

## Preserving the Sandingan Malam Jumat Tradition: A Manifestation of Cultural Acculturation in Probolinggo Regency

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### Abstract

Its vast archipelago makes Indonesia a meeting place for various ethnicities, races, traditions, cultures, and religions. Many indigenous communities reside there, each contributing uniquely to Indonesia's rich cultural heritage. This research aims to evaluate the existence of the Friday Night Sandingan tradition in Probolinggo Regency. This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings of this research are as follows: 1) The decline in the existence of the sandingan tradition among young people indicates a shift in values and interests of the younger generation away from traditional cultural elements. Traditions upheld by previous generations may be experiencing a decrease in attention because younger individuals are more interested in contemporary entertainment or social activities. Conversely, older generations still consider the sandingan tradition important and relevant due to its historical values, cultural identity, or as a means of preserving ancestral heritage. These differing perceptions between the younger and older generations reflect the dynamics of shifting societal values and culture. Efforts to protect traditions need to be adjusted to the preferences and lifestyles of the new generation. 2) Those who consistently participate in the Friday Night Sandingan tradition serve as evidence of the community's efforts to maintain it. Actively involving and encouraging the younger generation to participate in this tradition demonstrates a conscious effort to preserve the values and distinctive features of the Friday Night Sandingan. This approach reflects an awareness of the importance of preserving local cultural heritage and a desire to sustain the tradition for the next generation. By engaging the younger generation, the community strives to ensure that the sandingan tradition remains relevant and is a vital part of their cultural identity. These efforts create a strong intergenerational bond and assist the community in preserving this tradition.

**Keywords:** Existence of tradition, Sandingan Malam Jumat Tradition, Cultural Acculturation

### Abstrak

Kepulauan Indonesia yang luas menjadikannya sebagai tempat pertemuan berbagai etnis, ras, tradisi, budaya, dan agama. Banyak komunitas adat yang menetap di dalamnya, masing-masing memberikan kontribusi yang unik terhadap kekayaan warisan budaya Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi keberadaan tradisi Sandingan Malam Jumat di Kabupaten Probolinggo. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Temuan dari penelitian ini adalah sebagai berikut: (1) Penurunan keberadaan tradisi sandingan di kalangan generasi muda menunjukkan adanya pergeseran nilai dan minat generasi muda dari unsur-unsur budaya tradisional. Tradisi yang dijunjung tinggi oleh generasi sebelumnya mungkin mengalami penurunan perhatian karena individu muda lebih tertarik pada hiburan kontemporer atau aktivitas sosial. Sebaliknya, generasi yang lebih tua masih menganggap tradisi sandingan penting dan relevan karena nilai historisnya, identitas budaya, atau sebagai cara untuk melestarikan warisan leluhur. Perbedaan persepsi antara generasi muda dan tua ini mencerminkan dinamika perubahan nilai dan budaya dalam masyarakat. Upaya untuk melindungi tradisi perlu disesuaikan dengan preferensi dan gaya hidup generasi baru. (2) Mereka yang secara konsisten berpartisipasi dalam tradisi Sandingan Malam Jumat menjadi bukti dari upaya masyarakat untuk mempertahankannya. Melibatkan secara aktif dan mendorong generasi muda untuk ikut serta dalam tradisi ini menunjukkan adanya upaya sadar untuk melestarikan nilai-nilai dan ciri khas dari tradisi Sandingan Malam Jumat. Pendekatan ini mencerminkan kesadaran akan pentingnya pelestarian warisan budaya lokal serta keinginan untuk mempertahankan tradisi ini bagi generasi mendatang. Dengan melibatkan generasi muda, masyarakat berupaya memastikan bahwa tradisi sandingan tetap relevan dan menjadi bagian penting dari identitas budaya mereka. Upaya-upaya ini menciptakan ikatan antargenerasi yang kuat dan membantu komunitas dalam melestarikan tradisi tersebut.

**Kata kunci:** Keberadaan tradisi, Tradisi Sandingan Malam Jumat, Akulturasi budaya.

## Introduction

With its vast archipelago, Indonesia is a meeting point for various ethnicities, races, traditions, cultures, and religions. Indonesian society places significant reliance on religious values. As stated in Article 18B, Paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, "The state recognizes and respects traditional communities along with their customary rights as long as they remain in existence and are by the development of society and the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, as regulated by law." This constitutional provision affirms the recognition and respect for indigenous communities stipulated in the 1945 Constitution (Akmal, 2021). One example of this can be found in East Java, particularly in Probolinggo Regency, which is rich in cultural and traditional diversity.

Probolinggo Regency has a tradition known as *Sandingan Malam Jumat* (Friday Night Sandingan). Tradition is one of the most essential components of human life and plays a significant role in preserving cultural heritage and ensuring its continuity. Traditions are generally inherited practices that continue to be observed within a community based on the belief or assumption that longstanding customs are the most appropriate and correct (Nuryah, 2016). Although traditions may appear static, in reality, they also undergo evolution and change over time. The *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition is a tangible example of cultural acculturation in Probolinggo Regency.

Cultural elements such as Javanese, Madurese, and Arab influences are integrated into a celebration marked by various unique and colourful symbols capable of uniting diverse groups of people (Subahri, 2018). Cultural diversity is a phenomenon that encompasses multiple aspects of culture across the globe, one of which is tradition. On the other hand, despite being a national asset, multicultural societies are often vulnerable to conflict and division (Mahdayeni et al., 2019). In an increasingly interconnected global society, there is potential to create a more tolerant and peaceful world where cultures are respected and recognized as part of the shared human heritage. Generally, each island within the Indonesian archipelago possesses its own biodiversity and cultural plurality (Iskandar, 2016).

Acculturation is defined in the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) as the blending of two or more cultures that come into contact and influence one another, often due to globalization dynamics in various cultural domains (Wahyu & Saddhono, n.d.). The development of culture progresses alongside human development, making it inseparable from the life of a community, as society itself is the creator of culture. The evolution of human lifestyles inevitably leads to cultural revolutions (Khasanah, 2022). One example of cultural acculturation in Probolinggo Regency is the *Sandingan* tradition performed on Friday nights. Through this acculturation process, the community in Probolinggo not only preserves ancestral cultural heritage but also shapes a unique cultural identity that reflects harmony among the diverse social groups residing in the area. This tradition has become an integral part of their collective cultural expression. The existence of cultural traditions refers to the presence, continuity, and relevance of cultural elements passed down from generation to generation. Traditions encompass various aspects of life, including values, social norms, rituals, and more. They often reflect a community's history, beliefs, and collective experiences, which enables these cultural elements to persist over time due to the inherent value they carry (Arif et al., 2022). The existence of tradition plays a vital role in Probolinggo Regency's preservation of cultural identity. Many communities strive to maintain their cultural heritage by adapting traditional practices to contemporary contexts, seeking a balance between the past and the future (Arif et al., 2022).

*Sandingan Malam Jumat* is a traditional practice found in Probolinggo Regency, which takes the form of ritual offerings. Although its origins are similar to those found in Hindu-Buddhist traditions, this cultural expression has been adapted and integrated with Islamic elements, particularly those associated with the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) community, and is observed on Friday nights. Despite its syncretic roots, the tradition holds a special place among the locals due to its incorporation of rich local elements, narratives, and vibrant cultural expressions. This study delves into the origins, artistic elements, and social impact of the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition on the community of Probolinggo. It also explores how this tradition enriches cultural diversity in the region while preserving its deep historical roots. In Javanese, *Sandingan* is also referred to as *Cawisan*. The *Cawisan* or *Sandingan* tradition functions as a non-formal social institution that allows community members to gather and interact with one another at night, a time when they are free from the demands of earning a livelihood for their families. Habermas' theory of communicative action is employed in this study to analyze the communicative realities embedded within the *Sandingan* tradition.

The exercise of such authority is restricted by Paragraph (3) to serve only the people's best interests. Therefore, when individuals or groups currently control key sectors of production, land, water, and natural resources, it raises questions regarding the relevance of Article 33 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. In the context of the Law on the Management of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection (UU K2P2LH), the concept of *Wawasan Nusantara* (Archipelagic Outlook) supports the recognition and existence of indigenous communities (Akmal, 2021).

This study aims to further explore the existence of the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition as a phenomenon of cultural acculturation. The researcher examines how this tradition has endured over the years, identifies the components of the tradition that may have been influenced by various cultural sources, and analyzes its role in preserving the community's cultural identity while simultaneously embracing change. Previous research has documented the cultural influences on multiple aspects of tradition, ranging from costume changes to incorporating modern elements in the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* celebration. However, there remains a significant gap in understanding how cultural acculturation affects the continuity and relevance of this tradition, as well as its broader implications for local cultural identity. In light of this, the present study aims to investigate the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition as a manifestation of cultural acculturation in Probolinggo Regency. Furthermore, it seeks to explore the strategies employed by the local community to preserve and sustain this tradition amid the challenges of modernization and shifting cultural values.

## **Literature review**

### **a. The Concept of Tradition**

*Tradition is one of the most essential components of human life and plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage. It comprises inherited customs practiced by communities, grounded in the belief or assumption that ancestral ways are the most appropriate or correct (Pejagoan, n.d.). However, perceptions of what is considered good or faithful about tradition vary widely among different social groups across regions.*

*Tradition fosters cultural continuity and reinforces a community's identity by linking past, present, and future generations within an unbroken cultural framework. The forces of globalization have increasingly shaped societal development, illustrating how cultures and communities evolve. While traditions are often perceived as static and unchanging, they are subject to evolution and transformation in response to social, cultural, and historical dynamics.*

*Certain aspects of tradition may remain consistent, while others may evolve or adapt in response to social, economic, and political changes. Tradition plays a crucial role in shaping the cultural identity of a group. It serves as a means through which communities distinguish themselves and reflect their core values and cultural beliefs. Many traditions involve specific rituals and symbols that are regarded as significant by the community. To achieve a prosperous and peaceful future, existing cultural values must be aligned with the social traditions of the society; rituals often serve a vital function in maintaining social cohesion and preserving cultural continuity.*

*Tradition or culture can significantly influence various aspects of community life, particularly religion, as reflected through numerous rituals. This is especially evident in Javanese society, where cultural practices such as the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition continue to play a deeply rooted role in shaping daily life (Rodin, n.d.). Culture originates from the community, a society that constructs social interaction and relationships. Civilization, as a more complex form of culture, encompasses various components, including beliefs, ethics, customary laws, scientific knowledge, and a wide array of learned behaviours that individuals acquire as they develop into members of society (To, n.d.).*

*Fundamentally, the practice of local traditions by communities represents a means through which they pursue self-determined goals guided by rational intelligence and individual freedom. The traditions established by communities serve as conditions through which nature may fulfil its purpose, mediated by the presence of local society (Sugiharto, 2019). Each community possesses its distinctive traditions, which originate from the habitual practices of the local people. These traditions help shape the cultural identity and character of the community (Hengki Armez Hidayat, Wimrayardi, 2019).*

*Culture is a collection of ideas, actions, and societal outcomes humans acquire through learning and adherence to customs. According to its definition, tradition refers to long-established practices integral to a community's way of life. Traditions are closely linked to the beliefs and values upheld by society (Priyanto., 2019). The values or behavioural norms embedded within traditions have persisted for generations. In other words, traditions represent fundamental values rooted in long-standing cultural heritage (Cahyani, n.d.). Traditions often involve using various symbols, which are applied in symbolic practices. They can also be defined as collective customs grounded in knowledge, symbolism, beliefs, and other inherited elements from the past (Candra Wesnedi, n.d.).*

### **b. The Sandingan Tradition**

*The Sandingan tradition, typically observed on the eve of Jumat Legi (a Friday that coincides with the Javanese calendar day Legi), refers to offering or serving. In Javanese communities, Sandingan is also commonly referred to as Cawisan. These offerings, or sesajen, are presented to honour deceased ancestors or family members. This cultural ritual varies in form across different regions, with each community expressing the tradition in ways that reflect their unique local characteristics. While symbols may differ from one area to another, the essence of the Sandingan tradition remains strong and deeply embedded in cultural practice (Mulyadi, n.d.).*

*The offerings typically consist of items favoured by the ancestors or deceased family members. Common elements include coffee, plain water, and apem (a traditional rice cake), which are considered essential components believed to symbolize a plea for forgiveness from God. The Sandingan ritual reflects a process of cultural acculturation between Hindu and Islamic beliefs, resulting in the formation of the Jumat Legi night ritual as a uniquely Javanese religious and artistic expression. In terms of religiosity, the Sandingan offerings carry symbolic meaning. The recitation of prayers accompanies them to show respect and seek blessings for both*

*the living and the spirits of their ancestors. From a scholarly perspective, Sandingan is defined as a ritual offering tradition dedicated to deceased ancestors to honour their memory and serve as a moral example for future generations (Subahri, 2018).*

*The Sandingan Malam Jumat tradition is deeply rooted in Javanese society, where ritual practices are inseparable from daily life. The ritual is usually performed on Thursday evening, leading into Friday. During this ritual, numerous offerings—each carrying symbolic meanings—are prepared, and the community actively participates, strengthening social bonds and reinforcing communal ties (Dhea Istiqomah, 2019). This tradition also serves an educational function by transmitting cultural knowledge to the younger generation. It encourages youth to continue practising the tradition and not to neglect its meaningful role in individual and communal life (Mardliyatun Nahdliyah Putri, 2021). Performing the Sandingan Malam Jumat ritual serves as a reminder of the ancestors who have passed away, ensuring that their contributions and legacies are not forgotten (Suyono, n.d.). As a form of reverence for cultural heritage and spirituality, the tradition also contributes to the continuity of Sandingan values in daily life. It reinforces social interaction and solidarity within the community.*

### **c. Cultural Acculturation**

*Acculturation, derived from the English term acculturate, refers to the process of adapting to a new culture, including the adoption of foreign customs and practices. It is a form of social interaction between groups with distinct cultural backgrounds whereby individuals are exposed to new cultural elements and engage in their development through ongoing interaction (Parepare, n.d.).*

*When two or more cultural groups come into contact and interact, universal cultural elements such as values, norms, traditions, language, and cuisine may influence each other and become blended. This dynamic process is known as cultural acculturation. Acculturation may result from trade, migration, colonization, or other intercultural encounters (Muhammad Idris & Eva Dina Chairunnisa, n.d.). Such interactions often involve the exchange of ideas, practices, cultural products, and even technologies.*

*The resilience of the local community often shapes the strength of acculturation in a given region. The stronger the cultural practices are upheld by society, the more likely the values of cultural acculturation will be preserved (Adisty Nurrahmah Laili, Ega Restu Gumelar, Husnul Ulfa, & Ranti Sugihartanti, 2021). Acculturation is a continuous and dynamic process that evolves. It involves not only the acceptance of new cultural elements but also their modification and adaptation within the receiving culture. In some cases, acculturated cultures may resist change and remain relatively unaffected by external influences (Amirul Nur Wahid & Sumarlam, n.d.).*

*Acculturation is inherently reciprocal, meaning both cultural groups influence one another. This interaction can lead to a new cultural identity that combines elements of both cultures. Such intercultural contact often changes the original cultural characteristics of both groups. Cultural blending is not always easy; it is better understood as the selective incorporation of new cultural elements into an existing way of life (Hagai Kuncoro & Robinson Rimun, n.d.). In some instances, acculturation may cause the loss of specific aspects of a weaker or marginalized culture. However, it can also serve to protect and revitalize certain cultural elements.*

*Cultural acculturation has become increasingly relevant in globalization, where various cultures interact intensively through mass media, international trade, and migration. It is a complex and ongoing phenomenon that continues to shape modern societies. Acculturation illustrates that culture is a living, adaptive force that responds to social, economic, and political changes in an interconnected world. It also underscores the importance of preserving cultural values while remaining open to positive influences from other cultures.*

*Indonesia provides a prime example of extensive cultural blending, particularly the fusion of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic traditions, which has led to the formation of new cultural identities (Yanyan Suryana, n.d.). One such example can be observed in Probolinggo Regency, where the Sandingan tradition represents a form of acculturation. While it incorporates symbolic elements associated with Buddhism, the practice has been adapted within an Islamic framework—especially among Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) followers—reflecting continuity and transformation in cultural expression.*

### **d. George Herbert Mead's Theory**

*George Herbert Mead, an American social philosopher and sociologist of the early 20th century, is renowned for developing the symbolic interactionism theory. This theory emphasizes the relationship between individuals, symbols, and social interaction. Although Mead did not explicitly address "culture" as conceptualized by cultural sociologists, his work is closely related to understanding how social contexts, norms, and values shape and influence individuals. Mead argued that language is one of the most significant symbols in human interaction. He categorized symbols into three fundamental components: the mind, the self, and society. In this context, the Sandingan ritual held on specific Friday nights can be understood through the lens of the self, particularly Mead's concept of the "I" and the "Me." These constructs explain individuals' varied interpretations regarding the meaning of the Sandingan Malam Jumat tradition (Subahri, 2018).*

Symbolic interactionism emerged as a new theoretical perspective following the action theory pioneered by Max Weber. Mead was one of the key proponents of this symbolic framework (Derung, n.d.). He highlighted the central role of symbols in communication and the construction of meaning. Individuals form their identities through interactions with others, utilizing symbols and employing their minds to interpret social situations (Laksmi, n.d.). Social relationships within society are created, constructed, and maintained by individuals who actively and voluntarily choose behaviours, ultimately enabling them to assume social roles within their communities.

From an interactionist perspective, communication is considered a deeply humanistic process. This viewpoint emphasizes the profound role of values in shaping individual behaviour, grounded in the cultural values they internalize. According to this perspective, every individual embodies cultural essence, interacts within society, and derives shared meanings through thought. Ultimately, every form of social interaction is influenced by the individual's subjective interpretation—a key feature of symbolic interactionism (Siregar, n.d.).

The *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition is closely tied to cultural acculturation, stemming from Javanese ethnic beliefs such as animism and dynamism, as well as Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic influences. This perspective offers a clearer understanding of how individuals enact the Friday night ritual, typically driven by specific intentions and meanings behind their actions.

Symbolic interactionism allows for a comprehensive understanding of the subjective actions of individuals. Through this theoretical lens, we can analyze how interactions within traditional practices are embedded with particular symbols and meanings. For instance, the significance of Friday night is highly valued, and although the symbolic elements—such as rice, coffee, and water—remain largely consistent, their interpretations often vary. Today, meanings and symbols are the foundation for much of the social interaction within these ritual practices.

Mead's theory also encourages a deeper examination of how meaning is constructed within multiethnic communities. This approach, rooted in symbolic interactionism, holds that humans are thinking beings interacting within socially built activities. It clearly positions symbolism as an analytical tool to explore how people from diverse ethnic backgrounds engage and interpret one another's actions.

This activity typically occurs on Friday nights in Probolinggo, where the local Muslim community—especially those affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)—interprets the ritual as a religious and social object through their interactions. As such, it is a socially constructed object open to varied interpretations. These differences in perception can either support or challenge the tradition's practice. Some individuals continue to question its compatibility with Islamic Law, viewing it instead as a Javanese cultural practice infused with Islamic religious symbols (Moch. Shofiyuddin & Martinus Legowo, 2016).

## Method

This study employs a qualitative approach. The rationale for using a qualitative method lies in the understanding that social reality or truth originates from individual consciousness. The qualitative method involves data processing techniques using "words" and aims to describe or analyze the research findings through conceptual and theoretical analysis (Ismail Suardi Wekke, n.d.). The primary objective of this research is to explore the existence of the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition as a form of cultural acculturation in the Probolinggo Regency. The focus of this study is (1) To evaluate how the existence of the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition serves as a manifestation of cultural acculturation in Probolinggo Regency and (2) To examine the efforts made by the local community to preserve the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition as a culturally acculturated practice in Probolinggo Regency. This research also explores phenomenological questions, aiming to provide insights into the meaning of lived experiences from the perspective of individuals or groups (Susila, n.d.).

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection. This study utilizes documentation, observation, and in-depth interviews as its primary data collection techniques. To identify informants, the researcher applies purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques. Snowball sampling refers to the process of identifying, selecting, and accessing participants through a chain of referrals. The researcher initially contacts a few known individuals or cases and then asks these participants to recommend others suitable for the study. Like a rolling snowball, each new participant recommends the next (Nurdiani, n.d.).

This research also employs theoretical triangulation, particularly drawing on the cultural anthropology theory of George Herbert Mead. The use of theoretical triangulation in this context is intended to align the study with established theoretical frameworks. The study was conducted in Probolinggo Regency, a location selected due to the researcher's in-depth familiarity with the area. In recent years, with the rapid advancement of technology, especially among the younger generation, the *Sandingan* tradition is no longer practised routinely. Many young people perceive the tradition as mystical or unnecessary. This shift in perception prompted the researcher to investigate the current existence of the *Sandingan* tradition in this location.

## Results & Discussion

### Result/Findings

#### a. The Existence of the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* Tradition as a Manifestation of Cultural Acculturation in Probolinggo Regency

The *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition as a form of cultural acculturation in Probolinggo Regency represents a unique blending of cultural and religious beliefs. The following image depicts the symbolic elements associated with the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition.



**Figure 1.** A symbol used in the Sandingan ritual on *Sandingan Malam Jumat*

The community continues to preserve this tradition, as stated by Informant 1 (Mrs. Sumini), who expressed the following opinion.

"This Friday night *sandingan* is a offering for the spirits on Friday night. We prepare rice wrapped in banana leaves—there must be banana leaves underneath and on top of the rice, Doctor. Do not forget the fish that goes with the rice; the coffee must be included too. It's believed that the spirits of the deceased—referred to as 'the ladies'—are waiting, sitting in anticipation for these offerings. There was a story about someone who didn't believe in sending food offerings. They then placed flour around the offering table, and sure enough, traces showed that the spirits had come and walked around the flour".

"Do not forget, Doctor, the names of the deceased must be mentioned one by one. They are said to be waiting for the offerings, and if you mention many names, the offerings, especially the rice, should be abundant so it is enough for everyone. It might not be sufficient for all the spirits if it is just a little. You have to estimate how much will be enough for them. Also, if we have many neighbors, the offerings must be plenty as well, since some will be shared with the neighbors in the same row of houses."

"The young people also participate in making offerings, Doctor. I tell my children to make offerings, too. The offerings shouldn't be consumed by ourselves—they must be shared with neighbours or relatives. Everyone prepares something, even those who are not financially well off. Even if it's just fish meatballs, it's fine—as long as something is prepared."

"One of my children doesn't fully believe in this practice. He thinks only the *Al-Fatihah* prayer reaches the afterlife. But we also recite prayers so that the offerings may spiritually reach them. The offerings, too, are chosen based on what the spirits supposedly used to like. Yes, Doctor, ideally, the offerings are sent on Friday nights. But sometimes, if I have extra blessings or cook a lot, I make offerings even if it's not Friday night. I also light incense (*minyan*) and pray so that the spirits will bless us. If we don't send offerings, our sustenance might be limited—they say the deceased spirits won't pray for us".

Based on the interview above, the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* is also referred to as the "Friday night offering," which reflects a diversity of culture, religious values, local wisdom, and social interaction within the community. The people of Probolinggo have their own, yet broadly similar, ways of preserving this tradition. The community pays close attention to the details of the offerings for Friday night, in which items such as banana leaves and coffee are considered symbolic elements. Although some youth may not fully believe in the tradition, the older generation continues to remind and encourage them—especially their own children—to preserve and carry on the cultural heritage. The younger generation may believe only in the power of the prayers, but the elders' continuous efforts to emphasize the importance of tradition have resulted in the youth participating in the Friday night offerings. The following is the opinion of Informant 2, Mrs. Maniye.

"It's not that I'm just following tradition, Doctor. I once had a dream where I was visited by my mother, who came from the village of Gerongan. She had 12 children, eight of whom had passed away, and only four are still alive today. In that dream, she was preparing *jenang* (a traditional sweet porridge usually made during the month of Asyura). But in my dream, the *jenang* was being distributed to her deceased children. The ones distributing it were those who 'care' for the souls in the afterlife. Then someone in the dream said, 'This won't be enough—the *jenang* is too little'.

"After that, I asked my mother in Gerongan village, 'Mom, did you make only a small amount of *jenang* yesterday?' She answered, 'Yes, only a little.' I asked again, 'Was it for an offering?' She replied again, 'Yes, just a small one.' That's when I started thinking seriously, Doctor—maybe the offering wasn't enough in the afterlife after it was shared among the spirits".

"So whenever I make an offering, Doctor, I always make sure there's coffee too so they can have it in the afterlife. I estimate the rice to be enough for those in the grave. Then I burn incense (*minyan*) and recite prayers before distributing the food to neighbors. Before there was a prayer room (*musholla*), we would just diste the offerings at home, now that there's a *musholla*, we place the food there too, even after praying, so that others can pray again for the deceased. Many neighbours gather for the *tahlil* prayer on Friday night—it's a communal prayer. And the coffee is important, Doctor. Don't forget the coffee—pity those in the grave if it's forgotten".

"Yes, this is how we make offerings every Friday night. I cook a lot, especially when we have more income—sometimes, I buy fish, chicken, or even beef. But when there's less money, just eggs are fine. I don't force myself when I don't have enough. My children do the same, Doctor—I've told them we must send offerings on Friday nights. And thank God, until now, they still continue the tradition".

This opinion aligns with the view that traditions foster social interaction within the community. In contrast, the cultural practices and traditions continue to be preserved by the people, along with the religious values observed during Friday nights. The belief system embedded in the tradition helps sustain its continuity, with rice, coffee, and incense (*minyan*) serving as essential symbolic elements. Elders consistently remind their children to uphold the *Sandingan* or *Kiriman* tradition, and to this day, their children continue to maintain it. Additional perspectives on this tradition were also expressed by Informant 3, Mrs. Tarwiyah, as follows.

"The so-called *Sandingan* or *Kiriman* on Friday nights refers to offerings made that evening, followed by *tahlil*—a collective prayer recitation at the *musholla* (prayer room) with neighbors and religious students. And don't forget to burn *minyan* (incense), my child. As for the food and drinks, they are considered rewards for those who recite the *tahlil* and offer prayers. According to the elders, the offerings must be complete because they used to believe that the food and drinks would physically reach the deceased in their graves.

Once, during a *tahlil* here, someone only brought crackers to the *musholla* for the *Kiriman* offering. The elders criticized it, saying, 'Why only crackers? Pity those in the grave.' But if someone has nothing else, even crackers are fine because what truly reaches the afterlife are the prayers and the scent of the incense, my child.

There was once a story about someone working overseas in Malaysia. Back then, there were no phones, so when he lost contact, people assumed he had died. His family held a *tahlil* and burned incense. Later, they were surprised when a friend returned home and saw him. The man explained, 'No wonder I kept smelling incense every Friday night.' From that, if someone alive can smell incense in Malaysia, then surely it reaches the afterlife too, my child.

Nowadays, elders still bring rice and fish—sometimes chicken—as offerings. They give generously, especially when they have more fortune, even though food prices like chilli are high now. The rice dishes—known locally as *berkat*—are often abundant and sometimes left unfinished".

Based on the above statement, this perspective differs from previous ones, illustrating that individuals within the community have diverse experiences. Nevertheless, they continue to preserve the tradition with a religious foundation by holding *tahlil* and preparing *Kiriman* offerings every Friday night. Bringing rice or *berkat* to the *musholla* has become a symbolic representation of the tradition, fostering religious

observance and social interaction. A noteworthy phenomenon mentioned is the belief that the scent of *minyan* reaches the afterlife, reinforcing its inclusion as an essential symbolic element in the *Kiriman* ritual.

Unlike the previous statements, this community has diverse experiences. Yet, they consistently preserve the tradition through its religious aspects by continuing the *kiriman malam Jumat* (Friday night offerings) accompanied by *tahlil* (communal prayers). The community maintains this practice by bringing rice or *bherkat* (blessed food) to the *musholla* (prayer room) as a symbolic gesture during the *kiriman malam Jumat*. This practice also fosters social interaction during the *tahlil* gatherings at the *musholla*. A phenomenon reported by one community member involves the belief that the scent of *minyan* (incense) surely reaches the afterlife, which reinforces the reason for including the burning of *minyan* as an essential element of the *kiriman malam Jumat* tradition. Other members of the community also shared their views, including those of Informant 4, Mrs. Aisah, as follows:

"I offer *kiriman* (ritual offerings) so that the recitation of Al-Fatihah may reach the afterlife. Sometimes I prepare rice, and sometimes only crackers—if I don't have money, I offer crackers; but if I have some income, I prepare rice. When placing the rice, what truly reaches the deceased is not the rice itself but the reward of the act (*amal*), which I dedicate to the departed. The offerings are made on Fridays because it is believed that on that day, the spirits of the deceased return to their homes—from Thursday evening until Friday evening. But, if no offering is made and the deceased is completely forgotten, it is believed that they may curse the living. According to what I heard from the teachings of several *kiai* (Islamic scholars), one of them said, 'May Allah reduce the sustenance of my descendants who forget me completely.' That's why I must continue to remember, pray, and recite *tahlil* for the deceased."

My mother once told me a dream in which a deceased family member said, 'If you forget me, I will take back the mortar and pestle'—a symbolic expression that one's fortune may be hindered. In the afterlife, the deceased depends on the prayers of the living; if the living forgets them, they might be cursed by those in the grave. One *kiai* said that when a child or grandchild sends even a single recitation of Al-Fatihah, the blow of the angel meant to strike the deceased is lightened. That's why the spirits of the deceased long for *kiriman* on Friday nights."

The results of this interview also reinforce how the community preserves the tradition from a religious standpoint while maintaining social ties through communal gatherings at the *musholla* (small mosque). If people do not perform the *kiriman*—such as sharing rice or crackers—it is believed to affect their financial stability, according to local beliefs negatively. Offerings like rice and coffee are regarded as acts of charity (*sedekah*); if these are not done, people believe that their sustenance (*rezeki*) may be diminished. The following is the statement of Respondent 5, Mr. Imam:

"Kiriman malam jum'at (ritual offering) on Friday night is not just any event; it is held on a very noble day—Friday night and Friday itself. *Dhinah* (on) Friday night is considered a good and most exalted day. That is why the *ulama* (religious scholars) set an example for us to give charity on Friday night."

The statement above emphasizes the preservation of tradition through its religious significance, particularly highlighting Friday night as a sacred and virtuous day. The respondent follows the guidance of the *ulama* to ensure that this tradition continues to be practised to this day. The community closely associates the *Sandingan* tradition with the teachings of the *ulama*, as illustrated in the following statement from respondent 6, Mrs. Ami:

"When someone passes away, their children always perform *kiriman* (ritual offerings), which includes coffee and rice—sometimes even cakes, or if there are no cakes, they substitute it with crackers. But the coffee and rice must always be included, followed by the *Fatihah* (surah Al-Fatihah) recitation. If the deceased's children do not send offerings for three consecutive Fridays, it is believed their sustenance (*rezeki*) will be reduced. The deceased is said to complain to God, saying that their children have forgotten them. The souls in the grave are believed to pray to Allah to lessen the sustenance of their forgetful children—even from the afterlife; they may curse them."

I also listen to religious sermons (*ngaji kopengan*), so I know this, especially from *Gus Boy*, who frequently gives religious speeches. Don't forget the *minyan* (aromatic incense), either. The procedure for the *kiriman* goes like this: begin with the intention and prayers—(1) *Ila hadratin* Prophet Muhammad *Shallallahu Alaihi Wasallam*, (2) the late KH Hasan, elder of Genggong, (3) the late KH Saifur Rijal—then recite Surah Al-Fatihah three times. After that, read: (1) *Wa'ala jami'i almarhum keluarga kamu* (to all deceased family members), followed by another recitation of Al-Fatihah. Those

in the *barzakh* (afterlife) are said to rejoice when these offerings reach them, according to *Almukarrom KH Naival of Genggong*.

Until now, I have never forgotten to do this, as I pity those in the *barzakh*. Even though my children are still young, I teach them to make *kiriman* as well. After the prayers, rice and coffee are given to neighbours. The ritual doesn't necessarily have to be on Thursday night—it can be done Friday morning, Friday afternoon, Saturday night, even Sunday night—because it is believed that the souls of the deceased visit their homes during these times. In the *barzakh*, they ask the angels, 'Did I receive any offerings?' and if there are, they rejoice. The rice prepared by the children is not consumed by the deceased—it is considered a symbolic reward for those who recite the *Fatihah*. No one in the afterlife eats the rice; the merit goes to those who pray. I will never forget this because I clearly remember what *Kyai Genggong* preached in his sermons."

Based on the interviews, it is evident that the community continues to uphold symbolic elements of the tradition, such as rice, coffee, and *minyan* (incense). They engage in social interaction by sharing food with neighbors. This tradition is strongly preserved, as it is highly recommended within Islamic teachings and advocated by religious scholars. Local Muslim communities can manage and package religious traditions into engaging and appealing cultural attractions (Suma, 2022). The local community believes that neglecting the *sandingan* or Friday night offerings could negatively affect their livelihood, as it is deeply rooted in their beliefs. The following is the statement of Informant 7, Ust. Amar Hasan:

"There is no specific ruling stating that visiting graves on Fridays (*ziarah Jumat*) is obligatory, but there are two interpretations—some scholars regard it as *sunnah* (commendable), while others believe it holds no specific legal status. However, as mentioned in classical religious texts, the deceased in the grave hope for offerings in the form of *Al-Fatihah*, and the living—especially their children—are expected to give alms to others. It is said that the deceased would convey the message: 'You are living in the world that once belonged to me, and I'm reminding you of that.' It suggests that the children live in the world inherited from the deceased and yet may forget them—something that should not happen".

This interview with a religious expert reflects the ongoing theological debate regarding the practice of Friday grave visitation, rooted in differing interpretations. Making offerings such as *Al-Fatihah* to deceased parents or relatives is believed to provide spiritual benefits in the hereafter. The voice of the deceased, as imagined through local belief, highlights a desire for their living descendants to continue these religious traditions by offering prayers and almsgiving. This reflects a cultural message emphasizing the importance of remembering and preserving such practices across generations.

#### **b. Community Efforts to Preserve the Sandingan Malam Jumat Tradition as a Form of Cultural Acculturation in Probolinggo Regency**

The community's efforts to preserve the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition as a form of cultural acculturation demonstrate a strong commitment to safeguarding local heritage. As an initial step, the community continues to practice *sandingan*, commonly referred to as *kiriman*, which is consistently carried out on Thursday evenings to transmit cultural values associated with that particular night. Consequently, knowledge encompassing various symbols and traditions related to *Sandingan Malam Jumat* can be sustainably passed down. Communities in Probolinggo Regency actively maintain and strengthen the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition through symbolic expressions rooted in each local context. On Thursday evenings, Probolinggo residents consistently utilize symbols such as coffee and rice, with *minyan* as a central element. This activity is regarded as a meaningful moment in their lives, fostering the continuity of the tradition. The persistence of this practice is underpinned by religious conviction, such as the belief, expressed by Informant 5 (Mr. Imam), that Thursday evening is a sacred time. Hence, the people of Probolinggo remain steadfast in performing this tradition.

Several symbols—coffee, rice, and *minyan*—serve as tangible representations of acculturation within the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition. These symbols are practised based on personal beliefs. Informant 1 (Mrs. Simini) stated that these offerings are intended for deceased family members, even though this is not physically evident. Despite some skepticism, the symbolic acts allow the tradition to be preserved. Even when rice and coffee are omitted, *minyan* still fulfills the symbolic requirement, as explained by Informant 3 (Mrs. Tarwiyah), who believes these offerings are meant more as tokens of appreciation for the living than for the deceased. Despite varying beliefs, the people of Probolinggo continue to uphold the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* as a form of cultural acculturation. Informant 4 (Mrs. Aisah) still believes that the deceased can offer blessings—or even curses—if the living forget

them or neglect to perform the ritual. Failure to participate in this tradition is perceived to bring misfortune, including financial hardship, thereby reinforcing the ritual's perceived necessity.

The connection between *Sandingan Malam Jumat* and economic wellbeing suggests that not giving offerings or alms may result in decreased fortune. Informant 6 (Mrs. Ami) expressed that not performing the tradition might reduce one's sustenance. Religious figures, especially those from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) community, emphasize this point in sermons, reminding the people that remembering the dead is a religious obligation. Informant 7 (Ustaz Amar Hasan) referenced classical texts in which the deceased long for prayers and offerings from the living. As a result, the people of Probolinggo interpret the Thursday evening *sandingan* as a blessed and meaningful practice.

Through the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition as a form of cultural acculturation, the people of Probolinggo maintain their cultural heritage with religious observance. This tradition also fosters social interaction—when people distribute coffee, rice, and other foods, they engage in communal acts. When they recite prayers with local religious leaders, they strengthen social and spiritual bonds. The community's involvement in preserving this tradition is vital in ensuring the survival of the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* as a culturally acculturated practice. By caring for these traditions collectively, the people cultivate a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for their cultural legacy. Probolinggo Regency not only preserves the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition as a cultural identity but also integrates it harmoniously into the rhythm of daily life. These efforts are not merely acts of cultural acculturation but also a concrete manifestation of cultural awareness in facing the ongoing tide of modernization.

## Discussion

The findings from the study on the existence of the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition as a form of cultural acculturation in Probolinggo Regency reveal that the local community is highly enthusiastic about preserving their local heritage through this tradition. Despite differences in beliefs and symbolic interpretations, the community continues to practice this tradition to acknowledge and uphold the cultural and spiritual values embedded within it. Symbols such as coffee, rice, and *minyan* (incense) are considered essential elements of the tradition. The community regards each symbol as carrying distinct meanings and beliefs. Nevertheless, the tradition serves as a medium for cultural acculturation within the local context. The people of Probolinggo remain united in preserving the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition, even amidst varying perspectives regarding its symbolic components. Notably, there is a perceived correlation between this tradition and the local economy; the *Sandingan* ritual is believed to influence economic livelihood and local income positively. In this sense, the tradition holds spiritual and socio-economic significance within the community.

Beyond its cultural and spiritual importance, the tradition also bears economic implications. From a financial standpoint, the belief persists that failure to perform the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* may negatively affect one's sustenance or livelihood. Thus, this local tradition not only functions as a marker of cultural identity but also significantly impacts the economic life of Probolinggo residents. Religious leaders and clerics (*alim ulama*) play a vital role in sustaining the tradition. This collective practice fosters social bonds, cultivating a sense of shared belonging and solidarity. These dynamics strengthen social cohesion in the effort to safeguard cultural heritage and nurture a community committed to maintaining the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition.

Community perspectives indicate that the *Sandingan* tradition performed on Friday evenings in Probolinggo also acts as a medium to connect younger generations with their cultural heritage. By actively engaging in the practice, young people can understand and transmit the traditional values inherited from their ancestors. Therefore, the role of youth is crucial in sustaining and safeguarding the tradition. Research on the existence of *Sandingan* on Friday evenings in Probolinggo offers more profound insights into how communities maintain and integrate cultural heritage into their daily lives by exploring these additional dimensions.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of the study on the existence of the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition as a form of cultural acculturation in Probolinggo Regency reveal that:

1. **Diversity of Symbols and Beliefs:** The *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition in Probolinggo involves a variety of symbols and beliefs. Despite differing opinions regarding symbols such as coffee, rice, and kerosene, the community continues to uphold the spiritual and social values embedded within the tradition.
2. **Significance of Religious Values:** Religious values strongly influence the *Sandingan* practices on Friday nights in Probolinggo. Religious leaders and scholars (*ulama*) play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting the tradition. Collective prayer, *tahlil* recitations, and specific symbolic offerings are practices closely aligned with religious principles.
3. **Impact on the Local Economy:** The *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition also affects the economy. Communities believe that neglecting this tradition could negatively affect their sustenance and well-being, thus demonstrating the interconnection between cultural traditions and the economic life of society.

4. Role of the Younger Generation: The active participation of younger generations is essential for preserving the *Sandingan Malam Jumat* tradition. The youth can sustain previous generations' principles and local wisdom through involvement in these practices.

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