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The Nyangahant Ritual In The Culture Of Salako Community At Kampung Pueh Lundu, Sarawak.

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ABSTRACT

This research is about the *Nyangahant* ritual in the culture of the Salako community in Kampung Pueh, Lundu, Sarawak. The *Nyangahant* ritual is the main ritual in the culture of the Salako community. To ensure that the rituals performed achieve the purpose and goal, the *Nyangahant* ritual must be performed according to the prescribed process. The situation is for the purpose of perfection to assure that the wish requested can be accepted by *Jubata*, the god of the Salako community. The main focus of this research is to identify the meaning of every ritual performed in the *Nyangahant* ritual in the Salako community. This study uses ethnographic methods for data collection using an ethnographic interview technique that involves the informants who are experts on *Nyangahant* ritual ceremonies, which are *Tuha Adat*, *Nyangahant* craftsmen, headman, and village chief. In addition, observation methods are also widely used in this research to deeply understand the ritual ceremonies of *Nyangahant* in the studied community. The observation techniques are conducted before, during, and after the *Nyangahant* ritual ceremony. This study found that the *Nyangahant* ritual ceremony is the 'mother' of all rituals for the Salako community. It became a priority in the executed ritual or other festivals. Moreover, the ritual also a prayer in the praying ceremony to ask for well-being and prosperity spared from all problems, calamities, and misfortune. Although the culture and customs of the Salako community have evolved mainly through the process of modernity in terms of heritage, they still held the ritual as a lifeline in their community.

Keywords: *Nyangahant* Ritual, Salako Society, Culture, Prayer, Heritage

INTRODUCTION

The Salako community is a minority ethnic originated from Gunung Gajing, a mountainous area located around the Salako River (Sungai Selakau), and the location of Gunung Gajing is located not far from an area known as Singkawang district, in West Kalimantan, Indonesia (Mohamad Maulana et al., 2020). A large number of the Salako community migrated to Sarawak around the 1800s due to the political and geographical

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factors at that time. The migration and the process of settlement construction by the Salako community to Sarawak become easier because the geographical position in the district of Kalimantan, Indonesia, is very close to the state of Sarawak (Adelaar, 2005).

The first settlement of the Salako community in Sarawak was in the Sungai Pasir and Sungai Kayan areas. The impact of the first settlement has led to the existence of several Salako villages in Sarawak in this day (Chang, 2002). Most of the Salako villages in Sarawak are in the Lundu and Sematan districts. Among them are Kampung Pueh, Kampung Biawak, Kampung Selabat, and Kampung Sebako (Mohamad Maulana & Hazizy, 2020).

The tradition of the Salako community in Sarawak is they firmly adhere to the beliefs of animism. These traditional beliefs held since the ancient, thus become the basis for forming beliefs and way of life of the Salako community until today. Through this, they also believe in a god's existence and called the god a *Jubata*. In their beliefs, *Jubata* is the owner of the realm, including human beings, and responsible for managing it. (Awang Hasmadi, 1994).

Due to strong belief in *Jubata*, thus their lives until this day are still bound to the taboos that must be followed and obeyed to avoid the wickedness of *Jubata*. The Salako community believes that if the taboo is violated or disobey, it will cause harm to themselves or a community in the village such as *badi*, *idap*, and *tulah*. Hence, the respect and fear of *Jubata* are implemented through the performance of the *Nyangahant* ritual. The *Nyangahant* ritual will be performed to obtain permission and blessings from *Jubata* to execute an action and seek prosperity in carrying out the socialisation of their lives.

The word ritual is widely interpreted in the aspect of meaning in the field of social and cultural anthropological studies. Each interpretation is different according to the approach and method used for every research. In the early stages of anthropological research related to rituals, the anthropologists have provided interpretations of ritual as a religious behaviour used to understand the context of the belief systems and religions of primitive societies. The tradition in such interpretation was initiated by Edward (1871) in his writing, such as entitled *The Primitive*, Benson (2009), *Understanding Religion*, and several other anthropological researchers related to rituals in Europe in the late 19th century.

According to Nur Syam (2005), in the context of anthropological studies, two important aspects need to be observed in the study of rituals for society, which are rituals and ceremonial. According to Winnick (1977), a ritual is a tool of action that always involves religion or magic and has been strengthened by the society that owns the ritual practice through tradition. Meanwhile ceremonial is a fixed pattern as a result of human behaviour related to the variations in stages of life or for religious purposes. Moreover, based on Tugau, M. et al. (2020), the rituals performed are naturalisation in facing the demands of life and society to ensure a better life for the entire society that practices it. On the other hand, Sarra Jestika (2020), a form of ritual performed by the community of practitioners is due to the bond of social tradition that still has a gap in the practitioners' community. This is because even the ritual has been continuously distinguished, but the bond of tradition has caused the ceremony to still be carried out although not perfectly complete to avoid argument among the traditional generation. The understanding showed that the rituals are more appoint towards the reinforcing elements to the bond of social traditions and individuals with the social

structure of a society. This statement also is supported by Dhavamony (2000) and Nur Syam (2005), who stated that every complex organisation occurs resulting from human behaviour not only based on technical and recreational, but it has content related to the meaning expressed from a social relationship of society.

Therefore, for the Salako community, every action and behaviour are closely related to the belief in the existence of *Jubata* (God for the Salako community). Thus, they performed the *Nyangahant* ritual ceremony to get permission and blessings from Jubata before carrying out an action and asking for prosperity in life. According to Awang Hasmadi (1990), the Salako community in Sarawak still practice this heritage tradition even though most of them have professed religions such as Christianity and Islam. According to Mohamad Maulana. et al. (2021, 3005-3023), although they already have their own religion, it does not bother them to perform the ritual due to the concept of kinship that binds through life. Apart from that, the Salako community in Sarawak firmly adheres to the concept of *Parukunan Diri*. The concept of *Parakunan Diri* in the Salako community is a guideline for the belief that the existence of supernatural powers and their rights must be preserved as best as possible. Moreover, the Salako community is convinced that everything that exists in this world has a guardian and the guardian is *Jubata*.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is qualitative research that used an ethnographic approach. In cultural research, an ethnographic approach is used to scrutinise human behaviour related to the life patterns of a society. This approach will able to obtain comprehensive data through observation, participation, and interview methods. In addition, this approach can extract all the information authentically through the researcher's involvement directly with the community or society studied. The selection of this approach is in line with the research objective, which aims to understand further the aspects of the Pure Theory in ethnic, cultural rituals in Sarawak. Therefore, the main goal of this study is to find the meaning in the implementation of *Nyangahant* rituals in the Salako community.

The field research used to obtain the data was using participant observation and ethnographic interviews. The first method is participant observation was carried out from January 2020 until December 2020 by going back and forth to Kampung Pueh, Lundu, Sarawak. During that period, the *Nyangahant* ritual was held only once, on 27 and 28 December 2020. The first observation was carried out when the Salako community held the ritual to ward off misfortune (*Tolak Bala*) COVID-19 to seek protection from *Jubata* against the disease. *Tuha Adat* is a responsible person for performing this ritual. On 27 December 2020, a *Noget* ceremony was held at the Kampung Pueh longhouse, and the next day the actual *Nyangahant* ritual was performed in an area not far from the longhouse. The area was known as “*Guna*” by Salako community in the Kampung Pueh, Lundu, Sarawak. This ward off misfortune ritual was carried out to ask for safety and kept away from infectious disease pandemic, which is the COVID-19 virus.

The researchers in this study widely used the second method known as the Ethnographic Interview. The researcher has been there throughout the year 2020 until early 2021, back and forth, to obtain data and make observations for this study. This method was used to obtained

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authentic data from several informants. The informants involved in this study are Mr Ramil Mina, 67, he is the Headman of Kampung Pueh, Lundu Sarawak; Mr Iran @ Eran Suut, 64, he is the Village Head, responsible as acting *Tuha Adat* and *Penyangahant* of Kampung Pueh, Lundu Sarawak; Ayahanda Nulos s/o Nimbun, 89 years old, he is the *Tuha Adat* and *Penyagahant*; Sukor anak Lauik, 51; Menghia anak Mahli, 53; Jala anak Limbang, 78 years old. The interviews were conducted by asking about the informant's background before asking a more focused question on the content of the research associated with the study's objectives. The interview focused on the meaning of the *Nyangahant* ritual and the things that need to be emphasised during the performance of the ritual ceremony.

Data Analysis

This study was analysed using the Cosmological Model in the Salako community. In this model, three main elements need to be highlighted, namely *Salako Pagan* (animism), Religious Salako (Christian/Islamic), *Jubata* (Prosperity). The clash of two different elements, which is the *Pagan* Salako (animism) and religious Salako (Christian/Islamic) in the implementation of the *Nyangahant* ritual, has led to a process called syncretism. Although they already have their own religion, it does not bother them to perform this ritual due to the concept of kinship that binds them together with their life. Apart from that, the Salako community in Sarawak still adheres to the concept of *Parukunan Diri*. This concept is a guideline for the Salako community in the belief of the existence of supernatural powers, and it right must be preserved as best as possible. Moreover, the Salako community was convinced that everything that exists in this world has a guardian, and they called the guardian *Jubata*. The data from the interview will be analysed manually to see each the information obtained had an implicit meaning or not, based on the forms of performances held from every ritual ceremony. Through this study, the symbols derived from the ritual performance will be analysed using this theory with the theme of pure concept. The validity of each data obtained by the researcher will be checked with the informant by cross-checking method to ensure that the data is truly accurate to avoid confusion to the readers and subsequent researchers.

FINDINGS

The Meaning of the *Nyangahant* Ritual

The *Nyangahant* ritual is a performance or prayer ceremony performed by the Salako community in Kampung Pueh, Lundu, Sarawak to their god, *Jubata*. The *Nyangahant* ritual is usually performed during important rituals or festivals such as *Gawe Ka Padi*, a set of festivals for the fertility of paddy crops, and *Gawe Ka Manusia*, a festival for human prosperity. The ceremony of worship or praying in this *Nyangahant* ritual is performed for the following purposes:

- i. Request for protection from *Jubata* to avoid a threat or destructive disaster in daily life.
- ii. Request for blessings from *Jubata*.
- iii. Pray to be blessed with harmony and peace of life from *Jubata*.
- iv. Request for fertility and good rice crop yields from *Jubata*.
- v. Pray for a wish from *Jubata*.

vi. Ward off misfortune (*Tolak Bala*)

In the Salako community in Kampung Pueh, Lundu, Sarawak, the *Nyangahant* ritual is a ritual known as *Indu' Gawe*, which is the 'Mother' of all rituals and festivals in their community. Therefore, the implementation of the *Nyangahant* ritual is an important event in the traditional beliefs of the Salako community in Kampung Pueh, Lundu, Sarawak to ensure that every objective of the practice for the ritual ceremony is achieved.

In implementing all rituals in the Salako community of Kampung Pueh, the *Nyangahant* ritual is the opening ritual before the other ritual or festival ceremony is carried out according to the *Gawe* themes. **Table 1.1** below showed a detail of the essential rituals and festivals for the culture of the Salako community in Kampung Pueh, Lundu, Sarawak that need to be started with the *Nyangahant* ritual as the opening ritual ceremony for worship and praying to *Jubata*.

Table 1.1: The essential rituals and festivals in the Salako community at Kampung Pueh, Lundu, Sarawak

Rituals/Festivals Names	The Purpose to Perform
<i>Gawe Ka Padi</i> (a gathering ceremony for paddy fertility)	<i>Munoh Manuk Ka Pagar</i> ceremony (Opening of paddy fields)
	<i>Ngarantika</i> ceremony (Beginning of harvesting season for paddy rice)
<i>Gawe Ka Manusia</i> (a gathering ceremony for the prosperity of life)	<i>Bataah</i> ritual ceremony (Giving names for their children)
	<i>Batenek</i> ceremony (piercing ears)
	<i>Baturih</i> ceremony (circumcision)
	<i>Bakawen</i> ceremony (marriage)
	<i>Baranak</i> ceremony (births)
<i>Ngoncong</i>	A dance ceremony performed to fulfil one's vows (promises) or a traditional medical method in the Salako community to overcome a disease that is difficult to treat using modern medical methods; Rejoicing ceremony, <i>meramikan Gawe</i> . The poems (<i>pantun</i>) used during the <i>Ngoncong</i> ritual are different according to the ceremony held.
<i>Nyemah Ai' Tanah</i>	Ceremony for the opening of new land for settlements, agriculture, and development.
<i>Pamindahan Padukng</i>	The ceremony of transferring the death monument/transferring the old grave to a new site (development)

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	factor) and others special ceremonies performed to seek the help of supernatural powers, which is <i>Jubata</i> to overcome the life crisis of the Salako community.
<i>Ngayau</i> (Hunting)	Ceremonies were performed to ask for safety and prosperity while conducting hunting activities.
Ward off misfortune (<i>Tolak Bala</i>)	Performing the ritual for protection from a disaster such as infectious diseases, such as COVID-19 virus.

Every ritual and festival listed in **Table 1.1** above must perform the *Nyangahant* ritual as the opening ceremony of the ritual to appeal for the fertility of paddy fields, prosperity, and seek protection from disasters. They believe that without performing the *Nyangahant* ritual at the beginning of the actual rituals and festivals, the rules of a ritual ceremony, as stated above, are considered incomplete. Thus, due to it, the Salako community believes that all requests made will not be accepted by the god, *Jubata*.

Typically, the *Nyangahant* ritual will involve all members of the Salako community, and each ritual will be carried out on a large scale regardless of the ceremony's theme. Therefore, the *Nyangahant* ritual will be held in 'gotong-royong' or communal work by the Salako community to facilitate and lighten the workload. **Figure 1.1** below shows that the men of the Salako community work together in preparing the *poe'* for the Nyangahant ritual of ward off the misfortune of COVID-19, which was held on 27 and 28 December 2020.



Figure 1.1: The men of the Salako community work together in preparing the *poe'*

Source: The Field Research, 2020

The Aspects that Need to Emphasise in Nyangahant Ritual.

To complete the *Nyangahant* ritual, the following aspect is essential and needs to be emphasised to ensure the *Nyangahant* ritual ceremony runs smoothly and perfectly. Among them are:

- a. *Tuha Adat* as the ritual conductor
- b. *Tuka'ng Nyangahant* or *Panyangahant*
- c. *Buis* performance
- d. Poems or mantras of worship

***Tuha Adat* as the ritual conductor**

Tuha Adat is the head of the custom in every village of the Salako community in Sarawak. The role of *Tuha Adat* (ritual expert) is a crucial person in the *Nyangahant* ritual. This is because *Tuha Adat* is the main subject in controlling and leading the *Nyangahant* ritual ceremony. The Salako community believes that the *Nyangahant* ritual cannot be performed by any random people, since the performance of this ritual will involve supernatural powers. That means the success of the implementation and management of a *Nyangahant* ritual depends on the authority and skills of *Tuha Adat* while handling the ritual. During the implementation of the *Nyangahant* ritual, *Tuha Adat* must ensure that every ritual must follow the rules or processes that have been set. The same as the rules and processes of execution that have been inherited from their ancestors and must not make any mistakes either at the previous, current, and after performing the rituals. Therefore, *Tuha Adat* must ensure that the *Nyangahant* ritual must be performed with full discipline and in a prudent manner. Therefore, the role of *Tuha Adat* is very important in managing the rituals and culture of the Salako community.

Tuka'ng Nyangahant* or *Panyangahant

Tuha Adat is the person who will become *Tuka'ng Nyangahant* or *Panyangahant*. The role of *Tuka'ng Nyangahant* or *Panyangahant* is very important in the *Nyangahant* ritual. In the *Nyangahant* ritual, *Tuka'ng Nyangahant* or *Panyangahant* is the mediator who will connect the Salako community in the real world with the *Jubata* in the virtual. During the process of performing the *Nyangahant* ritual, *Tuka'ng Nyangahant* or *Panyangahant* will use various knowledge received from generation to generation as a mediator to communicate with *Jubata* to ensure the effectiveness of the ritual and achieve the purpose of the ritual performed. For example, in the process of naturalising human relationship with *Jubata*, *Tuka'ng Nyangahant* must be an expert in persuading, praising, promising through the poems (*pantun*) or mantras recited during the ritual ceremonies and providing food offerings and performing sacrificial rites (*Buis*) in other for the rituals performed can please the *Jubata* and in response from *Jubata* as they are given prosperity and protection in their daily lives. In addition, the role of *Tuka'ng Nyangahant* or *Panyangahant* also needs to ensure that all *Nyangahant* ritual procedures are appropriately performed according to the taboos and punish those who disobey. Most importantly, the *Nyangahant* ritual implemented by the Salako community is not only performed by those who believe in animism, but other religions such as Christian and Muslims of the Salako community also joined the ritual.

***Buis* Performance**

Performing the *Nyangahant* ritual is not an easy task. To ensure the successful execution of this ritual as desired, it requires meticulous preparation from the event organiser or host. Among them is preparing the *Buis* for performance purposes. *Buis* in this ritual is an offering

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to the *Jubata* in the form of food and jewellery. According to the ceremony held, various types of food are arranged to prepare the Buis in this ritual. The obligatory foods that must be present in the preparation of the Buis for every ritual are *Manuk* (chicken) or pig, *Bontonk*, *Tumpi* and *Garetant*. The foods will be placed on a special tray called *Apar*. **Figure 1.2** below is an example of *Buis* worshipped in the *Nyangahant* ritual during the ward off misfortune (*Tolak Bala*) COVID-19 ritual in 2020.



Figure 1.2: *Buis* performance

Source: The research field, 2020

The Poems or Mantras of Worship

In the *Nyangahant* ritual, the poems or mantras are an important aspect that should not be left out. Without the poems or mantras, the *Nyangahant* ritual will not achieve the objective of ritual. This is because the poems or mantras are an action used to communicate with *Jubata* to ask for help, prosperity, and happiness in life. The poems or mantras are not recited arbitrarily or use their own words. The *Tuha Adat* will be recited according to the poems that were passed down from the previous generations of the ancestors of the Salako community. The poems or mantras are passed down from one generation to another without using a writing method (*anan 'baketab*). Below are some examples of the poems or mantras in the *Nyangahant* ritual to ward off the misfortune of COVID-19 performed on 27 and 28 December 2020.

Sak, Dua, Talu, Empat, Lima, Anam, Tujuh...
O...o...o Jubata
An bakoasa ka daapm aiik,
Tanah tinggi,
Puhutn kayu ayak,
Puhutn kayu tinggi,

*Penguasa ka aiik an tanah,
Mampu nunu aiik sunge,
Nyambung nyawa,
Kami minta dah maritaatn
Ame marek wabak ka kami manusia.*

The meaning,

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven...
Oh Jubata,
Who has power over the deep water,
Highlands,
A big wooden tree,
A tall wooden tree,
Ruler of the waters and the earth,
Able to burn the rivers,
The life connector,
We beg and preach,
Do not give the pandemic to humans.

Therefore, not everyone can memorise and recite the worshipped poems or mantras fluently because the person who is qualified in reciting the worshipped poems of *Nyangahant* is said to be the *Jubata's* chosen person. To be a *Tuha Adat*, they not only need to have an interest, desire, intelligence, and superior personality, but they must get the *Jubata's* approval. The worshipped poems or mantras will be read spontaneously, and basically, the poems are short and read repeatedly. According to *Tuha Adat*, when he repeatedly recited the mantra, he felt a presence of power that helped to arrange and add more verse until the mantra became long and his recitation seemed to be fluent. Obviously, there is a power that helps *Tuha Adat* in the recitation of the poems or mantras of the *Nyangahant* worshipped.

Chart 1.1: The arrangement of poems or mantras in the *Nyangahant* ritual

Stage 1: <i>Noget</i> is inviting the <i>Jubata</i> to their ceremony.
Stage 2: Cherished the presence of <i>Jubata</i> .
Stage 3: Washing the feet and welcome the <i>Jubata</i>
Stage 4: Feeding and washing <i>Jubata's</i> hands.
Stage 5: <i>Badendeng</i> is to serve the <i>Jubata</i> who is full.
Stage 6: Sending the <i>Jubata</i> to his original place.

The poems or mantras of the *Nyangahant* ritual worshipped are different according to the theme of the ceremony. But the stages in the poems or verses of worshipped still the same and have their own purpose. **Chart 1.1**, showed the order of the stages for the poems or mantras as the following. According to *Tuha Adat*, usually, the poems and mantras' worshipped content revolves around asking for prosperity and seeking help from *Jubata*.

DISCUSSION

The observation result started in September 2019 and based on the information obtained from several informants, including *Tuha Adat*, the village head, village chief showed that the *Nyangahant* ritual is a performance or prayer ceremony by the Salako community in Kampung Pueh, Lundu, Sarawak to their god, *Jubata*. The *Nyangahant* rituals usually are performed during important rituals or festivals such as *Gawe Ka Padi*, a gathering ceremony for paddy fertility, and *Gawe Ka Manusia*, a common ceremony for the prosperity of life. The ritual of offering or praying in this *Nyangahant* ritual is performed to seek protection from *Jubata* to avoid any threat or bad disaster in their daily life; asking for blessings from *Jubata*; begging to be blessed with harmony and peace of life from *Jubata*; beg for fertility and a good harvest of paddy rice from *Jubata*; request a wish from *Jubata*. In addition, the important thing and need to be emphasised in ensuring that the *Nyangahant* ritual runs smoothly and perfectly is *Tuha Adat* as the ritual coordinator; *Tuka'ng Nyangahant* or *Panyangahant*; *Buis* performance; the poems or mantras of worship. Each stage of the process must be carried out in an orderly manner and follow the rules and guidelines that have been set. If the taboo is violated, the Salako community believes they will be affected by *idap*, *badi*, and *tulah*. Therefore, the Salako community is very obedient and highly respects the customs and rituals inherited from the previous community. Thus, *Tuha Adat* or *Ketua Adat* has been appointed in each village of the Salako community to be the coordinator for the implementation of ritual ceremonies because ordinary people cannot perform these rituals. If the *Tuha Adat* is unable to perform this ritual, then the *Tuha Adat* must choose a trusted person which could perform the ritual and replace him temporarily.

CONCLUSION

The *Nyangahant* ritual is a ritual with a value system in the belief and worldview of the Salako community in Sarawak. A value system is a set of belief values, the declaration of truth, ethics of thought about the good and bad in every aspect of human life in terms of views, decisions, actions, behaviours, and attitudes. The Salako community believes in the existence of a god, *Jubata*, who is the owner of the universe and manages everything, including humans. In the animistic beliefs of the Salako community, the *Jubata* is responsible for everything in the world, including humans, land, water, plants, rain, sea, and rivers. The implementation of the *Nyangahant* ritual is to solve the difficulties faced by the Salako community and it must be performed according to the process provided in the ritual so that their god, *Jubata*, can accept all requests and prayers made.

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Sukor anak Lauik, 51; Menghia anak Mahli, 53; Jala anak Limbang, 78. It is hoped that this study will benefit all of us, especially researchers who will conduct research in the same field in the future.

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