of the religion they adhere to ([Setiyani, 2018](#)). Rituals are understood as something that must be done and are sacred. In carrying out these rituals, the embedding of "religious" symbols is also not spared from the implementation process. The rituals practiced are a manifestation of the values, norms, and customs of the local community.

Victor Turner in [Suprpto, \(2020\)](#), defines Ritual as a series of activities involving body movements, words and objects, carried out in a special place and deliberately designed to influence supernatural forces, in the name of the actor's goals and interests. "Nyerabi" is a ritual practiced by people at the Rembitan Ancient Mosque. It is usually carried out by people who have made a vow. Have you ever dreamed of eating serabi, or when there is an "Perintah dari Wali Nyatok " to "Ngaturang Serabi". Interview with Mr Lalu Suriyadi, administrator of the Rembitan village traditional institution, on 18 October 2023 that serabi is Wali Nyatok favorite food. The purpose of carrying out these rituals varies, it depends on the motive for carrying out them. Those who make vows to "Nyerabi" because they want to have children are, of course, aiming for children. If those who dream or get "wangsit," then the aim is only for safety. However, in general, this cultural practice aims to be safe from dangers in this world and the hereafter ([Suriyadi, 2023](#)).

The implementation of nyerabi begins with collecting materials, starting from loose money, upland rice which is not from paddy fields, white cloth made from cotton, lelepak (nare from wood) and dulang (clay plates). This equipment is mandatory for carrying out the Nyerabi ritual. After the materials were collected, the person who had the intention of Nyerabi invited the mangku to lead the process of making it until the serabi was brought to the ancient mosque where it was then prayed for by the local kiai who had been appointed with certain prayers. After you have finished praying, you can eat the serabi together.

Time and Purpose of the Nyerabi Ritual Practice

The time for holding the Nyerabi is Wednesday, it is not permitted to hold it on any other day. These ritual practices have dos and don'ts. Things that cannot be done are, for example, tasting, menstruating women taking part in making it, not using loose money, reconstructing the shape and taste of serabi, and many others, likewise with making serabi, from pounding and grinding. The grinding must not use a machine; it must be with a drum. (a pounding tool made of wood). This rule that cannot be done is called malik, malik lengat and is believed to give penulah Malik are words and actions that are not permissible to do; for example, menstruating women enter the mosque, participate in making serabi, or have not washed their feet entering the mosque. Malik lengat tasted the serabi, which had been put in a bowl but had not been prayed for by the kyai. If you do this, it is believed that you will immediately experience bad things, whether in the form of falling off the motorbike or encountering problems and possibly even getting sick straight away. Penulah is a form of karma, or direct reprimand from the

guardian because his methods and actions are not right or wrong.

Figure 1. Penginang Oleman In The Nyerabi Tradition



Figure 2. Joint prayer in the Nyerabi procession



Figure 1 is the 'pending Coleman', which contains nine broken betel nuts, nine rolled betel leaves, nine cigarettes made from corn husks rolled together with copper, nine pieces of hollow money and nine sheets of paper money. Meanwhile, Figure 2 shows the prayer time together in the Nyerabi procession, where the serabi is covered with white cloth in the middle. According to an interview with [Menyah, \(2024\)](#), In the Nyerabi ritual event, the family celebrating the Nyerabi prepares themselves well in advance for the necessary needs before the event takes place. Starting from determining the day. Determining the day must be done together with the Mangku (a certain person who is trusted and is used to guiding the Nyerabi ritual) so that it is at a different time than other people brought/guided by the Mangku. After the day is determined (Wednesday of that week) a week before, the family of the Nyerabi ritual participants collects mountain rice that has been tied (tied in one handful) amounting to one hundred due amat (six bundles), two hundred pieces of perforated money. After all is collected on Wednesday, a week before the Nyerabi ritual is carried out, the Nyerabi ritual participants prepare oleman to the Mangku and to the Kiai (a religious figure who has been determined as the foremost person in guiding the community) as a sign to carry out Nyerabi the following week (Wednesday). On Tuesday morning, Epen Gawe (people/families who are carrying out the Nyerabi ritual) pound rice to be ground into rice. Together with neighbors, they take turns pounding the rice so that it can later be made into serai. This implementation is unique. All those who work to prepare the

activity are women, and none of them are allowed to menstruate because they must be clean from all hadas.

On Tuesday afternoon, all the equipment was gathered to be used as a tool for making Serabi. Inen Kerandang (Mangku's wife/who accompanied her) had prepared all the equipment needed. Starting from Lelepak Pesajik (a type of nari/tray made of wood), a bowl (place to put serabi) kettle of drinking water made of earth, Dulang (earthen plate), a tool for making serabi to rice that would be made into serabi. At the time after Maghrib prayer, Mangku came; before kulak rice (preparing rice to be ground into flour), he was first entertained with Lekas (earthen plates containing cigarettes made of corn husks and areca nuts along with betel). In addition, Mangku was also entertained with coffee and food offerings from earthen plates; the number of offerings presented was two lepak (wooden nare), one nare containing two plates of side dishes and two rice. After being entertained, Mangku prepared himself to kulak (scoop) rice with mantras after the rice was ready. Next, Mangku asked other residents to pound the rice into flour.

On Wednesday morning, Mangku and Inen Kerandang came to make serabi. The rice that had been pounded into flour was mixed with coconut milk. Previously, six coconuts were peeled, and the coconut milk was mixed with water and flour, stirred thickly, and then eighteen serabi were made. The 18 serabi had to be separated into two bowls (four put serabi made of clay) to be placed in each bowl, with nine seeds and enough coconut milk. After the Dhuhur prayer, the serabi were taken up together to the ancient mosque to be prayed for by the Kiai who had been olem (invited beforehand). Not much different from zikir in general, the serabi was also prayed for by family and neighbours who also went to the ancient mosque. In the prayer process, there was a special prayer using the Sasak-Kawi language that the Kiai read. After the prayer was finished, the serabi could be eaten together and taken home if it was not finished.

Semiotic Elements in the Nyerabi Ritual

Littlejohn argued that signs are the basis of all communication ([Sobur, 2021](#)). According to Saussure, language is a sign system ([Sobur, 2021](#)). This means that every sign contains language and communication that has meaning. In the Nyerabi culture, the sign is the serabi, which is carried in a bowl (a tool for placing serabi) in the amount of nine, which means it signifies the nine saints who spread Islam in Indonesia. Apart from containing serabi, the bowl also contains coconut milk. This means these saints carry the teachings of goodness. White signifies purity, where people must be holy and clean as taught.

Apart from that, the symbol is that the bowl cover must be made of woven mambo covered with white cloth. This indicates that every life will definitely end, and the human's death will be wrapped in a white shroud. The existence of woven bamboo is a tool for death. The Rembitan community requires bamboo as a coffin. For every death, people are required to make a bamboo coffin to be used to carry the deceased. This is one of the meanings of the symbols in the Nyerabi tradition.

Conclusion

Apart from that, the symbol is that the bowl cover must be made of woven mambo covered with white cloth. This indicates that every life will definitely end, and the human's death will be wrapped in a white shroud. The existence of woven bamboo is a tool for death. The Rembitan community requires bamboo as a coffin. For every death,

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