
THE NGOBENG TRADITION IN PALEMBANG: IMPLEMENTING LOCAL WISDOM AND RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL HARMONY

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Abstract

Ngobeng tradition in Palembang is a community practice of serving food at religious and social events. This tradition has received increasing academic attention due to its role in building inter-group relations amidst increasing social and religious polarization in a multicultural society. In the context of multicultural education, Ngobeng is a learning tool that instills the values of togetherness, tolerance and respect for diversity in social life. The purpose of this study is to examine the contribution of Ngobeng tradition to multicultural education by combining local wisdom and religious moderation values to create social harmony. This research uses a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach, through participatory observation in the implementation of the Ngobeng tradition, in-depth interviews with community leaders and residents, and literature review of relevant cultural and educational theories. The results showed a dynamic integration between cultural practices and religious values. The Ngobeng tradition not only strengthens relationships between individuals across social and religious groups, but also serves as a medium for multicultural learning.

Abstrak

Tradisi Ngobeng di Palembang merupakan praktik masyarakat dalam menyajikan makanan pada acara keagamaan dan sosial. Tradisi ini semakin mendapat perhatian akademik karena perannya dalam membangun hubungan antar kelompok di tengah meningkatnya polarisasi sosial dan keagamaan di masyarakat multikultural. Dalam konteks pendidikan multikultural, Ngobeng menjadi sarana pembelajaran yang menanamkan nilai kebersamaan, toleransi, dan penghargaan terhadap keberagaman dalam kehidupan sosial. Tujuan penelitian ini mengkaji kontribusi tradisi Ngobeng terhadap pendidikan multikultural dengan menggabungkan kearifan lokal dan nilai moderasi beragama untuk menciptakan harmoni sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnografi, melalui observasi partisipatif dalam pelaksanaan tradisi Ngobeng, wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh masyarakat dan warga, serta telaah pustaka terhadap teori-teori budaya dan pendidikan yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya integrasi yang dinamis antara praktik budaya dan nilai-nilai keagamaan. Tradisi Ngobeng tidak hanya mempererat hubungan antarindividu lintas kelompok sosial dan agama, tetapi juga menjadi media pembelajaran multikultu

Keywords: Ngobeng Tradition; Local Wisdom; Religious Moderation; Multicultural Education

INTRODUCTION

Local traditions and culture are fundamental pillars in shaping the character and identity of a society¹. Amidst the rapid wave of globalization, local traditions often face challenges due to modernization and changing lifestyles². One tradition that continues to thrive in Palembang is the Ngobeng Tradition, a practice of communal cooperation in food preparation for religious and social events³. This tradition not only reflects the spirit of togetherness and social solidarity but also embodies noble values aligned with the concept of religious moderation, such as *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance), *tawāḥḥun* (balance), *i'tidal* (justice), and *musawāḥ* (equality)⁴.

In a heterogeneous society, the Ngobeng Tradition has significant potential to foster social harmony by strengthening relationships between individuals and social groups⁵. However, contemporary social phenomena indicate a weakening of social interactions due to deepening individualism. The fast-paced lifestyle, digitalization, and changing social structures have shifted the togetherness values that once formed communal life's foundation⁶. The younger generation interacts more in digital spaces than traditional social environments, leading to a decline in understanding and appreciation of local wisdom. This has reduced participation in traditional and cultural activities, including the Ngobeng Tradition, which has long served as a strong platform for social interaction⁷.

Furthermore, Indonesia's socio-political dynamics reveal that intolerance and identity-based polarization remain serious challenges⁸. Despite Indonesia's well-known principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), incidents of religious or ethnic-based intolerance still occur frequently⁹. This highlights the need to strengthen religious moderation and multicultural education. Multicultural education emphasizes the importance of understanding diverse cultures and fostering mutual respect and cooperation in diversity¹⁰. In this regard, the Ngobeng Tradition, which embraces inclusivity and respects diversity, has the potential to be a strategic instrument for maintaining social harmony and reducing tensions caused by differences¹¹.

However, if this tradition is not preserved and systematically passed down to the next generation through educational approaches, the noble values it holds may experience

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- ¹ Muhammad Azani, "The Development of Islamic Law in Indonesia Through Traditional Theory and Legal Changes," *Jurnal Mahkamah: Kajian Ilmu Hukum Dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 2 (2021): 113–28.
 - ² Muhammad Ali, "Muslim Diversity: Islam and Local Tradition in Java and Sulawesi, Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 1, no. 1 (2011): 1–35.
 - ³ Mustaqim Pabbajah, "From the Indigeneous to the Religious Practices: Islamic Construction of the Local Tradition in South Sulawesi, Indonesia," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 1 (2021): 91–102.
 - ⁴ Adison Adrianus Sihombing, Irwan Abdullah, and Zaenuddin Hudi Prasajo, "Nostra Aetate and Space for Religious Moderation: Interfaith Dialogue in Multicultural Indonesia," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 19, no. 55 (2020): 142–57, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33989/jsri.2020.19.55.8>.
 - ⁵ Aldy Hidayat Pratama, Amilda Amilda, and Fitriah Fitriah, "Makna Tradisi Ngobeng Pada Masyarakat Melayu Palembang," *Tanjak: Sejarah Dan Peradaban Islam* 1, no. 2 (2021): 54–62.
 - ⁶ Desy Misnawati and Nursila Nursila, "The Meaning Of 'Ngidang Ngobeng' Tradition In Palembang City," *JHSS (Journal of Humanities and Social Studies)* 8, no. 1 (2024): 138–42.
 - ⁷ Misnawati and Nursila.
 - ⁸ Adrianna J Kezar, *Rethinking Leadership in a Complex, Multicultural, and Global Environment: New Concepts and Models for Higher Education* (Taylor & Francis, 2023).
 - ⁹ Toto Suharto, "Indonesianisasi Islam: Penguatan Islam Moderat Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia," *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 17, no. 1 (2017): 155–78.
 - ¹⁰ Norbertus Tri Suswanto Saptadi et al., *Pendidikan Multikultural* (Sada Kurnia Pustaka, 2023).
 - ¹¹ Sipuan Sipuan et al., "Pendekatan Pendidikan Multikultural," *Aksara: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Nonformal* 8, no. 2 (2022): 815–30.

degradation¹². The issue becomes even more complex as consumerism and pragmatism increasingly dominate societal perspectives¹³. A tradition once practiced with the spirit of communal work (cooperation) gradually becomes a formality. In the past, Ngobeng was involved in active community participation in food preparation and social interaction¹⁴. However, the current trend of hiring catering services has eroded the essence of togetherness, which is the core of this tradition. This shift not only diminishes the values of solidarity but also reduces opportunities for people to connect, understand each other, and build social bonds¹⁵. From the perspective of multicultural education, the loss of such spaces for social interaction could hinder the internalization of diverse values within society¹⁶.

Therefore, efforts are needed to ensure that the Ngobeng Tradition remains relevant and continues to evolve amid social changes. This study aims to find solutions by identifying key elements of the Ngobeng Tradition that can be contextualized within modern life without compromising its essence and values¹⁷. One possible approach is integrating Ngobeng values into formal and informal education as part of multicultural education. By incorporating cultural practices like Ngobeng into a curriculum based on local culture, schools can teach the importance of mutual cooperation, tolerance, and togetherness¹⁸. This allows the younger generation not only to understand these values theoretically but also to experience them firsthand¹⁹.

The research approach used in this study is based on Erving Goffman's social interaction theory, which emphasizes the importance of Communication and social engagement in fostering societal cohesion²⁰. Amitai Etzioni's concept of communitarianism also serves as a theoretical foundation for understanding how community values can be strengthened through inclusive cultural practices²¹. In multicultural education, Vygotsky's social constructivism theory is also relevant in explaining how interaction within cultural practices like Ngobeng can become an effective medium for social learning.

To further support the analysis from the perspective of religious moderation, this study incorporates the theoretical framework proposed by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, which outlines four core values: *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance), *tawāḏun* (balance), *i'tidāl* (justice), and *musāwāh* (equality). These values emphasize a harmonious and moderate religious attitude that encourages mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and rejection of extremism. By applying

¹² Vera Dwi Apriliani Acep, Etik Murtini, and Gunawan Santoso, "Menghargai Perbedaan: Membangun Masyarakat Multikultural," *Jurnal Pendidikan Transformatif* 2, no. 2 (2023): 425–32.

¹³ Abdul Azis and Khoirul Anam, "Moderasi Beragama Berlandaskan Nilai-Nilai Islam," *Edited by Anis Masykhur. Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI*, 2021.

¹⁴ Sri Septiyani, Bety Bety, and Nurfitri Hadi, "Tradisi Ngidang (Kajian Perubahan Dan Pergeseran Tradisi Ngidang Di Masyarakat Kelurahan 30 Ilir Palembang)," *Tanjak: Sejarah Dan Peradaban Islam* 1, no. 2 (2021): 1–9.

¹⁵ Andrew Davidson and David Henley, *The Revival of Tradition in Indonesian Politics* (Routledge London, 2007).

¹⁶ Azani, "The Development of Islamic Law in Indonesia Through Traditional Theory and Legal Changes."

¹⁷ Septiyani, Bety, and Hadi, "Tradisi Ngidang (Kajian Perubahan Dan Pergeseran Tradisi Ngidang Di Masyarakat Kelurahan 30 Ilir Palembang)."

¹⁸ Syarifuddin Syarifuddin et al., "Developing Mobile Learning Activity Based on Multiple Learning Objects for the South Sumatra Local Wisdom Course," *Asian Journal of University Education* 19, no. 1 (2023): 12–27.

¹⁹ Alipvia Kesuna Septi, Sudirman Sudirman, and Fahrudin Fahrudin, "Evaluation of the Performance of Supervisors in Planning the Supervision Program for the State Tsanawiyah Madrasah in Mataram City," *Path of Science* 8, no. 8 (2022): 2015–20.

²⁰ Jeffrey Trawick-Smith, *Early Childhood Development: A Multicultural Perspective* (ERIC, 2022).

²¹ Simon Prideaux, "From Organisational Theory to the New Communitarianism of Amitai Etzioni," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie* 27, no. 1 (2002): 69–81.

these principles, the study interprets the Ngobeng tradition as a local cultural expression that aligns with and reinforces religious moderation in a pluralistic society.

Previous studies have shown that cultural practices can be an effective means of fostering tolerance and social cohesion. Research on Kenduri in Sumatra, Sedekah Bumi in Java, and other local traditions highlights the strategic role of local wisdom in balancing tradition and religious values²². However, specific research on the Ngobeng Tradition from the perspective of spiritual moderation and multicultural education remains limited. Thus, this study seeks to fill the academic gap by deeply examining how the Ngobeng Tradition can serve as a model for fostering social harmony through the synergy of local wisdom, multicultural education, and religious moderation principles²³.

The novelty of this research lies in its groundbreaking approach to transforming the Ngobeng Tradition, traditionally regarded merely as a cultural heritage, into a strategic instrument for strengthening religious moderation and fostering national character through direct integration into the framework of modern multicultural education. This study goes beyond merely documenting the noble values embedded in local traditions; it formulates a transformative, locally-rooted, and applicable approach to addressing contemporary challenges such as rising intolerance, identity crises, and the weakening of social cohesion due to globalization and digitalization. This makes the research a significant and original contribution to the discourse on education, social policy, and cultural preservation in a synergistic and impactful way.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to two main aspects. First, academically, it can serve as a reference for further studies on the interaction between local culture, multicultural education, and religious moderation in building social cohesion. Second, practically, the study's results can provide a foundation for various stakeholders, including local governments, educational institutions, religious organizations, and community groups, to design strategies for preserving local traditions relevant to social dynamics.

This study employs a qualitative paradigm with an ethnographic approach to understand how the Ngobeng Tradition in Palembang contributes to social harmony through the synergy between local wisdom and religious moderation²⁴. The ethnographic approach was chosen as it allows researchers to engage directly in community life to understand cultural practices, symbolic meanings, and social interactions within this tradition²⁵.

The research was conducted over six months, from June to December 2024, in Kelurahan 9 Ulu and 10 Ulu, Palembang—two urban communities that actively preserve and perform the Ngobeng tradition as part of religious and social events. The subjects of this research include traditional leaders (pemangku adat), local religious figures (ustadz / imam), and community members involved in Ngobeng rituals, while the object of research is the Ngobeng tradition itself as a cultural-religious practice.

By placing the Ngobeng Tradition within the perspective of multicultural education, this study not only highlights a local tradition but also explores how the values of togetherness, justice,

²² Leylia Khairani and Yan Hendra, "The Symbolic Communication of Kenduri: Ritual Adaptation, Identity Formation, and Social Cohesion in Javanese Diaspora Communities," *Jurnal Penelitian* 22, no. 1 (2025): 27–42.

²³ Muhammad Arif Arkan, Syarip Hidayat, and Idhar Resmasi, "Perancangan Buku Ilustrasi Tradisi Ngidang Sebagai Bentuk Pengangkatan Nilai-Nilai Tradisi Kepada Generasi Muda Masyarakat Kota Palembang," *EProceedings of Art & Design* 7, no. 2 (2020).

²⁴ James P Spradley and Misbah Zulfa Elizabeth, "Metode Etnografi," 2007.

²⁵ Spradley and Elizabeth.

and balance can continue to be reinforced in society. In an era of increasingly complex social challenges, approaches based on local wisdom like this become highly relevant in maintaining social integrity, strengthening national unity, and enhancing young generations' understanding of diversity and tolerance in social life.

UNDERSTANDING THE NGOBENG TRADITION

Traditions often play a crucial role in shaping a community's cultural and social identity while maintaining connections with the past. Indonesia is known for its vast diversity of cultures and customs, one of which is found in the city of Palembang. One tradition that has developed in Palembang is the Ngobeng Tradition.

The Ngobeng Tradition is a local cultural heritage of Palembang that has been preserved and passed down through generations. According to Ismail²⁶, local culture encompasses all ideas, activities, and outcomes of human activities within a specific community. This local culture continues to grow and develop within society, being agreed upon and upheld as a shared guideline. Thus, the sources of local culture are not limited to traditional values, activities, and ancestral heritage but also include all cultural components or elements that define and uniquely develop within a specific community²⁷.

The Ngobeng Tradition is a heritage of the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, centered in Palembang. It honors or shows respect to guests in the deeply Islamic Malay culture²⁸. During the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate era, the Ngobeng Tradition was practiced by the sultanate's elites during charity events and communal feasts²⁹. Ngobeng is an acculturation of foreign influences, mainly Chinese and Arab cultures, as evidenced by the presence of Kampung Kapitan and Kampung Arab³⁰. According to Koentjaraningrat, acculturation is a social process that occurs when a group of people with a particular culture encounters elements of a foreign culture, gradually accepting and integrating them without losing their cultural identity³¹.

According to Kemas Andi Syarifuddin, *Idangan* (a traditional meal serving) is one of Palembang's food presentation traditions that follows a specific arrangement: one meal is typically served for eight people³². The dishes include a large tray of rice, paired main dishes served on two trays (8 or 16 plates), and side dishes placed on a separate tray. The food is arranged alternating and paired, accompanied by a hand-washing station. The person serving the

food is called obeng, and serving is referred to as ngobeng. Typically, in this tradition, the obeng are the sons-in-law of the host family³³.

In the Ngobeng process, the primary responsibility of the obeng is to serve guests by attending to their needs. For instance, if the chicken or rice runs out, the Obeng will replenish it.

²⁶ Indra Tjahyadi, Sri Andayani, and Hosnol Wafa, "Pengantar Teori Dan Metode Penelitian Budaya" (Pagan Press, 2020).

²⁷ Muhamad Idris, Sukardi Sukardi, and Riki Andi Saputro, "Local Wisdom in the History of Traditional Headbands Palembang South Sumatra," *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute (BIRCI-Journal): Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 4 (2021): 8066–77.

²⁸ Pratama, Amilda, and Fitriah, "Makna Tradisi Ngobeng Pada Masyarakat Melayu Palembang."

²⁹ Misnawati and Nursila, "The Meaning Of 'Ngidang Ngobeng' Tradition In Palembang City."

³⁰ Halizah Rahmadani and Syarifuddin Syarifuddin, "Tradisi Sedekah Tahunan Di Kampung Kapitan," *Sosial Horizon: Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial* 9, no. 2 (2022): 246–56.

³¹ Tjahyadi, Andayani, and Wafa, "Pengantar Teori Dan Metode Penelitian Budaya."

³² Misnawati and Nursila, "The Meaning Of 'Ngidang Ngobeng' Tradition In Palembang City."

³³ Septiyani, Bety, and Hadi, "Tradisi Ngidang (Kajian Perubahan Dan Pergeseran Tradisi Ngidang Di Masyarakat Kelurahan 30 Ilir Palembang)."

During the Ngobeng ritual, guests are expected to maintain proper manners and behavior, as taking too much food at once is considered improper in a communal setting where people sit face to face³⁴. This tradition emphasizes moderation and discourages wastefulness. It also encourages eating with hands for a more authentic experience, with the obeng assisting guests by pouring water from a kettle to wash their hands and providing a container to collect the used water.

The Ngobeng Tradition remains deeply rooted in Palembang's culture, reflecting its strong Malay heritage³⁵. Its key values include togetherness, hospitality, cooperation, and mutual respect. However, with time, the practice of Ngobeng has become increasingly rare and is nearly extinct, with only a few areas, such as Tangga Bunting and 13-14 Ulu, still preserving it. The author concludes that the Ngobeng Tradition is a form of cultural acculturation between Arab and Chinese influences, adopted by the local community as a food presentation method to honor and respect guests. This tradition, particularly during the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate era, was deeply rooted in Islamic values and etiquette. As a cultural heritage, traditions like Ngobeng are invaluable assets that future generations must preserve and safeguard. Therefore, the Ngobeng Tradition should be maintained, especially among the people of Palembang.

PRINCIPLES AND HISTORY OF THE NGOBENG TRADITION

During the Palembang Sultanate, particularly under Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I, Islamization took place in Palembang, adapting many Hindu and Buddhist heritage traditions into Islamic teachings. Various forms of acculturation and assimilation occurred in Palembang in the past, integrating diverse cultures, traditions, foods, and arts into Palembang's cultural landscape³⁶. One of the ancestral traditions inherited from the Palembang Sultanate is Ngobeng. This tradition was practiced initially to commemorate the passing of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II, who was exiled to Ternate. The tradition strengthens social ties and simultaneously honors guests³⁷.

During the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate era, the Ngobeng Tradition was practiced by the sultanate's elites during charity events and communal feasts³⁸. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II once wrote, "Preserve yourself from actions and words that contradict Islamic law." This statement suggests that the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate emphasized hospitality and politeness in welcoming guests³⁹. This aligns with the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (SAW),

narrated by Abu Hurairah: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honor his guest" (H.R. Ahmad)⁴⁰.

The Ngobeng Tradition is a cultural heritage of the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, centered in Palembang. It serves as a means of honoring and respecting guests in the highly Islamic

³⁴ Arkan, Hidayat, and Resmasi, "Perancangan Buku Ilustrasi Tradisi Ngidang Sebagai Bentuk Pengangkatan Nilai-Nilai Tradisi Kepada Generasi Muda Masyarakat Kota Palembang."

³⁵ Septiyani, Bety, and Hadi, "Tradisi Ngidang (Kajian Perubahan Dan Pergeseran Tradisi Ngidang Di Masyarakat Kelurahan 30 Ilir Palembang)."

³⁶ Syarifuddin Syarifuddin et al., "Eksistensi Ngidang Sebagai Tradisi Makan Khas Palembang Di Abad 21," *Sosial Budaya* 19, no. 1 (2022): 30–38.

³⁷ Arkan, Hidayat, and Resmasi, "Perancangan Buku Ilustrasi Tradisi Ngidang Sebagai Bentuk Pengangkatan Nilai-Nilai Tradisi Kepada Generasi Muda Masyarakat Kota Palembang."

³⁸ Syarifuddin et al., "Eksistensi Ngidang Sebagai Tradisi Makan Khas Palembang Di Abad 21."

³⁹ Septiyani, Bety, and Hadi, "Tradisi Ngidang (Kajian Perubahan Dan Pergeseran Tradisi Ngidang Di Masyarakat Kelurahan 30 Ilir Palembang)."

⁴⁰ Eko Crys Endrayadi, "Kesultanan Palembang Darussalam: Sejarah Dan Warisan Budayanya," 2016.

Malay culture⁴¹. Additionally, the Ngobeng Tradition is considered a sunnah (tradition) taught by Prophet Muhammad (SAW)⁴². This tradition flourished in Palembang because it embodies noble values such as respecting elders, helping one another, and showing mutual appreciation. This is why Ngobeng was widely practiced during the sultanate era-the ancestors highly upheld ethics, morals, and etiquette in daily life⁴³.

Ngobeng is a result of cultural acculturation between Chinese and Arab influences, as evidenced by the presence of Kampung Kapitan and Kampung Arab in Palembang. As a form of Arab-Islamic cultural influence, during the Palembang Sultanate, the tradition observed gender etiquette men would conduct Ngobeng first, followed by women once they had finished. During its practice, specific terms were used to designate roles, such as managing for the head cook, while the cooking activity was referred to as manggung. According to Palembang historians R.M. Ali Hanafiah and Kemas Ari Panji, Ngobeng relates to the individuals responsible for serving food from the kitchen to the dining area and assisting guests with handwashing⁴⁴.

The Ngobeng Tradition is deeply rooted in Islamic values, as Islam emphasizes the importance of honoring guests. Imam Al-Ghazali stated that hosting guests, showing hospitality, and serving food is praised by Allah (SWT). The Quran reflects this principle, specifically in Surah Adh-Dhariyat: 24-27 (Hidayat et al., 2022, p. 298):

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ قَوْمٌ مُنْكَرُونَ
فَرَأَى إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ فَجَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِينٍ فَقَرَّبَهُ ۖ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ

“(Remember) when they entered his place and said, ‘Salaam.’ Ibrahim replied, ‘Salaam, you are people unknown to me.’ Then he went quietly to his family and brought a roasted fattened calf. He then placed it before them and said, ‘Will you not eat?’” (QS. Adh-Dhariyat: 24-27)

The verse above teaches humanity that those who believe in Allah should honor their guests. Prophet Ibrahim demonstrated this by greeting his guests, secretly preparing the best meal for them, and inviting them to enjoy the feast. This act reflects the level of faith a Muslim possesses. A Muslim’s quality can be measured by their ability to honor and serve guests within the prescribed limits of Islamic⁴⁵.

This tradition is also an inseparable part of the cultural heritage of the Palestinian people and holds deep symbolic meaning in preserving identity and local wisdom⁴⁶. In the Ngobeng tradition, food is served in a lesehan (sitting on the floor) style, with each meal portioned for eight

⁴¹ Arkan, Hidayat, and Resmasi, “Perancangan Buku Ilustrasi Tradisi Ngidang Sebagai Bentuk Pengangkatan Nilai-Nilai Tradisi Kepada Generasi Muda Masyarakat Kota Palembang.”

⁴² Septiyani, Bety, and Hadi, “Tradisi Ngidang (Kajian Perubahan Dan Pergeseran Tradisi Ngidang Di Masyarakat Kelurahan 30 Ilir Palembang).”

⁴³ Syarifuddin et al., “Eksistensi Ngidang Sebagai Tradisi Makan Khas Palembang Di Abad 21.”

⁴⁴ Syarifuddin et al.

⁴⁵ Idris, Sukardi, and Saputro, “Local Wisdom in the History of Traditional Headbans Palembang South Sumatra.”

⁴⁶ Khairani and Hendra, “The Symbolic Communication of Kenduri: Ritual Adaptation, Identity Formation, and Social Cohesion in Javanese Diaspora Communities.”

people⁴⁷. The number eight carries a philosophical meaning, symbolizing the 24-hour cycle of a day, which is divided into three parts: eight hours for worship, eight hours for work, and eight hours for rest⁴⁸.

The implementation of the Ngobeng tradition involves various community actors, each with specific roles. Traditional leaders (*pemangku adat*) act as custodians of cultural norms, ensuring that the rituals and values of Ngobeng are preserved and respected. Religious figures (*ustadz, imam*) provide spiritual guidance, opening the event with prayers and embedding Islamic teachings into the practice. Community elders coordinate the preparation and ensure that food etiquette and symbolic meanings are observed, while women typically take the lead in cooking, food arrangement, and maintaining cleanliness and hospitality. Youth and children are usually involved as assistants, learning by participation⁴⁹. The pattern of social relations formed during the Ngobeng tradition reflects mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), respect for hierarchy, and the reinforcement of communal identity. Roles are distributed not based on social class but on cultural responsibility and religious commitment, creating an inclusive and egalitarian environment. The act of eating together in a circle fosters intimacy, equality, and togetherness among participants, strengthening intergenerational bonds and collective values of tolerance and harmony⁵⁰.

The symbolic meaning of eight people sitting in a circle and facing each other also represents the eight cardinal directions and the Batanghari Sembilan (Nine Branches of the Musi River). Batanghari Sembilan refers to the nine tributaries of the Musi—Rawas-Klingi, Bliti, Lakitan, Rawas, Rupit, Lematang, Leko, Ogan, and Komering—with the Musi River as the main branch. Batanghari is also a term for a traditional musical rhythm played with a *gitar tunggal* (single-string guitar), which expresses a romantic, melancholic, and naturalistic cultural atmosphere. The connection between Batanghari Sembilan and the nine essential food components in a traditional Ngobeng meal is reflected in arranging eight varieties of fish, vegetables, and side dishes, with a single mound of rice in the center. The specific food arrangement also embodies etiquette and table manners in traditional Palembang culture.

The Ngobeng tradition continued to thrive and was commonly practiced until the 1990s. However, in the 18th century, food serving styles began transitioning to buffet-style dining. Due to cultural shifts brought about by globalization in the 21st century, this tradition has become increasingly rare in Palembang⁵¹. Several factors have contributed to the decline of the Ngobeng tradition, including:

1. With the advancement of time,
2. Economic factors,
3. Lineage and generational changes, and
4. Modernization⁵².

The disappearance of *idangan* (traditional meal serving) and its replacement with buffet-style dining reflects cultural coexistence in Uluan Musi traditional weddings. The traditional *idangan*

⁴⁷ Misnawati and Nursila, "The Meaning Of 'Ngidang Ngobeng' Tradition In Palembang City."

⁴⁸ Septiyani, Bety, and Hadi, "Tradisi Ngidang (Kajian Perubahan Dan Pergeseran Tradisi Ngidang Di Masyarakat Kelurahan 30 Ilir Palembang)."

⁴⁹ Misnawati and Nursila, "The Meaning Of 'Ngidang Ngobeng' Tradition In Palembang City."

⁵⁰ Misnawati and Nursila.

⁵¹ Rahmadani and Syarifuddin, "Tradisi Sedekah Tahunan Di Kampung Kapitan."

⁵² Septiyani, Bety, and Hadi, "Tradisi Ngidang (Kajian Perubahan Dan Pergeseran Tradisi Ngidang Di Masyarakat Kelurahan 30 Ilir Palembang)."

serving process was complex, involving many people and requiring an extensive collection of dining equipment. This complexity led to its replacement with buffet-style meals, which are more practical. The traditional idangan setup required many dishes, including various plate sizes, serving trays, and glasses-up to 50 gross (7,200 pieces) of dishware for even a tiny wedding ceremony.

The loss of the idangan tradition in Uluan Musi wedding ceremonies has led to the erosion of three essential cultural values:

1. Etiquette, which reflects traditional ethics,
2. Orderliness, which fosters discipline, and
3. Education, which provides a means of cultural learning and transmission⁵³.

STEPS OF THE NGOBENG TRADITION

The Ngobeng tradition is a way of serving food in small groups of eight people, with a distinctive arrangement of dishes. At the center of the circularly arranged meal, oil rice (nasi minyak) or plain white rice is placed on a single tray or large plate. The second layer consists of pulur, which includes pickles, sambal, and fruits, served on small plates. The third layer contains iwak, which refers to side dishes such as chicken, satay, opor, fish, and others, arranged on slightly larger plates. The pulur and iwak are placed either diagonally or in parallel alignment. The final layer consists of dining plates along with drinking water⁵⁴.



Figure 1. *Implementation of the Ngobeng Tradition*

The Ngobeng tradition is one of the most distinctive expressions of Palembang's local wisdom that combines communal values, religious ethics, and cultural identity through a shared meal practice. Through a six-month fieldwork period involving in-depth interviews with community elders (*tetua adat*), religious figures (*ustadz lokal*), and active participants, along with

direct observation during several Ngobeng events in 2024, this research offers a comprehensive and authentic account of how this tradition is practiced and interpreted today. The data presented below are not merely a reconstruction from literature but are based on first-hand field experience with the practicing community.

Based on observations during several community events, the Ngobeng tradition is carried out in a structured and sacred manner, comprising several key stages:

⁵³ Syahril Jamil, "Kesenambungan Dan Perubahan Budaya Pada Perkawinan Adat Uluan Musi," *Khazanah: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan Islam*, 2019, 161–73.

⁵⁴ Rahmadani and Syarifuddin, "Tradisi Sedekah Tahunan Di Kampung Kapitan."

1. Preparation Stage: Women in the community—often in groups—collaboratively prepare food early in the morning. Cooking takes place in communal kitchens or the host's backyard, creating a lively atmosphere filled with mutual assistance (*gotong royong*). According to a participant named Ibu Misnah (65 years old), "Kalau kami masak Ngobeng, semua bantu. Yang tua, yang muda, semua ada bagian."
2. Serving Stage: The food is presented using a specific arrangement. The rice (*nasi minyak* or *nasi putih*) is placed in a large tray (*dulang*) and surrounded by layers of dishes: *pulur* (pickles, sambal, fruits) and *iwak* (main dishes like chicken curry, fish, or satay). These are arranged in a cross-pattern, ensuring fairness in access. A special cloth called *sepra* is spread on the floor, serving as both a base and a symbol of equality—everyone eats on the same level.
3. Dining Stage: Eight participants sit cross-legged in a circle around the food. It is customary for the eldest or most respected individual to begin eating, followed by others. One informant, Pak Usman (72), explained: "Kami biasanya yang paling tua makan dulu, sebagai bentuk hormat. Anak-anak muda tidak boleh mendahului." The serving is done without individual plates for dishes—everyone shares from communal platters, reinforcing values of trust and mutual respect. Conversations during meals often revolve around daily life, farming, religion, and community events.
4. Closing Stage: After eating, the group recites prayers, and then all participants participate in cleaning the area together. This act concludes the ritual with a reaffirmation of unity and shared responsibility.

The Ngobeng tradition is not randomly performed but is closely tied to meaningful communal and spiritual moments. Based on field data, Ngobeng is often held during:

1. Religious commemorations (e.g., *maulid nabi*, *tahlilan*, *doa selamatan*)
2. Life-cycle events (e.g., weddings, circumcisions, thanksgiving ceremonies)
3. Harvest celebrations or local feasts (*kenduri kampung*)

The implementation typically takes place in the host's house, the mosque hall, or even on the open field near rice paddies, reflecting its flexibility and deep communal integration. In all these settings, the values of hospitality and social order are consistently maintained.

Observations and interviews confirm that the Ngobeng tradition utilizes specific items with rich symbolic meanings:

1. *Sepra* (cloth mat): More than a dining base, *sepra* is perceived as a symbol of unity and humility—everyone sits on the same level, erasing social stratification during the meal.
2. *Dulang* (rice tray): Carrying the rice at shoulder level, not in front of the chest, is seen as a sign of hygiene, respect, and humility, as emphasized by Ustadz Firdaus, a religious leader in the area.
3. Three layers of dishes:
 - a) *Pulur* (sambal, pickles, fruits): Placed in small plates, symbolizes flavor balance and cultural harmony.
 - b) *Iwak* (main dishes): Represents generosity and sustenance, placed in medium-sized plates.
 - c) Rice mound: Placed centrally, reflects the core of unity and shared livelihood.

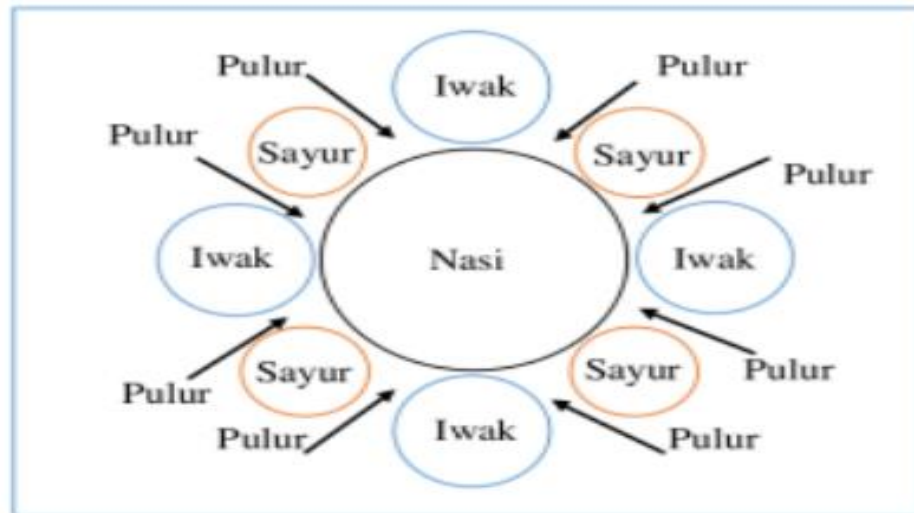


Figure 2. Illustration of the Arrangement of Iwak, Meat, Fruits, and Vegetables

These arrangements are not incidental but are culturally coded symbols of justice (*i'tidal*), equality (*musāwah*), and communal moderation (*tawāzūn*). Community members unanimously interpret the plate arrangement—particularly the cross-pattern layout—as a reflection of fairness and mutual consideration, ensuring no one reaches across another, a behavior deemed *pamali* (taboo).

Field data highlight several specific dishes that carry deep symbolic meaning:

1. Nasi Minyak: Considered sacred in traditional feasts, representing abundance and festivity.
2. Ayam Opor (chicken curry), ikan pindang (spicy fish stew): Signify gratitude for sustenance from both land and water.
3. Sambal and acar (pickles): Offer contrast and balance, symbolizing the need for moderation in life, both in emotion and behavior.



Figure 3. Arrangement of *Iwak*, Meat, Fruits, and Vegetables

Interestingly, the number eight is consistently mentioned by informants as representing the philosophy of time management: eight hours for worship, eight hours for work, and eight hours for rest. This cosmological interpretation was conveyed by several elders and reflects a deep cultural-spiritual integration in how time and food are valued.

From the interviews and observations, it is clear that the Ngobeng tradition functions as a ritual of social interaction. It not only facilitates food sharing but also nurtures interpersonal bonding, intergenerational dialogue, and community solidarity. The cross-sharing system and eating in proximity allow for the reinforcement of Islamic values such as:

1. *Tasamuh* (tolerance): Respecting each other's space and turn
2. *Ta'āwun* (cooperation): Mutual help during the meal
3. *Ukhuwwah* (brotherhood): Building emotional closeness

This research concludes that Ngobeng is not merely about food—it is a performative expression of cultural identity, spiritual humility, and social harmony.

THE NGOBENG TRADITION AS A MANIFESTATION OF PALEMBANG'S LOCAL WISDOM

The Ngobeng tradition is a form of *gotong royong* (communal cooperation) that has long been practiced by the people of Palembang, especially during religious celebrations (*kenduri*, *maulid nabi*), weddings, and community gatherings. Far beyond a mere communal dining practice, Ngobeng is a symbolic cultural expression that reflects togetherness, equality, and mutual respect.

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, community elders, and religious figures, as well as direct participatory observation conducted from June to December 2024, Ngobeng embodies values of *ukhuwah insaniyah* (human fraternity) and religious moderation. It serves as a ritual of sharing, where symbolic elements—from the food arrangement to gestures during dining—represent deep social and spiritual meaning.

Ngobeng is carried out by eight people sitting cross-legged in a circle on a cloth called *sepra*, which is often adorned with dark floral motifs to conceal food stains. This circular seating

arrangement is not merely practical—it symbolizes equality and unity regardless of social class. According to several informants, the number eight itself holds philosophical meaning: it

represents the threefold division of time in a day (eight hours for worship, eight for work, and eight for rest), promoting a balanced life (*tawāzūn*).

The food arrangement is also rich in symbolic values. The rice (*nasi minyak*) is placed in the center on a *dulang*, representing the core of sustenance and shared blessing. Surrounding it are *pulur* (condiments like pickles, sambal, and fruits) and *iwak* (main dishes such as chicken, satay, or fish), arranged in a crossed pattern. This layout reflects the principle of fairness—each participant should get an equal share without crossing over others, which is considered *pamali* (taboo). This reflects the internalized values of tolerance and etiquette in communal settings.

Serving etiquette—such as carrying the rice tray beside the body instead of in front of the chest—symbolizes humility and hygiene, while waiting for the elders to take food first shows respect and honor. Ngobeng facilitates meaningful social interaction, as seen in the informal conversations that take place during meals. These interactions often involve discussions about farming, family affairs, or religious matters, fostering interpersonal trust and community cohesion. According to a local religious leader, "Ngobeng is not just about eating, but about *berkah* (blessing) that comes from togetherness." Moreover, Islamic values such as serving others before oneself, cleanliness, and gratitude are deeply embedded within this tradition, aligning with the principles of religious moderation (*tasāmuh*, *i'tidāl*, *musawāh*).

Although modern lifestyles and individualistic eating habits have started to shift communal traditions, the core values of Ngobeng remain preserved. Some changes have occurred—for instance, the use of stainless-steel plates replacing banana leaves, or hosting the tradition in modern halls instead of traditional houses. However, the spirit of cooperation and respect continues.

Efforts to preserve Ngobeng are visible through its integration into religious gatherings, community-based cultural education, and youth events. According to a youth leader, initiatives such as teaching Ngobeng etiquette in pesantren or incorporating it into local festivals are effective in ensuring its continuity. Parents also emphasize the tradition during family events to instill its values in the younger generation.

The Ngobeng tradition is more than a cultural practice—it is a living symbol of Palembang's social philosophy, embodying values of moderation, mutual respect, and collective harmony. Its continued relevance is ensured not just by maintaining the ritual, but by preserving the cultural meanings embedded within it. Through a deeper understanding of its symbols, gestures, and structure, Ngobeng becomes a mirror of how local wisdom and religious values can synergize to promote peace and cohesion in an increasingly diverse and modern society.

A. Religious Moderation Values in the Ngobeng Tradition

This study affirms that the Ngobeng tradition is not merely a social activity but also embodies fundamental values of religious moderation. Data analysis conducted through in-depth interviews with religious figures, direct observations of Ngobeng practices, and extensive literature reviews reveal that this tradition encompasses four key principles of religious moderation: *Tasāmuh* (tolerance), *tawāzūn* (balance), *i'tidāl* (justice), and *musawāh* (equality).

1. *Tasāmuh* (Tolerance) in Social Interaction

Interviews with religious leaders and community figures highlight that Ngobeng serves as an inclusive space for all members of society, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or social status.

During the preparation and execution of Ngobeng, there was no discrimination regarding who could participate. Field observations show that Muslims and non-Muslims can work together

in food preparation, harmonizing responsibilities, and using the occasion to strengthen social bonds.

This tradition provides an opportunity for community members to interact and respect differences. In more relaxed settings, interfaith conversations often occur naturally, allowing individuals to share stories about their beliefs without pressure or attempts to change each other's religious views. This demonstrates that Ngobeng is not merely about sharing food but also an effective platform for fostering sustainable tolerance.

2. *Tawāzun* (Balance) in Social Life

The concept of balance in Ngobeng is evident in how the tradition maintains religious values and broader humanitarian principles. Documentation studies reveal that Ngobeng is a cultural practice and aligns with the Islamic concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all creation), which emphasizes harmony in social life. This balance is reflected in the equitable distribution of food, ensuring everyone can partake without feeling marginalized.

Furthermore, balance is also seen in the participation of all societal groups, from young to old, without gender discrimination. This demonstrates that Ngobeng serves as a bridge to reduce social disparities that may arise due to economic or social differences. Observations across various communities indicate that participation in Ngobeng strengthens a sense of unity, where economically privileged individuals do not dominate over less fortunate ones.

3. *I'tidāl* (Justice) in Distribution and Participation

Justice within the Ngobeng tradition is particularly evident in food distribution. No group receives a more significant portion based on higher social status. Observations reveal that every participant gets an equal share regardless of economic background. This serves as concrete evidence of the application of justice in communal life.

Justice is also reflected in the food preparation process. Participation is not limited to those with financial means but is open to anyone willing to contribute through labor or cooking skills. Tasks are assigned based on each individual's abilities, ensuring no one feels inferior or superior. Thus, Ngobeng is not only a means of sharing food but also of sharing responsibilities in fostering solidarity.

4. *Musawāh* (Equality) as a Social Unifier

Equality in Ngobeng is not just rhetorical but is actively practiced. Interviews with community members reveal that within this tradition, all individuals have equal rights to contribute and benefit from it. Literature reviews show that this principle aligns with Islamic teachings, which regard all humans as equals before God. This reinforces the idea that Ngobeng is not just a tradition but also an effective tool for promoting religious moderation.

During Ngobeng, no particular group receives special privileges. Everyone present has the same opportunity to share food and enjoy the communal experience. In some communities, even traditional leaders or religious figures do not sit in a more prestigious position but rather blend in with others in a warm and harmonious atmosphere. This is strong evidence that equality is deeply rooted in the communities that uphold the Ngobeng tradition.

IMPLEMENTING LOCAL WISDOM AND RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL HARMONY

Based on the interviews and observations, it was found that the Ngobeng tradition not only serves as a form of social interaction that strengthens relationships among community members but also as an effective means of instilling multicultural education values. This tradition teaches people to live harmoniously by respecting differences in religion, culture, and social status. Direct observations at various Ngobeng events show that all elements of society, whether young or old, rich or poor, male or female, can participate in this activity without discrimination or differential treatment. In interviews with several traditional leaders, they emphasized that Ngobeng has long been an effective medium for fostering a sense of brotherhood amidst the diversity of Palembang society. In some instances, people from different cultural backgrounds can exchange experiences and gain a deeper understanding of one another through conversations during the event.

Furthermore, this research also found that Ngobeng plays a significant role in shaping an open-minded society that embraces diversity. This tradition serves as a platform for multicultural education that is theoretical and practiced in everyday life. For example, during every Ngobeng gathering, participants are taught to show respect by allowing elders to take food first and ensuring everyone receives a fair share. Field observations also indicate that there is no distinction between guests and hosts during the event. Everyone sits in a circle and enjoys the meal in a strong spirit of togetherness. This demonstrates that the Ngobeng tradition promotes values of equality and anti-discrimination, which are fundamental principles of multicultural education.

Moreover, Ngobeng positively fosters collective awareness and maintains unity amid differences. Interviews with religious leaders revealed that Ngobeng reflects Islamic teachings on *ukhuwah insaniyah* (human brotherhood), emphasizing the importance of living in harmony and helping one another regardless of background. In several cases, observations showed that Ngobeng also serves as an opportunity for the community to share their blessings with those who are less fortunate, further instilling values of solidarity and empathy in daily life. This proves Ngobeng is not merely a communal dining tradition but a tangible form of implementing religious moderation values, emphasizing balance, tolerance, and justice in social life.

Considering the various findings of this research, it can be concluded that Ngobeng plays a crucial role in fostering social harmony and strengthening multicultural education within Palembang society. Through the social interactions in every Ngobeng gathering, people learn to appreciate differences, act reasonably, and build stronger relationships. Therefore, preserving this tradition becomes increasingly relevant in the modern era, where diversity-related challenges are becoming more complex and require more inclusive approaches to maintaining social harmony. Suppose the Ngobeng tradition continues to be upheld and developed. In that case, the values of religious moderation and multicultural education will become even more deeply rooted in society, making Palembang a remarkable example of a culture that upholds unity and diversity.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE NGOBENG TRADITION IN THE MODERN CONTEXT

The Ngobeng tradition is one of the cultural heritage of the Palembang community, and it embodies strong values of togetherness and cooperation. Ngobeng, which essentially refers to a communal dining tradition following customary or religious events, was once a symbol of social solidarity within society. However, this tradition has transformed in form and practice as times have changed. Based on interviews, observations, and literature reviews, the transformation of the

Ngobeng tradition in the modern context can be seen from several aspects, including community participation, changes in consumption patterns, and adaptation to technology.

1. Changes in Community Participation in the Ngobeng Tradition

Observational data indicate that active participation in Ngobeng has declined in recent decades, particularly in urban areas such as Palembang. Interviews with younger generations revealed that while they still appreciate the values of Ngobeng, their involvement in its preparation and execution has diminished. This is due to several factors, including:

- a) **Busy Lifestyles and Modern Living Patterns** – The fast-paced modern lifestyle has led people, especially the younger generation, to prefer more practical solutions over engaging in traditions that require time and effort. Many families now opt for catering services or professional food providers for family or community events instead of preparing and serving food communally.
- b) **Changes in Social Structures**-In the past, people lived in tightly knit communities where mutual cooperation in Ngobeng was an integral part of daily life. Today, many individuals lead more individualistic lives and reside in urban environments with limited social interactions, reducing opportunities to organize Ngobeng gatherings.
- c) **Influence of Social Media and Technology** – Younger generations spend more time in digital spaces, leading to decreased participation in traditional social activities like Ngobeng. Some communities have attempted to adapt Ngobeng by incorporating digital platforms, such as fundraising for communal meals at charity events or sharing food virtually.

2. Changes in Consumption Patterns in the Ngobeng Tradition

Beyond the decline in community participation, the consumption patterns associated with Ngobeng have also transformed. While the communal preparation of meals traditionally characterized Ngobeng, several changes have emerged, such as:

- a) **Shift to Fast Food**-In some urban communities, fast food has begun replacing traditional home-cooked meals in Ngobeng due to its convenience and efficiency. Due to time constraints, many families prefer purchasing ready-made food instead of cooking.
- b) **Transition from Traditional to Modern Menus** – Interviews with community members indicate that while some traditional Palembang dishes, such as pindang ikan and pempek, are still preserved, many families have started incorporating modern dishes, such as pasta or Western-style cuisine in Ngobeng. This reflects cultural acculturation in urban dining habits.
- c) **Emergence of Catering Services for Ngobeng** – Some entrepreneurs have recognized business opportunities in these changes and now offer specialized catering services for Ngobeng-style gatherings, maintaining the communal spirit without requiring extensive community involvement. Observations suggest that these services are increasingly popular among urban communities seeking to uphold tradition without sacrificing convenience.

3. Adaptation of Ngobeng in the Digital Era and Social Activities

Although the Ngobeng tradition has evolved, the core values of togetherness and cooperation can still be preserved through appropriate adaptations. Several communities in Palembang have found ways to maintain the essence of Ngobeng in the modern context, including:

- a) **Ngobeng in Digital Community Events** – Some communities use social media to organize virtual communal dining events, where participants share meals from their respective locations while interacting through digital platforms. While this concept does not fully replace traditional Ngobeng, it provides an alternative for those unable to gather physically.

- b) Ngobeng in Charitable Activities – Some communities have transformed the Ngobeng concept into social initiatives, such as distributing food to the underprivileged or organizing communal meals at orphanages. This demonstrates that the spirit of cooperation in Ngobeng remains relevant despite adjustments to contemporary social conditions.
- c) Revitalization of Ngobeng through Cultural Education-Some schools and cultural institutions in Palembang have started reintroducing the Ngobeng tradition to younger generations through educational programs. At certain school events, students are encouraged to participate in cooking and sharing meals as part of preserving local cultural heritage.

Based on interviews, observations, and literature studies, it can be concluded that the Ngobeng tradition has undergone significant transformation in the modern context. Lifestyle changes, technological advancements, and new consumption patterns have influenced how the tradition is practiced. Nevertheless, the core values of togetherness and cooperation that define Ngobeng can still be preserved through various forms of adaptation, such as integration with digital technology, involvement in social activities, and cultural education for younger generations. Therefore, the preservation of Ngobeng does not necessarily require maintaining its traditional form but adapting it to contemporary dynamics to ensure its continued relevance in modern society.

THE IMPACT OF THE NGOBENG TRADITION ON SOCIAL HARMONY

The Ngobeng tradition is one of the cultural practices preserved in Palembang. Ngobeng, literally means communal dining, is not merely about food consumption but also carries profound social significance. This tradition is typically conducted during various events such as weddings, Italian (prayer gatherings), and religious celebrations. This study aims to analyze the impact of the Ngobeng tradition on social harmony based on observations, interviews with the community, and literature reviews.

This research employs a qualitative approach using observation and in-depth interviews. Observations were conducted by attending several Ngobeng events in different community settings in Palembang. Interviews were conducted with community leaders, cultural practitioners, and residents participating in this tradition. Additionally, this study incorporates literature on similar traditions in other cultural contexts to enrich the analysis.

1. Ngobeng as a Conflict Resolution Medium

Based on observations, Ngobeng often serves as a moment to ease minor resident conflicts. For instance, during a tahlilan event observed in this study, two families who had experienced tensions due to misunderstandings eventually greeted each other and engaged in conversation while sitting together at the Ngobeng gathering. This indicates that meeting in a relaxed and communal setting can be a natural bridge for resolving disputes.

A community leader interviewed in this study stated that Ngobeng reduces social barriers and creates opportunities for residents to interact again without awkwardness. This aligns with social interaction theory, which posits that togetherness in informal situations can help repair strained interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, several interviewees mentioned that Ngobeng is not merely an occasion for gathering but also fosters a constructive dialogue. Dining together encourages open-hearted conversations, and many social issues can ultimately be resolved through a more personal approach.

2. Enhancing Interpersonal Communication

Interviews with community members revealed that Ngobeng encourages them to communicate more openly. This tradition requires individuals to sit together in one space, regardless of social or economic status. One respondent mentioned that during Ngobeng, he could converse with neighbors he rarely encountered daily, thus strengthening previously weak social ties.

Literature on social harmony emphasizes the crucial role of Communication. Traditions like Ngobeng facilitate direct, unmediated Communication and can help reduce prejudice and enhance communal solidarity. This is consistent with Robert Putnam's (2000) concept of "social capital," which suggests that strong social relationships contribute to increased societal cohesion.

In some communities, Ngobeng even serves as a platform for sharing essential information related to community life, such as social welfare programs, village policies, and regional development plans. Direct interactions help residents better understand communal conditions and needs.

3. Solidarity and Sense of Belonging

Social solidarity is one of the most tangible impacts of the Ngobeng tradition. Observations showed that during Ngobeng events, residents voluntarily help with food preparation, venue arrangements, and other tasks. These collective activities strengthen emotional bonds among community members and reinforce a sense of belonging.

An elderly respondent stated that since childhood, he had been accustomed to seeing people working together to prepare Ngobeng, which instilled a strong sense of community care. Similar findings have been observed in other studies on communal dining traditions in various cultures, showing that active participation in collective activities enhances social bonds and fosters empathy.

In some cases, the solidarity fostered through the Ngobeng tradition extends into the economic sphere. Small business owners, such as caterers and local farmers, often benefit from this tradition as their food products and services are used for Ngobeng events. This creates a community-based economic ecosystem that further strengthens social welfare.

4. Ngobeng as a Means of Social Inclusion

One of this study's most significant findings is that Ngobeng creates an inclusive space for participation, regardless of social, economic, or even religious backgrounds. In some cases, individuals from different faiths are also invited to Ngobeng events, reflecting an inclusive attitude that forms the foundation of social harmony.

From a sociological perspective, inclusive activities like Ngobeng can reduce social segregation and promote mutual respect among diverse groups. This is particularly relevant in a multicultural society like Palembang, where the Ngobeng tradition serves as a model for fostering harmonious intergroup relationships.

Furthermore, this tradition reflects the strong gotong royong (cooperation) philosophy deeply rooted in Indonesian society. In every Ngobeng gathering, values of togetherness and equality are highly upheld, with each participant contributing without regard to their background.

The Ngobeng tradition is not merely a communal dining practice but also serves as a mechanism for conflict resolution, enhanced Communication, strengthened solidarity, and social inclusion. Therefore, preserving and developing the Ngobeng tradition can effectively foster a more harmonious and tolerant society.

For future research, a quantitative approach could be used to measure Ngobeng's social impact in greater depth. Additionally, comparative studies with similar traditions in other regions could provide broader insights into the role of culture in building social cohesion. Further studies could also explore how the Ngobeng tradition adapts in the digital era, where social interactions increasingly shift to virtual spaces.

Overall, Ngobeng is not just a tradition but a vital social mechanism that helps maintain balanced relationships between individuals and groups in Palembang society. By sustaining this tradition, communities can continue to build stronger and more inclusive social harmony.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the Ngobeng tradition is not merely a communal dining practice, but a cultural expression that reflects the synergy between local wisdom and the values of religious moderation, such as tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), balance (*tawāzūn*), justice (*ʿiṭidāl*), and equality (*musāwāh*). Rooted in Palembang's social fabric, Ngobeng strengthens social harmony by promoting togetherness across diverse groups, reducing social gaps, and fostering an inclusive environment for intergroup interaction. It also reflects how religious values are harmoniously integrated with local customs—making it a valuable model for nurturing social cohesion in a multicultural society.

However, modernization and changing lifestyles have caused a decline in the tradition's practice. Therefore, innovation and educational strategies are required to ensure the continued relevance and transmission of Ngobeng's values. As a key recommendation, this study proposes the integration of Ngobeng values into multicultural education, specifically through:

- 1). Curriculum development that includes local traditions as learning materials for subjects such as Pancasila education, social studies, or religious education.
- 2). Contextual learning strategies, using Ngobeng as a case study to explore cultural symbols, social roles, and communal values.
- 3). School-based cultural projects and communal meal simulations to teach values of empathy, equality, and cooperation.
- 4). Character education programs that internalize the values embedded in Ngobeng, such as respect for elders, humility, and group solidarity.

Furthermore, the application of Goffman's symbolic interaction theory and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory deepens the analysis by showing how Ngobeng functions as a 'social stage' where values are performed, observed, and learned in real-life settings. These values are not only inherited but also constructed and reinforced through interaction, making Ngobeng an effective medium of sociocultural learning.

In conclusion, Ngobeng can serve as a pedagogical resource in multicultural education, fostering inclusivity, strengthening national identity, and preserving cultural heritage. Its adaptation in educational settings will ensure that its noble values continue to shape future generations in a pluralistic society.

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