



Lempar Dawet Tradition: Local Wisdom as an Effort to Ask for Rain in Medang Kamulan, Banjarejo Village

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ABSTRACT

The *Lempar Dawet* tradition, a unique rain-inducing ritual practiced in Medang Kamulan hamlet, is deeply rooted in the community's history and cultural values. This qualitative study employed observation, interviews, and documentation, alongside a review of relevant literature, to examine the tradition from multiple perspectives. The *Lempar Dawet* tradition, originating in the Hindu-Buddhist era, has undergone cultural adaptation with the advent of Islam, while retaining its core essence as a communal response to drought. The study delves into the intricate procedures of the tradition, highlighting the importance of using homemade *dawet* and the inclusive participation of all community members in the *dawet* throwing procession. Furthermore, the research uncovers the tradition's inherent character education values, encompassing religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity, which can be harnessed for educational purposes. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the *Lempar Dawet* tradition, its cultural significance, and its potential as a source of character development and environmental adaptation strategies. By shedding light on this unique practice, the study underscores the importance of preserving local wisdom and cultural heritage in an ever-changing world.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 21/05/2024
Revised 01/06/2024
Accepted 30/06/2024
Published 13/07/2024

KEYWORDS

Lempar Dawet; unique tradition; local-cultural wisdom; Javanese culture; Medang Kemulan.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30743/mkd.v8i2.9270>

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an agricultural country, and rice plants thrive on Indonesian agricultural land. Rice is the main source of income for Indonesian agriculture. However, global warming is significantly impacting Indonesian agriculture, causing droughts in many areas. Droughts result from unbalanced water conditions in a region. Grobogan, a district in Central Java, is experiencing drought due to global warming. Grobogan is the second-largest district in Central Java after Cilacap, with an area of 2013,90 km². Most of Grobogan's land is agricultural, cultivated by farmers who rely on rainwater. However, Grobogan experiences drought every year. Research by Julianto indicates that East and South Grobogan are the most severely affected areas (Julianto, [2021](#)).

East and South Grobogan are the hardest hit because of their flat topography, which makes up 22% of Grobogan's total area. The presence of limestone mountains in these areas further reduces water availability compared to other parts of Grobogan. In 2020, the Grobogan Regency Government provided 312 tanks of clean water (1,431,000 liters) as aid to 13 sub-districts and 80 villages, mainly in eastern Grobogan (including Bago, Grabagan, Banjarsari, Suwatu, Tuko, Kradenan, and Banjarejo). In addition to government aid, communities try to induce rain through traditional practices.

Banjarejo is one such village experiencing drought. The people of Banjarejo have a unique tradition called "*Lempar Dawet*" (throwing *dawet*) to ask for rain. *Dawet* is a traditional drink made from rice flour, coconut milk, and palm sugar. This annual tradition is a cultural heritage passed down through generations. Indonesia experiences distinct rainy (September to March) and dry (April to September) seasons. However, human activities and development have increased greenhouse gas emissions, altering rain patterns and air temperatures (Suhadi, Mabruroh, Wiyanto, & Ikra, [2023](#)). These changes impact everyone in Indonesia, particularly farmers who depend on rainwater. In 2023, rain patterns shifted, with rain starting in November instead of September. The Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency estimates an increase in annual rainfall but a decrease in heavy

rain occurrences, limited to a few areas) (Suhadi et al., [2023](#)). This shift significantly affects rain-fed agricultural land in Indonesia, including Medang Kamulan hamlet in Banjarejo village.

The *Lempar Dawet* tradition is local wisdom preserved by the people of Medang Kamulan. However, not everyone, especially the younger generation, is aware of this tradition. To preserve such local wisdom, it should be integrated into school curricula. The Indonesian government is addressing this through the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which includes local content tailored to regional characteristics (Suwaryani et al., [2020](#)). This aims to develop students' character in line with the Character Education Strengthening Movement program, drawing from tradition and culture (Arrazaq & Aman, [2020](#)).

Previous studies have explored Javanese unique traditions as local wisdoms related to rituals kind of rain-inducing, aversion, or thanksgiving, such as the *Udan Dawet* tradition (Ulum, [2020](#)), *Sadranan Kali Sedangdang* tradition (Arrazaq & Tasnur, [2023](#)), *Uborampe Pasang Tarub* and *Siraman* in Javanese wedding ceremonies (Wulandari, Nugraha, & Kaswati, [2023](#)), the *Kenduren* and *Udan Dawet* traditions (Rahmawati & Sabardila, [2023](#)), the *Apitan* tradition (Asyari, Ismaya, & Ahsin, [2021](#)), and the *Magibung* tradition (Tripayana, Mufidah, Handayani, & Basyariah, [2021](#)). However, no study has specifically focused on *Lempar Dawet* tradition. This research fills that gap by examining the character education values embedded in the local wisdom of the *Lempar Dawet* tradition in Medang Kamulan. This study differs by focusing on the procession of the tradition and the character values it imparts to the younger generation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research methodology with a historical approach. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, designing research steps to uncover and interpret phenomena (Fadli, [2021](#); Sugiyono, [2019](#)). This approach was specifically chosen to examine the *Lempar Dawet* tradition as a form of local wisdom in seeking rain within the context of Medang Kamulan hamlet, Banjarejo village.

Data collection for this qualitative study encompassed a multi-faceted approach: (1) Observation: The researcher actively participated in the *Lempar Dawet* tradition held in November 2023, triggered by prolonged drought in Medang Kamulan. This firsthand experience provided valuable insights into the cultural context and nuances of the tradition; (2) Interviews: In-depth interviews were conducted with individuals directly involved in the tradition within Medang Kamulan, offering a deeper understanding of the motivations, beliefs, and practices associated with the tradition; (3) Literature Review: A comprehensive review of relevant literature, including books, journals, and online publications, was conducted to provide a broader theoretical framework and contextualize the findings within existing knowledge.

Adhering to the historical research stages outlined by Kuntowijoyo (Kuntowijoyo, [2018](#)), the study proceeded as follows: (1) Heuristic: A comprehensive search for sources was conducted, encompassing both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consisted of interviews with key informants directly involved in the *Lempar Dawet* tradition, including village elders, tradition guides, and the village head of Banjarejo. Secondary sources comprised relevant articles, books, and online resources pertaining to the tradition; (2) Verification: Rigorous source verification was performed, cross-referencing primary data with secondary sources to ensure the validity and reliability of the information gathered; (3) Interpretation: Validated data was then subjected to in-depth interpretation, guided by existing source guidelines. This facilitated the synthesis of research findings, which were subsequently presented in a coherent and sequential manner, aligning with the interpreted sources; and (4) Historiography: Elaborating the findings as data in the form of writing. This stage also accommodates data from a qualitative approach.

Data analysis focused on unraveling the local wisdom embedded within the *Lempar Dawet* tradition in Medang Kamulan. This entailed an exploration of the tradition's historical origins, the

specific rituals and practices involved in its implementation, and the underlying character values it embodies. By synthesizing these diverse data sources, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the *Lempar Dawet* tradition as a manifestation of local wisdom in response to environmental challenges.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

General situation of the Medang Kamulan

Medang Kamulan, a hamlet in Banjarejo village, Grobogan Regency, Central Java, is situated in a lowland area that was once part of the now-dried Muria Strait. The Muria Strait area currently covers the areas of Pati, Kudus, and Grobogan. The sedimentation of the strait since the 17th century has led to the diversion of shipping routes to the Jepara Sea (Novita, Agustiani, & Hendratno, [2010](#)). Medang Kamulan has benefited from its location in the former strait area, as evidenced by the discovery of various ancient animal fossils.

The Medang Kamulan community primarily relies on rain-fed rice cultivation in their lowland rice fields. Due to the dependence on rainfall, they can only plant rice twice a year, with the second planting season often resulting in crop failure due to the onset of the dry season. This is consistent with the statement of Zainfudin:

"We can plant rice twice in our fields, but that's only if we're lucky. Crop failure has become common due to the lack of rain. Usually, the second harvest isn't sold but consumed by ourselves because it's not as good as the first. As you know, it gets extremely hot without rain, and rice needs a lot of water." (Interview with Zainfuddin, 60 years old, local resident, a trader).

The rising average global temperature has further exacerbated the problem, leading to a higher percentage of crop failure in the second planting season due to the prolonged drought in East and South Grobogan. The Medang Kamulan community attempts to mitigate the extended drought through traditional practices passed down through generations. One such tradition is the "*Lempar Dawet*" (throwing *dawet*) tradition, a culturally inherited practice that the community believes can alleviate drought. The procession of this tradition remains unchanged from the past, with the only difference being the prayers offered, as the majority of the Medang Kamulan community is now Muslim.

History of the *Lempar Dawet*

The tradition of *Lempar Dawet* in Medang Kamulan village is a time-honored practice, dating back to the ancestors of the community. However, it is not held annually but rather in response to specific circumstances, namely prolonged dry seasons. The tradition serves as a way for the community to beseech God Almighty for rain, ensuring the well-being of their rain-fed agricultural practices.

Before the advent of Islam in Medang Kamulan, the community adhered to Hindu-Buddhist beliefs, which had flourished in the region. Evidence of the deep-rooted Hindu influence can be seen in the discovery of various relics, both tangible and intangible, within the hamlet. The *Lempar Dawet* tradition is one such intangible relic that continues to be preserved to this day.

Originally, the *Lempar Dawet* tradition involved offerings to ancestral spirits as a central element. These offerings included *tumpeng* (cone-shaped rice), *pecel pitik* (chicken dishes), *jenang abang* (red-colored dodol), *kinangan* (a set of tools for eating), *dawet* (sweet dessert), and *toyo arum* (variety of local rice paddy). However, the arrival of Islam brought by the Wali Songo (nine revered saints) led to the conversion of many Hindus in Medang Kamulan. This religious shift resulted in a cultural acculturation, where the *Lempar Dawet* tradition adapted to incorporate Islamic practices. The Hindu offerings and prayers were replaced with Islamic prayers, and the offerings themselves were simplified, with only *dawet* remaining as an essential element in the procession.

Lempar Dawet as a tradition

The *Lempar Dawet* tradition was held in Medang Kamulan hamlet, Banjarejo village, in November 2023 due to an extended dry season. Taufik noted that "Medang Kamulan was one of the few hamlets that had not received rain, while other areas had. The tradition aims to bring rain, which is crucial for the farmers in the community." (Interview with Taufik, 45 years old, local residence, head of Banjarejo village).

Held on a Friday afternoon after midday prayers, the tradition commences with the preparation of the Pasujudan Aji Saka site, a place of significance believed to be guarded by Aji Saka. The community cleans the area and then individually prepares the *dawet* in their homes. The elder leading the ceremony emphasizes the importance of making the *dawet* themselves, rather than purchasing it, as this is believed to increase the chances of rain.

The entire community, including children, teenagers, and the elderly, gathers at the Pasujudan Aji Saka site, each bringing their homemade *dawet*. The village elder leads a communal prayer, beseeching God Almighty to send rain to Banjarejo and enable the farmers to resume their work. Following the prayer, the participants engage in a lively *Lempar Dawet*.

"The *Lempar Dawet* procession resembles a playful brawl, with residents throwing *dawet* at each other until it's all gone. There's no discrimination based on age or status; everyone participates joyfully. Despite the lively atmosphere, there's no animosity, and the community embraces the event with enthusiasm." (Interview with Taufik, 45 years old, local residence, head of Banjarejo village).

Upon the conclusion of the *Lempar Dawet*, participants are not permitted to clean themselves until they return home. This practice is believed to enhance the likelihood of the prayers being answered and rain falling abundantly.

Character education values in the *Lempar Dawet* tradition

The *Lempar Dawet* tradition embodies several character education values rooted in local wisdom, aligning with the *Guidelines for Strengthening Character Education in Early Childhood Education* by Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture to strengthen character education, which emphasizes religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity (Suwaryani et al., [2020](#)).

Religiosity

The tradition underscores the value of religiosity through the communal prayers led by village elders at the sacred site of Pasujudan Aji Saka. This practice demonstrates the community's reverence for God Almighty and highlights the importance of religious devotion in their lives. Moreover, the inclusion of diverse community members in the prayer fosters religious tolerance and harmony.

Nationalism

The *Lempar Dawet* tradition promotes nationalism by actively involving children and teenagers in the event. This intergenerational participation ensures the preservation and continuity of the tradition, safeguarding it from the erosive forces of time and globalization. By instilling a sense of cultural pride and ownership, the tradition nurtures a deep-rooted connection to the community's heritage.

Mutual Cooperation

The strong sense of community in Medang Kamulan hamlet is evident in the collaborative spirit demonstrated throughout the tradition. From jointly preparing the venue at Pasujudan Aji Saka to actively participating in the *Lempar Dawet*, the community exemplifies the value of mutual cooperation. This collective effort reinforces social bonds and strengthens the community's resilience in the face of challenges.

Independence

The tradition fosters independence by encouraging adherence to established rules and guidelines. Participants demonstrate this value by refraining from purchasing *dawet* and instead preparing it themselves at home, as stipulated by the tradition's customs. This practice instils a sense of self-reliance and responsibility, crucial for personal and communal growth.

Integrity

The Medang Kamulan community exhibits a strong sense of responsibility and integrity in upholding the traditions of their ancestors. This commitment is evident in their meticulous organization of the event, including the formation of a committee to oversee its smooth execution. By prioritizing the preservation of their cultural heritage, the community demonstrates a profound respect for their roots and values.

Educational implications and cultural preservation

The *Lempar Dawet* tradition offers a rich source of character education, drawing from the wisdom of the local community. The embedded values can be integrated into local content curricula, particularly in subjects like history, given the tradition's historical roots in the Hindu-Buddhist era. Additionally, the tradition serves as a valuable tool for cultural preservation, educating students about Indonesia's rich cultural diversity and the importance of safeguarding it for future generations. This aligns with Nahak's assertion that continuous cultural preservation ensures the dynamism, flexibility, and longevity of cultural practices (Nahak, [2019](#)).

CONCLUSION

The *Lempar Dawet* tradition, a vibrant tapestry of rituals and beliefs, stands as a symbol of hope and unity in the face of adversity. Passed down through generations, this unique practice reflects the deep connection between the people and their environment. It is a tangible expression of their reliance on nature's bounty, a plea for divine intervention when the delicate balance of the ecosystem is disrupted. As the rain continues to fall, washing away the dust and despair, the community gathers in gratitude. They recount stories of ancestors who faced similar trials, finding solace and strength in their cultural heritage. The elders share their wisdom, emphasizing the importance of preserving traditions that connect them to their roots and the land that sustains them. Children, wide-eyed with wonder, learn the significance of community, faith, and the harmonious coexistence with nature.

The *Lempar Dawet* tradition is not merely a relic of the past; it is a living testament to the enduring spirit of the Indonesian people. It reminds us that even in the face of climate change and environmental challenges, there is hope in unity, resilience in cultural practices, and strength in collective action. The rain may have come, but the lessons learned from this ancient tradition will continue to nourish the community, ensuring a brighter future for generations to come. The *Lempar Dawet* tradition contains character values that can be adapted in the Indonesian education environment in accordance with the *Guidelines for Strengthening Character Education in Early Childhood Education*, including religiosity, nationalism, mutual cooperation, independence and integrity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The authors acknowledge the use of Gemini Advanced (<https://gemini.google.com/>) to refine the academic language and accuracy of our work. On 6 July 2024, the authors submitted several paragraphs with the instruction to "Improve the academic tone and accuracy of language, including grammatical structures, punctuation and vocabulary" and "Please check the English grammar and make corrections where possible to improve the readability of the text." The output (here) was then

modified further to better represent our tone and style of writing. This acknowledgement has been approved by the editorial team of this journal.

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