RIUNGAN: REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIM BETAWI PINGGIR THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF EATING TOGETHER (A CASE STUDY OF KAMPUNG PONDOK PUCUNG, PONDOK AREN, SOUTH TANGERANG)

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ABSTRACT
Riungan is an eating-together event involving the kampung community as a form of religious worship and gratefulness/gratitude to God. Through an ethnography approach, with in-depth interviews and a literature review as a method, this research explores the relationship between the practice of eating together and cultural identity in riungan as held by the Muslim Betawi of Kampung Pondok Pucung. The result of this research shows that riungan has become a space to representation of the cultural identity of the Betawi Pinggir (peripheral Betawi), particularly emphasizing their cultural and Islam heritage. Through the types of food brought and the communal eating practices, the cultural identity influenced by Sundanese and Javanese cultures is revealed. The practice of riungan at the mosque, musalla, and residents' homes underscores that this food practice is not only a form of worship but also a means to strengthen social relationships within the Muslim community, thereby reinforcing their cultural and religious identity.

KEYWORDS: Cultural identity, Muslim Betawi Pinggir, riungan

INTRODUCTION
The practice of eating together refers to a commensality—it highlights a process of devouring food by several people who are present on the same table. This stresses the occurrence of food practice as a social process that strengthens the community through the sharing of food. Chee-Beng (2015) categorizes the practice of eating together or commensality into several kinds, covering domestic commensality, ceremonial and religious commensality, political commensality, and hospitality commensality. Herein, families are initially posited as the most basic forms of domestic commensality where each family member sits and devours the cuisines together on the same table. Hence,
eating together as a practice is enlivening and turning meaningful through interactions among the family members. Each family member might share stories regarding their daily activities, discuss numerous topics, and build an affective relationship. Moreover, in contemporary society, technology facilitates this interaction among family members (Ferdous et al., 2016). This practice of eating together within a family hence becomes an opportunity to teach values and tradition to the younger generations in upholding their family identity. In its practice, it allows the children to apply values and tradition within the scope of family through devouring food.

In the context of social community, the practice of eating together is conducted in a communal manner while stressing on the experience of togetherness through the process of sharing food which gives birth to the so-called “human interaction” (Tuten, 2019). This practice involves more than consuming food; instead, it is a moment for the individuals to communicate, share stories, and interact with one another. Hence, it strengthens the social bond and the sense of togetherness. This practice of eating together within the community is usually encountered in a celebration party, where individuals are involved in the activity of cooking and eating together to celebrate particular moments. Through this experience of eating together, the community members share culture, tradition, and values which are considered their identity. This turns as an effective method of how eating together is able to strengthening social bond and community cohesion (Giacoman, 2016), while at the same time, creating and preserving a collective space (Katz, 2012; Marovelli, 2019).

In accordance, the practice of eating together as a social process is defined as a medium to create interaction between different individuals to shape and strengthen the cultural identity of the referred community. Moreover, it shows the symbolic meaning of cuisines within social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. Barthes (2012) depicts food as a form of communication tool that not only functions as a source of nutrition but also captures symbolic and communicative values which are strong in nature. It links to the discourse that food possesses the power to signify identity, social status, or even certain cultural values. Moreover, in regards to its meaning, Lévi-Strauss (2012) in Culinary Triangle explains that cooking practice—as a part of food practice—as a language, where patterns and structures in preparing food is reflected in the culture and patterns of the referred community. Through the approach by Barthes dan Lévi Strauss, Mary Douglas (2012) conducts structural analysis in the construction of diet rules among the Jewish community based on the construction of sanctity. Meanwhile, in the area of praxis, Bourdieu (2012) elaborates that food practice exhibits social class differentiation based on taste.

In the context of this research, the practice of eating together manifests in the tradition of riungan by the residents of Kampung Pondok Pucung in South Tangerang Banten Province. As a native kampung in the area of Bintaro Jaya, Kampung Pondok Pucung is inseparable from gentrification as utilized through the development of modern housing or residential. Its location which is squeezed by the residential barriers wall results in a segregation within the aspect of social, economy, and culture (Permanasar et al., 2024). The most apparent issue is the disappearance of prior-existing spaces which were used to be occupied for communal activities in the kampung. This further engages with the lost of local knowledges and traditions which function to strengthen the communities and their cultural identity. However, in the midst of their complex challenges, there is still one tradition that is preserved in Kampung Pondok Pucung which is riungan, where each local resident is bringing their cuisines to be devoured together with other local residents. This event is usually held at the mosque or musalla during the month of Ramadhan or other Islamic religious days. This research aims to explore how
the practice of eating together in *riungan* contributes to the survival of the kampung as well as their cultural identity. Through analyzing cultural identity, it is plausible to obtain the representation of cultural identity which is presented by the residents of Kampung Pondok Pucung in their cuisines along the interpretation.

**METHOD**

**Region Coverage**

This research covers the area of Kampung Pondok Pucung, RT. 005 and RT 006/RW 002, located in Karya Usaha 1 Road, Pondok Pucung, South Tangerang, Banten Province. As a native kampung located in urbanized Bintaro, the population in Kampung Pondok Pucung mostly consists of Betawi ethnic residents who live side by side with the comers who rent properties within the kampung area. Specifically, the land ownership is managed by seven local Betawi clans who inherit their lands for generations. Today, these lands have been developed for settlements, either to be occupied by the local residents or rented to the comers. Surrounding the kampung is a large modern residential called Bintaro Jaya Sector 9. Some of the residential clusters include Senayan I, Elang HG, Crista, and Pondok Pucung Indah 2.

Administratively, Kampung Pondok Pucung is a part of the Village of Pondok Pucung, within the Sub-district of Pondok Aren, South Tangerang. The Village of Pondok Pucung covers an area of 301,150 ha, consisting of 17 citizen wards, and 119 neighborhoods. Its area borders the Village of Pondok Jaya in the north, the Village of Pondok Jaya-Sawah Baru in the east, the Village of Jombang (the Sub-district of Ciputat) in the south, and the Village of Parigi in the west.

![The Administrative Map of the Village of Pondok Pucung](kelurahanpondokpucung.com)
Data Collection
   This is qualitative research using ethnographic approach to dissect the existence of riungan in its relationship to the cultural identity of the residents in Kampung Pondok Pucung. The data collection relied on in-depth interview and literature review. In particular, the utilization of in-depth interviews allowing the researcher to obtain comprehensive information and knowledge regarding the cultural practice by the informants involved in riungan (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). Herein, the informants were gathered through the snowball sampling technique where the key informant led to the other informants. The key informant here is Ahmad Nawiri (54), whose serves as the head of RT. 005/RW. 002. Meanwhile, the additional informants are Siti (48), the wife of Ahmad Naswiri, who works as a teacher and is notably known for organizing recitation (pengajian) for the local women in the kampung, as well as Lilis (39), a merchant woman and a resident of RT. 006/RW. 002. In this research, the researcher compared each resident’s experiences and their interpretation of riungan, especially among those from different neighborhoods (RT). Moreover, a literature review was also employed to complement the interview data to provide theoretical context related to the articulation of the cultural identity of the residents in Kampung Pondok Pucung through riungan, compared to other cases of eating together in different cultures and places. This intertwining of interview data and literature review is a strategy for strengthening the data validity (Creswell, 2018), which provides a deep understanding of the correlation between the practice of eating together and cultural identity. Herein, the integration of two data sources offers a comprehensive and detailed perspective on how the event of eating together such as riungan plays a crucial role in shaping and expressing the cultural identity of the kampung residents.

DISCUSSION
Cultural Identity of Muslim Betawi Pinggir through Riungan
   The existence of Betawi ethnicity is inseparable from the construction of cultural identity that has been ongoing since Dutch. Stuart Hall position’s cultural identity into two perspectives. First, cultural identity refers to a singular identity possessed by individuals who share a common history and culture. This is evident in Hall’s statement that cultural identity is a “shared culture, a sort of collective "one true self"” (Hall, 2021:258). In the first perspective, Hall suggests that cultural identity is rooted in a share history and collective experiences that shapes a unified sense of self among individuals...
within a particular culture. This perspective emphasizes a sense of belonging and continuity, where cultural identity is seen as stable and unchanging, deeply embedded in traditions and shared memories. Meanwhile, Hall’s second perspective emphasizes cultural identity as a process of "becoming" as well as "being" (Hall, 2021:260). This view underscores the dynamic and complex nature of cultural identity as a process that is continually shaped and reshaped by historical and cultural contexts. Hall argues that identities are not fixed essences but are constantly in flux, influenced by various factors such as migration, globalization, and intercultural exchanges. This perspective acknowledges the fluidity and multiplicity of identities, where individuals and groups negotiate and renegotiate their identities in response to changing circumstances. Stuart Hall’s second view on cultural identity as a process of becoming highlights that identity is not something fixed or predetermined. Instead, it is an ongoing process of formation and transformation.

In the early 20th century, the term Betawi began to be used by natives or long settled residents to mark their identity as inhabitants of Batavia. Castles’s (1967) research indicates that various ethnic groups such as indigenous (Javanese including Sundanese), Balinese, Sumbawanese, Ambonese and Banda, Malay, and South Sulawesi groups settled since the era of Dutch colonialism, either as immigrants, freedmen, or slaves. These free people, comprising both immigrants and freedmen, were then placed by the Dutch in villages according to their ethnic groups. For smaller ethnic groups, they would be merged with others. Over time, this led to the fading of their original identities as ethnic blending occurred and was strengthened by interethnic (Erwantoro, 2014). The loss of their original identities led the local population (who had long resided in Batavia) to form their identity as Betawi (Batavians) and was recorded in the population census in 1930. Betawi then became an ethnic group, representing a melting pot of the diverse mix of various ethnicities in Indonesia (Suswandari, 2017). As a result of its long history, the melting pot culture within the Betawi community has contributed to the formation of the cultural identity of the community, represented through various cultural elements such as language, traditional food, and clothing. For instance, Dewantara et al. (2023) indicated that in terms of traditional food, Bubur Ase, one of the traditional dishes, is a manifestation of cultural blending of Chinese, Middle eastern, and Dutch influences, as observed in the ingredients used. Similarly, in traditional clothing, Winarni et al., (2020) demonstrate that the Baju Sadariah, worn as everyday attire by Betawi men, is influence by Malay-Chinese culture, while attire such as Baju Demang and Dandanan Care Haji is influenced by Arab culture.

The Betawi ethnic group is generally divided into two types based on location and socio-cultural characteristics: Betawi Tengah/Kota and Betawi Pinggir, also known as Betawi Udik/Ora. According to Knör (2014), Betawi Tengah are located within the administrative region of Jakarta and are characterized by the rapid influence of modernization. Consequently, Betawi Tengah people view themselves as more modern compared to Peripheral Betawi people. Betawi Tengah individuals are relatively well-educated and hold professional occupations. They tend to be more influential in decision-making processes concerning urban matters as representatives of the Betawi community. Despite their modern outlook, Betawi Tengah people still adopt traditional Betawi customs, such as marriage traditions. They package Betawi wedding traditions in a chicer manner, thus feeling both modern and honorable in the social eye.

While the status of Betawi Tengah is determined by their socioeconomic standing, the status of Betawi Pinggir is based on their level of piety or knowledge of Islam. Betawi Pinggir people reside on the outskirts of Jakarta and generally practice pure Islam.
diligently. They consider religious education far more important than formal education. Hence, many parents send their children to prestigious Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) to gain knowledge from esteemed religious scholars (ulama/kyai). Betawi Pinggir, especially the religious leaders among them, feel obligated to ensure that Islam plays a crucial role in the identity of the Betawi people.

On the other hand, Betawi Udik/Ora are located farthest from the city center, in areas such as Tangerang, Bekasi, and Bogor, which are border regions. Due to their distance from the city center and relative isolation, Betawi Udik/Ora people maintain traditions more so than other Betawi groups. During the Dutch colonial era, some areas inhabited by Betawi Udik/Ora became cultural mixing zones, causing certain Betawi traditions to blend with other cultural practices. For example, Betawi Udik/Ora in North and West Jakarta and Tangerang are influenced by Chinese traditions, while those in Bekasi and Bogor are influenced by Sundanese traditions. This cultural blending has led to perceptions that Betawi Udik/Ora are "not so good Muslims" (Knörr, 2014:107), as they are viewed as less devout Muslims and less civilized. To avoid this negative stigma, Betawi Udik/Ora are now categorized as Betawi Pinggir, reflecting a combination of cultural authenticity and the practice of Islamic teachings as part of their identity. In this case, the Muslim Betawi of Kampung Pondok Pucung are classified as both Betawi Pinggir (also Betawi Udik) because their location bordering South Jakarta, where the influence of Sundanese culture and Islam is stronger compared to the Betawi Kota or Betawi Udik (i.e., North Jakarta, West Jakarta, and Tangerang), which are more influence by Chinese culture. In this paper, I will use the term "Muslim Betawi Pinggir" to emphasize the form of culture wrapped in Islamic traditions in the practices of eating together, known as the *riungan* tradition.

The *riungan* tradition serves as a representation of identity through the practice of communal eating as a local tradition to celebrate Islamic religious occasions. During *riungan*, various cultural elements such as food, religious rituals, and social values are interconnected. This also highlights the blending of Javanese and Sundanese cultural values as part of their cultural identity. While *riungan* generally refers to the event of eating together, the term varies across different regions in Indonesia, such as *Paperahan* as another term in Sunda (Agustina & Pratiwi, 2019), *Orom Sasadu* in Halmahera (Nanuru, 2019), *Megibung* in Bali (Adi Susrawan & Artika, 2023) and many others.

*Riungan* in Indonesian language refers to an event of gathering. It also appears in a Sundanese proverb, “*bengkung ngariung bongkok ngaronyok*” which is directly translated as “circling in gathering, bowing in assembling”. This proverb reflects the sense of togetherness among people in the period of joy and sorrow. Throughout its development, the practice of gathering and assembling in *ngariung* turned into a core communal practice to commemorate certain events. The integration of Sundanese cultural values into the social concept of *riungan* underscores the unique identity of Muslim Betawi in Kampung Pondok Pucung as Betawi Pinggir. This community is deeply influenced by Sundanese culture as well as Javanese culture, which is reflected in their language, traditions, and local customs. The occurrence of *riungan* in various parts of Java further demonstrates this cultural fusion. For instance, *riungan* appears as a part of *Suroan* tradition within Javanese society (Fadlan et al., 2020). The same occurrence is also apparent within Sundanese society since *riungan* is a part of *Tingkeban*, where

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1 *Suroan* is a tradition practiced by the Javanese community to commemorate the month of Muharram, which falls on the 1st of Suro in the Javanese calendar, carried out collectively through prayers, communal meals, and spiritual practices (*tirakat*) (Fadlan et al., 2020).
people are praying together for the safety of a seven-month-old fetus, as well as during a wedding ceremony (Agusta et al., 2020; Perbawasari et al., 2022). In another case, *riungan* is held to mark the end of harvest season and celebrate the farmers’ harvest (Sari & Munandar, 2020). *Riungan* exposes the role of food in the formation of relationship and cultural identity of certain communities, which is usually wrapped in religious ceremonies.

In the context of Kampung Pondok Pucung, *riungan* are generally held by Muslim Betawi Pinggir in conjunction with Islamic rituals during the month of Ramadan, especially during *ruwahan*², on the fifteenth night of Ramadhan, as well as *takbiran*³. According to Ahmad Nawiri, *riungan* involving many people are more often held on the fifteenth night of Ramadhan. This practice is not a *sunnah*, but rather a tradition passed down from the older generations of Muslim Betawi Pinggir in Kampung Pondok Pucung. Nevertheless, as a tradition, Muslim Betawi Pinggir interpret this tradition form an Islamic perspective, where the fifteenth night of the Ramadan is an opportunity to "ask forgiveness for the sins as well as expressing gratitude for being able to complete half a month of fasting”⁴. Thus, these *riungan* are held as part of Islamic rituals and also as a means for the Muslim Betawi Pinggir to come together. The *riungan* held on the fifteenth night is also related to the *Qunutan* tradition practiced by the Sundanese Muslims in Banten. This tradition is marked by the activity of making rice cakes (*ketupat*), carried out by the Muslims community in Banten prior to the fifteenth night. After *Tarawih* prayers, the community then eats the prepared rice cakes (*ketupat*) along with accompanying dishes. The practices of making rice cakes (*ketupat*) before the fifteenth nights is also observed in the *riungan* of Kampung Pondok Pucung, as stated by Nawiri “[Translated] Here, before the fifteenth night of Ramadhan, the community usually makes rice cakes (*ketupat*) along with other dishes. After the *Tarawih* prayers, we eat together in a gathering (*ngariung*)” (Personal interview transcript with Ahmad Nawiri on April 9, 2023)

The latest *riungan*, held to commemorate the fifteenth night of Ramadhan on April 6, 2023, took place in both Nurul Iman Mosque and Assyafa’ah musalla (prayer room). This significant event encompasses several key activities, beginning with meticulous preparation and food collection ahead of the *tarawih* prayers, followed by the communal meal. Several days before the *riungan*, the head of the neighborhood (*Ketua RT*) of RT005/RW002, Ahmad Nawiri, took the initiative to inform all residents of the kampung about the schedule and location through announcements in the mosque and messages sent via WhatsApp group. While Nawiri typically sets guidelines for the types of cuisines to be brought to the *riungan*, residents are also given the freedom to choose dishes according to their preferences. Traditionally, Beawi Muslim residents prepare rice cakes (*ketupat*) as a mandatory dish to bring to the *riungan*. Specifically, Nawiri and Siti prepared rice cales (*ketupat*) and tofu stew with egg and potato, which they called "Semur 3T", to bring to the *riungan* at the mosque. Meanwhile, Lilis only brought oranges to the *riungan* at the musalla.

Subsequently, as the fifteenth night arrives, Muslim residents gather to

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² *Ruwahan* is a Muslim Betawi tradition held in two occasions: 1) during the end month of Sya’ban or prior to Ramadhan to welcome fasting season and 2) the *takbiran* night prior to Eid Day to celebrate the end of fasting season. This tradition is meant to pray for the ancestors’ spirits through Islamic recitation, *tahlil*, and prayers where families, collages, and religious leaders are being invited, and concluded with a feast. ([https://dinaskebudayaan.jakarta.go.id/2022/news_web/detailnews/tradisi-warga-betawi-di-bulan-ramadhan](https://dinaskebudayaan.jakarta.go.id/2022/news_web/detailnews/tradisi-warga-betawi-di-bulan-ramadhan))

³ Personal interview transcript with Ahmad Nawiri, on April 9, 2023

⁴ ibid.
collectively perform the *Tarawih* prayers. Some residents who bring food items consolidate them with mosque administrators, the women’s Quran recitation group (*kelompok pengajian ibu-ibu*), or designated individuals entrusted with food distribution management. The food provisions are then placed within the mosque premises and the residences of individuals near the musalla. Following the conclusion of the salat tarawih, the food that was previously gathered is distributed equally among all participants before they partake in the communal feast together. Nawiri emphasizes that the food brought by residents typically comprises traditional Betawi cuisines and customary Ramadan dishes, such as rice cakes (*ketupat*), coconut milk soup (*sayur godog*), beef stew (*semur*) containing eggs, tofu, and potatoes, as well as chicken opor. Desserts such as oranges, banana, and cookies are also served. During the *riungan*, Muslim residents will sit in a circle or facing each other while eating together.

The presence of Betawi cuisines, as mentioned by Nawiri, represents the identity of Muslim Betawi Pinggir in the kampung. For instance, rice cakes (*ketupat*) are known to be the typical food for Eid celebration in Indonesia. The origin of rice cakes (*ketupat*) originates from *bakda lebaran* (the celebration of the first day of Eid al-Fitr) and *bakda kupat* (the celebration a week after Eid al-Fitr), which were introduced by one of the nine saints of Javanese Islam (*wali songo*), namely Sunan Kalijaga, in the 15th-16th centuries in Demak Regency, Central Java (Rianti et al., 2018). In Javanese society, ketupat symbolizes the confession of one’s sin (*ngaku lepat*) as well as four demeanors (*laku papat*) consists of *Lebaran, luberan, leburan, and laburan* where each encompasses specific meaning: 1) In Indonesian, Eid is also called *Lebaran* (from the root word “lebar” or wide) which refers to the idea that the door of forgiveness is wide open for everyone during the holy event; 2) *Luberan* (from the root word “luber”) referring to the act of overflowing others’ lives through sharing; 3) *Leburan* (from the root word “lebur”) denotes the realization towards every sin which has been done in the last year. 4) *Laburan* (another term for chalk or *kapur* in Indonesian) which signifies the act of purifying oneself.

Although ketupat originates from Javanese culture, it has also become a traditional Betawi food called *Kupat*. This is influenced by the spread of Islam, which brought the tradition of ketupat as part of the Eid al-Fitr celebration. Therefore, it is apparent that consuming rice cakes (*ketupat*) during Eid is posited as a manifestation of Islamic teaching and values by the referred Muslim Betawi Pinggir community. Hence, rice cakes remain as a main dish which is obliged to be served alongside other Betawi dishes such as coconut-milk soup, stew, tofu, tempe, and potato. It shows the representation of Muslim Betawi Pinggir Cultural Identity through traditional food reflects the cultural fusion among ethnicities. The adoption of Javanese culture in food and Sundanese culture in the interpretation of *riungan* illustrates the ongoing process of becoming for Betawi cultural identity (Hall, 2021), where various cultural elements from different ethnic groups in Indonesia come together to form a unique and diverse identity. On the other hand, food also signifies social status, which can be seen in the presence of foods which are relatively cheaper in price and consumed as mere additional or side dishes. The apparent examples are the fruits brought by Lilis which are simply considered as complementary dessert. This finding is traced to Lilis’ background as a small merchant.

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who hold her business on the fore of her house. Therefore, herein is a contrast to Siti, the wife of Nawiri, who works as a teacher, where it is possible for her to bring various kinds of dishes to *riungan*.

The persistence of *riungan* today shows a gesture of negotiation is a form of cultural dynamics that is simultaneously changing. It is revealed in the ways of food being served and the kinds of food being brought. Siti mentions that some of the food she brought during the gathering was bought from her brother. This is because 'It's easier. Sometimes we don't have time to cook". The same occurrence is also experienced by Lilis: "Yesterday I didn't cook, so I just bought fruits [...] as the others has already brought rice cakes (*ketupat*), *opor*, vegetables to the event, so we do not bother ourselves (to cook)". Herein, Siti’s statement embodies the characteristic of contemporary society which rely on speed and practicality within culinary practice. Therefore, even though *riungan* is considered a form of solidarity and religious practice, many kampung residents now prefer to buy ready-to-eat food because of the busyness and practicality. Instant cuisines which are easy to obtain and serve has become an alternative for those who want to speed up their food serving period. However, this alteration to instant cuisines brings implications to the disappearance of several prior-existing traditional cuisines, as stated by Siti below:

"[translated] In the past, when I was a little, there was this traditional food called *awug*. It was made from flour, rice, and grated coconut. Perhaps, today, (the name of) the food has changed, the shape remains the same but it has changed. More people now prefer to buy them, and not to make them themselves. In the past, of the fifteenth night (of Ramadhan), it was the most prominent food, *awug*. However, many traditional foods today have been displaced. In the (another) case of *dodol*, it is usually served during the Eid.”

(Personal Interview transcript with Siti on April 10, 2023)

*Awug* is originally a traditional Javanese food which are recognized by Betawi people as *kue dongkal*. The basic difference between *awug* and *dongkal* is in the ingredients they are made from. Specifically, *awug* is made from rice flour while *dongkal* is made from cassava. However, since cassava is difficult to obtain, people often use rice flour instead to make *dongkal*. In the interview, the phrases ‘more people’, ‘prefer to buy them’, and ‘not make them themselves’ indicate that the process of making *dongkal* has no longer widely known by the current generation of kampung residents. Apart from that, the difficulty in finding ingredients and the complexity of cooking process has led Siti’s generation and its following generation to prefer some ready-to-eat or instant cuisines, instead. This alteration in types of food and the preference in cooking processes among the residents in Kampung Pondok Pucung today indicates the cultural dynamics which are simultaneously changing throughout the time. On the other hand, even though instant cuisines are increasingly popular, people still maintain some kinds of classic foods usually served during Eid, such as rice cakes (*ketupat*), coconut-milk vegetable (*sayur godog*), tofu stew, tempeh, and meat as parts of their cultural identity.

In accordance, based on these findings, *riungan* exhibits a local tradition which posits a central role in mediating and representing the cultural identity of Muslim Betawi Pinggir. Referring to Stuart Hall (1997), representation involves the production of meaning from the concepts present in our minds through language. This process involves
the relationship between the concepts in our minds and the language we use to express them. Based on this, Hall reveals two systems of representation. Firstly, the system by which various material objects, people, and events are linked to a set of concepts or mental representations in our minds; secondly, the system of representation through language, symbols, and cultural practices that allow us to communicate these concepts. Within the context of the riungan tradition among the Muslim Betawi Pinggir in Kampung Pondok Pucung, these two systems of representation function in interconnected ways.

At the level of the first system, members of the Muslim Betawi Pinggir develop mental representations of riungan as a practice deeply embedded in cultural and religious values. Concepts such as community solidarity, charity (sadaqah), and religious observance during Ramadan are internalized and recognized as integral parts of riungan. These values are more than abstract ideas; they are ingrained in the community’s collective consciousness and shape their perception of riungan. The tradition of riungan is not merely a social event but a manifestation of deeply held beliefs and values that have been passed down through generations.

Food plays a significant role in these mental representations. Specifically rice cakes (ketupat) carry rich cultural and spiritual meanings. For the Betawi people, these foods symbolize tradition, togetherness, and religious devotion. This mental representation helps them see these foods as more than just physical nourishment—they are embodiments of their cultural and religious identity. The preparation and sharing of these dishes during riungan are seen as acts of devotion and communal solidarity, reinforcing the connection between food, culture, and religion.

Riungan also fosters a sense of social cohesion and community identity. The practice of communal eating reinforces concepts of equality, mutual support, and collective identity. These mental representations of riungan as a unifying force help maintain the community’s cohesiveness and support network. In riungan gatherings, every member of the community, regardless of social status or age, is treated with equal respect and hospitality. This practice strengthens the social fabric and ensures that the values of empathy and mutual assistance are continually reinforced. Moreover, the understanding of riungan adaptation to modern lifestyles—such as the inclusion of ready-to-eat foods—reflects the community’s ability to maintain core values while adapting to contemporary needs. This adaptability is crucial in ensuring the relevance of riungan in the lives of younger generations who may face different social and economic pressures. The ability to incorporate modern conveniences while preserving traditional values demonstrates the dynamic nature of cultural practices and their capacity for evolution.

In the second system of representation, the role of language, symbols, and cultural practices becomes evident. The term "riungan" itself and related proverbs (e.g., "bengkung ngariung bongkok ngaronyok") are part of the linguistic system that conveys the practice's cultural and social significance. These terms and phrases encapsulate the values of gathering, togetherness, and shared joy and sorrow, effectively communicating the essence of riungan to both insiders and outsiders. Community announcements made through modern channels like WhatsApp groups and mosques illustrate how the tradition is maintained and organized in the contemporary context. This system of representation ensures that riungan remains relevant and accessible to all community members, regardless of their level of direct engagement with traditional practices. The use of modern communication tools reflects the community’s ability to blend tradition with modernity, ensuring the continuity of riungan in a rapidly changing world.

Rituals and symbolic practices are also central to the second system of representation. The preparation and sharing of specific dishes during riungan serve as
symbolic acts that communicate cultural identity and religious devotion. These practices represent the blending of Betawi, Javanese, and Sundanese cultural elements, showcasing the community's hybrid identity. The ritualistic aspect of preparing and sharing food during riungan gatherings highlights the importance of these actions as more than mere sustenance; they are expressions of cultural heritage and religious faith. Religious observance is another critical component of riungan. The practice is intertwined with religious rituals, particularly during Ramadan. This includes communal prayers and the sharing of meals, which symbolize both religious observance and social solidarity. The act of sharing food after Tarawih prayers embodies the community's values of charity and togetherness, reinforcing the religious and social dimensions of riungan. Therefore, the tradition of riungan among Muslim Betawi Pinggir demonstrates that culture is not merely something we 'have,' but something we 'do'—the social production and reproduction of meanings realized in materiality and social practices (Storey, 2015:228).

**Eating Together: A Medium for Worship and Residents’ Solidarity**

Eating together in the context of riungan is a multifaceted practice which covers the dimension of worship, solidarity, and cultural expression specified for the Muslim Betawi Pinggir community. Previously, within the first system of representation—mental representation—the meaning of riungan indicated that it serves as a space for internalizing Islamic and Betawi cultural values, as well as fostering social cohesion and Muslim Betawi Pinggir identity. In this second discussion, I will present the interpretations of Siti and Lilis, who are directly involved in the practice of riungan as part of the system of representation.

**Riungan** is seen as more than just an event of eating together. It is an important medium for kampung residents to interact, strengthen their social ties, and express their cultural identity. Thus, the dishes served during riungan are not only seen as physical sustenance but also as symbols that convey spiritual and social meanings. For example, rice cakes (ketupat), coconut-milk soup (sayur godog), and stew (semur) are not merely Betawi dishes; they also highlight cultural and religious values. This perspective is supported by the statements of Siti and Lilis below:

“[translated] First and foremost, (riungan) is strengthening our silaturahmi (relationship) with other kampung residents, since after finishing tarawih, we do not straightly go home but to riungan, instead. Secondly, there is also a religious value through alms (sadaqah)... Particularly during Ramadhan, the values of our virtue are being doubled”

(Personal Interview transcript with Siti on April 10, 2023)

“[translated] It strengthens (the relationship between) neighbors. In Parigi (other region in Banten Province), the eating together event is usually done in each house. But here, it is being done in musalla... So it strengthens the neighbors since we can enjoy the dishes together. Besides, we are not hasle to bring every food, like rice cakes or opor soup. Everything is collected and enjoyed together.”

(Personal Interview transcript with Lilis on April 10, 2023)

During Ramadhan, as explained by Siti and Lilis, riungan represents religious and social practice. The event of eating in the mosque or musalla is done as a sequence of the ritual of tarawih, right after praying and dzikir. Prior, food is located within private domain, the family. However, through riungan, food has been shifted to be placed within communal domain. Through sharing and enjoying food together, the complexities within riungan as a communal event has been unveiled. It goes in accordance to Islamic
teaching, in which *riungan* is interpreted as a form of charity (*amal*) which are manifested through culinary as a medium. This practice is moreover showing the inherent religious values, such as patience, discipline, and social awareness. Both fasting and communal eating practice in *riungan* are perceived as a way to get closer to God and means to improve oneself and worship.

Within social context, *riungan* showcases the high level of solidarity among the kampung residents. During its practice, residents sit together to eat food without considering social or economic status. This reflects unity and equality among the residents, while also strengthening their relationships and sense of togetherness. During Ramadan, *riungan* helps to nourish empathy and foster social awareness. Wealthier residents share their possessions—in this case, food—with less privileged residents, promoting social equality and care. This is in accordance with Islamic teachings that invite the ummah to contribute alms and share with others as a virtue. Additionally, Lilis’ statement regarding the differences between *riungan* in Kampung Pondok Pucung and Parigi highlights how culture is defined and practiced in different ways, rooted in the customs of scattered communities. The social significance of *riungan* is also evident in small-scale gatherings among residents, as seen in Siti’s statement:

“[translated] (*riungan*) is usually held at Nurul Iman Mosque. However, we as a family also often arrange it ourselves with other residents who live across (of our house). The activity is basically enjoying cuisines together, *riungan*. Particularly during the fifteenth night (of Ramadhan), it is usually also held for *slametan*, in the commemoration of *haul*. Prior to the fasting season, we also have *ruwahan*, where we send prayers, gathering neighbors, and doing recitation (*pengajian*). When it is time for *ruwahan*, we also share groceries and meals in which the groceries are usually provided by the host.” (Personal Interview Transcript with Siti on April 10, 2023)

This statement by Siti demonstrates that *riungan* has become an integral part of sustaining the everyday lives of kampung residents. Beside commemorating religious days, Siti explains that *riungan* among the neighbors illustrates how tradition is embedded in the strengthening solidarity among kampung residents. Particularly, *riungan* is posited as a medium of charity between the residents through *Ruwahan*, where there are families who do recitation and distribute groceries or food to the neighbors who attend the event. Ahmad Nawiri also supports this view, noting "Here, every month, the local residents and newcomers have a gathering (*ngariung*). You bring this... you bring that, then we do the *riungan* over there (pointing to the area in front of the house)” (Personal Interview Transcript with Ahmad Nawiri on April 9, 2023). Nawiri’s statement underscores the regularity and communal nature of *riungan*, highlighting its role in integrating newcomers into the community and maintaining cultural continuity. The monthly gatherings, involving both local residents and newcomers, emphasize that *riungan* as a cultural tradition has become deeply embedded in the everyday lives of the kampung residents. This practices not only preserves their cultural and religious traditions but also reinforces their collective identity and social cohesion.

These findings also suggest that places of worship not only serve religious purposes but also play significant social roles. Meetings held in a mosque or musalla, including communal gatherings, mass prayers, and other activities, are vital in strengthening bonds within the community. By participating in worship and social activities within the mosque or musalla environment, community members can reinforce their social relationships. The practice of mass worship and *riungan* in mosques and
musallas, as practiced by the Muslim Betawi Pinggir of Pondok Pucung, offers a space for interaction and building solidarity. This indicates that the mosque or musalla serves as a place where individuals construct emotional bonds with their surroundings, fostering a sense of community (Dewiyanti et al., 2015), while also strengthening social interaction (Yuliastuti et al., 2018).

**CONCLUSION**

*Riungan* in Kampung Pondok Pucung is a space for Muslim Betawi Pinggir to represent their cultural identity through food and social practices. By utilizing interconnected systems of representations and cultural practices, *riungan* not only preserves the community's heritage but also adapts to contemporary contexts, ensuring its continued relevance and vitality. This tradition exemplifies the dynamic and evolving nature of cultural identity, demonstrating how communities sustain their cultural practices while embracing change.

Firstly, the *riungan* tradition is a tapestry of cultural and religious values, symbolized by the preparation and sharing of traditional foods like rice cakes (*ketupat*), coconut-milk soup (*sayur godog*), and stew (*semur*). These foods are not merely for nourishment but act as cultural symbols that communicate heritage and spirituality. The mental representations of these foods and the associated practices are deeply ingrained in the community's collective consciousness, embodying values of solidarity, charity, and religious devotion.

Secondly, the language and communication methods surrounding *riungan*, including specific terms, proverbs, and modern channels like WhatsApp groups, play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting this tradition. These systems of representation ensure that the practice remains relevant and accessible, effectively bridging traditional values with contemporary lifestyles.

Moreover, *riungan* showcases the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity. The inclusion of ready-to-eat foods within the practice illustrates the community's flexibility in preserving cultural heritage while accommodating modern conveniences. This evolution reflects an ongoing negotiation of cultural identity, balancing the preservation of core values with practical adaptations. The communal aspect of also emphasizes its role in fostering social cohesion and equality. By uniting individuals from diverse social and economic backgrounds to share a meal, *riungan* promotes unity and mutual respect. This practice reinforces social bonds and creates a space for empathy and collective identity, aligning with the broader cultural values of the Muslim Betawi Pinggir community.

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