



## THE TRADITION OF COKBAKAL AND MBOK SRI IN THE JAVANESE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY IN TEBING TINGGI, NORTH SUMATERA

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### Abstract

This research aims to explore the unique traditions practiced by the Javanese community in Tebing Tinggi, focusing on their rituals, purposes, and meanings, as well as comparing this tradition with similar practices in other regions. The study specifically examines the Javanese tradition that retains Hindu influences while thriving within a predominantly Muslim society. It investigates whether the tradition has undergone changes over time or remained consistent, and whether it was brought by migrating Javanese communities or originated independently in Tebing Tinggi. The findings of this research indicate that the tradition indeed stems from Hindu influences, reflecting Indonesia's historical adherence to Hinduism before the arrival of Islam. Although Islam became the dominant religion, cultural habits did not disappear entirely. Many similar traditions exist, differing in nomenclature but sharing comparable meanings and purposes. This tradition is notably unique, and the author suggests that such cultural practices should continue to be introduced and preserved. The intricate steps involved in the ritual, each imbued with distinct meanings, highlight the profound appreciation and gratitude of past generations toward the creator.

Keywords: Tradition; Rice planting; Farmers.

### Abstrak

Penelitian bertujuan untuk mengenal Tradisi unik yang di lakukan masyarakat Jawa yang ada di Tebing Tinggi mulai dari tata cara hingga tujuan pelaksanaan dan maknanya, serta membandingkan tradisi ini dengan tradisi lainnya di berbagai daerah yang serupa. Dengan fokus penelitian pada permasalahan Tradisi Jawa yang masih memiliki corak hindu namun tetap berkembang dikalangan masyarakat muslim, lalu apakah tradisi ini berubah atau tetap sama, apakah tradisi ini di bawa oleh masyarakat Jawa yang bermigrasi atau memang tradisi ini mutlak berasal dari Tebing Tinggi, kesimpulan dari penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa tradisi ini memang menganut aliran hindu, dikarenakan masyarakat Indonesia dahulu yang menganut ajaran agama tersebut, meski Islam datang kebiasaan tidak akan bisa hilang begitu saja. Ada banyak tradisi serupa yang berbeda dari segi penanaman namun makna pelaksanaan yang tergolong sama, tradisi ini cukup unik dan saran dari penulis alangkah lebih baik jika tradisi seperti ini bisa terus di perkenalkan, cara pelaksanaan yang tak biasa dan bahkan setiap langkah yang dilakukan memiliki maknanya masing masing, menunjukkan bagaimanakah orang-orang terdahulu sangat menghargai dan memaknai sesuatu sebagai rasa syukur terhadap sang pencipta.

Kata Kunci: Tradisi; Tanam padi; Petani.

## INTRODUCTION

Tradition and culture are two concepts frequently discussed in relation to these issues. Culture itself originates from the Sanskrit word *buddhayah*, which is the plural form of *buddhi* (mind or intellect), meaning matters related to human intellect and reasoning. In English, culture is referred to as "culture," derived from the Latin word *colere*, which means to cultivate or work,



often associated with farming or tilling the land. The term "culture" is also commonly translated as "kultur" in Indonesian<sup>1</sup>.

In simple terms, tradition can be seen as a type of habit continuously practiced by individuals from the past to the present. The word "tradition" originates from the Latin term *traditium*, meaning something passed down from the past to the present. Tradition can thus be defined as customs or cultural practices that are preserved to this day<sup>2</sup>. From an epistemological perspective, tradition also derives from the Latin word *tradition*, meaning habit, closely related to culture or customs<sup>3</sup>. When examining the various definitions of tradition, a consistent theme emerges: it is a practice perpetuated and preserved by society.

Individuals who uphold and practice long-standing customs and traditions are becoming increasingly rare in today's world. However, this does not imply that culture has entirely disappeared; there are still places where customs passed down through generations are preserved, such as in Java, where Javanese people are renowned for their rich traditions and customs.

Humans are social beings. Society is often defined as a group of people living together, cooperating to achieve common goals, and adhering to a set of rules, conventions, and customs within their environment<sup>4</sup>. This explanation emphasizes that humans, as social beings, are interdependent.

When discussing traditions, the Javanese community stands out for its rich cultural heritage. They are known for preserving their customs, despite challenges. Participation, in this context, can be understood as actions involving individual sentiments and emotions in decision-making processes and the fulfillment of responsibilities within an organization or group to achieve specific objectives<sup>5</sup>.

The Javanese community, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group, faces unique challenges in preserving their traditions. Despite Islam prohibiting some Javanese customs that conflict with Islamic teachings, many individuals, including non-Javanese people, find it difficult to abandon these long-standing practices. In Java itself, traditional customs remain widely practiced, and many other ethnic groups across Indonesia also continue their ancestral traditions.

For instance, the rice planting tradition, which varies in execution and naming across regions, demonstrates this diversity. While the objectives may be similar, differences in names and rituals give each tradition its unique characteristics.

In Paya Lombang Village, Dusun IV, Rejo Street, Tebing Tinggi, North Sumatra, the rice planting tradition is divided into two parts: one performed before planting and the other before harvesting. The pre-planting ritual, known as "penganting cokbakal," involves preparing red and white porridge, reciting prayers over it, and placing it at the planting site. The pre-harvest ritual,

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<sup>1</sup> Abdul Wahab Syakhrani and Muhammad Luthfi Kamil, "Budaya Dan Kebudayaan: Tinjauan Dari Berbagai Pakar, Wujud-Wujud Kebudayaan, 7 Unsur Kebudayaan Yang Bersifat Universal," *Journal Form of Culture* 5, no. 1 (2022): 1–10.

<sup>2</sup> Rhoni Rodin, "Tradisi Tahlilan Dan Yasinan," *IBDA` : Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Budaya* 11, no. 1 (2013): 76–87, <https://doi.org/10.24090/ibda.v11i1.69>.

<sup>3</sup> Ainur Rafiq, "Tradisi Slametan Jawa Dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Islam," *Attaqwa: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Islam* 15 (2019).

<sup>4</sup> Irwansyah Prasetyo, Doni, "Memahami Masyarakat dan Perspektifnya," *JMPIS* 1 (2020).

<sup>5</sup> Ahmad Mustanir and Partisan Abadi, "Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Musyawarah Rencana Pembangunan Di Kelurahan Kanyuara Kecamatan Watang Sidenreng Kabupaten Sidenreng Rappang," *Jurnal Politik Profetik* 5, no. 2 (2017): 247–61.

called "mbok sri," involves bringing the harvest home. Both rituals aim to seek blessings and sustenance, including prayers for family safety and health.

However, with modern advancements, these traditions are increasingly being forgotten. Various reasons are cited for this decline, including population changes, new discoveries, environmental shifts, and the influence of other cultures<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, those who still practice these traditions often feel hesitant or embarrassed, while observers may perceive them as strange due to a lack of knowledge about these customs. In the past, such practices were commonplace.

This research aims to explore this unique tradition, including its procedures, purposes, and meanings, and to compare it with similar traditions in other regions. To achieve these objectives, the study employs a qualitative research method, gathering field data through interviews and supplementary data from journals, books, and other literature sources.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach, which involves collecting data or conclusions that cannot be obtained using statistical analysis or quantitative techniques. Alternatively, this research can be simply described as a type of study where the results are not derived from statistical procedures but rather focus on the researcher's interpretation of the significance of events, interactions, or subjects' behaviors in specific circumstances<sup>7</sup>. The data collected includes field data obtained through interviews, as well as literature sources such as books and academic journals.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Cokbakal and Mbok Sri Traditions**

There is still much to be learned about the history of rice farming in general. Currently, most scholars agree that rice (*Oryza sativa*) was first cultivated in the Yangtze River Valley (now in China) between 13,500 and 8,200 years ago. This conclusion is supported by archaeological data and the historical development of language. Since its initial cultivation, rice has spread across the world through trade and migration, initially reaching much of East Asia before spreading to other parts of the world. Around 3,500–3,000 years ago, Africans independently cultivated the *Oryza glaberrima* variety. Throughout the world, including in the Americas, other wild rice species were also grown<sup>8</sup>.

Since its introduction, rice has become a staple crop that is vital for food security and culture worldwide. More than 40,000 different cultivars of *Oryza sativa* have been produced, with various other strains. New varieties, such as golden rice, genetically modified to contain beta-carotene, have emerged as a result of recent advancements in breeding techniques and agricultural practices, such as the Green Revolution and other agricultural technology transfers, leading to increased production in recent decades.

The question of whether rice originated from China or India has been a topic of discussion in plant history and anthropology. One of the earliest cultivated plants is Asian rice (*Oryza sativa*). The two main subspecies of this plant are *indica* and *japonica*, with thousands of varieties. Archaeologists in East and Southeast Asia argue that rice cultivation originated from the Yangtze

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<sup>6</sup> Anang Sugeng Cahyono, "Pengaruh Media Sosial terhadap Perubahan Sosial Masyarakat di Indonesia," *UNITA*, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Moun Erland, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. In *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, Rake Sarasin, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Jae Young Choi et al., *The Complex Geography of Domestication of the African Rice *Oryza Glaberrima**, *PLoS Genetics*, vol. 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgen.1007414>.

River Valley in southern-central China, spreading north and south to Korea and Japan. According to Indian archaeologists, rice was first cultivated by people unrelated to those in the Yangtze River Valley in the Ganges and Indus river valleys <sup>9</sup>.

Contrary to archaeological evidence, a study conducted in 2012 using genetic diversity maps of contemporary wild rice populations suggests that rice domestication may have occurred in the Zhujiang River Valley in southern China. However, due to significant climate changes during the last Ice Age, around 12,000 years ago, the map of wild rice populations used in this study is based on current data and may be misleading. Over thousands of years, human activities have also pushed wild rice populations out of their original habitats.

An older theory, based on a chloroplast and two nuclear genes <sup>10</sup>, proposed that *O. sativa* was domesticated independently at least twice, with *indica* in eastern India, Myanmar, and Thailand, and *japonica* in China and Vietnam, although they acknowledge that there is archaeological and genetic evidence for a single rice domestication in the lowlands of southern China.

Korean archaeologists claim to have discovered burned domesticated rice grains dating back to 13 BC in Soro-ri, Korea, in 2003. This claim may challenge the widely accepted theory that cultivated rice originated from China, as the rice was found to predate the earliest grain remains from the region, which date back to 10 BCE. Early scholars were initially very skeptical of this discovery, but it was later recognized as a secondary source, including in textbooks such as "Archaeology: Theory, Method, and Practice" <sup>11</sup>.

### Implementation of the Cok Balang and Mbok Sri traditions

The Cokbakal and Mbok Sri rice planting tradition is carried out at the beginning before planting rice (cokbakal) and before harvesting rice (Mbok Sri). The following are the results of the author's interview with Mr. Sumadi<sup>12</sup> on September 12, 2024, he said:

"This tradition is called the cokbakal Bride tradition, which is the cokbakal Tradition carried out at the beginning of planting rice, if it is before the harvest, it is usually called Mbok Sri, because it is brought home". "So Mbok Sri means, if in Hindu Buddhist beliefs, Mbok Sri used to mean the Goddess of Rice." "At the beginning, before planting, you make white porridge, then with the same red porridge, you recite a prayer, then take it to the field and put it in the field, then before harvesting, you usually go around the rice field seven times or maybe only three, after that you take a few stalks of rice and tie them together, then take them home, take them home like a bride and groom, carry them in a jarek cloth (carrying cloth). Then put them down until the house. "On a new white cloth, put some water there in a glass with some flowers. Also, it's also called Javanese people usually use flowers, then OK, let's say a prayer, then let it sit overnight, that's all."

The Cokbakal and Mbok Sri Tradition in Paya Lombang Village, Hamlet IV, Jln. Rejo, Tebing Tinggi, which occurred or is still carried out in Hamlet IV, but many have abandoned this tradition, there are certainly many reasons used. Here is also a continuation of the interview with Mr. Sumadi regarding the procedures, what is done and how to do it, he said:

<sup>9</sup> Sandhya Ramesh, "India's Rice History May Not Have Had Anything to Do with China," 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Jason P. Londo et al., "Phylogeography of Asian Wild Rice, *Oryza Rufipogon*, Reveals Multiple Independent Domestications of Cultivated Rice, *Oryza Sativa*," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 103, no. 25 (2006): 9578–83, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0603152103>.

<sup>11</sup> Ji myung Kim, "15,000-Year-Old Rice," *The Korea Times*, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Mr. Sumadi community leader in Paya Lobang Village, September 12, 2024

"In Javanese, there is a calculation for that day, then there is also a Javanese day so it is added up to be that many stalks of rice that must be brought home, the calculation in Javanese is like this, if Monday: 4, Tuesday: 3, Wednesday: 7, Thursday: 8, Friday: 6, Saturday: 9, Sunday: 5, then if Javanese days there are pahing: 9, wage: 4, pon: 7, kliwon: 8, legi: 5, so if for example you pick it up on Monday kliwon, if Monday is 4, kliwon is 8, so if you add it up it becomes 12, meaning the stalks of rice that must be taken are 12, well usually a good number in Javanese is, 12,16,18 is the good one."

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen how to choose a good time to carry it out, even for those who do it, it is usually recommended to have a higher neton or Javanese birthday than others. Mr. Sumadi also explained that what is read in carrying out this tradition is sholawat and also prayers after prayer. He also explained how people in the past did it.

"Yes, it's actually the same, only in the past it was still tied to Hinduism and Buddhism so there were readings and so on, but at the end it was also sholawat for the prophet, prayers and prayers, but yes, there were additions, because the Javanese people are indeed strong in tradition, like for example if genduri, there will be someone who has to make porridge or there are other activities, but now it's just sending prayers and then giving food."

"This tradition has existed since before the PKI era, even before Independence, this is a tradition brought by Hinduism and Buddhism, because this religion was the first to exist in Indonesia, then Islam came, then it faded after the PKI, because Islam had developed, if Javanese people taught that it was clean, but Islam is holy, it's actually the same, only Javanese people are clean, Islam is holy, meaning clean, if Javanese people used to be given a mandate to give something to someone, they would guard the item until it reached the person's hands, they would not give it to anyone, even if they had to die, so the mandate was held, if it was holy, things that were different from the Islamic sect were purified and removed, for example offerings, if Javanese people used to have things like that, but Islam forbade it, so many people don't do it anymore because of that, now we hold on to the Quran and Hadith, things like that are forbidden in Islam."

Based on the explanation above, we can see that this tradition has existed for a very long time, where it is said that it has even existed since before independence, and this tradition is related to Hinduism and Buddhism. It turns out that this tradition has faded not only in modern times but has begun to fade since the PKI era. He also explained a little about what Javanese teachings are like.

While this tradition certainly has its own meaning in its implementation, including asking for prayers for the smooth progress of rice planting, being grateful for the results we get, as explained by Mr. Sumadi<sup>13</sup> below:

"The meaning is that before planting, we ask for prayers so that the planting goes smoothly, and is also good, if before the harvest, it's like we are grateful for the results we harvest, actually there are also prayers for ourselves, for the safety of our family, because we have prayers, right?"

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Mr. Sumadi community leader in Paya Lobang Village, September 12, 2024

"Yes, using jarek cloth, then there is thread to tie it, and a caterpillar knife to cut the rice stalks and thread them, then a white cloth for the base of the rice that has been tied and brought home."

That was the explanation given by our resource person, from the explanation above the author can conclude that the Cokbakal Bride tradition has been carried out for a long time, because it is one of the traditions brought by the first religion in Indonesia, this tradition is a tradition related to planting and harvesting rice, so starting from planting it there are already a series of traditions that are carried out, and before harvesting too, the procedures are already in the interview above.

So according to the resource person, this tradition is carried out as a form of gratitude to God for the rice harvest that will be carried out, what is done before planting is a form of request so that it can be made easier in planting and there are no obstacles until harvesting, and also do not forget to pray for the safety of yourself and your family.

Many traditions are similar to the Cokbakal and Mbok Sri traditions in Jawa, among which are:

1. *Panjopputan* in Desa Poldung, Labuhan Batu Utara: This tradition involves the belief that rice plants have spirits, and Panjopputan is performed before harvest to ensure a plentiful and untroubled crop. The ritual ensures that the spirit within the rice can be properly honored.
2. *Methik Pari* in Desa Karanganyar: This tradition involves collecting rice grains before harvest as an offering for the fertility of the crops, ensuring a good yield <sup>14</sup>.
3. *Mairiak* in Minangkabau: This practice uses feet to separate rice grains from the stalks, performed cooperatively by family members, reinforcing social bonds within the community <sup>15</sup>.
4. *Mipit Pare* in West Java: This ritual involves harvesting rice with special tools, offering prayers and gratitude to the elders, and asking for blessings for abundant harvests <sup>16</sup>.
5. *Tolak Bala* in Desa Simaroken, Pasaman: This ritual involves ceremonies to ward off misfortunes that threaten rice crops, particularly from pests or natural disasters <sup>17</sup>.
6. *Wiwitan* in Sumberagung, Tuban: A ritual of gratitude to the earth and Dewi Sri, the rice goddess, with prayers and offerings to ensure a successful harvest <sup>18</sup>.
7. *Manugal* in Central Kalimantan: A traditional rice planting ceremony performed by the Dayak Ngaju people, fostering community cooperation and expressing respect for the land <sup>19</sup>.

While these traditions have common themes, such as gratitude, protection, and ensuring a good harvest, they vary in practices and meanings procedures and tools: The rituals often

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<sup>14</sup> Nanda Ayu Artiani et al., "Persepsi Petani Terhadap Pelaksanaan Tradisi Methik Pari Dalam Rangka Menyambut Panen Padi Di Desa Karanganyar Kecamatan Ambulu Kabupaten Jember," *Jurnal Adat Dan Budaya Indonesia* 5, no. 1 (2023): 14–22, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jabi.v5i1.55484>.

<sup>15</sup> Ayu Artiani et al.

<sup>16</sup> Moh Aini, Siti Nor, Syafii, "Tradisi Mipit Pare di Kasepuhan Ciptagelar," *Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 7, no. Juli (2019).

<sup>17</sup> Edriagus Imanda, Rahmad, Zulheldi, Fithri, Widia, Saputra, "Tradisi Tolak Bala Sebelum Tanam Padi Pada Masyarakat Desa Simaroken Kabupaten Pasaman (Kajian Livingal-Qur'an)," *Hikmah* 18, No. Januari-Juni (2021): 40–52.

<sup>18</sup> Supriyanto, Emi Fahrudi, and Kumaidi, "Tradisi Masyarakat Jawa Dalam Pertumbuhan Padi Wiwitan Di Desa Sumberagung Kec. Plumpang Kab. Tuban," *ASWALALITA (Journal Of Dakwah Manajemant)* 2, no. 1 (2023): 215–26.

<sup>19</sup> Agustinus Hendra and Ipolmi Aji Marseda, "Eco-Etika dalam Budaya Manugal Dayak Ngaju (Tinjauan Ekologis Berdasarkan Ensiklik Laudato Si Art. 139)," *ENGGANG: Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, Dan Budaya* 2, no. 2 (2022): 146–54, <https://doi.org/10.37304/enggang.v3i1.4938>.

involve specific tools, such as rice stalks, special cloths, or even traditional prayers and offerings. The detailed practices reflect local beliefs and community ties.

In various traditions, rice planting has different meanings, some are meaningful to establish good family relationships, relationships between communities such as the Manugal Tradition of Central Kalimantan, it is also good to express gratitude, some are intended for the land such as the wiwitan tradition, and also to the spirits in the rice such as the Panjopputan tradition. However, all of this is intended for good things regarding the sustenance received, gratitude for the blessings received during the harvest, and prayers that are expected before planting, although it is intended for various things, but the purpose is the same for goodness.

## CONCLUSION

The tradition of cokbakal and Mbok Sri carried out in Dusun IV, Paya Lombang has existed for a long time, namely it is estimated that since before the colonization, where this tradition adheres to Hindu-Buddhist teachings, but was modified along with the entry of Islam in Indonesia, which initially the previous people carried it out according to Hindu-Buddhist teachings, now it has been changed such as readings that must be said, now using prayers after prayer and also sholawat, but unfortunately this tradition has begun to fade at this time, due to the lack of knowledge about the tradition, which makes this tradition only a few people who carry it out. This tradition is carried out at the beginning before planting and also before harvesting rice, there is a little addition to this tradition, where after the rice is cut according to the rules that have been determined, the rice that has been cut will be tied, the leaves are put together and tied neatly and then taken home using cloth like carrying a baby, then after that at home a prayer will be read and after that the rice will be hung. In addition to the above traditions, it turns out that there are many other traditions related to the rice planting tradition as above, some of which are almost all done the same, but there are also differences, both in their names and some of their procedures. But from the various traditions mentioned, all have good meanings, all expect blessings, abundant sustenance, and other good prayers, which proves that these differences may exist but the meaning of this implementation has the same purpose.

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- List of Informants (optional)
- Sumadi, community leader in Paya Lobang Village, (September 12, 2024)