

Exploring the Ngejot Tradition in Lombok as a Sasak Cultural Identity through Ritual Communication: A Socio-Cultural Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the *Ngejot* tradition in Lombok as a form of Sasak cultural identity through the perspective of ritual communication, focusing on the forms of communication, symbols, and socio-cultural values embedded within the tradition. This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical method. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, literature review, and documentation involving four key informants purposively selected from religious leaders, customary leaders, community leaders, and youth leaders in Lenek Village, East Lombok. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model through the stages of data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings reveal that the *Ngejot* tradition functions as a mechanism of ritual communication that reproduces Sasak cultural identity through both domestic and public rituals. Symbols such as *sampak/dulang*, traditional food, *anjeng sanak*, local expressions, and the practices of giving and receiving represent the values of social connectedness, respect, sharing, reciprocity, solidarity, and togetherness, integrating Islamic values with Sasak socio-cultural norms. *Ngejot* thus serves as a space for the transmission of values, the strengthening of social cohesion, and the adaptation of cultural identity through the active involvement of younger generations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is characterized by remarkable cultural and traditional diversity, with each tradition embodying values that are deeply embedded in the lives of its communities [1]. Culture constitutes a fundamental component of social life, as it not only represents the products of human creativity, emotion, and intention but also functions as a system of values, knowledge, norms, symbols, customs, and social practices that shape how individuals and groups understand themselves and their social environment [2]. The

behaviors demonstrated by community members in social interactions contribute to maintaining intergenerational connections with the past while strengthening cultural identity, a sense of belonging, social cohesion, and the sustainability of community life [3]. Modernization and the rapid development of digital communication technologies, which facilitate social interaction across physical distances, mean that indigenous and traditional communities throughout Indonesia continue to strive to preserve face-to-face communication practices rooted in local traditions [4]. One distinctive and culturally significant practice in Lombok is the *Ngejot* tradition, which embodies rich local values and serves as an important expression of Sasak cultural identity.

The *Ngejot* tradition is a cultural practice observed by the Sasak community in Lenek Village, East Lombok Regency, as a representation of the interplay between the custom of sharing, respect for family members, and the strengthening of social relationships [5]. Etymologically, the term *Ngejot* is rooted in the local Lenek vocabulary, in which “*jot*” means “to come,” while “*ngejot*” refers to the act of “visiting” or paying a visit to relatives [6]. Unlike the customary *silaturahmi* practiced during Eid celebrations in general, the *Ngejot* tradition follows distinctive customary norms, particularly the social and spiritual obligation of younger family members to visit older relatives, including parents, grandparents, and elder siblings, while bringing traditional containers known as *sampak* or *dulang* filled with festive foods [7]. This tradition has been naturally rooted in the community for generations and is believed to have developed alongside the introduction and growth of Islamic teachings in the Lenek region. For the local community, *Ngejot* is not merely a routine activity but also represents an important ethical and symbolic expression of respect (*adab*) and adherence to religious and familial values [8].

This practice is closely associated with Islamic values, particularly *silaturahmi* (maintaining bonds of kinship), *shadaqah* (charitable giving), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), *tasamuh* (tolerance), compassion, and the preservation of peace [9]. The *Ngejot* tradition plays an important role in strengthening solidarity, social connectedness, mutual care, and tolerance among families and Muslim communities [10]. *Ngejot* can therefore be understood as a form of socio-religious communication that brings Islamic values into dialogue with the local wisdom of the Sasak community in Lombok [11]. Sasak traditions function as cultural practices that serve as mediums for the transmission of values, the development of interpersonal relationships, and the strengthening of the community's social identity [12]. In this context, *Ngejot* can be regarded as a space for cultural reproduction, whereby acts of giving, receiving, interacting, and sharing continuously reaffirm the value of togetherness while preserving the collective identity of the Sasak community [13].

Several previous studies have examined the *Ngejot* tradition as a ritual practice within Sasak community life. Luh et al. [14] explain that the *Ngejot* tradition is not merely a form of social interaction but also serves as a medium for conveying messages, norms, and values of local wisdom. Through this practice, residents of Dharma Agung Village are able to develop close social relationships, maintain social harmony, and preserve their

cultural identity. Hanip et al. [15] argue that the *Ngejot* tradition functions as a means of fostering tolerance, harmony, and togetherness among religious communities. However, its continuity faces challenges arising from modernization, the increasing influence of social media, and declining understanding of religious values and local cultural traditions. Similarly, Hidayah et al. [16] demonstrate that the *Ngejot* tradition is not practiced exclusively by Muslim communities in Lombok. Among Balinese communities, *Ngejot* is also strongly associated with the expression of harmonious interreligious relations and serves as a means of promoting tolerance and fostering interreligious harmony. Such tolerance is grounded in the participation of individuals and groups in shared activities and collective responsibilities.

Based on a review of previous studies, research on the *Ngejot* tradition has predominantly focused on religious tolerance, interfaith harmony, *silaturahmi* (the maintenance of social and kinship ties), value transmission, and the preservation of local culture. This gap indicates the need to examine *Ngejot* not merely as a tradition of food sharing or a form of social visitation, but as a ritual communication practice in which actions, symbols, food, language, and social interactions are employed to convey and sustain shared values. The novelty of this study lies in integrating the perspectives of ritual communication, Islamic values, and socio-cultural dimensions to understand how the *Ngejot* tradition represents and reproduces Sasak cultural identity amid social change and modernization. Therefore, this study aims to explore the *Ngejot* tradition in Lombok as a form of Sasak cultural identity through the perspective of ritual communication by analyzing the forms of communication, symbols, and socio-cultural dimensions embedded in the practice, while also identifying their significance in maintaining solidarity, togetherness, and the continuity of Sasak cultural identity.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method to explore the *Ngejot* tradition as a form of ritual communication and cultural identity among the Sasak community in Lenek Village, Aikmel District, East Lombok Regency [17]. This approach was selected because the study seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of the meanings, symbols, and patterns of social interaction embedded in the *Ngejot* practice from the perspectives of local practitioners and cultural figures (*emic perspective*) [18]. Data were collected through direct observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews with key informants purposively selected based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in preserving the *Ngejot* tradition. The informants consisted of religious leaders, customary leaders, community leaders, members of the indigenous community, and youth representatives as members of the modern generation in Lenek Village. The data analysis procedure employed in this study is presented in Figure 1.

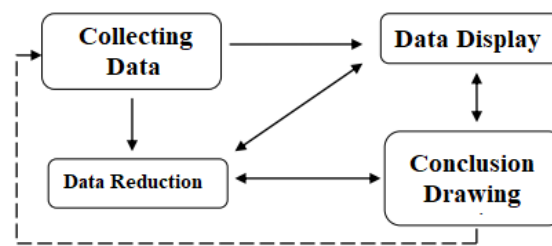


Figure 1. Miles and Huberman's Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model [19], which comprises four main stages: data collection, data condensation or reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. At the data collection stage, the researchers conducted a literature review on the *Ngejot* tradition as a form of ritual communication within the indigenous community, carried out direct observations in Lenek Village, East Lombok, conducted interviews with several key figures, including religious leaders (TA), customary leaders (TAt), community members, and youth representatives (TP), and collected documentation related to the *Ngejot* tradition. At the data condensation or reduction stage, the results of the literature review, observations, and interviews were transcribed, selected, and categorized according to the research focus, including ritual communication, cultural symbols, Islamic values, socio-cultural values, solidarity, and Sasak cultural identity. Subsequently, the data were systematically presented in thematic descriptions to facilitate the identification of patterns, relationships, and meanings embedded in the *Ngejot* practice. The final stage involved continuously drawing and verifying conclusions by comparing findings across the four informants, thereby generating credible interpretations of the *Ngejot* tradition as a form of ritual communication and its role in transmitting Islamic and socio-cultural values while preserving Sasak cultural identity.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Construction of Ritual Communication in the *Ngejot* Tradition

Based on observations conducted in Lenek Village, East Lombok, the *Ngejot* tradition was found to constitute a form of ritual communication within the Sasak community that serves not merely as a means of conveying information, but primarily as a mechanism for maintaining togetherness, strengthening social relationships, and representing shared beliefs and values. From the perspective of ritual communication, the significance of *Ngejot* lies in the processes of participation and symbolic actions repeatedly performed by community members, through which cultural and religious values can be continuously transmitted across generations [20]. In Lenek Village, the *Ngejot* practice operates at two levels: the domestic-family level, manifested through visiting and sharing food with family members and relatives, and the communal-public level, represented by the *Ngejot* Festival, which involves the broader community.

1. Domestic-Family Ritual Stages

Traditionally, the *Ngejot* ritual is performed in the afternoon following *Eid al-Fitr* or *Eid al-Adha*. Younger family members prepare traditional festive foods, such as *ketupat*, *sate bulayak*, and various meat dishes, which are then carefully arranged in traditional containers known as *sampak* or *dulang*. The food is subsequently delivered to the homes of parents, grandparents, or other elder family members as an expression of respect and *silaturahmi* (the maintenance of kinship ties). During the act of giving, verbal interactions take place through greetings, expressions of apology, prayers, and expressions of gratitude, thereby strengthening interpersonal relationships among family members. An important element of this ritual is the recipient's practice of refilling the *dulang* or *sampak* with food prepared at their own home before returning the container to the person who delivered it. This reciprocal practice represents the value of *reciprocity*, which not only reflects mutual respect and sharing but also strengthens family bonds, affection, and social solidarity within Sasak community life. As explained by a customary leader during the interview:

“Ngejot serves as a means of self-reflection, a space for reminding one another, and a way of teaching that maintaining kinship ties is essential. Community members visit one another's homes while bringing a dulang filled with traditional Eid food, and the dulang is refilled by the host before it is taken back home.”

The *Ngejot* tradition is not merely an activity of delivering food; rather, it constitutes a space for reflection, communication, and social learning within the Sasak community. The practice of visiting one another and bringing a *dulang* filled with food represents the concrete enactment of *silaturahmi* through direct interaction among families and community members. Meanwhile, the host's practice of refilling the *dulang* demonstrates the presence of symbolic communication and the principle of *reciprocity*, whereby giving is not understood as a one-way exchange but rather as an expression of mutual respect, sharing, and the strengthening of social bonds. From the perspective of ritual communication, this sequence of actions functions to maintain and renew the meaning of togetherness that has become an integral part of community life.

2. Stages of Public Ritual Participation

At the public level, the *Ngejot* tradition has undergone a transformation from a domestic family practice into a communal ritual involving broader community participation. This process is initiated by youth groups affiliated with *Karang Taruna* and *Rumah Budaya Lenek* as part of efforts to preserve and strengthen the continued existence of the *Ngejot* tradition. The ritual sequence begins with the dissemination of information through the mosque loudspeaker in the morning prior to the event. In the afternoon, community members from three areas Lenek Daya, Lenek Induk, and Lenek Pesiraman gather at the village field while bringing their *sampak*. The event features a torchlight procession, addresses by government officials and customary and religious leaders, communal prayers, and the symbolic presentation of *sampak* to government representatives and customary leaders. As a reciprocal gesture, the government provides basic food packages to community members. The event concludes with a communal *iftar*, after which

community members continue the *Ngejot* practice individually by visiting their respective family members' homes. These stages demonstrate that *Ngejot* in the public sphere is not merely a ceremonial activity but also a space for collective participation that brings together community members, religious leaders, customary leaders, youth, and government representatives to foster communication, solidarity, and collective awareness of the importance of preserving Sasak cultural identity. As explained by a youth representative during the interview:

"As young people, we certainly have a role in preserving and revitalizing traditions that have been practiced from generation to generation. The Ngejot tradition is not merely a family custom but a tradition that must continue to be introduced to the wider community, particularly to younger generations. Therefore, together with Karang Taruna, we have sought to transform Ngejot into a collective activity through a festival. Community members bring their sampak, gather, and participate in the various activities together. After the event concludes, they continue the Ngejot practice by visiting their respective family members."

The younger generation occupies a strategic position in the preservation, regeneration, and transformation of the *Ngejot* tradition amid social change [21]. The involvement of youth through *Karang Taruna* not only positions them as participants in the ritual but also as cultural agents who expand the practice of *Ngejot* from the domestic family sphere into the public sphere through the organization of festivals. Community participation, manifested through bringing *sampak*, gathering, and engaging in collective activities, demonstrates a process of ritual communication that constructs shared experiences and collective meanings [22]. Importantly, this transformation does not eliminate the traditional form of *Ngejot*, as community members continue to visit their respective families after the communal activities have concluded. This demonstrates both cultural continuity and adaptation, whereby the younger generation seeks to contextualize the tradition within contemporary social conditions without compromising its fundamental values of *silaturahmi*, togetherness, and Sasak cultural identity.

Cultural Semiotic Analysis: Symbols and Philosophical Meanings

Ritual communication within the *Ngejot* tradition is manifested through cultural symbols that are collectively understood and interpreted by the Sasak community. Each object, material, expression, and action serves not only a practical function but also represents customary, social, and religious values. The various symbols employed in the Sasak *Ngejot* tradition are as follows:

1. Sampak/Dulang (Food Presented in a Traditional Container)

The *sampak/dulang* is a traditional Sasak container that symbolizes respect, propriety, and courtesy in the practice of *Ngejot*. Delivering food to parents or older relatives using a *sampak/dulang* is regarded as an expression of respect for customary values. Presenting food without using this traditional container is considered inconsistent with the established norms and propriety of the tradition. This symbolic form shares

similarities with the findings of Zaelani (2019), who identified four Islamic values embedded in the *Nyorog* tradition of the Betawi community in Pondok Benda Village: (1) respecting parents, (2) maintaining social relationships, (3) creating opportunities for charitable giving, and (4) providing educational support for children.

This meaning is consistent with the use of the *sampak/dulang* in *Ngejot*, where the container and food presented to parents or older relatives constitute more than a material gift; they function as symbols of respect, customary propriety, and the preservation of *silaturahmi*. This similarity demonstrates that the practice of giving food in different local traditions may serve comparable social and religious functions, even when expressed through distinct cultural forms. Accordingly, the *sampak/dulang* can be interpreted as a symbol of ritual communication that conveys messages of respect, affection, and the preservation of intergenerational relationships within the Sasak community.

2. Ketupat Wrapped in Palm Leaves and Banana Leaf Packaging

The use of natural materials in food preparation and presentation represents the community's close relationship with the environment and the richness of local natural resources. The continued use of traditional materials also reflects the community's commitment to preserving the original form and distinctive character of the *Ngejot* tradition. As explained by a community leader:

"We always give food or side dishes to our family members and neighbors, wrapped in banana leaves. This is done to protect the food from anything that could affect its taste and also serves as a symbol of sharing among the Sasak people. Preparing ketupat and lotong is part of Sasak cultural identity during Eid, when these foods are enjoyed together."

The *Ngejot* tradition serves not only the practical function of maintaining food hygiene and quality but also carries significant social and cultural meanings as a symbol of sharing within the Sasak community. Meanwhile, the serving of *ketupat* and *lotong* during Eid celebrations represents a culinary identity deeply embedded in Sasak community life and constitutes part of a cultural experience transmitted across generations [24]. The practice of giving food to family members and neighbors demonstrates that food in the *Ngejot* tradition functions as a medium of social communication, conveying messages of care, generosity, and togetherness without necessarily relying on verbal communication. When the food is subsequently consumed collectively, it creates a space for social interaction that strengthens interpersonal relationships and fosters a sense of belonging to the local culture.

3. Direct Visits (Anjeng Sanak)

Physical presence when visiting parents, relatives, and family members serves as a symbol of filial devotion, humility, sincerity, and respect. Face-to-face interaction is considered to possess emotional and social value that cannot be fully replaced by communication mediated through digital technologies. The term *Anjeng Sanak* refers to the practice of maintaining *silaturahmi* by visiting family members and relatives in person.

This value is consistent with Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of strengthening and maintaining kinship ties (*silaturahmi*) [8].

4. Traditional Proverb: “*Ndak bi pada telang lalok, pe gemetan*”

This expression conveys an invitation to maintain social bonds and avoid allowing relationships to become disconnected by consistently visiting and maintaining contact with relatives. The proverb functions as a moral message that reminds younger generations of the importance of preserving kinship, mutual care, and social connectedness. In the context of the *Ngejot* tradition, this expression reinforces the understanding that *silaturahmi* is not merely a social practice but also a cultural and moral obligation that contributes to the continuity of interpersonal relationships within the Sasak community.

5. The Act of Giving and Receiving Food

The act of giving food by the person performing *Ngejot* and refilling the *sampak/dulang* by the recipient represents the principles of reciprocity, mutual respect, sharing, and the strengthening of social bonds. This symbol demonstrates that social relationships within the Sasak community are constructed through reciprocal practices of giving and receiving rather than through one-way exchanges.

Overall, these symbols demonstrate that *Ngejot* constitutes a form of ritual communication that integrates the values of respect, *silaturahmi*, mutual care, brotherhood, reciprocity, and Sasak cultural identity. The matrix of symbols, actions, and meanings of ritual communication in the *Ngejot* tradition is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Matrix of Symbols, Actions, and Meanings in Ngejot Ritual Communication

Ritual Element	Form / Action	Cultural & Theological Meaning
Primary Container	Sasak-woven <i>sampak/dulang</i>	A profound symbol of respect, customary propriety, and the preservation of ancestral heritage.
Ritual Cuisine	<i>Ketupat</i> wrapped in palm leaves and traditional Eid dishes	An expression of gratitude for blessings, a symbol of sharing the joy of Eid, and a representation of local natural abundance.
Physical Interaction	Visiting relatives and performing <i>sungkem</i> (a gesture of respect toward elders)	The embodiment of the Islamic teaching of <i>silaturahmi</i> and maintaining kinship ties, filial devotion to parents, and social reconciliation.
Reciprocity	Refilling the <i>dulang</i> with food	An expression of gratitude, social equality, and the preservation of reciprocal interpersonal bonds.

Local Cultural Identity and Social Norm Dimensions

The *Ngejot* tradition functions as a marker of cultural identity that distinguishes the community of Lenek Village from other Sasak communities across the island of Lombok. For the people of Lenek, the continued existence of this tradition fosters a sense of collective pride (*cultural pride*), as it is regarded as a distinctive cultural practice transmitted from one generation to the next. Beyond serving as a cultural identity marker, *Ngejot* also functions as a mechanism of social control through collectively established norms and expectations (Riskinta et al., 2026). Individuals or families who do not practice

Ngejot, particularly toward parents or older relatives, may be subject to social judgment, such as being perceived as lacking proper *adab* (social etiquette), showing insufficient respect for elders, or neglecting familial obligations [26]. This condition demonstrates that the continuity of *Ngejot* is sustained not only by individual awareness but also by social norms that regulate the behavior of community members. Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values, particularly the principle of *silaturahmi*, respect for parents, and concern for others, with local customary norms gives *Ngejot* strong religious and cultural significance. Even community members who migrate outside the region continue to make efforts to preserve the practice, either by returning home in person or by sending food to their families, as a means of fulfilling their moral, social, and cultural obligations toward their families and communities of origin.

The findings indicate that the *Ngejot* tradition in Lenek Village constitutes a form of ritual communication that operates at both the domestic-family and communal-public levels. Activities such as delivering *sampak/dulang*, visiting parents and relatives, exchanging greetings and apologies, and receiving food in return do not merely serve the function of conveying information; rather, they function as mechanisms for maintaining relationships and constructing shared meanings. These findings are consistent with Hemawati (2022), who demonstrated that *Ngejot* embodies the values of *silaturahmi*, *shadaqah*, *tasamuh*, mutual assistance, compassion, peace, and solidarity, as well as with the study by Yulistia et al., which positions *Ngejot* as a means of strengthening the social and religious values of the community. However, the present study extends these findings by demonstrating that such values are communicated through ritual symbols and actions, particularly the use of *sampak/dulang*, direct visits (*anjeng sanak*), the reciprocal practice of giving and receiving food, and collective participation in the *Ngejot* Festival.

The finding concerning the transformation of *Ngejot* into a festival involving youth, religious leaders, customary leaders, government representatives, and the wider community is also consistent with Naharudin (2019), who views the *Ngejot* Festival as an arena for reconstructing Sasak cultural identity. Nevertheless, the present study places greater emphasis on ritual communication as a primary mechanism in the reproduction of this identity. Thus, *Ngejot* not only preserves religious and social values but also constitutes a space for reproducing Sasak cultural identity through symbols, social interactions, collective participation, and intergenerational value transmission. Moreover, its adaptation into a festival demonstrates that modernization does not necessarily lead to the disappearance of tradition; rather, it can provide a space for cultural transformation when younger generations are able to develop new forms of practice without severing the fundamental meanings and values embedded in *Ngejot*.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, this study concludes that the *Ngejot* tradition in Lenek Village is not merely a practice of sharing food during religious celebrations but constitutes a ritual communication mechanism that actively constructs and sustains Sasak cultural identity. This identity is constructed through two primary forms: domestic rituals that reinforce interfamily relationships and public rituals, particularly the *Ngejot* Festival,

which broadens community participation. Symbols such as *sampak/dulang*, traditional foods, *anjeng sanak*, local expressions, and the reciprocal practice of giving and receiving food function as communicative media through which the values of *silaturahmi*, respect for parents, sharing, reciprocity, solidarity, and togetherness are conveyed, demonstrating the intersection between Islamic teachings and Sasak socio-cultural norms. Another significant finding is that *Ngejot* cultural identity is not static but is continuously reproduced through the involvement of younger generations, who transform the domestic practice into a public ritual without compromising its fundamental values. Thus, *Ngejot* can be understood as a space for the reproduction of Sasak cultural identity grounded in Islamic values, in which ritual communication functions as a mechanism for intergenerational value transmission, the strengthening of social cohesion, and cultural adaptation to changing times.

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