

## Ethnoconservation of Jugo Villagers in *Ngunggahne Beras* Tradition

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### ABSTRACT

*Ngunggahne Beras* is a respect to “Dewi Sri” as the keeper and fortune giver for farmers. The people of Jugo Village preserve the tradition well. *Uborampen* prepared by the villagers in the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition is different from other villages. The *uborampen* consists of various plants that are sublime symbols and offering to God. This study was conducted using an ethnographic approach through an in-depth interview with performers of tradition and traditional figures. The interview results showed that all plants used in the tradition are obtained from Jugo Village. The plants mostly planted are rose (74%), jasmine (62%), and rice (61%). Plants obtained from other areas include *Fimbristylis umbellaris* (99%), *pinang* (96%), and coconut (96%). Therefore, the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition is the application of ethnoconservation conducted by the Jugo villagers. Through tradition, the villagers have conserved rose flower (*Rosa* sp.), jasmine (*Jasminum* sp.), white champaca (*Michelia alba*), cananga (*Cananga* sp.), latundan banana (*Musa acuminata*), coconut (*Cocos nucifera*), betel leaf (*Piper betle*), *dadap serep* (*Erythrina subumbrans*), *pinang* (*Areca catechu*), *kebak* (*Macaranga* sp.), *pandan mendong* (*Fimbristylis umbellaris*), and rice (*Oryza sativa*).

Keywords: Ethnoconservation, *Ngunggahne Beras*, plant

### INTRODUCTION

The ethnic and cultural diversity of Indonesia has been known by world communities. One of the strongest tribes in maintaining traditions and heritage is the Javanese tribe. Javanese traditions related to birth consist of *Telonan* (a thanksgiving ceremony for three months of pregnancy), *Pitonan* or *Tingkepan* (a prayer event at seven months of pregnancy to ask for the safety of mother and child to be born), *Ngubur Ari-Ari* (a ceremony to bury the placenta of a newborn), *Sepasaran* (a ceremony to pray for a 35 day-old baby), *Tedhak Siten* (a ceremony to signify that the baby is ready to set foot on the ground), *Setahunan* (first birthday), and many more (Negoro, 2020). In their adolescence and adulthood, children will enter the marriage stage. In this stage, various ceremonies and traditions exist (Batoro et al., 2019). Even death will have various rituals and traditions in the Javanese tribe that still occur now (Pratama and Wahyuningsih, 2018). Other traditions that are conducted in every life event comprise *Wetonan*, *Ngunggahne Beras*, *Ruwatan*, *Popokan*, *Sadranan*, *Brobosan*, *Larung Saji*, *Grebeg Sura*, and many more (Hasbullah, 2022). These traditions have a meaning of asking for fortune and safety and praying for kindness (Negoro, 2020).

Not all Javanese people perform the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition. One of the communities that conduct this tradition is Jugo villagers. Jugo Village is located at the foot of

Mount Willis, 20 km from Kediri city center. The distance from the village to the city center is relatively far and access to the intervillage road is far. People in the village have a strong understanding of traditions and culture that makes various traditions well maintain in the village. Like the Javanese in general, people in Jugo village are familiar with a myth of Javanese creation in the story of *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Geertz, 1981). *Mbabad* means cleaning a forest to turn it into a village that includes paddy fields and building a small island for human settlement (Mangunwijaya, 1992). Besides the myth, Javanese also know a myth about the creation of plants that gives birth to symbolic figures, such as “Dewi Sri”. “Dewi Sri” is believed by the farmers as a Goddess who maintain plants. This engenders traditions related to worshipping and respecting Dewi Sri (Bakker, 1984). *Ngunggahne Beras* is initially a tribute to “Dewi Sri” (The Rice Goddess) and ancestral spirits so that the celebration runs smoothly and peacefully (Sari et al., 2020). *Ngunggahne Beras*, by and large, is conducted during circumcision, wedding, and *wiwit* (the beginning of paddy planting) events. However, for Jugo villagers, *Ngunggahne Beras* is conducted at the time of getting married.

The difference between the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition in Jugo village and other villages is in the *uborampen* prepared in the ceremony. Various plants are prepared as a symbol of self-kindness and the best offering for ancestral spirits (Rahayu et al., 2020). The plants are chosen and interpreted as a symbol of kindness so that their existence is sustainable (Mustafa and Faida, 2019). The preliminary interview results indicated that other villages also perform the *Ngunggahe Beras* tradition, such as Selopanggung Village, Parang Village, Kalipang Village, and Pelas Village (all in Kediri Regency). Other villages outside the Kediri Regency that have the same tradition are Loceret Village in Nganjuk Regency and several villages in Blitar (Sari, 2020). These villages have similarities in terms of plant components used in the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition, such as fragrant flowers, pandan leaves, coconut, and banana. *Kebak* leaf is a mandatory component of the tradition in Jugo Village. However, other villages do not use the leaves in the same tradition. Selopanggung village, which is located adjacent to Jago village, also does not use the leaf. The Selopanggung villagers, likewise villagers in Loceret and Pelas villages, use breadfruit leaves as a replacement for the *kebak* leaves. The reasons are still unknown regarding why other villages do not use *kebak* leaves. This study aims to identify whether, through the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition, the performers of tradition have implemented the conservation of plants and other *uborampen* used to support the tradition.

## METHODS

The study was conducted using observations and in-depth interviews with traditional figures and performers of *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition in Jugo Village, Mojo Sub-district Kediri Regency, East Java from May to November 2022. The snowball-throwing technique was chosen to select appropriate informants with the help of the village apparatus as key persons. Data collected were in the form of people’s knowledge of *Ngunggahne Beras*, the type of *uborampen* used, and numbers, meaning, and how to get them. Questions for the performers of tradition include how to maintain *uborampen*. Data on the origin of *uborampen* plants were retrieved from a questionnaire on plant scarcity. All data were analyzed qualitatively. Types of plants in the *uborampen* were identified and provided in the herbarium at the Botanical Laboratory, Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Villagers Profile

The total respondent in the study was 100 people from Jugo Village who are active in performing the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition. Of the 100 people, 7 of them (7%) were newcomers (see Figure 1). The newcomers are not native Jugo villagers, they came from other villages in the same regency or different regencies and have been living in Jugo Village for more than five years.

The Jugo villagers, both the native people and newcomers, follow the tradition. Certain written rules state that people must perform the tradition but people in the villages voluntarily perform the tradition since it has been conducted for generations and due to a teaching that the tradition has a good meaning. Villagers who newly build their houses in Jugo Village will grow plants to beautify their homes. The plants, in most cases, include rose, jasmine, ylang flowers, and other flowering plants that could add beauty to their houses. Therefore, several ritual plants can be easily found.

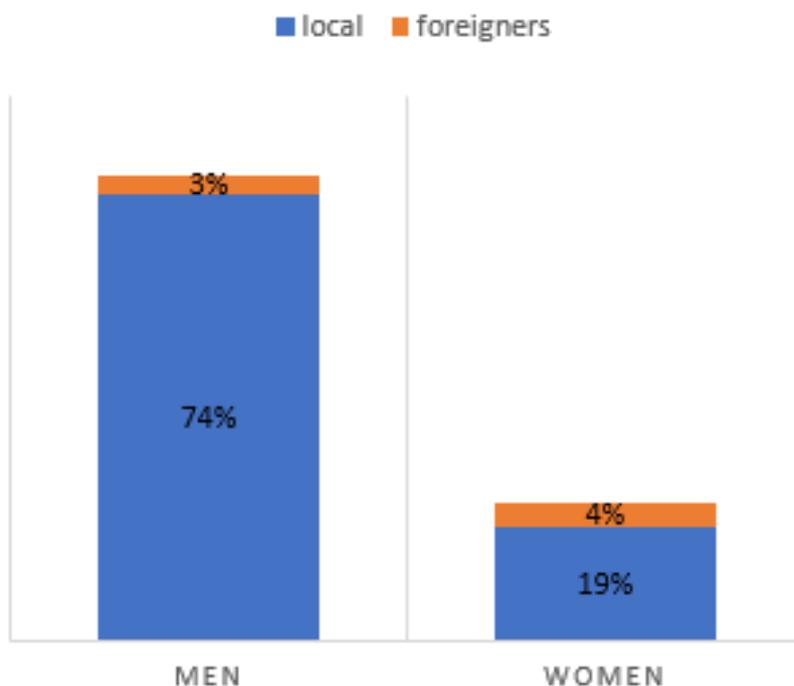


Figure 1. Distribution of respondent

Jugo is one of the villages in the Mojo Sub-district. The distance between Jugo Village and the city center of Kediri is 27 km (159 km from the capital of province) or can be reached in 40 minutes (Figure 2). The Jugo Village consists of 3 hamlets, namely Besuki, Jugo, and Sambiroto. The village areas are dominated by forest, which is 1.256 Ha of the village's total area of 998 Ha (<https://jugo.mojo-kediri.id/>).

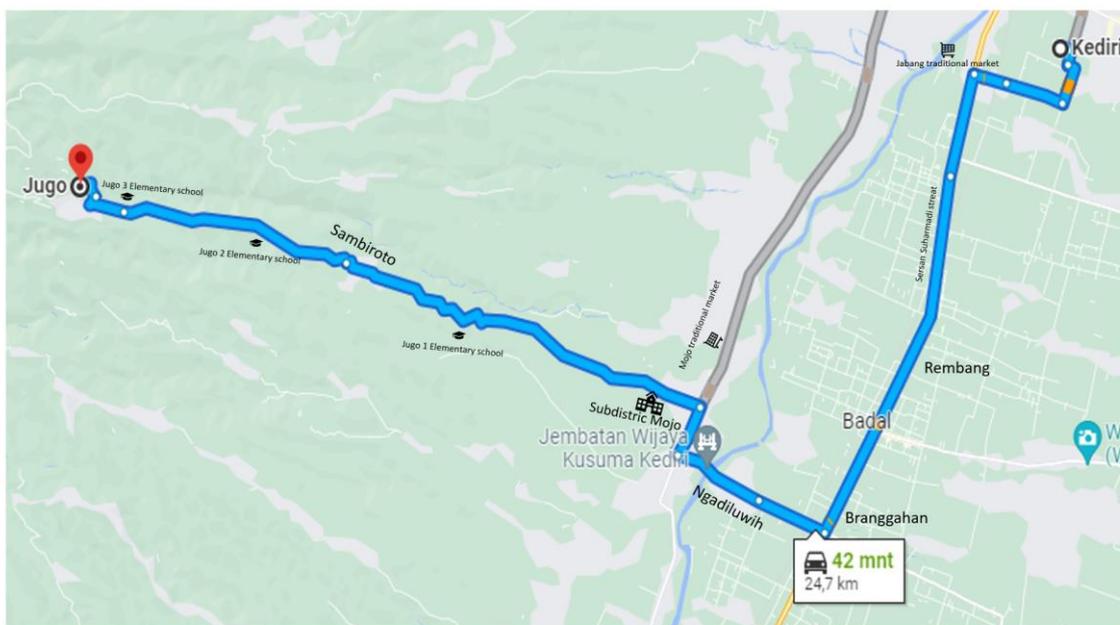


Figure 2. Distance between Jugo village and Kediri center

### Villagers Knowledge

The survey results suggest that 73% of the respondents know about the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition. The group is a native people of Jugo Village and have conducted the tradition for generations; therefore, they become the performer of the ceremony at present. The data generated 24% of the respondents knew about the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition from their neighbors. The group, in general, is people who just experience the tradition. Initially, they did not perform the tradition; however, through several stages, their neighbors or traditional figures suggest they perform the tradition in their family so the new-formed family will get a fortune from God (Suyoto et al., 2015). Only 3% of the respondents received information from other villagers or relatives who live in a distant location. The group is categorized in the “other” category. Figure 3 shows that no respondents receive information from the media. This was due to media that have not provided information about the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition specifically to Jugo villagers.

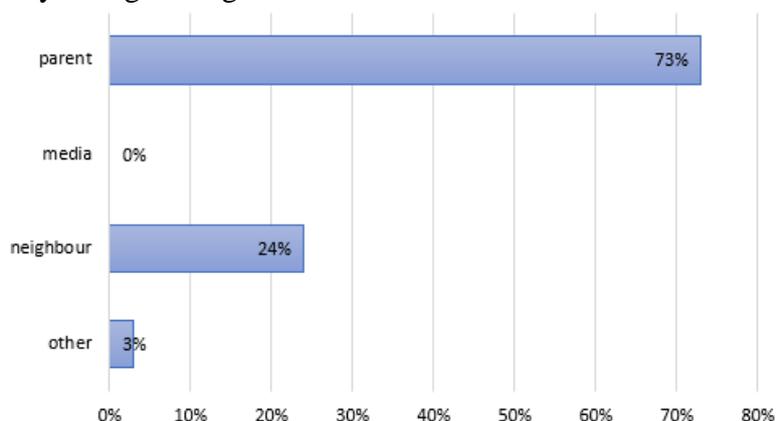


Figure 3. Source of knowledge

## Uborampen and Its Meaning

*Uborampen* is a material used in the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition. No other specific terms are found in villages that perform the same tradition. Other studies stated that *uborampen* is materials in rituals or traditions (Rohmah and Kurniahu, 2021). *Uborampen* in the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition consists of three types, namely plants, food, and supplementary materials. These offerings are used as a symbol of earnest prayer and hope submitted to God (Figure 4). The meaning and symbol of each *uborampen* are presented in Table 1.



Figure 4. Offerings in *Ngunggahne Beras*

Table 1. List of *Uborampe* and its meaning

Type of Plant	Meaning
Latundan banana ( <i>Musa acuminata</i> )	The sweetness of the latundan banana is different from other bananas. It means glory, beauty and kindness, happiness, and hope and is symbolized by a banana that is facing upwards resembling an upturned hand. The character of the banana that fruit one time and quickly sprout symbolizes the loyalty and fertility of the bride and groom (Bratawidjaja and Wijasa, 1985)
Coconut fruit ( <i>Cocos nucifera</i> )	Coconut water is a symbol of purity. It is expected that coconut fruit and water can clean and sanctify the whole family (Yeung et al., 2020)
Betel leaf ( <i>Piper betle</i> )	Betel leaf is called <i>atal</i> symbolizes love and prosperity hope. Betel leaves rolled and tied with white thread are called <i>lawe</i> that symbolize an eternal marriage bond (Bratawidjaja and Wijasa, 1985)
<i>Dadap serep</i> ( <i>Erythrina subumbrans</i> )	The plant is believed to be able to treat various diseases. It is expected that bride and groom are protected by God and will always be healthy (Batoro et al., 2019)
Betel nut ( <i>Areca catechu</i> )	The red color of the betel nut sap is a symbol of beauty. It is expected that bride and groom look beautiful, graceful, and dignified (Negoro, 2020)
Rice	A symbol of prosperity (Negoro, 2020)
Aromatic flower	An aromatic flower is a symbol that the scent of action and behavior of the bride and groom can be eternal (Negoro, 2020)
Rose ( <i>Rosa spp.</i> )	In the Javanese language rose is called <i>Regula. Raganing lola</i> . It means that humans are born alone and they need a partner to complete (Negoro, 2020)

Jasmine ( <i>Jasminum sp.</i> )	Similar to the rose, jasmine is a symbol of purity (Negoro, 2020)
Cananga ( <i>Cananga sp.</i> )	The flower is a symbol of apologies and requests for blessings to enter household life (Rohman et al., 2019)
White champaca ( <i>Michelia alba</i> )	White champaca ( <i>Kantil</i> ) means arrive, and <i>gemantil</i> means stick. It is a symbol that the heart of the bride and groom is intertwined (Negoro, 2020)
<i>Kebak</i> leaf ( <i>Ficus spp.</i> )	<i>Kebak</i> means full. <i>Kebak ing pambudi</i> means full of wisdom. It is expected that fortune will continue to flow and gain good wisdom (Sulistiyowati, 2022)
Coconut leaf	The height of the coconut leaf symbolizes high hopes in God (Rohman et al., 2019)
Food Ingredient	Meaning
Chicken egg	An egg is a symbol of birth suggesting the presence of a new household
<i>Inkung</i> chicken	<i>Inkung</i> or bending symbolizes nurturing and protecting
White sugar	A hope of sweet and good events in life
Salt	A symbol of Baruna God, the god of the seas who is capable to eradicate all diseases
<i>Karak grising</i>	A food made from dry rice that is cooked to not stick to one another that suggesting independency
<i>Karuk gimbal</i>	A food made from sticky dry rice. <i>Karuk</i> , or <i>kawruh</i> means knowledge
<i>Jadah</i>	A food made from steamed white sticky rice and pounded with young coconut. It symbolizes a close and inseparable relationship between bride and groom
Rice	A symbol of prosperity. Yellow rice is used as an evil spirit ward
Other materials	Meaning (Negoro, 2020)
Needle and white thread	These materials are called <i>lawe tumpeng</i> , <i>lawe genep</i> . The meaning of these materials is fulfillment. A couple fulfills each other
Mirror	It shows self. It indicates an ability to correct ourselves
Comb	A Symbol of beauty
Perfume	Perfume is used as a symbol of kindness and wisdom
Coin	Economic prosperity
Face powder	A symbol of beauty
<i>Mending</i> mat	A symbol of stability and success
Barrel	As a rice container
<i>Kendil</i> (clay pot)	As a water container for purification

### Conservation in Tradition

A *berjanga* helps Jugo villagers in the preparation of *uborampen* for the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition. *Ngunggahne Beras* is considered a sacred ritual; therefore, all materials used must come from the best materials and be flawless. The interview results indicate that all *uborampen* are obtained from Jugo village (Figure 5). Types of *uborampen* plants mostly planted by the performers of the tradition include rose (74%), jasmine (62%), and rice (61%). The location of Jugo village is close to the mountain so it has optimum temperature and humidity for the growth of various plants including rose and jasmine as ritual plants. Moreover, the villagers are farmers thus rice is common in the village.

Other plants that are mostly obtained from other areas are *pandan mendong* (99%), *betel nut* (96%), and coconut (96%). *Pandan mendong* (*Fimbristylis umbellaris*) is not directly used in the tradition, but it is woven and made into a small mat (Rohman et al., 2019). Although *mendong* mat is not produced in Jugo village, the product is often found in the market. The villagers also use *betel nuts* for *nginang* (betel nut chewing). The fruit is still commonly found in Jugo Village but only 1% of the respondents plant it. According to the respondents, the betel nut is a plant with unstable economic value; therefore, it is not a cultivated plant. Coconut trees are also common in Jugo Village. However, the interview result shows that only 2% of the respondents plant it.

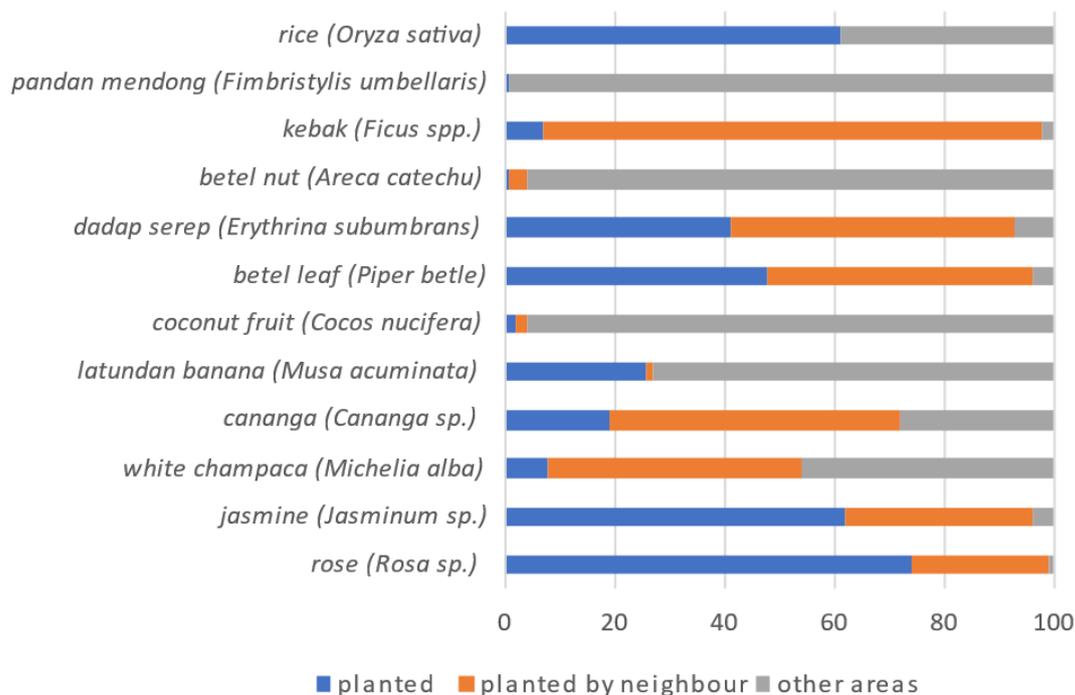


Figure 5. The origin of *Uborampen*

Overall, the results indicate that the *kebak* plant (*Ficus spp.*) is the least plant planted (7%) and the least plant obtained from other areas (2%). Unlike *kebak* leaves, betel nut is the least plant planted by the villagers (1%), yet it can be found in other regions (96%). Likewise for coconut where only 2% of the Jugo villagers plant the crop. However, the fruit is common in other regions (96%). Each village has its way to perform the ritual. Nevertheless, most villagers must have grown the plant types used for the tradition or ritual themselves (Sulistiyowati et al., 2021). Therefore, several types of plants have been conserved in the tradition and ritual. The respondents stated that the plant is easy to cultivate but it has no high economic value; therefore only a few villagers plant it (Nurhikmah et al., 2021). Based on the literature, *kebak* has good luck so it is believed that the plant can be used as *penglaris* (something that is believed to be able to sell merchandise) or a witchcraft repellent (Sardiana and Dinata, 2010). For some people in Jugo village, *kebak* has mystical abilities; thus, they teach their children to not play with parts of the plant (Sulistiyowati, 2022). Local children strictly adhere to this teaching; therefore, despite its rare existence, the plant has a high sustainable potential, as previously investigated by Oudraogo et al. (2019).

## CONCLUSION

Noble values in the tradition of *Ngunggahne Beras* for Jugo villagers indirectly preserve various *uborampen* plants. Although it is linked to a mystical matter, the existence of the ritual plants in Jugo Village remains sustainable. Local wisdom of the Jugo villagers to preserve the ritual plants in the *Ngunggahne Beras* tradition can be used as an ethnoconservation reference in other regions.

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