


Cultural Implementation of Punggahan in the Pujakesuma Organization: a Sociocultural Study in Medan City

Prinsi Rigitta

Universitas Al-Azhar, Medan, North Sumatera, Indonesia

Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Punggahan, Pujakesuma, Javanese Tradition, Culturalism, and Social Organization.	This study aims to determine how the Pujakesuma organization maintains the punggahan tradition as one of the Javanese cultural heritages in Medan City. Punggahan is a Javanese tradition performed before the month of Ramadan as a form of respect for ancestors and self-purification. This study uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The theories used are Koentjaraningrat's Culturalism and Emile Durkheim's theory of religion as a social institution. The results show that Pujakesuma actively preserves the punggahan tradition by involving all elements of the Javanese community, especially the younger generation, and adapting the form of implementation to remain relevant in the modern era.
This is an open access article under theCC BY-NClicense 	Corresponding Author: Prinsi Rigitta Universitas Al-Azhar, Medan, North Sumatera, Indonesia rigittaprinsi@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a country with incredibly rich cultural diversity. However, with the passage of time and modernization, many traditions have begun to erode and slowly disappear from people's lives, especially among the younger generation. One tradition that is becoming less common is the punggahan tradition, a Javanese tradition celebrated before Ramadan. The punggahan tradition is performed to cleanse oneself physically and spiritually before welcoming the holy month. This practice typically involves communal prayer, visiting graves, and social activities such as eating together and sharing food. In the context of migrant communities outside Java, maintaining such traditions presents a unique challenge. Pujakesuma (Son of Java Born in Sumatra), as a Javanese community organization on the island of Sumatra, plays an active role in preserving ancestral cultural values. In Medan, Pujakesuma runs various social and cultural programs, including maintaining the implementation of the Punggahan (traditional Javanese custom).

Culture is an integral part of community life that continuously evolves through generations. One of the cultural practices that persists among Javanese descendants in Indonesia is *Punggahan*—a local tradition held to welcome the holy month of Ramadan. This tradition is rich in social and spiritual values, including communal gathering, food-sharing, and mutual forgiveness. Although originally rooted in Javanese customs, *Punggahan* has been preserved and practiced by Javanese descendants living in various regions, including the city of Medan.

The PUJAKESUMA (Putra Jawa Kelahiran Sumatera) organization, which consists of Javanese individuals born and raised in Sumatra, serves as an important cultural agent in maintaining traditional practices such as *Punggahan*. In the urban and multicultural setting of Medan, the PUJAKESUMA organization plays a pivotal role in ensuring that cultural values are preserved, revitalized, and adapted to contemporary social dynamics.

This study aims to explore how *Punggahan* is implemented within the PUJAKESUMA organization, focusing on its cultural meanings, the forms of community involvement, and its impact on social cohesion. By investigating the sociocultural dimensions of *Punggahan*, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how traditional values can survive and thrive in modern urban environments. The study also aims to shed light on the significance of cultural preservation as a form of identity reinforcement among ethnic communities in Indonesia.

Literature Review

The Concept Of Culture And Cultural Practices

Culture is commonly defined as a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of society use to cope with their world and one another (geertz, 1973). It is learned and transmitted from generation to generation through socialization. Cultural practices, especially those tied to religion or traditional heritage, play an essential role in shaping community identity and fostering social cohesion. In the context of Javanese society, these practices often take the form of ritual ceremonies and community gatherings, such as *punggahan*.

Culture is a complex system that encompasses the beliefs, norms, values, customs, and traditions shared by a group of people and passed down from one generation to the next. According to Geertz (1973), culture is "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge and attitudes toward life." Culture shapes the way individuals perceive their surroundings and engage in social life. It is both adaptive and dynamic, constantly evolving in response to internal and external changes.

Cultural practices are specific actions or rituals that reflect a society's values and beliefs. These include ceremonies, traditional customs, language use, festivals, and communal gatherings. Such practices serve as mediums through which cultural identity is expressed, reinforced, and transmitted across generations. They not only reflect historical continuity but also provide a sense of belonging and social integration.

In many traditional societies, including Javanese communities in Indonesia, cultural practices are deeply tied to religious and spiritual meanings. Practices like *punggahan*—a communal tradition held before the month of Ramadan—represent more than just ritual observances; they encapsulate collective memory, moral values, and a shared sense of spiritual preparation. These cultural expressions play a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion, especially in diaspora contexts where cultural identity is at risk of dilution.

Furthermore, in multicultural urban settings such as Medan City, maintaining traditional cultural practices becomes a vital strategy for minority or ethnic communities to sustain their cultural distinctiveness while coexisting harmoniously within broader societal

frameworks. Through repeated participation in such practices, individuals reaffirm their cultural identity and strengthen communal bonds.

The Tradition of *Punggahan* in Javanese Culture

Punggahan is a pre-Ramadan tradition widely practiced by Javanese communities, symbolizing purification, reconciliation, and readiness to enter a holy month. According to Suyanto (2015), the Punggahan ritual typically includes communal meals, religious sermons, and social interaction that strengthens communal ties. The practice reflects a hybrid of religious and cultural values, combining Islamic teachings with traditional Javanese social customs.

Punggahan is a traditional Javanese practice held in the days leading up to the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. This cultural ritual, deeply rooted in Javanese-Muslim traditions, serves as both a spiritual and social preparation for the fasting month. The word “*punggahan*” itself derives from the Javanese word “*unggah*,” meaning to ascend or step up—symbolizing the spiritual elevation and readiness of individuals to enter a period of religious devotion and self-restraint.

In traditional Javanese society, *punggahan* is marked by communal activities such as joint prayer (*doa bersama*), religious recitations (*pengajian*), and shared meals (*kenduri* or *slametan*). These gatherings function as spaces for forgiveness, reconciliation, and the renewal of social ties. It is customary for community members to seek forgiveness from one another before the arrival of Ramadan, fostering a sense of humility and spiritual cleansing.

According to Suyanto (2015), *punggahan* reflects the syncretic nature of Javanese Islam, blending Islamic rituals with indigenous cultural values. It embodies key elements of Javanese philosophy such as harmony (*rukun*), respect for elders (*unggah-ungguh*), and the importance of togetherness. The practice has been passed down through generations, serving as an instrument of cultural continuity and moral education.

In diaspora communities, such as the Javanese descendants living in North Sumatra, *punggahan* plays an even more vital role. It acts as a cultural anchor, connecting individuals to their ethnic heritage and reinforcing their sense of identity in a multicultural setting. The practice is often preserved and facilitated by local ethnic organizations, including PUJAKESUMA, which help maintain its relevance and meaning within modern urban contexts.

Despite the challenges posed by urbanization and globalization, *punggahan* continues to be a resilient tradition. Its adaptability allows it to evolve while retaining its core values. In this sense, *punggahan* not only reflects cultural heritage but also serves as a mechanism for community building and spiritual alignment among Javanese-Muslim communities.

PUJAKESUMA And Ethnic Identity In Diaspora Communities

PUJAKESUMA (Putra Jawa Kelahiran Sumatera) is a sociocultural organization that acts as a medium for preserving Javanese traditions among Javanese descendants born in Sumatra. Studies by Harahap & Riyanto (2019) highlight that ethnic organizations like PUJAKESUMA serve not only cultural purposes but also as platforms for maintaining group identity, especially in multicultural urban settings. These organizations become vital in

maintaining traditions like *Punggahan*, which may face erosion due to modernization and inter-ethnic assimilation.

In diaspora communities, the maintenance of ethnic identity often faces various challenges due to assimilation pressures, multicultural dynamics, and generational shifts. Organizations like PUJAKESUMA function as social and cultural institutions that help bridge the gap between ancestral heritage and contemporary life. By organizing cultural events, traditional ceremonies, and social outreach programs, PUJAKESUMA enables its members to sustain their Javanese identity within a broader Indonesian context.

Ethnic identity, as defined by Phinney (1990), involves a sense of belonging to an ethnic group, a commitment to its values, and a shared cultural heritage. For diaspora communities, identity is not only maintained through language and customs but also actively reconstructed through participation in cultural rituals. Practices such as *punggahan* serve as tangible expressions of ethnic identity, reinforcing a sense of unity and shared history among members.

Moreover, PUJAKESUMA functions as a medium for intergenerational cultural transmission. Through its initiatives, younger members are introduced to traditional Javanese values, norms, and practices, which might otherwise be lost in urban, heterogeneous settings. Events held by PUJAKESUMA often integrate traditional performances, Javanese cuisine, and religious observances, all of which contribute to the preservation of cultural memory.

The sociocultural significance of PUJAKESUMA extends beyond mere cultural preservation—it also fosters resilience, community empowerment, and social inclusion. In doing so, it helps mitigate identity loss and encourages a positive expression of ethnic distinctiveness within Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Cultural Preservation in Urban Multicultural Environments

Urban settings often bring challenges to cultural preservation, including the dominance of mainstream cultures, social fragmentation, and reduced participation in traditional practices. However, as noted by Nasution (2020), cultural organizations can serve as resilient spaces for marginalized or minority cultural practices. In cities like Medan, where ethnic diversity is high, the active role of cultural institutions becomes essential in maintaining intergenerational transmission of cultural heritage. Anthropologically, rituals like *Punggahan* serve as mechanisms to reinforce collective memory, cultural values, and social solidarity (Turner, 1969). Beyond their ceremonial value, such rituals function as expressions of identity and continuity. This is particularly relevant in diaspora communities, where cultural rituals help preserve a sense of belonging amidst diverse influences. Urban multicultural environments, such as Medan City, present both opportunities and challenges for cultural preservation. On one hand, cities offer a diverse social landscape where multiple ethnic and cultural groups coexist and interact. On the other hand, urbanization, globalization, and the dominance of mainstream culture can dilute or marginalize minority traditions, leading to cultural erosion over time.

Cultural preservation in such contexts involves deliberate efforts to maintain, practice, and transmit traditional values, beliefs, and rituals. As posited by Smith (2006), cultural

sustainability requires both institutional support and community participation. Local cultural organizations, religious institutions, and family networks play pivotal roles in this process, acting as custodians of heritage and agents of cultural renewal. For ethnic communities like the Javanese in Medan, preservation is not just about retaining customs, but also about asserting identity, dignity, and belonging. The practice of *punggahan*—supported by organizations like PUJAKESUMA—exemplifies how traditional rituals can be adapted to the urban context without losing their core meaning. Public celebrations, communal gatherings, and educational programs are strategies used to ensure continuity of cultural knowledge.

Furthermore, cities can also serve as fertile ground for cultural innovation. Hybrid practices often emerge, blending traditional elements with modern expressions, allowing younger generations to connect with their heritage in more relevant and meaningful ways. These adaptations help traditions remain dynamic rather than static, ensuring that they resonate across generations.

The role of education, media, and digital platforms cannot be underestimated in modern cultural preservation efforts. Social media, for instance, has become an essential tool for disseminating cultural content, documenting rituals, and organizing community events, especially among diaspora youth. In summary, cultural preservation in urban multicultural settings depends on the community's collective consciousness, adaptability, and willingness to transmit cultural values intentionally. With institutional support and active participation, traditions such as *punggahan* can thrive even amid the pressures of urban modernity.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to describe systematically and factually the Pujakesuma organization's strategy in maintaining the *punggahan* tradition.

Research Location, The research was conducted at the Pujakesuma Secretariat Office in Medan City and several locations of *punggahan* activities held by the organization.

Data collection technique :

1. Participatory observation
Researchers are directly involved in the gathering activities.
2. In-depth interviews
Carried out against the administrators and active members of Pujakesuma.
3. Documentation
Photos, videos, and archives of upload activities.

Data source :

1. Key informants
Chairperson and administrators of Pujakesuma.
2. Supporting informants
Community members, traditional leaders, and participants in the *Punggahan* activities.

The data was analyzed thematically by grouping the findings into several main themes: implementation of the upload, the role of organizations, community participation, and challenges.

This research uses two main theories

Culturalism Theory (Koentjaraningrat): Emphasizes that culture is the result of human creativity, feelings, and intentions that are passed down from generation to generation. This theory explains that culture is the whole of human ideas and works that must be accustomed to learning, as well as the whole of the results of character. Culturalism Theory is closely related to local wisdom. Prof. Dr. Koentjaraningrat explains that local wisdom is a form of knowledge and cultural values that are owned and maintained by a particular society or community. This knowledge includes an understanding of the harmonious relationship between humans and culture, as well as social values that form the basis of ethics and morals in everyday life. Culturalism in the punggahan culture is seen in the way society maintains and develops this tradition from generation to generation, as well as in the values contained in the process of this tradition, such as the values of gratitude, worship, and Islamic brotherhood.

The value of gratitude in Punggahan is to express gratitude to Allah SWT for all the gifts and blessings bestowed. In this tradition, the community performs Punggahan as a form of gratitude and an opportunity to gather, pray, and eat together. The Javanese believe that by carrying out this tradition, they will receive blessings and forgiveness from Allah SWT. Worship in the punggahan includes praying together and listening to sermons. Islamic brotherhood in the punggahan also includes fostering friendship, increasing charity, and sharing with others during communal meals. These activities open the door to forgiveness and fostering friendship among each other, thereby gaining the virtues of Ramadan. This demonstrates that the punggahan tradition is not only a symbol of Islamic teachings, but also a way for communities to preserve and develop their culture and associated social values. Punggahan also serves as a means of praying for ease in carrying out religious duties during the holy month of Ramadan.

Theory of Religion as a Social Institution (Durkheim): Religion and religious traditions serve to strengthen social cohesion and collective consciousness. Religion as a Social Institution. Durkheim saw religion as a fundamental social institution that plays a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion. Religion as a Social Institution means that religion is not merely a collection of beliefs, but a social phenomenon that strengthens collective consciousness and integrates individuals into a community. Punggahan is a concrete example where society experiences strong solidarity through activities such as religious study and communal prayer, which create a sense of togetherness and foster community spirit ahead of the month of Ramadan. The tradition of punggahan, with its various rituals and social activities, reflects Durkheim's theory of religion as a social system that functions to create solidarity and social cohesion. Through punggahan, society can strengthen collective consciousness and integrate religious values into daily life, all of which are in line with Durkheim's view of the social function of religion.

RESULT

The Punggahan Tradition in Medan is still routinely performed by Pujakesuma every year before Ramadan. This activity includes visiting graves, praying together, reciting religious teachings, and eating together. This series of events is designed to create a sense of family and spiritual strengthening ahead of the fasting month. Pujakesuma collaborates with mosques and community leaders in organizing these activities. Each member is asked to contribute through food, labor, or moral support.

Pujakesuma's role is as a facilitator, implementer, and guardian of Javanese cultural values. This organization actively encourages the involvement of the younger generation, including students from Javanese families in Medan. This activity also serves as a forum for cultural and spiritual education for the younger generation. Challenges to Preservation: Some of the challenges faced in implementing Punggahan include:

The declining interest of the younger generation in local traditions, the lack of operational funds for activities, the dominance of foreign cultures, and the influence of digitalization have caused oral traditions to begin to be abandoned. However, Pujakesuma has implemented several innovations, such as disseminating information about traditions through social media and creating video documentation content to reach the digital generation.

Implementing Culturalism Theory, Pujakesuma maintains the continuity of the punggahan culture through the informal and formal transmission of cultural values. Values such as mutual cooperation, respect for ancestors, and kinship are continuously promoted in every organizational activity. Implementing Durkheim's Theory, the punggahan tradition is seen as a social practice that strengthens the collective consciousness of Javanese Muslims in Medan City. Shared practices such as prayer and pilgrimage not only contain spiritual meaning but also strengthen social solidarity among residents.

The Pujakesuma organization plays a crucial role in preserving Javanese culture in North Sumatra as a form of cultural preservation. Here are some key aspects of its role:

a. Developing Javanese Culture

Pujakesuma was founded in 1980 with the primary goal of developing and preserving Javanese culture within the community. The organization focuses on improving the quality of human resources and the socio-economic conditions of Pujakesuma members, as well as exploring, fostering, and developing Javanese arts, culture, and sports through collaboration with other social and cultural organizations.

b. Bringing Javanese People Together

Pujakesuma is an organization that brings together Javanese people in North Sumatra. It was founded in response to the younger generation beginning to abandon their culture due to the influence of technology and information. Pujakesuma aims to continue to preserve and uphold Javanese culture within the community.

c. Developing Cultural Values

Pujakesuma aims to increase members' devotion to God Almighty, improve the quality of human resources and socioeconomic conditions, and explore, foster, and develop

Javanese arts, culture, and sports. The organization also focuses on developing positive cultural values and ancestral traditions.

d. Gathering the Javanese Generation

Pujakesuma acts as an association that serves as a forum for the next generation of Javanese people who were born in Sumatra and those who live there, to preserve the traditions and arts and culture of their ancestors.

e. Developing Culture as a Uniting Force for the Nation

Pujakesuma is committed to preserving culture as a legacy of the nation's ancestors. Culture is considered a unifying factor for the nation and needs to be properly managed as a strategy for creating national unity. This organization also focuses on nurturing, caring for, and preserving local cultures.

Pujakesuma, an organization focused on preserving Javanese culture in North Sumatra, faces several challenges in the digital era. Pujakesuma focuses on preserving culture as a legacy of the nation's ancestors. Culture is considered a unifying force for the nation and needs to be well-managed as a strategy to create national unity. Pujakesuma is an organization that brings together Javanese residents in North Sumatra. This organization was established in response to the rising generation who are starting to abandon their culture due to the influence of technology and information. Pujakesuma aims to continue to maintain and preserve Javanese culture within the community. Pujakesuma acts as an association that serves as a forum for the next generation of Javanese people born in Sumatra and those who live there, to maintain the traditions and arts and culture of their ancestors.

Thus, Pujakesuma seeks to address the challenges of preserving Javanese culture in the digital era by developing culture as a unifying force for the nation, uniting Javanese citizens, developing cultural values, and uniting the Javanese generation. This explanation demonstrates the relevance of the theory of culturalism, as it encompasses a form of cultural knowledge and values held and maintained by a particular society or community. This knowledge encompasses an understanding of the balance between humans and culture, as well as the social values that underlie ethics and morals in everyday life. Culturalism in the Punggahan culture is evident in the way the community maintains and develops this tradition from generation to generation, as well as in the values it embodies.

Next is Emile Durkheim's theory of religion as a social institution. Durkheim views religion as a fundamental social institution that plays an important role in maintaining social cohesion. Religion as a social institution means that religion is not just a collection of beliefs, but a social phenomenon that strengthens collective consciousness and integrates individuals into a community. This research is in line with this theory, as can be seen from the Javanese term "sekapal" which has quite deep meaning and is often used in social and cultural contexts. Literally, "sekapal" means "one ship." The term refers to a group of people who are in the same boat, facing a journey or challenge together. In a figurative context, "sekapal" is used to describe people who are in the same situation or condition, sharing the same fate or goal. This can refer to various contexts, such as: Friendship, Work and Family.

In the Javanese social context, "sekapal" (a ship) is often used to describe solidarity and togetherness. People considered "sekapal" typically have close relationships and rely on one another to face life's challenges. The term "sekapal" often appears in expressions or proverbs that emphasize the importance of togetherness and mutual support. For example, "we are one ship, we must help each other" implies that people in the same group should help and cooperate with one another. The concept of "sekapal" reflects Javanese cultural values that emphasize mutual cooperation, togetherness, and solidarity. This is an important part of the Javanese ethos, where togetherness and mutual assistance are considered the foundation of harmonious social life.

Thus, the term "sekapal" in Javanese society not only describes a literal situation but also reflects cultural and social values that prioritize togetherness, solidarity, and mutual support in various aspects of life. The function of the *punggahan* is to commemorate this event and strengthen solidarity. Within the context of the *punggahan*, this tradition unites community members in various joint activities such as cleaning the village, praying together, and eating together. All of these activities strengthen social bonds and a sense of togetherness among community members.

Durkheim introduced the concept of individuals within a group experiencing a sense of shared energy and enthusiasm through participation in rituals. *Punggahan* is a concrete example of a community experiencing collective consciousness through activities such as religious study and communal prayer, which creates a sense of togetherness and fosters community spirit during the month of Ramadan. The tradition of *punggahan*, with its various rituals and social activities, reflects Durkheim's theory of religion as a social system that functions to create solidarity and social cohesion. Through *punggahan*, communities experience collective consciousness, strengthen collective awareness, and integrate religious values into their daily lives, all of which align with Durkheim's view of the social function of religion.

CONCLUSION

The cultural implementation of *punggahan* within the PUJAKESUMA organization in Medan City reflects the resilience and adaptability of Javanese cultural identity in diaspora settings. As a sociocultural ritual practiced ahead of Ramadan, *punggahan* serves not only as a spiritual preparation but also as a vital instrument for reinforcing communal bonds and intergenerational cultural transmission. This study reveals that PUJAKESUMA plays a crucial role in sustaining Javanese cultural traditions through active engagement in ritual practices, community organization, and the promotion of ethnic values. In an urban, multicultural environment like Medan, where cultural diversity coexists with strong homogenizing influences, *punggahan* becomes a symbol of cultural continuity and social unity among the Javanese diaspora. Furthermore, the practice of *punggahan* as adapted by PUJAKESUMA demonstrates how traditional rituals can be maintained and revitalized within modern urban contexts. By integrating cultural preservation with community development, the organization not only upholds cultural identity but also fosters mutual respect and social harmony in a pluralistic society. In conclusion, the implementation of *punggahan* reflects the

broader significance of local traditions as pillars of cultural identity, social cohesion, and spiritual reflection. Through such rituals, ethnic communities like PUJAKESUMA reaffirm their heritage while contributing meaningfully to the multicultural tapestry of Indonesian urban life.

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