

LOCAL INDONESIAN TRADITIONS AND THE ENHANCEMENT OF SOCIAL SPIRITUALITY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the influence of the Suronan tradition on improving the social spirituality of the community in Ngawonggo Village, Malang Regency, East Java. The primary focus is to understand how cultural and religious rituals performed during the 1 Suro observance interact with the community's spiritual dispositions, as interpreted through the concepts of *communitas* and *moral habitus* within symbolic anthropology. This research employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation to explore the symbolic significance, spiritual importance, and social functions of the Suronan tradition. The findings indicate that the observance of Suronan not only serves as an annual ritual but also enhances social cohesion, deepens spiritual consciousness, and provides an opportunity for reflection on values of unity and life. Suronan functions as a medium through which social and spiritual meanings are reproduced and negotiated, thereby contributing to the development of a more robust social spirituality. Consequently, this study concludes that the Suronan tradition plays a strategic role in fostering social harmony while strengthening the spiritual identity of the residents of Ngawonggo Village.*

Keywords: Suronan tradition; social spirituality; Javanese culture; solidarity; social transformation.

Abstract

Artikel ini mengkaji tradisi Suronan di Desa Ngawonggo, Kecamatan Tajinan, Kabupaten Malang. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana tradisi Suronan membentuk dan memediasi bentuk-bentuk spiritualitas sosial dalam komunitas, tanpa mengasumsikan terlebih dahulu adanya “peningkatan” sebagai hasil normatif melainkan memahaminya sebagai proses sosial dan spiritual. Fokus utamanya adalah memahami bagaimana ritual budaya dan keagamaan setiap 1 Suro berinteraksi dengan disposisi spiritual masyarakat, yang dipahami melalui konsep *communitas* dan *moral habitus* dalam antropologi simbolik. Penelitian menggunakan metodologi kualitatif berorientasi interpretivis antropologi simbolik melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Suronan bukan sekadar ritual tahunan, tetapi arena dinamis tempat nilai antargenerasi dinegosiasikan, ikatan komunal diteguhkan, dan resistensi simbolik terhadap narasi keagamaan dominan diartikulasikan. Tradisi ini berkontribusi pada konfigurasi spiritualitas sosial dengan menghubungkan warisan budaya lokal dan praktik keagamaan sehari-hari. Keseluruhan dinamika tersebut menegaskan bahwa Suronan memiliki peran strategis dalam menstrukturkan harmoni sosial sekaligus memperkuat identitas spiritual masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Tradisi Suronan; spiritualitas sosial; budaya Jawa; solidaritas; transformasi sosial.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Indonesia, local traditions persist within a dynamic context shaped by tensions between indigenous cultural values, religious purism, and modern socio-cultural change, creating a space where communities continually negotiate the relevance, legitimacy, and spiritual authority of long-standing ritual practices. Recent studies emphasize that tradition should not be understood merely as a static means of preserving identity or social cohesion, but as a contested arena in which moral frameworks and spiritual meanings are actively interpreted, reshaped, and sometimes strategically transformed through lived religious experience (Aritonang, 2023; Maulidin et al., 2024). In this sense, spirituality embedded in everyday life emerges from the interaction between doctrinal teachings, communal expectations, and embodied ritual participation, positioning tradition as an evolving spiritual medium rather than a fixed cultural inheritance (Hannan & Khotibum Umam, 2023). Within this broader framework, Suronan constitutes a significant element of Javanese cultural heritage that continues to be carefully preserved and meaningfully practiced, particularly during the sacred month of Suro, which is widely regarded as a time for introspection, strengthening faith, seeking divine protection, and deepening one's spiritual relationship with the Creator (Febriyanto et al., 2023; Khoirul Istianah, 2022).

The East Java region, particularly Malang Regency, encompasses the Suronan tradition as a principal cultural and spiritual practice. The inhabitants of Ngawonggo Village in Malang Regency exemplify a community that consistently upholds the Suronan tradition as an essential aspect of their social and religious lives. This tradition is transmitted across generations, serving as a sign of reverence for ancestors and as an act of worship to God, understood by the community as the Supreme Being (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Villagers voluntarily congregate in an atmosphere of solidarity to perform collective prayers, *tirakatan*, and various cultural activities rich in symbolic significance. These activities not only function as formal rituals but also provide a space for spiritual reflection that enhances the collective consciousness of the community. The communal execution of these activities reinforces spiritual bonds among individuals and fosters a heightened sense of solidarity that unites the community as a whole.

The spiritual values cultivated through the Suronan tradition are evidently reflected in the daily social life of the Ngawonggo community. Collective prayers and *tirakatan* activities serve to reinforce the sense of brotherhood and foster solidarity among citizens (Jamil et al., 2023). The religious principles embedded within this tradition motivate individuals to exhibit greater empathy towards others, demonstrate increased patience in confronting challenges, and exercise greater wisdom in making life decisions (Lazuardi et al., 2024). Consequently, the practice of Suronan contributes to establishing a harmonious balance between humanity's relationship with God and with fellow human beings. Furthermore, this tradition not only fortifies individual faith but also enhances the social bonds that unify the community.

Although existing scholarship acknowledges the cultural and symbolic significance of Suronan, much of the recent literature remains predominantly descriptive and does not sufficiently examine the experiential and phenomenological dimensions of spirituality shaped through the ritual. For example, (Ayu Lusoi M Siburian, 2018) focus on the symbolic configuration of Suroan offerings and ritual sequences, while (Febriyanto et al., 2023) document communal processions and collective ceremonial structures; however, these studies do not explore how participants internalize religious meaning or experience personal spiritual transformation. More recent works, such as (Rakhmawati et al., 2024; Rostiyati et al., 2024), similarly conceptualize Suronan as a marker of Javanese cultural identity but overlook analytical dimensions related to emotional resonance, subjective religiosity, and the cultivation of spiritual consciousness. Consequently, despite the growing body of descriptive documentation, the literature still lacks a substantive analysis of lived religious experience within the Suronan ritual, indicating a clear conceptual and empirical gap.

The research gap is identified by the lack of studies linking the practice of the Suronan tradition to the level of socio-religious spirituality in contemporary society, especially in rural communities that continue to perform Suronan rituals collectively. In the face of

modernization and evolving religious practices, it is imperative to conduct a new study examining how Suronan contributes to the development of spiritual consciousness, social cohesion, and religious values among community members.

This study examines how the Suronan tradition influences the spiritual well-being of Ngawonggo Village residents, highlighting its role in the community's evolving socio-religious landscape. Seen not just as a culture-bound ritual but also as a means of shaping individual thinking, attitudes, and behaviors (Rochayani & Brata, 2022), this tradition plays a key role in fostering spirituality and maintaining religious values in everyday life. The research explores the interaction between religious principles and cultural practices passed down through generations. Findings are expected to enhance understanding from both academic and practical angles. Academically, it adds to the literature on how local traditions impact social spirituality. Practically, it guides community members and leaders in preserving traditions that strengthen community bonds, encouraging social development based on religious and cultural principles. Overall, the study benefits both scholarly research and community cohesion.

Research indicates that cultural practices such as Suronan in Suro serve as platforms for expressing spirituality and maintaining collective identity. This tradition persists due to its profound religious significance and its role in fostering social cohesion through communal prayers, vigil (*tirakatan*), and reinforcement of community morals (Abiha & Zahra, 2024; Rofiq, 2024). Similarly, in Turkey, Nevruz fulfills a comparable social function, acting as a means for spiritual renewal, community unification, and marking the cyclical year. Recent studies demonstrate that Nevruz is celebrated with rituals such as fire-lighting, traditional music, and family visits, symbolizing renewal and fertility (Batu et al., 2024). Ethnomusicological research indicates that the musical elements of Nevruz aid in preserving oral traditions and strengthening bonds within Turkic communities (Kurbanova, 2023). Conversely, a 2025 study reveals that Hıdırellez, Turkey's spring festival, adapts to contemporary contexts and tourism, transforming into a modern event that continues to embody spirituality, hope, and social unity (Şengel & Uz, 2025). These cases suggest that Suronan in Indonesia and Nevruz/Hıdırellez in Turkey, despite differing historical and theological backgrounds, serve as mechanisms for shaping vibrant communal spirituality within modern society (Gunce & Kozlu, 2023).

From a comparative anthropological perspective, Indonesian and Turkish traditions serve not only as symbolic rituals but also as cultural instruments that reinforce shared identities and spiritual beliefs. In Java, Suronan is founded on religious and cosmological principles emphasizing spiritual reflection, moral consciousness, and communal harmony (Abiha & Zahra, 2024). Conversely, Nevruz in Turkey transcends its role as a seasonal festival to function as a marker of national and cross-ethnic identity, resulting in its politicization and more intricate meanings than the locally oriented Suronan (Batu et al., 2024). Similarly, Hıdırellez embodies spiritual functions such as hope, prayers for safety, and self-purification, although its practices are more centered on seasonal symbols and public festivities (Şengel & Uz, 2025). Research further indicates that the modern resurgence of Nevruz and Hıdırellez is influenced by media, cultural policy, and globalization, transforming them into national and touristic cultural expressions (Batu et al., 2024; Gunce & Kozlu, 2023). Overall, while Suronan remains closely associated with communal religiosity and ancestral values, Turkish traditions are increasingly developing through broader processes of national cultural reconstruction, with both continuing to shape contemporary public religiosity and social spirituality.

Research on local traditions in Indonesia not only enriches academic discussions about how cultural rituals relate to social spirituality but also offers empirical insights into the persistence of local values within modern social settings. The findings confirm that traditions such as Suronan serve as venues for religious and spiritual fulfillment, fostering social cohesion and moral awareness (Abiha & Zahra, 2024; Rofiq, 2024). Academically, this research expands the literature on the relationship between ritual practices, cultural identity, and community religiosity, particularly in rural areas where local wisdom functions as a moral compass. Recent studies emphasize that safeguarding local traditions is crucial for cultural resilience

and the preservation of shared moral values, in addition to strengthening social capital to navigate social changes (Puspitasari et al., 2025; Supriatna et al., 2023). Consequently, this study enhances theoretical understanding of culture and spirituality and underscores the significance of the Suronan tradition as a wellspring of values that bolster the social identity of Indonesian communities.

This study provides essential guidance for communities and local authorities in developing comprehensive policies to protect religious and cultural traditions. The social structures rooted in the Suronan tradition can serve as a key foundation for village administrations in implementing initiatives centered on cultural preservation, such as managing local budgets, establishing customary institutions, and integrating traditional values into community education and youth programs (Kasih et al., 2024; Suharyanto & Wiflihani, 2024). Additionally, it is recommended that regional authorities incorporate these insights into cultural policy development based on local wisdom, including documenting traditional heritage, legally safeguarding cultural practices, and creating cultural calendars that align sacred activities with the socio-economic roles of traditions (Novrizal Arifin, 2017). Clearly, policies guided by scholarly research can enhance community participation, uphold spiritual values within cultural practices, and promote the sustainability of local traditions amid globalization (Saputra, 2024). Overall, this research makes a valuable contribution to both academic knowledge and the socio-cultural progress of local communities.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive, and interpretative approach, using direct observations to understand the Suronan tradition in its social and spiritual context. The researcher selected this approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the Suronan tradition shapes the spirituality of the residents of Ngawonggo Village. The research is descriptive and interpretative, aiming to elucidate the meanings, experiences, and religious values embedded within the tradition (Charismana et al., 2022). The investigation was conducted from June 20 to June 28, 2025, with Ngawonggo Village designated as the research site due to its well-preserved Suronan tradition. The villagers consistently participate collectively in Suronan activities. This environment renders Ngawonggo Village an ideal location to examine the relationship between tradition and the enhancement of residents' spirituality.

The researchers employed three primary methodologies for data collection. Firstly, the researcher conducted comprehensive interviews with eight informants, encompassing religious leaders, village elders, youth, and mothers actively participating in the activity. These informants offered valuable insights into spiritual experiences, the significance of traditions, and the impact of Suronan on daily life. Secondly, the researcher engaged in direct observations during Suronan events, including processions of joint prayers, feasts, and various social activities conducted by residents. Thirdly, the researcher utilized existing documents, such as village archives, committee records, and historical narratives concerning Suronan (Ardiansyah et al., 2023; Mukhamad Fathoni, 2019).

The researcher assumed a non-participant observer role. While present during Suronan's activities, they did not engage in organizing the procession. This stance allows for observing social interactions and religious expressions naturally. Furthermore, the researcher recorded field data to support insights from interviews and observations. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Bidang's method (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). This process included data reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The researcher categorized the data into themes such as spiritual values, social solidarity, and religious transformation.

The research aims to elucidate how the Suronan tradition influences the spiritual practices of the residents of Ngawonggo Village. It is also anticipated that this study will enhance the understanding of local culture and shed light on the relationship between traditions and religious practices within Indonesian communities.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sustainability and Community Involvement in Suronan Tradition

The Suronan tradition in Ngawonggo Village, Tajinan District, Malang Regency, is a well-preserved cultural and religious practice. For the local community, Suronan signifies more than an annual Javanese New Year ritual; it functions as a conduit for expressing social and spiritual values that fortify communal bonds (Yulian & Lubis, 2022). It also serves as a collective space where community members engage, cooperate, and contemplate spirituality. The research concerning the Suronan tradition in Ngawonggo Village highlights the importance of diverse community activities vital for achieving a comprehensive understanding. These activities include not only religious rituals but also social, cultural, and spiritual elements. To improve clarity, this study records several key activities within the Suronan series, complemented by informants who offer insights into the execution of the tradition, as illustrated in the following table.

Table 1.
Suronan Tradition Activities in Ngawonggo Village with 5 rows and 5 columns

Yes	Suronan Activities	Form of Activity	Implementation Time	Informed Cited
1	A Brief Introduction to Preparation	Donations of rice, vegetables, money sincerely	The day before Suronan	Head of RT/RW, housewife
2	Joint Prayer and Salvation	Prayer reading, tumpeng, eating together	1 Suro	Community Leaders, Religious Leaders
3	Penance Together	Modesty and appearance	Ahead of and during the month of Suro	Religious leaders, young people
4	Involvement of the Young Generation	Karang Taruna participated in the procession and documentation	When the event takes place	Youth representatives

(Source: Processed by Author, 2024)

The table above delineates the various activities and informants involved in the Suronan tradition within Ngawonggo Village. These activities include collective prayers, communal feasts, artistic performances, and community service initiatives, involving religious leaders, village officials, youth, and PKK women. Each activity bears social and spiritual significance, promoting unity, mutual cooperation, and reverence for ancestors. Through the participation of all societal members, the Suronan tradition functions as a means of preserving religious values and social solidarity at the local level.

Maintaining religious values and community solidarity in Ngawonggo Village is vital for nurturing a sustainable and meaningful tradition across generations. The religious principles embedded in the Suronan tradition reinforce the community's spiritual connection with God and offer moral guidance in everyday life. Activities such as tirakatan, communal prayer, and collaborative efforts facilitate the transmission of faith, sincerity, and unity to younger members. Consequently, Suronan transcends mere ritual; it becomes a social and spiritual arena that fosters an understanding of a contextual religiosity one that endures and adapts in response to societal changes. During an interview, a local resident observed:

“...when we attend to this surrogate, young individuals recognize that religion encompasses more than just prayer and worship; it also involves living harmoniously, supporting one another, and caring for the environment. furthermore, it is regarded as an integral aspect of worship.” (interview with resource person, on June 23, 2025).

The statement indicates that society perceives religion not merely as formal rituals but also as an ethical guideline that influences social conduct. Furthermore, social solidarity evident in

the unity of residents throughout all Suronan stages, from preparation to implementation is essential for sustaining community life. Activities such as mutual cooperation, assistance, and the brotherhood spirit inherent in this tradition serve to reinforce social bonds and cultivate a sense of belonging and respect for the village and its ancestral cultural values (Afriansyah & Sukmayadi, 2022). Mrs. R, a housewife, also observed:

“...should the suronan arrive, all residents are expected to participate actively. some are responsible for preparing food, others focus on cleaning, and some oversee the event. no one is coerced; each individual acts willingly and with personal awareness. additionally, we experience happiness as everyone perceives that we share a common responsibility and can collaborate harmoniously.” (interview with resource person R, on June 25, 2025).

The findings from the interview indicate that the Suroran tradition has progressed into a legitimate method for the community to reinforce social bonds and uphold shared religious principles. Failure to preserve these principles may lead to their decline, rendering rituals superficial and devoid of spiritual and social importance (Tarumingi et al., 2023). Therefore, the protection of the Suroran tradition requires collective involvement and proactive participation from all sectors of society to ensure its continued preservation.

Reflections on the Changes and Challenges of Modernity

Despite the rapid dissemination of contemporary influences, the residents of Ngawonggo Village remain steadfast in their commitment to preserving the Suroran tradition. They diligently safeguard their spiritual and social values transmitted through generations, protecting them from external cultural influences. Their dedication is evidenced by a modest yet significant celebration emphasizing reverence, serenity, and unity fundamental elements of their tradition (Meylani & Hernawan, 2024). The community's devotion is demonstrated by their opposition to amplified horek sounds and music often employed for modern entertainment. Unlike other villages that incorporate entertainment into their Suroran festivities, Ngawonggo sustains a solemn, religious ambiance. For them, loud music poses a threat to the sanctity of prayer and diminishes the spiritual significance of the Sura commemoration. Mr. M, a village official aged 56, expressed this perspective.

“...here, suronan is a time designated for reflection and prayer. if the sound of a horek occurs, it diminishes its significance. the loud noise creates a noisy environment, contradicting the intent of silence and solemnity. therefore, from the outset, the residents mutually agreed not to use horek sounds during the suronan event.” (interview with resource person M, on June 24, 2025).

The statement clarifies that the prohibition on sound horek is not solely based on conservative considerations but is intended to preserve the religious spirit inherent in the ritual. During its implementation, the atmosphere of Suronan in Ngawonggo is marked by calmness and simplicity. The night of tirakatan is accompanied only by the chanting of prayers, the recitation of tahlil, and the gentle sounds of Javanese prayers sung alongside the residents. Furthermore, the statement has been approved by the village youth who participated in Suronan.

“... we, the youth, have agreed not to employ horek sounds. if entertainment is desired, it pertains to a different time. the sounds are reserved for prayer and the remembrance of our ancestors. therefore, we adhere to this rule to ensure that its significance is preserved.” (interview with resource person Z, on June 24, 2025).

This attitude demonstrates a cross-generational awareness that modernity need not be pursued clandestinely. The Ngawonggo community intentionally avoids adopting elements of modern culture in order to preserve their deeply rooted religious and social values. In this context, modernity is perceived not as a threat but as an opportunity to strengthen the community's cultural and spiritual identity.

Spiritual Values in the Suronan Tradition

The Suronan tradition in Ngawonggo Village, Malang Regency, exemplifies the profound wisdom embedded within Javanese society and is consistently maintained across generations. Celebrated annually on the night of 1 Suro according to the Javanese calendar, this tradition represents a significant occasion for self-purification, introspection, and expressions of gratitude to God for blessings and protection. In addition to embodying the community's spiritual core, Suronan also functions as a social gathering that fortifies communal bonds and reinforces a shared collective identity. For the Javanese populace, Suronan signifies the commencement of a sacred new year and promotes introspection and spiritual renewal through prayer.

The residents of Ngawonggo Village regard Suronan as a prominent spiritual intermediary that enhances their connection with the Divine and strengthens social cohesion within the community. Annually, villagers convene to perform collective prayers, tahlilan, and modest festivities held at the residences of elders or at the village hall. In a reverent environment, participants are seated in a circle, engaging in the recitation of prayers and supplications for safety, health, and prosperity, thereby exemplifying the harmonious relationship between humans and God (*hablum minallah*) and among fellow humans (*hablum minannas*). The practice of Suronan is also intricately associated with philosophical reflections on time and self-awareness, as articulated by Mr. R, a religious leader in Ngawonggo Village with over twenty years of experience in leading Suronan prayers, illustrating the integration of Islamic principles with indigenous Javanese cultural values (Lestari et al., 2023).

"...for us, suro night is not merely a tradition; it is an occasion to humble ourselves before the lord. all residents gather in prayer, seeking forgiveness and safety. occasionally, some individuals shed tears during prayer as they feel they have not performed sufficient good deeds. this night serves as a time for heart purification and spiritual reorientation." (interview with resource person R, on June 23, 2025).

The statement underscores the evolution of reflective spirituality founded upon the collective consciousness of the village community. This tradition cultivates a moral habitus rooted in sincerity, simplicity, and submission to God. It elucidates that Suroan rituals serve as an enduring link between the sacred and the profane, enabling individuals to attain moral purification through culturally ingrained religious practices. In addition to its spiritual significance, Suronan possesses a notable social dimension. Mrs. M, a resident responsible for organizing the feast, provided an explanation.

"...we mothers prepare tumpeng rice, vegetables, and snacks. all done together and with prayer. after the prayer is over, the food is distributed to the neighbors. we feel at peace, like all sins are washed away when we can forgive and share with each other." (interview with resource person M, on June 23, 2025).

Mrs. M's account emphasizes that spirituality in Suronan encompasses more than a personal relationship with God; it is also demonstrated through tangible social actions such as sharing food, forgiving others, and fostering stronger neighborly bonds. Located in Ngawonggo Village, Suronan additionally serves as a form of cultural resistance to modernity, which often highlights entertainment and festivities. The villagers deliberately refrain from practices such as "sound horek" loud music parties common elsewhere considering such activities as distractions from the sanctity of worship. This viewpoint reflects the Javanese principle of Peaceful Rule, or inner tranquility. Valuing this serenity helps to safeguard the sacredness of rituals and reinforces the community's spiritual identity amidst modern changes (Atmadiredja et al., 2024).

From the perspective of Islamic education, the Suronan tradition can be regarded as an informal mode of spiritual learning that makes a significant contribution to character development within the community. Participation in Suronan enables individuals to internalize values such as patience, sincerity, and ethical awareness, which align with the principles of Islamic character education emphasizing balanced relationships with God, fellow human beings, and the natural environment (Karim, 2025). This indicates that local cultural

traditions like Suroran play a vital educational role in fostering social piety and moral responsibility within society (Siswayanti et al., 2023).

The spiritual values inherent to the Suroran tradition can be systematically categorized into three primary dimensions: religious, moral, and social-spiritual. The religious dimension is evidenced through collective prayers and the acknowledgment of divine authority, while the moral dimension is demonstrated through self-reflection and a collective dedication to moral development. The social-spiritual dimension emphasizes solidarity and community as vital elements of ritual practice (Suryawati et al., 2025). Furthermore, these values exemplify a harmonious integration of Islamic teachings with Javanese cultural traditions, as the community perceives religion and culture as mutually reinforcing rather than conflicting (Mujibuddin & Zuliana, n.d.). This peaceful and symbolic process of Islamic cultural assimilation is demonstrated in the reinterpretation of traditional practices such as offerings or communal prayers viewed as acts of gratitude to God rather than as acts of worship directed towards other entities (Rofiq, 2024).

The Suroran tradition, within a sociological context, functions as a mechanism for the community to establish spiritual identity and maintain social cohesion. This ritual enhances communal unity, develops ethical standards, and promotes moral awareness among the youth. Children and adolescents are encouraged to partake in prayers and tirakatan, facilitating the transmission of spiritual values across generations. Consequently, the Suroran tradition operates as a "school of life" that imparts noble values such as sincerity, simplicity, and compassion within the framework of local spirituality.

Spirituality as Social Capital of the Ngawonggo Village Community

The Suroran tradition in Ngawonggo Village transcends mere religious rituals, serving as a significant forum for fostering social spirituality and enhancing communal cohesion. Through this tradition, the community reaffirms its relationship with God while concurrently strengthening social bonds rooted in shared norms, trust, and cooperation, thereby exemplifying the principles of social capital as delineated by Robert D. Putnam (Syaharuddin et al., 2021). This social capital is exemplified through values of unity, mutual support, and collective responsibility, which sustain social and spiritual harmony. The active engagement of all villagers in practices such as tahlilan, kenduri, communal prayers, and collective neighborhood activities illustrates that spirituality in Ngawonggo is expressed not solely through individual devotion but also via inclusive social practices that transcend social, economic, and religious differences, thus bolstering solidarity and reaffirming a shared commitment to communal well-being (Meylani & Hernawan, 2024).

Suroran exemplifies two categories of social capital as delineated by Putnam: Bonding Social Capital and Bridging Social Capital. The former is characterized by strong bonds among community members who share similar values and beliefs, transmitted through collective norms passed down across generations. Conversely, bridging social capital is manifested in the Ngawonggo community's receptiveness to other religious groups with differing worship practices. This tradition fosters dialogue and mutual respect between traditionalist and modernist Islamic factions, thereby establishing a social link that unites various segments of society (Lestari et al., 2023). Consequently, the Suroran tradition not only preserves religious values but also functions as a pivotal space for social cohesion amid diverse belief systems.

James C. Scott's concept of symbolic resistance offers a critique of the concealed functions of traditions such as Suroran. Marginalized groups often engage in indirect resistance through cultural symbols, rituals, and everyday narratives (Ruiz, 2022). In this context, Suroran di Ngawonggo can be considered a form of symbolic resistance against cultural uniformity and the dominance of religious authorities seeking to standardize worship practices (Rofiq, 2024). The ritual serves to assist the community in preserving local customs, including festivals, collective prayers, and reverence for ancestors, not as a deviation from Islamic teachings but as a means to uphold a humanist and inclusive Javanese spiritual identity.

This view is strengthened by the results of an interview with a local traditional leader, Mrs. S (72 years old), who stated;

“... The suroran is not solely about sharing a meal, but also about recalling origins and expressing gratitude for life. Without prayer, individuals may forget how to coexist harmoniously and to care for one another.” (interview with resource person S, on June 25, 2025).

This statement emphasizes that Suroran holds profound spiritual significance and serves a crucial role in fostering mutual cooperation and fraternity. The Islamization of local rituals, such as traditions in certain regions of Java, exemplifies an ongoing negotiation between religious and cultural values, whereby communities endeavor to preserve their spiritual identity without compromising the core principles of Islamic teachings (Karim, 2025).

Another interview was conducted with Mrs. M (54 years old), a resident who is active in Suronan activities. He said;

“... Every suronation, all residents must participate. Some cook, some donate food, some help pray. Even though it's simple, it feels like life is more meaningful because we do it together.” (interview with resource person M, on June 25, 2025).

This recognition illustrates that social spirituality develops through collective interaction and participation, thereby strengthening a sense of community and social concern. According to Putnam's theory, Suronan's practices exemplify how social capital can foster social trust, serving as the foundation for community harmony. Robust social capital enables residents to support one another and sustain social stability without external assistance. Concurrently, symbols within the Suronan tradition have become a means for individuals to articulate their cultural independence amidst modern influences and pressures from formal religious authorities (Mujibuddin & Zuliana, n.d.). Consequently, Suronan functions as a symbolic space of resistance, where individuals express their personal spirituality, which is not entirely subordinate to the dominant religious paradigm.

Based on this theory, it can be concluded that the Suronan tradition plays a dual role in the social life of the Ngawonggo community. On the one hand, it strengthens social capital that underpins social spirituality and maintains community cohesion. But on the other hand, it serves as an expression of symbolic resistance to the homogenization of religious values that can threaten local cultural identity.

Increasing Social Spirituality through the Suronan Tradition

The Suroran tradition in Ngawonggo Village exemplifies indigenous wisdom that is profoundly embedded in Javanese-Islamic culture and has been transmitted across generations. Celebrated annually during Suro (Muharram), it functions as a period for spiritual reflection, communal penitence, and expressions of gratitude to God for the preservation of life. The community partakes in rituals such as collective prayer, tahlilan, tirakatan, and communal meals, which serve to foster unity and reverence for ancestors. These practices bolster social spirituality, deepen the community's relationship with God, and strengthen social bonds (Rahmawati et al., 2023). The Suroran tradition is instrumental in reinforcing communal ties, with participation extending to all individuals regardless of age, social status, or faith, thereby cultivating an egalitarian environment of unity. Activities including coordinated event planning, mutual aid, and the sharing of harvests exemplify a collective spirit, demonstrating that spirituality transcends rituals to encompass social actions that embody divine principles in daily life (Dwi Rachmat Setiyono et al., 2025).

The practice of Suroran embodies profound theological and ethical significance, as the month of Suro is widely regarded as a sacred period dedicated to introspection, repentance, and personal renewal. Rituals such as tirakatan performed on the night of Suro possess substantial spiritual value, particularly in fostering self-discipline and resistance to worldly temptations. Through these observances, Suroran functions as a form of spiritual education that imparts core Islamic virtues including sincerity, patience, and gratitude which are evident in everyday social conduct (Wicaksono & Muna, 2022).

Beyond its individual spiritual dimension, Suroran also assumes a significant role in enhancing social spirituality by promoting solidarity and empathy within the community.

Collective activities such as sharing meals, giving alms, and participating in joint prayers foster mutual care and social responsibility among participants. In Ngawonggo Village, this shared participation exemplifies both vertical devotion to God and horizontal commitment to social unity, aligning with the concept of religious communitarianism whereby faith is expressed through collective moral and social engagement. Consequently, the social spirituality cultivated through the Suroran tradition represents a meaningful integration of personal religiosity and communal cohesion (Cindy Artika et al., 2024; Jailani, 2024; Nezlek, 2022).

The Ngawonggo community regards Suroran as an essential component in the preservation of their local identity and moral principles. Through the diligent observance of this ritual, they uphold venerable ancestral values such as simplicity, respect, and tranquility. In a modern era characterized by practicality, maintaining this tradition functions as a form of resistance against moral and social decline. The practice of Suroran provides the community with an opportunity to pause, contemplate the meaning of life, and rejuvenate spiritual values amidst societal changes (Yulian & Lubis, 2022).

This scene highlights the internal cohesion of the community as they assemble to observe their religious rites. Their gathering functions not only as an occasion for communal sharing but also as a platform for prayers aimed at salvation, seeking forgiveness, and strengthening their spiritual bonds with both the divine and one another. Through collective prayers and rituals, the residents of Ngawonggo Village foster a vibrant and inclusive religious environment, wherein each individual perceives themselves as an integral part of a broader spiritual community (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Concerning social spirituality, this imagery exemplifies the harmony between the horizontal and vertical dimensions. The vertical dimension is evidenced by their prayer practices and reverence for the divine, symbolizing devotion. The horizontal dimension is demonstrated through communal activities such as food preparation, sitting side by side regardless of social status, and sharing produce to exemplify equality and solidarity (Dwi Rachmat Setiyono et al., 2025).



Figure 1.
The community's practice of the Suroran tradition is carried out in an open area
(Source: Processed by Researchers in 2025)

Research indicates that the social spirituality cultivated through practices such as Suroran plays a significant role in enhancing social cohesion and mitigating internal conflicts within village communities. By emphasizing values of mutual cooperation, respect, and care for others, Suroran reinforces a sense of unity rooted in religious and cultural teachings, thereby functioning not only as a sacred ritual but also as a social instrument that fosters collective awareness and fortifies community foundations (Husna et al., 2023). In Ngawonggo Village, Suroran exemplifies an integrated spiritual and social practice that amalgamates religious, moral, and cultural values, serving as a dynamic mechanism through which communal spirituality is perpetually renewed. Through this tradition, residents deepen their relationship with the divine while concurrently promoting solidarity, empathy, and social responsibility, thereby contributing to the long-term cohesion and sustainability of the community.

CONCLUSION

The Suronan tradition in Ngawonggo Village exemplifies how local cultural practices function not merely as mechanisms for preserving customs but also as vital means of promoting the social spirituality of the community. Through collective activities such as joint prayer, tirakatan, and other communal endeavors, the community regards Suronan as an occasion for self-examination and the reaffirmation of faith. This tradition sustains a harmonious equilibrium between social and religious spheres, thereby enabling each member to find a space for communal unity and spiritual strengthening. Even amid modernization, the Suronan tradition continues because of the community's strong and consistent commitment to preserving it. The findings of this research additionally indicate that social values such as mutual cooperation, solidarity, and unity are not merely symbolic but are actively demonstrated through Suronan activities. Most importantly, the spiritual significance derived from religious practices gives Suronan a deeper meaning, extending beyond mere ritual and fostering a collective awareness that preserving culture also means safeguarding the community's identity and spirituality. Suronan extends beyond mere rituals, fostering a collective consciousness that preserving culture equates to safeguarding the community's identity and spirituality.

This research is expected to serve as a recommendation to the local government, with the aim of providing enhanced support for the preservation of Suronan. Such support may encompass the provision of facilities, official recognition as a cultural tradition, and integration into the village's cultural agenda. Educational institutions are urged to incorporate Suronan into locally based learning programs to promote moral values and character development among youth. Conversely, active participation from the community across various generations is vital to ensure that Suronan remains relevant and continues to function as a social cohesive force. Furthermore, additional research is necessary to examine the changing perceptions of Suronan among younger generations, ensuring that this tradition not only endures but also evolves in accordance with contemporary societal dynamics.

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