**JOLENAN TRADITION IN SOMONGARI VILLAGE AS ONE OF JAVANESE LOCAL CULTURES**

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**Abstract**

This article is about *Jolenan* in Somongari Village, Kaligesing Sub-region, Purworejo Regency. In other place in Central Java, this kind of traditional ceremony is called *merti desa* or *merti bumi*. The objectives of this paper are to know the steps of *Jolenan* ceremony, to understand the meaning of *Jolenan*, and to find out the purposes and benefits of *Jolenan*. The writer used interview in finding the information about *Jolenan* ceremony. The result shows that steps of *Jolenan* ceremony in Somongari are cleaning the village and graveyard, making *jolen*, preparing the food that have to be placed in *jolen*, *kenduri*, performing arts, *Jolenan* parade and performing *tayub* dance. The meaning of *Jolenan* ceremony is human should remember God the Almighty who gives and provides every goods in life. The purposes and benefits of *Jolenan* are to thank God for His blessings that have already been given to people, make people gather in togetherness, and to make people in Somongari remember about the founder of their village.

**Keywords:** *Jolenan*, Javanese local culture, *Sapar*, *tayub*, meaning, purposes and benefits

**Introduction**

One of the Javanese local cultures in Indonesia can be found in Purworejo Regency, Central Java, which is called *merti desa* or *merti bumi* such as in other regions in Purworejo and especially called as *Jolenan* in Somongari village. This tradition is originally a Javanese local culture and can be found in a village named Somongari, Kaligesing Sub-region, Purworejo Regency, Central Java, Indonesia.

There are some reasons why *Jolenan* is interested to write more detail. First, this tradition is unique because of meaning of its name. Based on the explanation by Mr. Hary Yudhistira, one of public figures in Somongari, *Jolenan* stands for “*Ojo kelalen*” in Javenese language, or “*Jangan lupa*” in
bahasa Indonesia, and “Do not forget” in English. Second, Jolenan is an interesting tradition because philosophically it has deep meaning and moral value. Here, it has meaning that people should feel grateful for whatever they got in their life, for example food, a happy life, and any kind of goodness. In a purpose of making the society in Somongari village remember to always be grateful, they always hold the ceremony once in two years. Third, this tradition has certain purposes and benefits, which are, people can gather together in one place to enjoy the ceremony and also to learn how to be a person who always feels blessed.

Jolenan tradition is executed by holding a ceremony in a day starting from morning until noon and it has to be held in month Sapar (Javanese month). It is common for Javanese people to call it as Saparan. The steps of the Jolenan ceremony are chronological, because it consists of the series of the traditions itself. Additionally, the series of the ceremony are developed by presenting some dances and performances which are always done by the people in this village, such as Dolalak dance which is a traditional dance that is influenced by Dutch soldiers’ costumes and other traditional dances, which are not only from Purworejo but also Gunung Kidul Regency, Yogyakarta.

Jolenan as one of the Javanese local culture identities is very interesting and important to be known and to be understood because it shows what Somongari is. Besides, Jolenan is so precious, the interesting thing that people can learn from this ceremony that it has the philosophy of Dewi Sri, goddess of Rice, fertility, and abundance. In Tri Hita Karana, it is stated that “the goddess Sri, also named Lakshmi, is personified not only as the goddess of fortune and wealth but also as an embodiment of loveliness, grace and charm” (Peters and Wardana 236). The philosophy is very important to be applied in Javanese people’s life. The last, Jolenan ceremony is worth because it has moral value and priceless to be applied in Javanese people’s life.

Based on the background which is mentioned above, this paper is extended to know more about:

1. What are the steps of Jolenan ceremony in Somongari?
2. What is the meaning of Jolenan ceremony in Somongari?
3. What are the purposes and benefits of Jolenan in Somongari?

Method

The data collection methods which were used are library and field research. The data is taken from the printed source in form of journal, books, magazine and newspaper. Then, the writer directly gets the data from the experts through interviewing. The experts are Mr. Hary Yudhistira, as one of public figures in Somongari, Mr. Drs. Sungkono, as the head of BPP (Badan Pengelola Pariwisata) of Somongari or Tourism Management Agency of Somongari and Mrs. F. Untariningsih, as Pamong Budaya of Purworejo.

Through the interview, the writer gets some information which the history of
Jolenan are, what the meaning of Jolenan is, what the purpose and benefits are, and the steps of Jolenan ceremony itself.

The Steps, Meaning, Purposes and Benefits of Jolenan Tradition

The Steps of Jolenan Tradition

The first steps before doing the Jolenan ceremony on Tuesday wage morning in month Sapar is the preparation. This preparation includes some activities as follows.

a. **Doing Resik-resik Desa (Cleaning the Village)**

   *Resik-resik desa* is cleaning the village in which people do together in the same time. In doing this activity, usually people use some stuff such as hoe, big knife, and broom. People in Somongari always do *resik-resik desa* several days before the ceremony. Eventhough cleaning up is done every day, by doing *resik-resik desa*, people can gather to clean up every places starting from house, garden, road, pavement, and places in around it. By doing this activity together, their village become clean and neat.

b. **Doing Resik-Resik Pesarean (Cleaning the Graveyard)**

   *Resik-resik pesarean* is an activity that people do together to clean the graveyard and its area from the dirt and bushes in the morning or evening several days before Jolenan ceremony started. People will clean the grave of the founder of this village, *Eyang Beruk Singonegoro*, the elders of this village, *Eyang Kedana Kedini* and many others, and also Somongari society’s family which were died and buried in this graveyard.

   What they need to prepare for this activity are some stuff to clean up the graveyard such as hoe, big knife, and broom. Especially for the grave, people will bring some types of flowers, which are roses, jasmine and *kenanga* flower. These kinds of flowers will make the cemetery/graveyard fragrant and aromatic. People who do this custom not only want to make the graveyard becomes aromatic but also clean and neat.

c. **Making Jolen**

   The next is the activity that the people in Somongari will do one day before Jolenan ceremony. This activity is preparing all of the things needed for making jolen. *Jolen* a piramid food container which is made from bamboo and young sugar palm leaves (*janur aren*). This food container’s size is about one meter and it is
functioned to put the food for *kirab or arak-arakan* (a procession of people that usually organized along a street, often in costume and accompanied by some performing arts).

![Picture 1. The Example of Jolen](image)

**d. Making Ornaments**

Meanwhile, people also make some traditional ornaments made from young coconut leaves for decorating the village head office and Eyang Kedana Kedini or Eyang Kedana Kedini’s cemetery which is a building similar to a house. Not only the village head office and *pesarean* Eyang Kedana Kedini which is decorated by people but also the entrance gate of Somongari and every side of the village. One of the ornaments is *gagar mayang*, a small coconut tree which is made from crepe paper for making the leaves and canopy, and bamboo for making stem or trunk.

**e. Preparing Food and Ingredients**

The women prepare the food ingredients and spices to make the food for the ceremony. The food that they will prepare are:

1. *Nasi tumpeng* with *ayam panggang* (roasted chicken). *Nasi tumpeng* is rice that is formed into a cone and served with roasted chicken. The roasted chicken itself is made from young roaster, not a hen.

2. The food that made from *beras ketan/pulut* (glutinous rice) which are *jadah* and *rengginan*. *Jadah* is made by steaming the glutinous rice with coconut milk then pounding it. Similar with *jadah*, *rengginan* is cooked by steaming the glutinous rice with coconut milk then dried and fried.

3. The food that made from *ketela pohon* or cassava which are *ledre* and *binggel*. *Ledre* is crunchy fried cassava and *binggel* is made from tapioca flour mixed with garlic and salt then fried.
4. Pisang agung/raja (banana), durian, mangosteen, pineapple, petai, and many other vegetables and fruit.

**The second steps is Jolenan Ceremony.** The ceremony begins on Tuesday *wage morning* in month *Sapar*. In this ceremony there are some activities in which people should do properly. They are cooking food, doing *kenduri*, gathering in the yard of *pepundhen Kedana Kedini*, performing arts, opening ceremony and speech, and *kirab Jolenan* or *Jolenan* parade.

- **a. Cooking Food**

  In that morning, people in every *RT* (neighborhood) cook Javanese traditional cuisine, eventhough the ceremony will start at 8 a.m. people actually prepare the cooking since at the middle of the night until at dawn for cooking, so the all of the food that will be included in the ceremony is still fresh. After finishing cooking, people start to organize the food to be placed in the *besek* and *jolen*. In the Javanese culture, *besek* is a rectangular food container that is made from bamboo to put the food for *kenduri*.

- **b. Doing Kenduri**

  *Kenduri* is an event when people gather, pray for His blessings, share food and togetherness. This activity is usually done in most of Javanese traditions. The first point of morning events is *kenduri* which starts at 8 a.m in every *RT* (neighborhood). In this tradition, *kenduri* is done twice. The first *kenduri* is done on Tuesday *wage* morning before gathering and bringing *jolen* to the yard of *pepundhen Kedana Kedini*. The second *kenduri* is done right after *kirab Jolenan* or *Jolenan* parade is over. Both *kenduri* is led by religious leaders.

- **c. Gathering in the Yard of Pepundhen Kedana Kedini**

  After the first *kenduri* has ended, people in every *RT* will bring *jolen* to the yard is known as the yard *pepundhen Kedana Kedini*. This yard is located in the middle side of village head office and also *pepundhen Kedana Kedini* (in Javanese language *pepundhen* is a cemetery).

- **d. Performing Arts**

  A lot of arts will be performed in *Jolenan* tradition. Most of arts are traditional dances such as *kuda kepang, dolalak* dance, *reog cimpoling*, and *tayub*. All of the arts that would be presented and *jolen* that followed by people brought to the yard. Every art should
be presented its performance in front of the *pepundhen* Kedana Kedini more or less 10 to 30 minutes.

e. **Opening Ceremony and Speech**

Afterwards, the head of Somongari along with his/her staff and the committee lead the ceremony. A lot of people will give their speech for this ceremony. They are the head of this village, the representative of Somongari who live in other cities, such as Jakarta and the regent of Purworejo itself. They usually give the speech about the message of moral value about gratitude to God and how to live in togetherness.

f. **Doing Kirab Jolenan or Jolenan Parade**

Next, whenever the ceremony has ended, the *kirab* or parade begins from the yard of *pepundhen* Kedana Kedini heading to the east. It could not circle the village because of the geographic problem so that it should be back again to the yard. The parade is quite long which the length of the parade itself could be more than one kilometers. The route that has to be done by all of the people who follow the parade is four to five kilometers long. The order of the parade starts from the first row:

1. A banner where the words “Saparan/merti desa” and the theme are written.
2. The Indonesian national flag, *Bendera Merah Putih*.
3. *Gagar mayang*, an ornament that is made from sticks of coconut leaves that are wrapped in colorful crepe paper.
4. The head of the Somongari along with the staff who wear *kejawen* or Javanese clothes. In this parade, only people in this group who rides horses.
5. *Subamanggala* and *Talangpati*, a group of boys who wear Javanese traditional clothes.
6. Dewi Sri, the goddess of Rice in the Javanese belief, a girl acts like Dewi Sri and wears the costume of Dewi Sri.
7. *Putri Domas*, a group of girls that wear Javanese traditional clothes who act like *dayang* (followers and servants) of Dewi Sri.
8. *Among tani*, a group of people who wear farmer costume and bring some fruit and vegetables as the symbol of prosperity.
9. *Slawatan* art (*Rebana*), a music art that is affected by Islam.
10. *Jolen*, a pyramid food container which is made from bamboo and young sugar palm leaves which Javanese people usually call it as *janur aren*.

11. School students, a group of students whose elementary and junior high school is located in Somongari.

12. *Reog*, an old classical art from Jatirejo village. It is danced by men who wear costumes which were influenced by Dutch soldiers’ costumes. This dance tells the audience about Sultan Senopati who fought against Dutch and right before fought in the war, they would pray to God. Some movements bring the dancers to the right and the left. These movements have meaning to stalk their enemies.

13. *Kuda Lumping*. *Kuda* means horse in English language. It is a dance which the dancers use stuff symbolizing horse and it is accompanied by traditional Javanese musical instruments, *gamelan*.

14. *Dolalak*, a dance which is influenced by Dutch culture. This influence can be seen from its costumes. *Dolalak* dance is originally owned by Purworejo and they who usually perform this dance are women but it also can be performed by men.

After the parade finished, people who bring *jolen* put all of it down at the same place as before, which is the yard of *pe pundhen* Kedana Kedini. It is believed that this is the right time for all of the people and the audience who come not only from Somongari but also many other sub regions to fight over to each other for the food and dish. What is interesting from this part of event is togetherness because they blend to each other without thinking from where they come from and do not hesitate to enjoy this activity happily.

**The third step** is in the end of the *Jolenan* Ceremony, there will be a Performing *Tayub* Dance. After finishing *kirab Jolenan*, around 3pm, the ceremony is continued with the main art to be performed, *tayub*. *Tayub* is a Javanese traditional dance. However *tayub* which is also called *ledhek* which comes from Wonosari, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta is the one that has to be chosen to perform in the *Jolenan* ceremony because this dance means the essence of the forest. It is danced by some women beautifully in Javanese clothes. It is commonly known in Java that *tayub* comes from Javanese language’s words “tata” and “guyub” which mean the social relationship of people can be happily
together. While the women are dancing, some of men also follow them
to dance together.

![Picture 2. Tayub Dance from Wonosari](image)

This dancing is quite interesting to be performed in
*Jolenan* ceremony. The story that spread in the society saying one
of the founders’s wife came from Wonosari, Gunung Kidul,
Yogyakarta. Moreover, *tayub* will be dancing from 3 p.m. in the
afternoon until 3 a.m. in the dawn. At the time of this dancing
finished, the *Jolenan* ceremony also finished.

**Meaning of Jolenan**

The meanings of *Jolenan* can be devided into three points, which
are:

**a. Steps’ Ceremony Meanings of *Jolenan***

1. Preparation Before *Jolenan* Ceremony

   In this part, people do *resik-resik desa* and *pesarean*, making
ornaments and preparing food. It has meaning that before doing
the main ritual of the tradition people must prepare everything
related to the tradition itself. In the people’s life, they also need
everything well prepared so their activity, goal and dream can be
reached. Especially for *resik-resik desa* and *pesarean*, it has
philosophical meaning which is people not only clean the village
and graveyard but clean something cannot be seen by eyes.

2. *Jolenan* Ceremony

   On the day of the ceremony there are four main activities which are:

   3. *Kenduri*
In *kenduri*, people can gather, pray for His blessings, share food and togetherness. It has meaning “*selamatan*” in Javanese language. It means people who do this activity become saved. Kenduri is very important because by doing this tradition people can do socialization and talk about what they have to do in the ceremony. So, all of the purpose *Jolenan* tradition and the value of gratitude to God can be delivered to the people clearly.

b. Performing arts

There are several arts which are performed in supporting this tradition so that this tradition becomes successful. Arts such as *reog, kuda lumping, dolalak* and many others should be performed right in front of *pepundhen Kedana Kedini*. At this point, people in Somongari believe that the founder of their village will be respected by performing all of the arts one by one.

c. Opening Ceremony and Giving Speeches

The opening ceremony of *Jolenan* tradition is starting by ringing a *gong* three times. *Gong* is one of Javanese musical instruments, *gamelan*. The sound of *gong* gives the sign that ceremony is begun followed by some speeches that are delivered by the head of Somongari, regent and many others representatives. It is commonly known that the speeches from the leaders give many moral value and message for the people so that people can live in a good environment.

d. Kirab Jolenan

Kirab *Jolenan* or it is called as *Jolenan* parade is a parade which is filled with many equipment and arts. The arts consist of:

4. Equipment

Some equipment which is needed in *Jolenan* tradition are banner, Indonesia national flag, and *gagar mayang*.

1. Banner; By using banner, people not only can read the theme but also understand the meaning of theme of *Jolenan* tradition which will be different every two years.

2. Indonesia National Flag; The flag has meaning to make the people who watch this tradition remember and embrace their identity as Indonesian.

3. *Gagar mayang* Jolen; It has meaning as tree of life which can be the source of life.
- Traditional dance: Some traditional dances which are performed in this tradition are *reog cimpoling*, *kuda lumping*, and *dolalak*.

1. *Reog cimpoling:* It is a dance that performed by men who wear costumes that is influenced by Dutch soldiers’ costumes. The meaning of *reog cimpoling* is asking for help from God.

2. *Kuda lumping:* Kuda lumping shows the human’s personality. It can be bad such as hatred and anger and also good such as patience and humble, which can be seen from the dancing’s movements.

3. *Dolalak:* The song lyrics of Dolalak dance shows how the human life should be. It gives human moral value so human can learn how to live in a good way happily.

- People who dress as certain figures and do the parade.

1. Head of village along with his or her staff; Every leader has always to be in the tradition where all of the society gather.

2. *Dewi Sri:* A girl who has long hair, does not married, and does not in the period. She acts as *Dewi Sri* to show the philosophy of goddess of Rice which is fertility, abundance, fortune, wealth and embodiment of loveliness, grace and charm.

3. *Putri Domas:* 40 *putri domas* are likened to be the ladies or in bahasa people call it as *dayang* of the princess. They wear Javanese clothes like *dayang* (followers and servants) of Dewi Sri.

4. *Subamanggala* and *Talangpati:* It is consist of 40 boys who are likened to be royal retainers.

5. *Among tani:* It is a group of farmers which consists around 20 people. *Among tani* means people should respect farmers because all of food is produced by them.

6. School students; the presence of the school students gives a meaning that people should pursue their dream by having good education.

**Philosophical and Practical Meaning**

As an old Javanese local culture in Indonesia, *Jolenan* is not merely just a tradition that has to be done by people in Somongari once in two years. However, it is a culture which is very precious so that the people in this village always uphold all the values inside this tradition. It also has a symbolical meaning which people can see it by following this tradition. *Jolenan* can be specifically divided into both philosophy and practical.
Philosophically, *Jolenan* is the way of people to feel grateful to God the Almighty for what they have gotten in life such as health and happiness. Specifically, in Somongari, people do this tradition because of the big amount of garden products, such as cassava, durian, mangosteen, and others. Moreover, they also get a good life in togetherness. It can be shown from how the society feels grateful of being healthy and safe.

Besides the philosophical meaning, practically, *Jolenan* is the way for people to share what is valuable, such as, food and garden plants. Not only those things, but also happiness and togetherness are things which people want to share with. They do the steps in the ceremony so that every step has the meaning of sharing. At this point, every single step is something precious to be done.

**Food's Meaning**

The food that is used in *Jolenan* tradition has certain meaning:

*a. Nasi tumpeng with ayam panggang* (roasted chicken)

It is usually known that some of traditions in Java use *nasi tumpeng* and *ayam panggang* as the dishes that should be served. *Nasi tumpeng* which is made from rice mixed with coconut milk, meanwhile the roasted chicken should be made from *ayam kampung* (local chicken). It has meaning that people should have strong-based to achieve their high dreams and goal in this life.

*b. The food that is made from beras ketan/pulut* (glutinous rice) which are *jadah/gemblong* and *rengginan*

*Beras ketan/pulut* or glutinous rice is sticky. It gives meaning that the society can be blended to each other in togetherness in uphold their beliefs and goal.

*c. The food that made from ketela pohon, which are *ledre* and *binggel*

- *Ledre* is the identity of a mountainuous place that can give the people who live there enough food as what they need.

- *Binggel* can be shaped to be any kind of fruit and vegetables. It has meaning that Somongari can produce many kinds of fruit and vegetables.

*d. Pisang agung/raja*

It is believed that pisang agung/raja is the best banana because they wish that it can make Somongari to be a good place to be lived. It means, if the society of Somongari want to be
developing, they have to get the same goal, vision and missions.

**Arts’ Meaning**

There are certain meanings of arts which are *wayang golek, bende, tayub* dance in *Jolenan* traditions.

a. *Wayang golek*

*Wayang* is symbolizing people and *golek* means find. The miniature of *wayang golek* has meaning that is people should find the truth in life.

b. *Bende*

*Bende* is a musical stuff that being used in *reog*. This instrument must be included in this ceremony. *Bende* is originally from Somongari, but now it is not owned by Somongari anymore. The village that has this musical stuff is Jatirejo. *Bende* becomes so important and has high value because it is a heritage of Somongari and the people in Somongari believe if it is not played by one of people in the ceremony, their harvest will be failed.

c. *Tayub* Dance

*Tayub* shows some women who dance and it is circled by many people who act as the audience. By performing *Tayub*, people hope that they have to live in the value of togetherness. *Tayub* is one of the main dances that has to be performed in *Jolenan* tradition because it is from Wonosari. Even though there are some types of *Tayub*, the one that is performed in this tradition should be imported from Wonosari, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta. Why it has to be from that region because it is believed if they do not use this *Tayub*, their harvest will fail. As it is known in Javanese that *wono* means forest and *sari* means essence. So, *wonosari* means the essence of forest.

**purposes and Benefits of Jolenan**

Every tradition has its own purpose and benefit so does *Jolenan* tradition itself. Every step in *Jolenan* tradition and every prayer about gratitude to God show the purposes which are:

1. To make a way to gratitude to God of blessings that have already given.

   As human being wherever they live, all of the prosperity comes from God the Almighty. So that, this tradition is a way for the
people in Somongari who want to embrace their belief so they always feel blessed in their life.

2. Make people gather in togetherness.

In Somongari, people togetherness. They really care about that because they understand if there is something happen to one of them, they will help to each other.

3. To make people in Somongari remember about the founder of their village.

This ceremony is also the way for people in Somongari to remember to their village founder who have died, and usually they call their cemetery as pepundhen. What can be seen from this ceremony is they really respect and care about they who live in this village at the first time. So, by doing this ceremony, they can feel their presence and try to introduce the feeling of respecting to the young generation.

4. People in Somongari can always share their love by sharing food and happiness.

When people realize that all of the things they have comes only from God, they will share it to the others, too. In this ceremony, sharing does not mean giving money but food that they have already cooked and also happiness which can be seen from their smile and story they deliver to one another. Sharing to each other, this is one precious thing that people in Somongari uphold in their life.

Conclusion

Jolenan tradition is a local culture which contains steps that always be done in Somongari, Kaligesing, Purworejo once in two years. Furthermore, it should be done in month Sapar on Tuesday wage. Jolenan is interesting, has incredible value and lastly, time which brings some changes to Jolenan ceremony.

Firstly, it is known that Jolenan is interesting because of some reasons which are about its uniqueness and steps. This tradition only exists in Somongari which means that Jolenan is an original Javanese local culture of Somongari, Purworejo. Besides the uniqueness, this tradition also has some steps that should to be done complete with some mandatory requirements.

Secondly, it is believed that Jolenan has high value because of its meaning, purpose and benefits. Since the name Jolenan consist of meaning, “do not forget” which means as human being, people should remember to always feel grateful towards God the Almighty. Moreover, it also has some purposes and benefits which are as the way they have to feel the blessings that God has
already given, make people gather in togetherness, remember about the founder of their village, they can always share their love by sharing food, happiness and the last is about the idea of applying gotong royong, which means people or society in Somongari help and cooperate one to each other in doing this tradition.

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