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Undhuh-Undhuh Tradition from the Perspective of Historical Traces of Inculturation of Javanese Culture and Art to Christianity

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Abstract: The Undhuh-Undhuh tradition is an annual celebration carried out by Christians more precisely at the Jawi Wetan Christian Church (GKJW) in the village of Mojowarno Jombang. The tradition symbolises the community's gratitude to God for the crops in the form of fruits, vegetables, animal husbandry, and others. The celebration existed and developed into a tradition in 1930 and in 2025 this tradition is 95 years old. However, in reality the Undhuh-undhuh tradition is still not widely known, especially outside the Jombang Regency area. This research not only aims to document and analyse in depth how this tradition is carried out but also to introduce and promote the Undhuh-undhuh tradition to the wider community especially outside Jombang Regency. The problem will be formulated as follows: 1) What is the background of the Undhuh-undhuh tradition. The purpose of this research is to analyse the background and structure of the Undhuh-undhuh tradition at Jawi Wetan Christian Church Mojowarno. This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods. Sources of data obtained in the form of writing from the results of interviews and observations. Data collection techniques are: observation, interviews, photos, videos, and audio recordings. Data analysis techniques through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity using source triangulation and technique triangulation. The results of the research on the background of the Undhuh-undhuh tradition at GKJW Mojowarno are rooted in the life of an agrarian Christian society, where most of its members work as farmers, a form of acculturation between the Javanese harvest tradition and Christian teachings that reflect the integration of local culture and Christian spirituality in the life of the GKJW Mojowarno congregation.

Keywords: *Background, Undhuh-undhuh, Tradition*



1. INTRODUCTION

Culture is a term derived from the Sanskrit language *buddhayah*, which is the plural form of *buddhi*, which means something related to human reason and mind. In a culture, of course, it is closely related to tradition, tradition in Latin, namely *traditio*, which means that it is a habit that develops in society into customs that are understood by traditional rituals and religion. According to Soerjono Soekanto (1990) tradition is an activity carried out by a group of people on a lasting basis (repeated). Tradition based on nature, one of which is a religious tradition, is one aspect of culture that has an important role in shaping character in society. Through religious traditions a society can maintain long-established values, customs and rituals.

One of the traditions found in Mojowarno is the Undhuh-Undhuh tradition, an annual celebration held by Christians, especially in the Jawi Wetan Christian Church (GKJW) located in Mojowarno village, Jombang. This tradition is an expression of community gratitude to God for the crops such as fruits, vegetables, livestock, and others. The Undhuh-Undhuh tradition has existed and developed since 1930, so that in 2025 this tradition will be 95 years old. This celebration is held twice a year, in the second week of May and October. Founded by two figures with different backgrounds, Johannes Emde and Coenraad Laurens Coolen, GKJW Mojowarno is the oldest church in East Java. In 2019, the Undhuh-Undhuh tradition at GKJW Mojowarno was officially recognised by the Jombang Regency government as an 'intangible cultural heritage'.

Before going down to the rice fields or starting work in the fields, the Mojowarno Christian community carries out a tradition known as *Kebétan*, in Dutch the term for prayer is 'Gebed', and most likely the Javanese call it "Kebet" or 'Kebétan'. *Kebétan* is a prayer performed collectively before the farmers start their activities in the rice fields addressed to God, this Joint Prayer contains an expression of gratitude as well as a request for protection and safety so that there are no obstacles during the work process. After the rice plants are *selapan dina* (36 days old), GKJW Mojowarno residents hold a ceremony called *Keleman* which aims to ask God for protection so that there are no pest attacks and rice growth can be good. *Keleman* comes from the Javanese word *kelem*, which means sinking or immersed in water, which means that the rice fields have been flooded. People bring snacks such as *horog-horog*, *pleret*, *tetel/juwadah* cake, *wajik*, *serabi*, *nagasari*, etc. After the *Keleman* ceremony is over, and the next stage is to carry out maintenance so that the rice can grow fertile and the results can be harvested later.

Prior to the Undhuh-undhuh tradition on Saturday, a night of art and culture was held, which was attended by the youth of GKJW Mojowarno, several youth from churches in the Jombang area, and interfaith. The procession of the building began with the congregation gathering at the Block Meeting House (Synagogue), then together parading the statue building to the church yard. After the procession, the event continued with the *Bedhaya Undhuh-undhuh* dance. Next, representatives of each block carry parcels of harvest into the church, accompanied by gamelan and Javanese songs. After the service, the event ends with a harvest auction held at Mojowarno Christian Junior High School. In the evening after the Undhuh-undhuh tradition, a shadow puppet show is held which is part of the tradition of the Jawi Wetan Christian Church (GKJW).

This church is only found in the East Java region, and in its worship uses Javanese and Indonesian.

In the midst of globalisation and modernisation, many local traditions have changed in value or are even threatened with extinction. Therefore, research on the Undhuh-undhuh tradition is very important to explore the cultural background so that this tradition is maintained and developed according to the context of the times without losing its original meaning. However, the Undhuh-undhuh tradition is still not widely known, especially outside Jombang Regency, even within East Java Province. This research not only aims to document and analyse the tradition in depth, but also to introduce and promote it to the wider community.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research method that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from sources, which allows researchers to explore the meaning and context of the tradition in depth. This method is general, focuses on something that cannot be measured by quantitative data, is dynamic and flexible, and is based on the philosophy of postpositivism. The qualitative approach is used to examine natural object conditions, where the researcher is the key instrument, data analysis is inductive or qualitative, and qualitative research results emphasise meaning rather than generalisation (Sugiyono, 2006: 09).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Undhuh-undhuh tradition is a feast of offerings that grew and developed within the Christian community, especially in GKJW (Greja Kristen Jawi Wetan) Mojowarno. This tradition is deeply rooted in the life of an agrarian society, where most of the congregation work as farmers. Therefore, the Javanese agrarian culture that is thick with customs and kinship merges with the Christian faith, resulting in a unique tradition that combines local values and Christian religiosity. The Undhuh-undhuh celebration began to develop around 1930, after the Mojowarno congregation officially declared itself an adult congregation in 1923 and joined the GKJW Supreme Council in 1931. Since then, this tradition has spread and carried over to other agrarian congregations in the East Java region.

This tradition was born as an adaptation between the harvest rituals of traditional pre-Islamic Javanese society and the Christian teachings brought by missionaries, especially CL Coolen in the early 19th century. This process shows a harmonious blend in which elements of the old culture are preserved in the context of the new faith. Practically, the Undhuh-undhuh tradition is carried out through a series of activities starting with the kebetan and keleman rituals as prayers before and during the planting period. When the harvest season arrives, the congregation makes a procession carrying crops such as fruits, vegetables, and livestock to the church. The produce is then offered as a form of gratitude to God, and then a harvest auction is held to support church activities and help others in need. This tradition not only has religious significance, but also strengthens solidarity and togetherness among the congregation.



Figure 1 Undhuh-undhuh procession in 1939
(Source: Riyaya Undhuh-undhuh Mojowarno History Book, 2018)



Figure 2 Arak-arakan Building in 1939
(Source: Riyaya Undhuh-undhuh Mojowarno History Book, 2018)

The Undhuh-undhuh tradition has been adopted and developed into an annual feast of offerings. This tradition began to grow and develop since 1930, so in 2025, this tradition will be 95 years old. Undhuh-undhuh is held twice a year, in the second week of May and October. Greja Kristen Jawi Wetan (GKJW) itself is a fellowship church based in East Java, which was first declared on 11 December 1936 in Mojowarno, Jombang Regency. Mojowarno is one of the oldest Javanese Christian congregations in the region, built by two figures with different backgrounds, namely Father Johanes Emde and Coenraad Laurens Coolen. GKJW Mojowarno remains the oldest church in East Java. In 2019, the Undhuh-undhuh tradition at GKJW Mojowarno received official recognition from the Jombang Regency government with the designation as 'intangible cultural heritage'. Besides being known as the territorial church in East Java, GKJW is also known as an agrarian, traditional, and kinship church. However, along with the changing times and the process of urbanisation, people who originally lived in an agrarian environment began to shift to urban areas. This phenomenon is inevitable and encourages adjustments in the implementation of the Undhuh-undhuh tradition. When brought to an urban environment, the Undhuh-undhuh tradition underwent modifications in accordance with the conditions and situations of the congregation in the city. Nevertheless, the characteristics and main values of this tradition in GKJW Mojowarno are still well maintained

until today. Thus, the Undhuh-undhuh tradition is not only a symbol of gratitude for the harvest for agrarians, but also able to adapt and survive as an important part of the cultural identity of the GKJW community, despite being in a different society.

Paulus Tosari was an indigenous pamulang (madurese) who became the first leader of the Mojowarno Christian Congregation, in 1851 Paulus Tosari was appointed as the leader of the Mojowarno Christian Congregation by a decree by the Protestant Church Council in Surabaya and then settled in Mojowarno. Paulus Tosari was a person who was very close to local spiritual teachings (Kejawen), during his service life he wrote songs as part of his appreciation for the teaching of Christian faith because as a Javanese song is a means of living an intense and personal relationship with God, the Creator of the Universe. His experience as a servant has led him to better understand and appreciate the life around him as part of an agrarian society. His social concern is undeniable, especially for the reality of poverty that is evident in the local colour, therefore together with the church leader and other members of the congregation he proposed the establishment of a granary as a solution for the agrarian community. The granary serves as a storage place for rice that is filled during the harvest season, which only occurs once a year. Paulus Tosari's experience as a church minister gave him a deep understanding of the social and cultural conditions of the surrounding agrarian society. He is not only active in spiritual ministry, but is also very concerned about social issues, especially the poverty that afflicts his community. For this reason, together with other leaders and members of the congregation, Paulus Tosari proposed the establishment of a granary as a practical solution for the local agrarian community. This barn serves as a storage place for rice that is filled during the harvest season, which takes place only once a year. This initiative shows how Paul Tosari's leadership combined spiritual values with concern for the social welfare of his congregation, so that the traditions and life of the agrarian community could go hand in hand with the development of the Christian faith.

In 1846, an evangelist named WM Donselaar fell ill while in Surabaya. During his recovery, he felt inspired after witnessing around 100 natives from the Wiyung and Sidokare areas enthusiastically participating in Holy Communion. This experience amazed him and prompted him to write a letter to the board in the Netherlands, inspiring them to commission someone to conduct more in-depth research into the development of Christianity in East Java. Following up on this suggestion, in December 1846, the board in the Netherlands sent JE Jellesma to conduct research in Surabaya and its surroundings. Jellesma was born on 13 May 1816 in the village of Hitzum near the town of Franeker, Friesland, the Netherlands. He was an alumnus of the Nederlands Zendelings Genootschap (NZG) in Rotterdam and had been stationed in Wahai, Seram Island, Ambon since 1843. After arriving in East Java, Jellesma tried to obtain permission to settle in Mojowarno, which was only granted in 1851, and he officially began moving to Mojowarno in 1852. During his early years of ministry in Mojowarno, Jellesma faced various internal challenges, especially tensions between two different Christian groups. CL Coolen's disciples rejected the practice of baptism and Holy Communion, while J. Emde's group saw themselves as rulers over the Javanese Christians in the new forest clearing. Despite these differences, JE Jellesma managed to unite the two streams of Christianity, the Western stream led by J. Emde and the indigenous Javanese stream of CL Coolen, thus creating unity in the church community in Mojowarno. This success was not insignificant in the development of the Christian church in East Java.

Under the leadership of JE Jellesma, the two previously separate streams of Christianity were brought together and influenced each other, forming the distinctive character of the Christian community in Mojowarno. A division of labour took place: Paulus Tosari focussed on the organisation and ministry of the congregation, while JE Jellesma was responsible for education at the Gospel School. The aspect of diakonia, or loving service, was a major concern. In the beginning, fundraising efforts were conducted through a tradition known as 'rembos', derived from the Dutch word 'armbus' (box for the poor). However, the contributions from this box were very limited or minimal. Recognising that most of the congregation is an agrarian society with an income that is highly dependent on the once-a-year harvest season, Paulus Tosari proposed a more sustainable solution: the establishment of a 'Lumbung Miskin'.

a. Lumbung Miskin

'Lumbung Miskin' can be considered the forerunner of the Undhuh-undhuh tradition that later developed in GKJW Mojowarno. In 1897, the barn was built permanently with wooden floors and walls made of gedheg, which is woven bamboo in a rectangular shape. The barn was originally located in Paulus Tosari's house, and was later moved to the church compound to facilitate management. In the early days, the rules for using the barn were still very simple. People were allowed to borrow rice before the harvest season, and were obliged to return it when the harvest arrived. The loan amount was adjusted to the ability of each borrower. In addition, there were provisions regarding the maximum loan limit and criteria for who was entitled to borrow from the lumbung. From 1902, the collection of paddy began to be recognised as a form of offering that was used to fulfil the needs of the local church and school. During this period, the implementation of lumbung management and offerings was not yet standardised. The management of the granary was carried out by three administrators who were elected annually. The rice collected is then sold, and the proceeds are deposited into the pasamuwan treasury as a source of funds for various congregational needs. The Lumbung Miskin initiative received positive appreciation from the Dutch colonial government, so this management model was later adopted and developed to other villages in the surrounding area.

b. Lumbung Pirukunan

In 1871, Paulus Tosari proposed the idea of building a church building with concrete walls as a symbol of progress and the physical durability of the house of worship for his congregation. To support the construction, he pioneered the establishment of the 'Lumbung Pirukunan,' a fund-raising institution whose operational principles were similar to those of the 'Lumbung Miskin.' This system collected rice offerings from farmers after the harvest, storing them in a bank. This system collects rice offerings from farmers after harvest, stores them as reserves, and sells them when market prices are high to obtain sufficient funds. This Lumbung Pirukunan is also the basis for the tradition of Undhuh-undhuh, the collective fundraising of the farming community during the harvest season for the church's Fellowship activities. The proceeds from the sale of rice are then deposited in the bank, a historical record shows that the Mojowarno community became the first savers at the Simeon Sandra Surabaya bank.

The groundbreaking of the church building took place on 24 February 1879, and after a process of about two years, the construction of the church was completed and inaugurated on 3 March 1881. Even though the church building was already established, the Lumbung Pirukunan mechanism continued as a means of collecting

funds and had an important educational function in building the congregation's awareness to always be grateful for the harvest blessings obtained. Paulus Tosari died not long after, on 21 May 1882 at the age of almost 70, and was buried in the Mojowangi village graveyard. The legacy he left behind through the construction of the church and the collective granary system had a profound impact on the spiritual and social life of the community in Mojowarno.

c. Maturity of the Mojowarno Congregation

On 20 May 1923, coinciding with the day of Pentecost, the maturity of the Mojowarno Congregation was officially recognised by Pastor J.M.S. Baljon. This recognition apparently caused a surprise among the NZG in the Netherlands, until Pastor Baljon had to be called back to his home country to account for the decision. However, thanks to the support of an influential figure, the NZG finally accepted and ratified the independent status of the Mojowarno Congregation. This recognition marked that the Mojowarno Congregation had achieved self-sufficiency, including in terms of funding, in accordance with the Trias Warneck principle which prioritises church independence in spiritual, organisational and financial aspects. One of the main sources of the Church's independence is thought to come from the tradition of collecting funds through harvest offerings, which has become a previous custom. From that it can be concluded that the maturing of the Mojowarno Congregation triggered the birth of the Undhuh-undhuh tradition as a form of independent fundraising from the peasant congregation. After the Mojowarno congregation, a number of other congregations also conducted an independent and separate maturation process, following in its footsteps. This maturation also became a milestone in the realisation of a broader concept of independence, as well as giving rise to the idea of 'Patunggilan Kang Nyawiji,' namely the formation of a church with a unitary character under the name of the Jawi Wetan Christian Church (GKJW). To commemorate this historical moment, a gate was made at the gate of the church yard which serves as a symbol of the importance of the event. On the gate is written the phrase 'Gunaning Panembah Trusing Tunggal,' which means 'The Benefit of Worship Towards the One God,' as a marker of the main value upheld by the Mojowarno Congregation in its spiritual journey.



Figure 3 Mojowarno Church Building in 1894
(Source: Riyaya Undhuh-undhuh Mojowarno History Book, 2018)

Koentjaraningrat asserts that culture and tradition are dynamic and undergo a process of development through selection, adaptation and transformation in accordance with social and environmental changes in society (Koentjaraningrat, 1996). In the context of Javanese society, traditions develop dynamically, always adjusting to

the times and external influences. Various ancestral cultural heritages, such as agricultural practices, traditional ceremonies and traditional arts, continue to undergo adjustments to remain relevant and meaningful in the lives of modern people today. In addition, in the religious and social spheres, traditions also develop through the process of acculturation and the adoption of new values that enter, so that the tradition is able to stay alive and develop over time.

Before the Undhuh-undhuh tradition was known, the life of the Mojowarno Jawi Wetan Christian Church (GKJW) congregation was closely related to the agrarian lifestyle that characterised the surrounding community. Most of the congregation work as farmers who depend their livelihood on agricultural products. In their daily lives, they carry out activities that match planting and harvesting as well as village communities in general in Java. As the number of congregants grew and Christianity developed in Mojowarno, there was a need to strengthen the sense of community and solidarity among members of the congregation. Especially after Mojowarno officially became an adult congregation in 1923, various joint activities began to be held with the aim of strengthening unity and as a form of expression of gratitude for God's blessings, especially the harvest. It was during this period that the Undhuh-undhuh tradition began to develop, which began with the custom of collecting crops as an offering and at the same time as a means of raising funds for the benefit of the church and congregation.

This tradition is known as 'Lumbung Pirukunan' and is an important foundation for resource management and church community solidarity. The Undhuh-undhuh tradition began to grow and became an important part of the life of the Mojowarno GKJW congregation around 1930. This celebration is designed not only as an expression of gratitude for the harvest, but also as a means to strengthen self-reliance and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood between members of the congregation. In its implementation, the harvest that has been collected is decorated in such a way and then paraded in a festive atmosphere before finally being auctioned. The funds obtained from the auction are then used to support various church activities and the welfare of congregation members. Over time, the Undhuh-undhuh tradition has not only served as a thanksgiving and fundraising event, but has also become an important medium in preserving local culture while strengthening the identity of the Christian community in Mojowarno.

In addition, this tradition also involves the participation of people of various religions, showing the existence of cultural adaptations that support social harmony and harmony in the neighbourhood. Soerjono Soekanto explains that traditions are born from fragments of past heritage that are selected and given special attention by the community. Soerjono Soekanto also stated that tradition is a cultural heritage that can undergo changes both quantitatively and qualitatively, where relevant elements of tradition are maintained and those that are less appropriate can be modified or lost (Soekanto, 2006).



Figure 4 Mojowarno Church Building in 1894
(Source: Google, 2025)

4. CONCLUSION

Through the results of previous research, conclusions can be drawn about the background of the Undhuh-undhuh tradition at GKJW Mojowarno, it can be concluded that the Undhuh-undhuh tradition in GKJW Mojowarno is an expression of gratitude that is strongly issued in the life of Christian agrarian society in the region. Most of the congregation there are farmers who depend on crops for their livelihoods. This tradition was born from the acculturation between the Javanese harvest tradition and Christian teachings, so that it is not only meaningful as a form of religious gratitude to God for the blessings of the harvest, but also strengthens social relations and fosters solidarity between members of the congregation. Since it was first implemented in 1930, Undhuh-undhuh has become a tradition that is maintained and developed continuously as an important part of GKJW Mojowarno's cultural identity. This tradition begins with agrarian rituals such as kebetan (prayers before work) and keleman (prayers during plant growth), followed by a celebration in the form of a procession of crops by all residents, which are then submitted in the form of offerings at the church. This celebration not only contains spiritual meaning, but is also a means of togetherness involving all levels of the congregation. Although the Undhuh-undhuh tradition has high cultural and spiritual values, until now this tradition is still not widely known outside Jombang Regency and even in East Java Province. However, the tradition has received attention and support from the local government as part of its cultural tourism assets, and has been recognised as an Indonesian Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2023. This emphasises the importance of Undhuh-undhuh as a cultural identity and desire for a Christian agrarian tradition in Mojowarno.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author was directly involved in all stages of the research, from planning, collecting data in the field, analyzing the data, to writing the article. Observations and interviews were conducted by the author to obtain in-depth data related to the background of the Undhuh-undhuh tradition. The author is also fully responsible for collecting data related to the background of the Undhuh-undhuh tradition.

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