
The Social Construction and Cultural Values of Nyadran Tradition in Semarang: A Case Study in Kyai Asy'ari Sentono Village

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Abstract

Local wisdom is deeply embedded in various regions, including Semarang City. However, many forms of this wisdom remain unpublished despite their unique characteristics and cultural significance. Research from the 2018 Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) UNESCO convention identified traditions such as the Dugderan and Warag Ngendog, offerings at Rewanda Cave Kreo in Gunung Pati sub-district, and the Bende Nangkasawit carnival. However, lesser-known traditions persist, such as Nyadran in Kyai Asy'ari Sentono village, Ngijo sub-district, where dozens of goats are ritually slaughtered. This study aims to analyze the meaning of Nyadran, examine its social construction using Peter L. Berger's theory, and explore the values represented within the tradition. The research employs a qualitative approach with data collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The findings reveal three key aspects: First, the Nyadran tradition symbolizes gratitude, spiritual reflection, and devotion to Islamic teachings. Second, the social construction of Nyadran follows Berger's stages of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, solidifying it as an annual community tradition without empirical foundations. Third, the tradition reflects significant cultural and economic values, fostering communal solidarity while supporting local economic activities. Despite its importance, Nyadran remains underrecognized. Therefore, it is recommended that stakeholders, including cultural organizations and local governments, document, preserve, and promote this tradition to ensure its sustainability and broader appreciation. By highlighting the cultural richness of Nyadran, its values can contribute to strengthening both local identity and tourism in Semarang City.

Keywords: *Local Wisdom, Nyadran Tradition, Social Construction Theory.*

A. Introduction

The Nyadran tradition, predominantly practiced by Javanese Muslims, is an ancestral ritual carried out annually before the fasting month of Ramadan, specifically during the Hijriyah month of Sya'ban and the Javanese month of Ruwah. This ritual, which historically evolved from Hindu-Buddhist traditions intertwined with animistic and dynamistic beliefs (Daryono, 2017), serves as a cultural manifestation to honor ancestral graves and preserve communal values. In Semarang City, the Nyadran tradition remains diverse; however, the Nyadran practice in Ngijo sub-district, Gunung Pati District, is particularly unique due to its notable activity of goat slaughtering as a form of gratitude to Allah SWT, surpassing even Eid al-Adha celebrations (Nur Kholid, 2020). Despite its profound cultural and religious significance, this tradition has not yet gained proper recognition, academically or publicly.

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Previous studies highlight the importance of local wisdom and its role in cultural preservation. For instance, Kusuma (2020) explored revitalizing local traditions in Kandri Tourism Village, emphasizing the need for sustainable cultural transmission to younger generations. Similarly, Widodo (2023) investigated the Nyadran Kali ritual, identifying it as a key element of community identity and spiritual gratitude. Another study by Prasetyo et al. (2018) examined the economic impacts of cultural preservation in tourism villages, showing how local traditions contribute to social ecosystems and economic growth. However, no research has focused explicitly on the Nyadran tradition in the Ngijo sub-district, where the lack of formal community structures and support jeopardizes its continuity.

This study aims to analyze the social values embedded in the Nyadran tradition at Kyai Asy'ari's ptisan, examine its cultural significance as a communal heritage, and explore its economic impacts on the local community. Field observations reveal that the Ngijo community exhibits high enthusiasm for maintaining this tradition, evidenced by the ritual slaughtering of goats as a symbol of gratitude and hope for blessings. However, the absence of structured preservation efforts or government recognition significantly challenges the tradition's sustainability.

This research argues that the Nyadran tradition in the Ngijo sub-district represents an invaluable form of local wisdom that demands urgent preservation and promotion. By integrating the findings into broader development frameworks, this study advocates for stronger collaboration between cultural stakeholders, religious leaders, and government agencies to ensure the sustainability of Nyadran. Preserving this tradition will strengthen local identity and serve as a cultural asset for socio-economic progress in Semarang City.

B. Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The qualitative approach was chosen to explore and understand the meanings constructed by individuals and groups regarding the Nyadran tradition in Ngijo, Gunungpati, Semarang (Fawaid, 2010). The phenomenological design focuses on the lived experiences and meanings embedded in social events, specifically the Nyadran tradition held at the sacred grave (petilasan) of Kyai Asy'ari. The research focuses on understanding how the Ngijo community interprets the Nyadran tradition and identifying the representation of social, spiritual, and economic values within this long-standing practice.

The research procedure consists of several stages. The preparation stage includes determining the research location, identifying key informants, and developing data collection instruments such as interview guides and observation protocols. The data collection stage involves fieldwork to collect primary and supporting data. Key informants include the Head of RW 02, Mr. Sunari, who serves as a community leader with knowledge of Nyadran history, Modin Ahmad Yasa as the religious leader responsible for rituals, and individual and group participants from the Ngijo community. Additional supporting data, such as historical records of the Sentono sacred grave, documentation of Nyadran events, and participation records maintained by village elders or committees, are also collected.

Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews are conducted with key informants to gather detailed information about the meaning, processes, and values of the Nyadran tradition. Participant observation involves directly attending Nyadran rituals to observe activities, community involvement, and the cultural and economic dynamics surrounding the tradition. Documentation includes photographs, videos, archives, and historical notes to support and triangulate the data. To ensure data validity, triangulation is employed through source triangulation (comparing data

from different informants), technique triangulation (using interviews, observations, and documentation), and time triangulation (conducting data collection at different times to ensure consistency).

The data analysis technique follows the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1992), which consists of three key stages. The first stage is data reduction, where the collected data are selected, simplified, and organized based on relevance to the research focus, such as the meanings and values embedded in the Nyadran tradition. The second stage is data presentation, where data are presented in descriptive narratives, tables, or visual illustrations to identify patterns and relationships. The final stage is verification and conclusion drawing, where conclusions are drawn and validated through triangulation to ensure reliability and accuracy. The conclusions reflect a comprehensive interpretation of the Nyadran tradition, emphasizing its social, spiritual, and economic significance for the Ngijo community.

Through these systematic procedures and techniques, this research aims to provide an in-depth and holistic understanding of the Nyadran tradition in Ngijo. The findings are expected to highlight this tradition's cultural, social, and economic contributions, offering insights for policymakers and stakeholders to preserve and promote Nyadran as an essential aspect of local wisdom and heritage. This study underscores the importance of maintaining cultural traditions in the face of modernization and societal changes to ensure their sustainability for future generations.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. The Meaning of the Nyadran Petilasan Sentono Tradition

Forms of Expression and Forms of Gratitude

Generally, a person's gratitude is expressed in various ways, including holding a celebration and sharing gifts with others. Gratitude is an emotion that is often experienced by every individual, showing that their life is valuable and that they get what they have targeted (Dzikrina, 2015). Researchers found that the nyadran activity involves slaughtering a goat as a form of gratitude to God Almighty. The form of goat slaughter that is carried out based on the belief that it can grant a nadzar creates a subjective reality. According to Peter L. Berger, reality is formed from an individual's experience and depends on the individual's understanding (Ritzer, 2012). This subjective reality is greatly influenced by social interaction; an individual's understanding of the world is not the result of complete thinking, so in the process, they adopt and internalize this reality, which is socially constructed. Internalization is an individual's interpretation of an object as an expression of meaning (Sheni Yania, 2021). According to researchers' observations in the field, the number of goats slaughtered was not only 10 but up to 50.



Figure 1. Slaughter and distribution of goats during Nyadran

The actual number of goats slaughtered is not certain but fluctuates. The following is a graph of the number of goats slaughtered over the last 3 years based on the results of observations by researchers in the field.

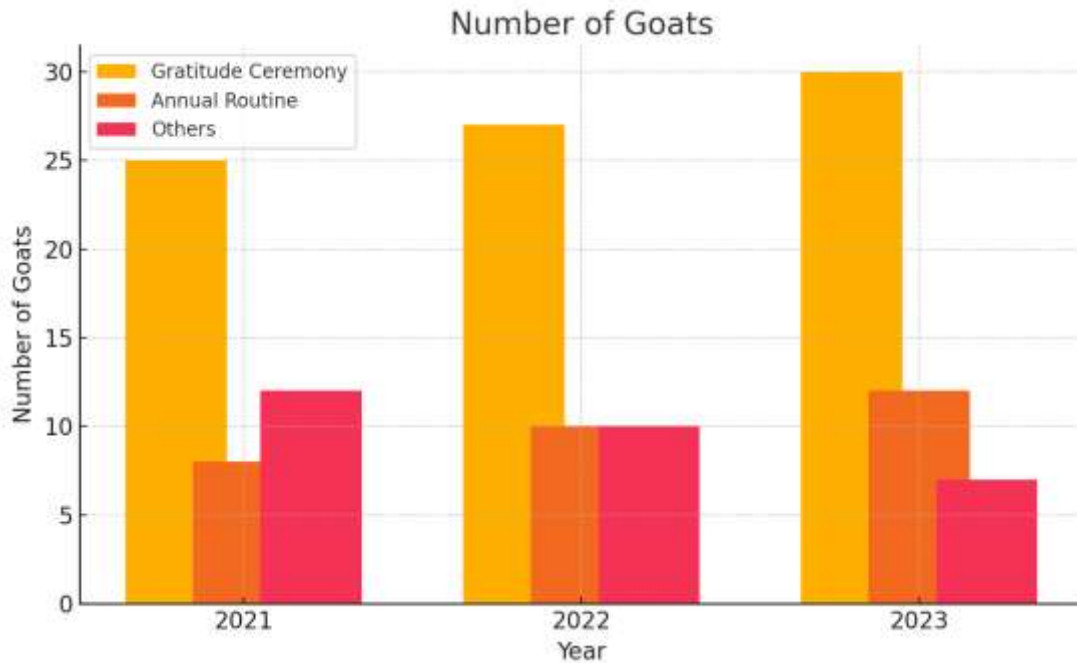


Figure 2. Goat data by destination

The goats slaughtered are then processed by residents and distributed when the recitation is finished. The objectives of the study include:

- The realistic goal is to implement the teachings and instill the values of the Islamic religion as a whole in a correct way based on faith so that the community around the Ngijo sub-district can carry it out well.
- The idealistic goal is to realize a Muslim society with a national and state life order, safe, peaceful, and prosperous under the protection of Allah SWT.
- The practical goal is to carry out and preserve traditions and customs left by ancestors that still exist today.

Religion had an important role in the social activities carried out by the Ngijo community during this time. Peter L. Berger has a different point of view, namely worldly or economic phenomena exploring the matrix through social, political, and cultural contexts (Berger, 1991). However, this understanding does not seem to apply to some people in rural areas who have it ingrained in their minds that their activities are purely based on practicing religion without the influence of economic factors (As'at, 2019). On the contrary, the people who slaughter the goats have the hope of improving their livelihood and economic standard.

The relationship between the nyadran tradition in the context of the actualization of gratitude coupled with religious recitation is a form of acculturation between culture and religion. Society and culture will always be related, giving rise to an inseparable side-by-side dialectic (Bahwan, 2019). The same view was also conveyed by Peter L. Berger, stating that the relationship between humans and culture occurs through a dialectical process involving externalization, objectification, and internalization so that humans themselves express themselves and build their world until it becomes a reality (Soemijantoro, 2024).

Tawassul through Midnight Worship Contemplation

A series of nyadran in the Ngijo sub-district is unique. One is that the local community holds a ritual of sending prayers at the Kyai Asy'ari petilasan. According to the results of the researcher's interview with the prayer leader (Modin), this aims to be more memorable and an alternative form if local village residents cannot attend the recitation in the morning. The Ngijo people believe that the relics of Kyai Asy'ari's legacy have energy and unique qualities because they are included in the group of Guardians who spread Islam in the area. According to A.Y., the tawassulan, which is carried out at midnight, is also a form of reflection on the services of the Wali's struggle who have preached, respected the legacy of ancestors, and preserved customs. The concept of tawassul (mediation) is driven by a bipolar thinking system, namely a relationship that occurs between humans regarding God humans, above - below, pure - dirty, sacred - profane, and far - near (Rahmawati, 2016).

Symbolic classification explains behavior regarding God's relationship with humans, thus creating moderation and giving birth to three classifications (Trichotomy). According to Berger, several elements of trichotomy can be linked to externalization, who explains that an individual is a living creature who is always in dialectic with the environment simultaneously so that they become one unit, including direct relationships, intermediary relationships, people, holy figures, and God. (Fery Adhi, 2018). The tawassulan activities carried out by some of the Ngijo sub-district residents who came began with turning off all the lights and sound systems at around 11.30 WIB. The later the prayer is read, the more silence and serenity the people who practice it will get. Humans actually consciously carry out diversity rituals like this and are often able to bring inner peace, so they do it with intentionality (Hikmatul, 2014).

Spiritual reflection and respect for Kyai Asy'ari

Nyadran activities, apart from being a cultural activity, are also a medium for reflection for some people, especially pilgrims who come. They also have personal goals, both worldly and as a form of respect for ancestral spirits. Kyai Asy'ari is known as a saint to the people of Kendal and surrounding areas because he is considered important and plays a significant role in spreading the religion of Islam (Eka, 2011). The apparent legacy of Kyai Asy'ari that exists to this day is the Al Muttaqin mosque in Kaliwungu, Kendal. Religious reflection is based on researchers' findings in the field, namely that residents around Sentono are more familiar with Islam. This is based on the narrative of one resident. The majority of them are "abangan," which is a term that labels a group of Javanese people who are Muslim but, in practice, are more syncretistic than the santri (Subair, 2015). According to Clifford Geertz (1983), society, especially in Java, has the applicable classifications and strata, namely the abangan, priyai (noble) and santri groups. Seeing that the majority of Sentono residents work as farmers and traders, this is certainly strong evidence that the majority are Abangan people.

The second reflection is to hope for blessings from Kyai Asy'ari. People say that blessings are not without reason. This is based on the Javanese belief that blessings are the same as praying (Muhammad, 2020). Tabarruk is also an effort to seek divine goodness in an object using media that has been agreed upon and is believed to have sacred value with Allah SWT (Layyinah, 2021). However, if we analyze more deeply the belief process in the form of tabarruk carried out by Sentono residents in nyadran, there is still debate to this day, namely: a) tabarruk through pious people, both living and dead is permitted as long as the aim is to worship/pray to Allah SWT. b) tabarruk on the graves of pious people and those who perform Tawassul, some allow it because they are considered not yet mentally dead, while some forbid it because it can lead to polytheism (Khoirul, 2015). There are several dimensions regarding tabarruk carried out by a person, namely the occurrence of a divine supernatural connection, the transfer of sacred power to certain materials, and the increase of positive essence in something blessed (Mireca, 2018).

These three things enable someone to understand better and reflect spiritually through Kyai Asy'ari regarding character and cultural aspects.

2. Nyadran Social Construction in Sentono petilasan

A social construction, namely a statement of belief (a claim), then becomes a paradigm (a viewpoint) that has meaning in an awareness that influences actions and interactions in culture in society (Charles, 2011). Social construction also adheres to an analysis system regarding the sociology of knowledge, not just a contemporary historical review (Bahwan, 2019). Departing from the main ideas of Peter L. Berger and Luckman regarding constructivism in the form of dialogue/social religion, which is everyday life, it gives birth to a social reality, which is the theoretical basis for this research. Berger's theoretical framework also focuses on the dialectical process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization in the context of understanding the reality of religion in society.

Externalization

definition of the initial processes that occur in socio-cultural society through language and action. Some explain that externalization is the process of individuals seeing social reality, social reality, and then understanding it based on their own subjective experience (Suandika & Wirasatya, 2021). Meanwhile, externalization in the context of religion is a human process of creating, expressing, and articulating religious beliefs and institutions into the social world (Adhi, 2018).

Externalization and sacredness in nyadran Adjustment to sacred texts towards the truth of the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. Used as a basis/guideline for providing recognition of the truth of a previous tradition (Bahwan, 2019). This was done by ancestors, ulama, and religious experts who were previously famous for their piety and could teach Islam based on their respective interpretations, regarding actions and language in the context of externalization, such as Jami's wage just kliwon, mbah sentono, night dhikr, slaughtering goats, nadzar, and nyadran. This research reviews constructions in the realm of religion so that by reasoning, you will find various kinds of terms. Berger's view of religion is one of the most fundamental ways humans give meaning to reality, such as the term nyadran every Thursday wage Friday. Kliwon is a word and day seen as sacred for the residents of Sentono and its surroundings.

Other forms of externalization are religious institutions and institutional authority. Humans create religious institutions/institutions as a form of externalization of the beliefs they have in order to support spiritualism. Each religion has institutions such as churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and other places of worship (Sulaiman Aimie, 2016). This institution functions as a place of worship and distributor of culture, society, and even politics (Bahwan, 2019). Although not too dominant, the role of existing religious institutions such as NU has a relationship/correlation on a particular scale, namely the security department, by deploying the Multipurpose Front (Banser).

This autonomous institution, part of Ansor NU, functions apart from warding off radicalism and also plays a role in community service. This is stated in the main tasks and functions of Banser Article 2, which states that it carries out social programs and development programs in the form of initiation and participation (Fatkhan, 2018). Peter L. Berger also explained that externalization would give birth to an institutional authority, namely that religion forms an authority system that regulates its adherents, acts as a guardian of doctrine, religious leaders act as mediators between religious teachings and their followers so that it later becomes the foundation of religious legitimacy in society (Maimunah, 2024). The administrators/committee of Nyadran every year become the embodiment of institutional authority so that it will give rise to objectivation based on social reality

Objectivation

The second dialectic in social construction is objectivation, namely, when an individual understands social reality, that social reality is separated from the person's personality. In another sense, objectivating moments of self-interaction with the sociocultural world and depicting if social reality is outside humans themselves (Romdani, 2021). Several things need to be noted, such as the connection between the ptisan and the original tomb, which is one of the bases for objectification. Believed to have supernatural powers, social products in the form of nyadran and Shyamalan, Habitus or habituation

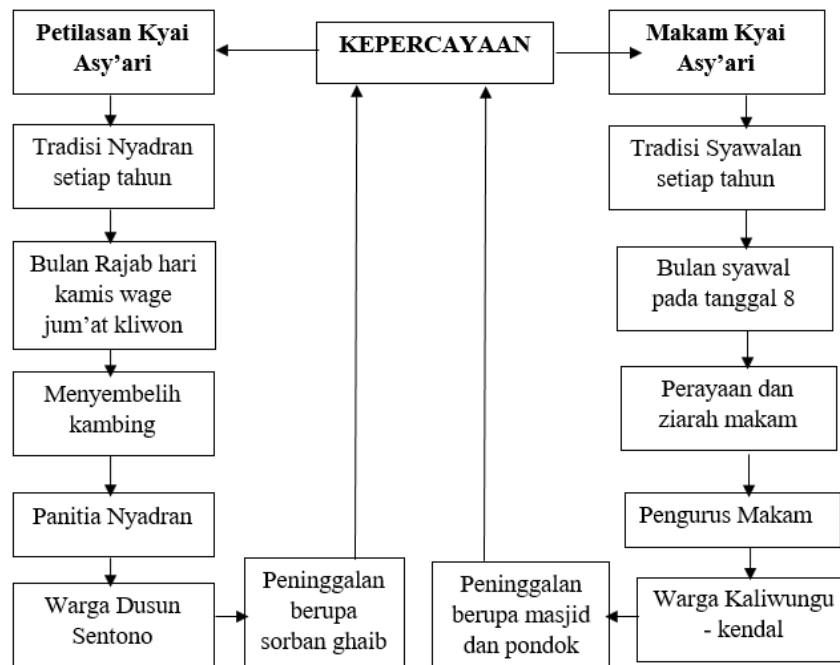


Figure 3. The objectivation cycle is based on the belief

Internalization

This stage is a person's self-identification in the socio-cultural world. This moment draws a social reality within a person, which will later become a subjective reality, existing within the human being so that it becomes its socio-cultural (Longhofer & Winchester, 2016). Humans live socially and in groups (Yusof & Kastolani, 2016). The internalization of nyadran activities in Sentono does not focus on one of the religious organizations discussed above, NU and Muhammadiyah. This internalization occurs through socialization in every social activity, including the Nyadran in Sentono. The internalization process in this research is the belief in slaughtering goats as a sacrifice to achieve success.

The Ngijo people have been social actors for many years and have already decided that it is obligatory to slaughter goats when they are aware of it. Goats are also used as symbols of rituals, such as nyadran in Bojonegoro district, specifically in Turigede village, where slaughtering goats means mutual respect and respect for parents, giving awards to someone who has achieved success (Ibnu Mustopo Jati, 2022). Some represent the meaning of slaughtering goats as a teaching concept from the beginning of human birth, from the existence of human form to its absence (Habib, 2021).

Belief in Petilasan as a stopover place for Kyai Asy'ari to spread Islam. Kyai Asy'ari became the center of attention for Sentono residents because he was placed at the center of social construction between religion, humans, and beliefs, giving birth to a culture (Longhofer &

Winchester, 2016). Humans and religion will not be separated regardless of social conditions. The interaction between the two will give birth to a new culture in a sustainable manner and will give rise to dialectics within it. Concrete reminiscences/relics, which are still the center of dialectics, greatly influence the internalization of the people of Ngijo and its surroundings. So, researchers describe a form of internalization based on the dialectic between religion, society, and belief.

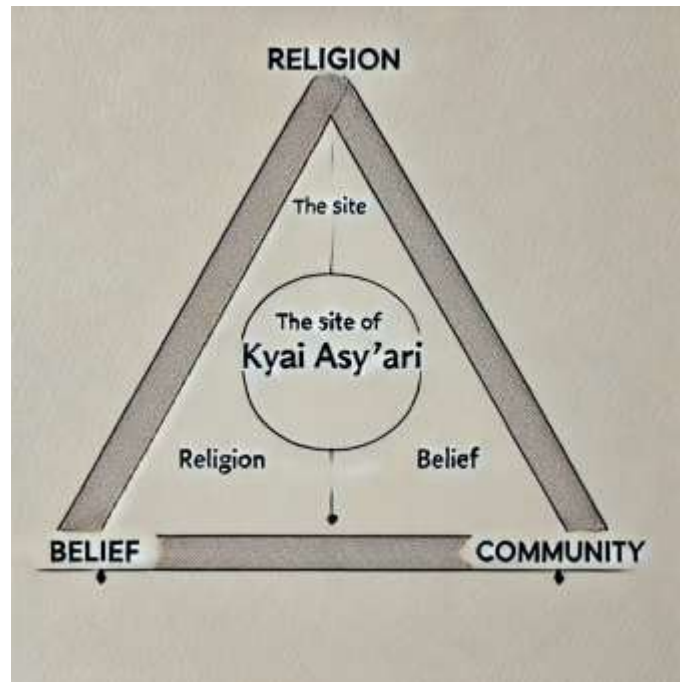


Figure 4. Dialectics of religion of the Ngijo people

The final internalization process was advice from community elders in the Ngijo subdistrict. It has become commonplace for village communities that the history developed from information passed down from generation to generation is the most important factor in preserving culture (Mahfuz, 2019). The role of the Ngijo village elders, apart from leading nyadran activities for many years, is also a liaison between generations so that local wisdom is not lost and remains respected by the next generation. This indirectly positions the elders as contemporaneous guardian agents, preservers, and cultural actors (Wahid et al., 2018).

3. The form and representation of the values in the Nyadran Sentono tradition

The positive values of local wisdom in art, games, and nyadran can be explored and actualized daily. This local wisdom is related to the knowledge of the local community; it could also be due to existing externalization, which will create harmony, peace, and even cooperation between people (Wayan Midhio, 2018). The third problem formulation describes the social, cultural, and economic values in Nyadran Sentono. The value itself is a general concept of something that is considered good; the existence of this value is highly aspired to, desired, and implemented in everyday life. These values in the Nyadran tradition also encourage people to behave and act appropriately towards themselves, their families, and God (Annisa Ul Aliyah, 2022).

Social Value

This value is held by society regarding the notion of good and evil, so it applies to use in social life. It could also be that social values are attitudes and feelings accepted by many

people/society, so they become the basis for formulating correct and important things (Duha, 2023). The social value in Nyadran itself means interaction between individuals and groups because later, there will be activities of helping each other, cooperation, and cooperation. (Widyanti, 2016). Based on researchers' findings regarding the implementation of nyadran in Sentono, cooperation and cooperation is one form of social value. Ngijo residents prepared the event by forming a committee, procuring equipment such as a sound system and tarpaulin, and then mobilizing residents by broadcasting on several prayer rooms/loudspeakers near the event. The attitude shown by residents is, of course, based on awareness and responsibility so that Nyadran can run well and that social values emerge. The above phenomenon represents social value formed through continuous interaction between humans, individuals, and groups (Waluya, 2020).

The inheritance of the Nyadran Sentono tradition is through a learning process through socialization, acculturation, and the spread of culture. The values differ depending on the subjectivity of the community and positively impact personal development as members of society (Nuryani Siti, 2018).

Social values in the Nyadran Sentono tradition also have a role in regulating the behavior of community members by tradition so that it will create inner security and peace (Rachman, 2013). The thoughts of the Ngijo people have made this tradition take root and influence existing social realities. They know that the figure considered the guardian of Kyai Asy'ari has been at the center of Nyadran's social legitimacy all this time. Petilasan, considered sacred, has the privilege of giving birth to dominant and deep social values. This value is higher than others (Annisa Ul Aliyah, 2022). This dominant value is considered an excellent value, which has been adhered to for a long time and is maintained by community leaders (Nur Inayati, 2021). Suppose it is connected to Nyadran and social values. In that case, it becomes a unity that cannot be separated, considering that value is real evidence of human activity in terms of goodness on a shared scale. In contrast, the nyadran tradition itself is the result of a thought and substantial belief and lasts a long time (Aryanti & Mosque, 2023). Nyadran in Sentono will bring out a value; this can be seen from the activities of residents when Nyadran takes place. So a social value will continue to be attached to every human activity, both individual and group, so that Nyadran in Sentono shows social values in the form of cooperation, cooperation controlling the behavior of the Sentono residents themselves, then as a boundary for the identity of the residents so that the spirit of a tradition is maintained for many years.

Cultural Values

These cultural values act as an orientation and reference for society to act, encourage thinking patterns, and become a source of order for society to behave (Batubara, 2017). Cultural elements that have long been known generally include language systems, knowledge, kinship, living equipment, economics, religion, and art.

a. Religious system

The value of religiosity in the Nyadran Sentono ritual manifests in symbols of belief and respect for the Asy'ari kyai's recitations. The Nyadran tradition is accompanied by reading prayers and holding public recitations, which many residents attend. The religious activities carried out so far depart from religious emotions usually experienced by every human. However, these emotional vibrations only last for a moment and then disappear again (Sutarto, 2020).

b. Economic system

Implementing the nyadran tradition in Sentono cannot be separated from economic activity, as shown by the presence of small traders who join in the fun. The cultural element in the form of an economic system is an activity that combines the management of natural resources, labor,

technology, production, and distribution of goods and services regularly (Khotimah, 2019). Culture and traditions directly provide encouragement and motivation to members of society to produce and distribute goods and services with different models. (Kamelia, 2018). Based on researchers' findings in the field, economic activity lies not only in the traders who operate during Nyadran but also in the ritual of slaughtering goats. The price of goats during Ruwah (rajab) is relatively stable, around Rp. 2,000,000.00 up to Rp. 4,000,000.00. If there are around 43 goats in Sentono every year, the economic value is around IDR 120,000,000.00.

D. Conclusion

Local wisdom in the form of the nyadran at the Asy'ari kyai recitation at the Sentono Gunung Pati cemetery in Semarang has several meanings based on the beliefs and beliefs of the residents around Sentono which represents a form of respect for religious figures/who are considered guardians for some people. The first meaning is nyadran at the Sentono petilasan as a form of gratitude to God Almighty for giving him safety and his success. This feeling of gratitude is also expressed in slaughtering (sacrificing) goats because their nadzar has been fulfilled. The following meaning is to reflect historically on the struggle of Asy'ari kyai in spreading Islam in the Sentono area. This analysis of the Nyadran Sentono tradition uses Peter L. Berger's social construction theory, which is based on externalization, objectivation, and internalization. In the externalization of Sentono nyadran, the sacredness in nyadran, such as the terms Thursday wage, Friday, Kliwon, Rajab month, nadzar, slaughtering goats, and tawassulan are terms identified by nyadran in Sentono. Other forms of externalization include religious institutions and institutional authorities, although temporary. In the objectification part, the nyadran tradition is divided into two parts, which are known based on the figure of Kyai Asy'ari as a tomb and a petilasan.

This figure, believed to be a guardian, has a different annual cycle to objectively influence people's views in the Kaliwungu area (Kyai Asy'ari's grave) and Sentono (Kyai Asy'ari's shrine). These two dialectics gave birth to internalization, as shown by the belief in slaughtering goats for a Mazda, the belief in ptisan being proof of sojourn, and the role of village elders in the indoctrination of the Sentono community. This tradition represents social values in the form of cooperation and cultural values in terms of religious and economic systems.

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