

Transformation of the Meaning of Mawlid Nabi Celebration in the Praje Sasak Tradition

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the dynamics of the Prophet's birthday celebration and its impact on the identity and social cohesion of the local community. This study used a qualitative approach and ethnographic research type, data were collected through in-depth interviews and direct observation. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive method that includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. The celebration of the Prophet's birthday in the Praje Sasak tradition in East Arong-Arong Village underwent a transformation due to modernization, including a shift from traditional music to modern music and the emergence of new entertainment elements. This transformation reflects a cultural convergence that enriches the identity of the Sasak people, but also poses challenges in maintaining traditional values. Through cultural education, community engagement and collaboration with outsiders, the original values of the Praje Sasak tradition can be preserved without losing its identity. The celebration of the Prophet Muhammad SAW is not only a spiritual moment, but also a reflection of the cultural identity of the Sasak people who continue to develop amid social and cultural dynamics.

Keywords: Praja Sasak, Tradition, Transformation Of Meaning

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INTRODUCTION

The celebration of the Prophet Muhammad' SAW mawlid is one of the most important traditions in the Muslim community in Indonesia. Especially on the Muslim-majority island of Lombok, this celebration has a deep and varied meaning, depending on the cultural and social context of each region. The Sasak people, who are indigenous to Lombok, have a unique way of celebrating the Prophet's birthday that reflects their cultural and religious values (Aziz, A. A., 2009). One of the villages in Mataram City, named Arong-Arong Timur Village, which is located in Dasan Agung Village, is known to have a distinctive tradition in celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. This village is one of the areas with the original population of the Sasak tribe, where the people here still maintain and preserve the culture of the ancestral heritage.

The celebration of Mawlid Nabi which is still very well preserved by local residents to this day is the “Praje Sasak Tradition”. Praje in the term Sasak community is “A tool or media used in parade activities which are usually carried out in the middle of the Maulid month. Initially, the Praje Sasak tradition carried children who would be circumcised around the village using a traditional Sasak musical instrument, namely “gendang beleq”.

In the celebration of Mawlid, the Dasan Agung community held a very lively Praje tradition, where this celebration was held like a party enlivened with music. Praje traditions in Lombok, usually associated with circumcision ceremonies, have been around for a long time and are part of the culture of the Sasak people thought to have started before the 16th century, as Islam entered the region, the practice of circumcision became important in the local culture, and this tradition also involves the Nyongkolan procession which is part of the traditional wedding celebrations, showing the close relationship between circumcision ceremonies and other traditional customs in Lombok (Aman, 2024; Lombokgroup, 2017).

The Praje Sasak tradition is one of the cultural heritages of the Sasak people in Lombok which has a deep meaning in social and religious life. This tradition is usually carried out in the context of certain celebrations, such as Maulid Nabi, as a form of respect for the Prophet Muhammad, as well as a spiritual reflection of the Sasak community. In practice, this tradition not only reflects the religious dimension but also emphasizes the values and social norms that guide daily life.

One of the main values closely held by the Sasak people in the Praje tradition is the value of religiosity. This tradition is a means of expressing love for the Prophet Muhammad SAW, through remembrance, prayer, and verses of praise that are chanted ceremonially. This shows how local traditions are able to harmonize culture with Islamic teachings. The religious value in Praje Sasak also functions as a strengthener of the community's Islamic identity, as well as a medium of religious education for the younger generation. In addition, through this tradition, the Sasak people affirm the principle of gratitude to Allah for the various favors given.

In addition to religiosity, the value reflected in the community for the existence of the Praje Sasak tradition is the value of togetherness and mutual cooperation, which is an important element in the implementation of the Praje Sasak tradition. This activity involves all levels of society, from children to the elderly, who work together to make the event a success. Starting from logistical preparation to the implementation of the event, everything is done collectively as a form of social solidarity. In this context, gotong royong is not only seen as a social obligation, but also as part of worship (Yunus, R., 2013). This value reflects how Sasak people integrate customary traditions and religious teachings to strengthen relationships between individuals in the community.

Customary and social norms also play an important role in maintaining the continuity of the Praje Sasak tradition. People follow rules that have been passed down from generation to generation, such as the division of roles based on gender, the various stages of the ceremony that are passed and others. These norms ensure that the

tradition continues in accordance with the applicable customary rules. For example, men are generally in charge of the main ritual activities, while women are more involved in food preparation and decoration. This division of roles is accepted as a form of respect for ancestral customs and traditions.

However, in the midst of modernization, the values and norms in the Praje Sasak tradition began to face challenges. Urbanization, formal education, and outside cultural influences have brought significant changes to the way people view this tradition (Afdhal, A., 2023). Norms that were once collective are now beginning to shift to become more individualized. The younger generation, for example, tends to be less involved in these activities, so the tradition is beginning to lose active participation from the productive age group. In addition, the religious elements of the tradition are sometimes reinterpreted to suit more modern religious and cultural understandings.

The community began to add elements of modern musical entertainment from reggae, turned into dangdut and koplo, and now back to trendy music such as DJ (Disc Jockey) played during the praje parade. Not only that, the Praje bearers' habit of drinking alcohol, both before and during the Praje parade takes place (Haninaturrahmah, H., & Muhammad, M., 2017). This has made the original values of Praje increasingly eroded and far from its original purpose. The emergence of an understanding that states that the praje tradition is nothing more than a matter of bid'ah that has no example from the Prophet Muhammad, but grows and develops following the times.

In this case, convergence arises as described by Sugiarto (2020), indicating that interactions between various cultures can result in the merging of different cultural elements, creating new meanings and enriching social identity in a multicultural society. Convergence is often known as the meeting or merging of different elements towards a single point or a more uniform form, just like the cultural convergence that exists in this tradition where the process of elements from various cultures influences each other and forms a new culture. The entertainment value contained in it can certainly be used as an existence in the process of implementing the Praje Sasak tradition, because it can entertain the community. Therefore, the existence of something new and innovative for Praje Sasak parade activities creates a livelier party atmosphere and attracts the attention of many people, especially young people.

Cultural transformation refers to the process of change that occurs in cultural practices, values, and symbols due to the influence of internal and external factors (Gunawan, H., et al., 2023). Cultural transformation is a shift in culture within a community of groups of people from all parts, from one situation to another or a better condition or vice versa (Mabrur, 2020). Meanwhile, according to Arianto (2021) Cultural transformation can also have complex and sometimes controversial impacts, such as cultural conflict, adaptation, or even the elimination of certain local cultures. Meanwhile, on the other hand, cultural transformation can also create new opportunities, innovations, and positive intercultural interactions (Widyanarti, T., et al., 2024).

The transformation of values and norms in the Praje Sasak tradition is an interesting phenomenon to study. On the one hand, people try to maintain the

authenticity of the tradition as part of their cultural identity. On the other hand, they are required to adapt to the dynamics of the times. Therefore, understanding the transformation of meaning and value in this tradition is important, not only to preserve local culture but also to formulate preservation strategies that are relevant to the modern context. The Praje Sasak tradition is a reflection of the richness of Sasak culture that combines spiritual, social, and customary dimensions, so it requires special attention to stay alive in the midst of the changing times that have occurred.

According to previous research, in research (Haninaturrahmah, H., & Muhammad, M., 2017) the Dasan Agung community still maintains the basic meaning of the Prophet's birthday celebration, but many practices and meanings have undergone transformations along with social and cultural developments. In the Dasan Agung community, the change in the social and cultural system is the change in the meaning of the Prophet's Maulid, which is an eating event. This change then became a habit of the community to serve food and drinks during the celebration of the Prophet's Nabi Muhammad SAW. Meanwhile, research conducted by Khaerunnisa, K. et al. (2019) shows that although the Prajemem tradition has strong roots in Islamic values, the influence of modernization has caused a shift in values and practices that the community must be aware of so as not to erode the original meaning of the tradition.

Through this research, it is hoped that the transformation in the meaning of the Prophet's Mawlid Nabi in East Arong-Arong Village can be revealed. As such, this research not only provides insight into local traditions, but also contributes to a broader understanding of the interaction between religion and culture in an evolving society. Against this background, this study aims to explore the dynamics of the celebration of the Prophet's birthday among the Sasak community, Dasan Agung Arong-Arong Timur village, and its impact on their identity and social cohesion.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach, which can produce findings that cannot be achieved through statistical procedures. In qualitative research, analysis of people's lives, phenomena, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts of individuals or groups can be carried out (Moleong, 2002). This researcher will use ethnographic research type, which is a method to describe naturally occurring behavior in a particular culture or social group to understand the culture from the perspective of the perpetrators (Creswell, 2008).

Researchers chose an ethnographic approach in this study because they wanted to describe the traditions that exist in the Sasak community, especially the Praje Sasak tradition in Dasan Agung Arong-Arong Timur Village. The data collection methods used include interviews and observations. For data analysis, researchers applied interactive analysis consisting of three components: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. Informants in this study include traditional leaders, community leaders, and individuals who have been involved in the implementation of the Praje Sasak tradition in Dasan Agung Arong-Arong Timur Village.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULT

The influence of modernization has brought significant impacts on the celebration of the Mawlid Nabi in the Praje Sasak tradition in the village of Arong-Arong Timur. One of the most striking changes is in the aspect of music used during the parade. Previously, the community celebrated with traditional music such as *gendang beleq*, but now they tend to choose modern music such as *dangdut* and DJ, which are more favored by the younger generation. This change not only enhances the festivity of the event but also attracts more people, although there are concerns that traditional values may begin to fade. Additionally, new entertainment elements have emerged during the celebration. The habit of consuming alcoholic beverages by the Praje bearers during the parade indicates that the influence of foreign cultures has altered the original meaning of the celebration.

The community now views the Maulid celebration as an opportunity for fun and social gatherings, rather than a spiritual moment to commemorate of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. This shift in meaning becomes a challenge for the community to maintain the original values of their traditions. Some community members even begin to consider the Praje practices as *bid'ah*, as there is no direct example from the Prophet Muhammad SAW. This indicates a cultural convergence, where elements from different cultures influence each other and form new meanings within a broader social context. Overall, while the Dasan Agung community still upholds the Praje tradition.

The celebration of Mawlid Nabi Muhammad SAW not only serves as a spiritual moment but also as a means to strengthen social ties among the community. This tradition becomes an opportunity for Muslims to gather, share, and support each other in their community. Through various activities such as religious lectures, recitations of prayers, and other social events, the community can strengthen relationships among residents. These activities create an atmosphere of togetherness that reinforces feelings of brotherhood and solidarity within the community.

Moreover, the Mawlid Nabi is often associated with other local traditions, such as circumcision. In many cultures, circumcision is regarded as an important ritual in the lives of boys, often conducted in conjunction with religious celebrations. This shows that religious activities and local traditions can complement each other and strengthen social and spiritual values within the community (Haninaturrahmah, H., & Muhammad, M., 2017). Thus, the Mawlid celebration becomes more than just a religious ritual; it acts as a platform to strengthen social relationships and integrate local cultural values.

The concept of cultural convergence in the Praje Sasak tradition illustrates how elements from various cultures influence one another. In this context, the Praje Sasak tradition combines local cultural elements with external influences, including Islam and other cultures. This assimilation process creates new meanings that enrich the social identity of the Sasak community. For example, religious practices adopted from Islam are often blended with pre-existing local traditions. This results in new forms of rituals that reflect a fusion of religious values and local culture. For instance, in certain celebrations,

elements of Islamic rituals may be accompanied by distinctive local customs, creating a unique spiritual experience for the community. This convergence process not only enriches the identity of the Sasak community but also enhances mutual respect and understanding among diverse cultures.

Thus, cultural convergence in the Praje Sasak tradition creates space for cultural innovation and the strengthening of a more inclusive social identity. It allows the community to celebrate their diversity while still preserving their cultural and religious roots.

The celebration of Mawlid Nabi Muhammad SAW among the Sasak ethnic group, particularly within the Praje tradition, has undergone significant transformation along with the development of the times. Various factors contribute to this change, reflecting the social and cultural dynamics occurring in the community.

One of the main factors influencing this transformation is modernization and urbanization (Ammar, M. A., 2023). With the rapid development of technology and urbanization, the Sasak community is now more exposed to information and cultures from outside. This brings changes in the way they celebrate Mawlid Nabi. Traditions that may have previously been held in a simpler manner can now involve new elements derived from modern culture. The community faces challenges in maintaining their cultural identity amid such rapid changes (Saputra, R., et al., 2024).

Additionally, education and preaching also play an important role in shaping the community's understanding of the meaning of the Mawlid Nabi celebration (Haninaturrahmah, H., & Muhammad, M., 2017). Through religious education, the younger generation is taught to understand the values embedded in the celebration. However, interaction with foreign cultures presents complex impacts. On one hand, it can enrich traditions with new elements; on the other hand, there is a risk of eroding the original values that have long been cherished by the Sasak community.

The younger generation plays a crucial role in the transformative process of the meaning of the Mawlid Nabi. They not only serve as successors of tradition but also as agents of change who can select relevant cultural elements to their current lives. With creativity and innovation, the younger generation can introduce new ways of celebrating Mawlid that respect tradition while also aligning with the modern context.

Overall, the transformation of the meaning of the Mawlid Nabi celebration within the Praje Sasak tradition reflects a complex dynamic due to the influences of modernization, education, interaction with foreign cultures, and the active role of the younger generation. It is important for the community to find a balance between preserving traditions and adapting to changes so that the meaning of this celebration remains relevant and meaningful for future generations. Thus, the Mawlid Nabi celebration continues to be not only a spiritual moment but also a reflection of a culturally evolving identity.

DISCUSSION

The social identity associated with the celebration of Mawlid, which commemorates the birth of Prophet Muhammad, has undergone significant transformation among the Sasak community. This shift not only influences how the celebration is conducted but also impacts the social identity of the community. In this context, it is essential to analyze whether these changes in the meaning of the celebration contribute to a decline or enhancement of the sense of identity among the Sasak people. As the community begins to adopt new elements in their Mawlid celebrations, such as external cultural influences and modern practices, there is a potential for ambivalence in their social identity. On the one hand, adopting new elements can enrich the celebration experience and make the community's identity more dynamic. On the other hand, it may lead to the loss of traditional essence, which has long been a defining characteristic of Sasak identity. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how the community can balance innovation and tradition preservation to maintain a strong and relevant social identity.

In the midst of rapid modernization, cultural awareness of indigenous values becomes increasingly crucial for the Sasak community. The rich symbolism and meaning embedded in the Praje Sasak tradition need to be preserved to prevent them from being eroded by the changing times. Awareness of these indigenous cultural values not only serves as a bulwark against cultural homogenization but also as a means to strengthen the community's identity. To preserve the original meaning of this tradition, the community can take several strategic steps. First, cultural education should be enhanced by incorporating lessons on the history and philosophy of the Praje Sasak tradition into school curricula. Second, community activities that involve the younger generation in traditional practices should be regularly organized to foster love and appreciation for their cultural heritage. Third, collaboration with external parties, such as academics or cultural organizations, can assist in documenting and promoting this tradition more broadly. Through these measures, the Sasak community can safeguard the authenticity of their traditions while adapting to modern developments without losing the identity they have long cherished.

CONCLUSION

The tradition of celebrating the Prophet's Birthday in Praje Sasak in Arong-Arong Timur Village has undergone significant changes due to modernization. Modern music such as dangdut and DJ music is starting to replace traditional Gendang Beleq music to attract the interest of the younger generation, although this raises concerns about the diminishing traditional values. Additionally, new elements such as the consumption of alcoholic beverages have also emerged, indicating the influence of foreign cultures that have transformed the spiritual meaning of the celebration into merely an entertainment and social gathering. This transformation reflects the occurrence of cultural convergence, where local traditions blend with external elements, resulting in a new form that enriches the identity of the Sasak community. However, these changes present

a challenge in preserving the traditional essence so that it does not get lost amidst modernization. The younger generation plays a key role as heirs of tradition as well as agents of change who can adapt tradition to the modern context. With the support of cultural education, community involvement, and collaboration with external parties, the original values of the Praje Sasak tradition can be preserved without losing their identity. The Mawlid celebration remains a spiritual moment as well as a reflection of the cultural identity of the Sasak community, which continues to evolve amidst social dynamics.

To maintain the spiritual and cultural significance of the Mawlid Nabi celebration in the Praje Sasak tradition, stricter supervision and active roles from religious and cultural leaders are required. The village government, along with community leaders, can establish regulations that ensure the implementation of Praje Sasak aligns with values and traditions. On the other hand, religious and cultural leaders can educate the community through socialization to collectively understand the meaning of this tradition. With the cooperation and collaboration of all parties, this tradition can continue to be preserved without losing its identity.

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