



Warak Ngendog as a Hybrid Cultural Symbol: Negotiating Urban Multicultural Identity in Semarang, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study examines Warak Ngendog as a hybrid cultural symbol that reflects the negotiation of urban multicultural identity in Semarang, Indonesia. In the context of globalization and rapid urban transformation, local cultural traditions are increasingly challenged to maintain their relevance while simultaneously adapting to new social, economic, and digital environments. This research aims to analyze how Warak Ngendog embodies cultural hybridity, how it is interpreted by the community, and how it contributes to the construction of social cohesion in a multicultural urban society. A qualitative ethnographic approach was employed, involving participant observation during the Dugderan Festival, semi-structured interviews with cultural practitioners and community members, document analysis, and digital ethnography of social media representations. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis informed by cultural hybridity theory, symbolic interactionism, and urban identity studies. The findings reveal that Warak Ngendog represents a symbolic integration of Javanese, Chinese, and Arab cultural elements, functioning as a medium for expressing tolerance and intercultural harmony. The tradition has undergone transformation from a religious-cultural ritual into an urban cultural icon embedded in tourism, digital media, and commercial practices. While this transformation enhances cultural visibility and economic value, it also raises concerns regarding cultural commodification and the potential dilution of its philosophical meanings. Nevertheless, Warak Ngendog continues to play a significant role in strengthening Semarang's urban multicultural identity and fostering collective belonging among diverse communities. This study contributes to broader discussions on cultural hybridity, urban identity, and multiculturalism by demonstrating how local cultural symbols operate as mechanisms of social integration in contemporary urban societies. It also highlights the importance of balancing cultural preservation with modernization in sustaining intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: Warak Ngendog; Cultural Hybridity; Urban Identity; Multiculturalism; Cultural Heritage

Introduction

In the era of globalization, local cultures face increasing pressure from rapid social transformation, technological advancement, and cultural homogenization (Robotham, 2005). These dynamics often challenge the sustainability of traditional cultural expressions, particularly in urban contexts where modernization and diversity intersect. At the same time, globalization also provides opportunities for local traditions to be reinterpreted,

reshaped, and repositioned within broader cultural, economic, and digital networks. Within this context, cultural symbols play an essential role in maintaining collective identity and strengthening social cohesion in multicultural societies.

Indonesia represents one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world, characterized by the coexistence of multiple ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups ([Ashadi, 2015](#)). This diversity is strongly reflected in urban centers that historically developed as hubs of trade and intercultural interaction. Semarang, the capital city of Central Java, is one such multicultural city shaped by long-standing interactions among Javanese, Chinese, Arab, and other communities. This historical configuration has produced various cultural traditions that embody processes of acculturation and cultural hybridity.

One of the most prominent cultural traditions in Semarang is Warak Ngendog ([Hasanah, 2019](#); [Rahmawati & Afrizal, 2023](#); [Senoprabowo et al., 2021](#)), a symbolic figure featured in the annual Dugderan Festival, which marks the arrival of Ramadan. Warak Ngendog is visually represented as a mythical creature combining elements of different animals, symbolizing the integration of diverse cultural influences within Semarang society. Beyond its physical form, it carries deep social and philosophical meanings related to harmony, tolerance, and multicultural coexistence, and is widely recognized as an icon of Semarang's urban identity.

From the perspective of cultural hybridity, Warak Ngendog can be understood as a manifestation of continuous cultural negotiation among different ethnic groups. Bhabha ([Bhabha, 2010](#)) conceptualizes hybridity as a "third space" where cultural meanings are produced through interaction and reinterpretation beyond fixed cultural boundaries. Empirical studies on Indonesia also show that local traditions often reflect hybrid cultural formations resulting from historical trade networks, migration, colonial encounters, and religious diffusion ([Abdullah et al., 2025](#); [Kurnia, 2011](#); [Soekiman & Purwanto, 2018](#)). Within this framework, Warak Ngendog represents a unique hybrid cultural symbol that integrates Javanese, Chinese, and Arab cultural elements into a single representation.

Symbolically, culture is not merely a collection of artifacts but a system of meanings through which societies interpret and construct reality ([Geertz & Darnton, 2017](#)). Warak Ngendog illustrates this symbolic dimension through its composite form: the dragon-like head is associated with Chinese cultural influence, the goat-like body reflects Arab-Islamic traditions, while its local performance is rooted in Javanese cultural practices. These symbolic elements demonstrate how meaning is socially constructed and continuously negotiated through festivals, community participation, and intergenerational transmission.

Urban identity is also central to understanding the significance of Warak Ngendog ([Laras, 2018](#); [Mawati & Darwoto, 2023](#); [Triyanto et al., 2013](#)). Castells ([Castells, 2010](#)) defines urban identity as a collective sense of belonging constructed through shared cultural practices and symbolic representations within urban space. In rapidly modernizing cities, cultural heritage functions as an anchor of historical continuity and collective memory. Semarang's identity as a multicultural trading city is strongly reflected in traditions such as Dugderan and Warak Ngendog, which reinforce local distinctiveness amidst global transformation.

However, urban cultural traditions today are also increasingly influenced by commodification and digital transformation. The integration of local traditions into tourism and digital media has transformed cultural practices into consumable cultural products ([Bai & Weng, 2023](#); [Hafidhoh, 2025](#); [Nasution & Sitti Nurlaeli, 2025](#)). This process reflects glocalization, where local culture adapts to global economic and media flows while maintaining its local specificity. Warak Ngendog, for instance, has evolved from a religious-cultural ritual into a cultural icon reproduced in tourism campaigns, digital content, and commercial products. While this transformation increases visibility and economic value, it also raises concerns regarding the potential loss of symbolic depth and cultural authenticity.

Despite extensive studies on cultural symbolism, hybridity, and urban heritage, previous research has primarily focused on Warak Ngendog from historical and folkloric perspectives ([Aryani & Djakaria, 2021](#); [Hasanah, 2019](#)). Limited studies have critically examined its role in negotiating contemporary urban multicultural identity, particularly in relation to globalization, digital culture, and cultural commodification ([A- et al., 2013](#); [Khamadi & Senoprabowo, 2021](#); [Senoprabowo & Khamadi, 2018](#)). Furthermore, its potential contribution to multicultural education and cultural sustainability remains underexplored.

Local wisdom, understood as culturally embedded knowledge developed through long historical experience ([Berkes, 1999](#)), provides an important framework for understanding the educational and social value of Warak Ngendog. Recent studies indicate that culturally responsive education based on local wisdom can strengthen intercultural understanding while supporting the preservation of intangible cultural heritage ([Metera et al., 2025](#); [Sadri & Wisnu Bayu Temaja, 2025](#); [Wayan Sadri & Gede Bagus Wisnu Bayu Temaja, 2025](#)). Warak Ngendog embodies values of tolerance, cooperation, and social harmony, making it relevant not only as a cultural symbol but also as a pedagogical resource in multicultural education.

Grounded in cultural hybridity theory ([Bhabha, 2010](#)), symbolic culture ([Geertz & Darnton, 2017](#)), and urban identity studies ([Castells, 2010](#)), this study analyzes Warak Ngendog as a hybrid cultural symbol that reflects the negotiation of urban multicultural identity in Semarang. Specifically, it investigates how the symbol is interpreted by the community, how it transforms within contemporary cultural practices, and how it contributes to social cohesion in a multicultural urban society. In doing so, this study contributes to broader discussions on cultural hybridity, urban identity, and cultural preservation in the context of globalization and digital transformation.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design ([Creswell & Creswell, 2018](#)) using an ethnographic approach to explore the cultural meanings and social functions of Warak Ngendog within the multicultural urban context of Semarang, Indonesia. Qualitative ethnography was considered appropriate because the study aimed to understand cultural symbols, community interpretations, and social interactions embedded within the Warak Ngendog tradition. The research focused on examining how Warak Ngendog functions as

a hybrid cultural symbol that negotiates urban multicultural identity in contemporary society.

The study was conducted in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia, particularly during the Dugderan Festival, where Warak Ngendog is prominently displayed as a cultural icon. Semarang was selected as the research site due to its historical multicultural characteristics shaped by Javanese, Chinese, and Arab communities. The research involved direct observation of cultural activities, festival performances, and community participation associated with Warak Ngendog.

Data were collected through several qualitative techniques, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, documentation analysis, digital media observation, and comparative analysis. Participant observation was conducted during the Dugderan Festival to examine the symbolic representation of Warak Ngendog, public interactions, and festival activities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with cultural practitioners, local historians, festival organizers, community leaders, educators, artists, and local residents. The interviews explored participants' perceptions regarding the cultural meanings, historical significance, and contemporary transformation of Warak Ngendog.

To strengthen the theoretical contribution of the study, comparative analysis was employed by examining similarities and differences in the interpretations of Warak Ngendog across various stakeholder groups. In addition, comparisons were made between traditional and contemporary representations of Warak Ngendog as reflected in historical records, festival practices, educational initiatives, and digital media content. This comparative approach enabled the identification of evolving cultural narratives and provided deeper insights into the processes of cultural preservation, adaptation, and identity formation within a multicultural society.

In addition, documentation analysis was conducted using photographs, festival archives, cultural publications, local government documents, and previous studies related to Warak Ngendog and Semarang's multicultural heritage. The study also included digital ethnography through the analysis of social media content, online festival promotions, and digital representations of Warak Ngendog on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and local news websites. This approach aimed to understand how local cultural traditions are reconstructed and disseminated within digital spaces.

The participants were selected purposively based on their involvement and knowledge regarding Warak Ngendog and Dugderan traditions. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to obtain rich and relevant information from individuals directly connected to the cultural phenomenon being studied. The study involved approximately 20 participants consisting of cultural experts, local community members, festival organizers, and youth participants.

Table 1. Interview Participants

Participant Category	Number of Participants	Main Issues Discussed	Emerging Themes	Representative Findings
Cultural Experts	5	Historical origins, symbolic meanings, cultural hybridity of Warak Ngendog	Cultural hybridity; symbolic culture; historical identity (Iezaz Ul Hassan & Zareena Qasim, 2025)	Warak Ngendog reflects the acculturation of Javanese, Chinese, and Arab cultural influences in Semarang.
Local Community Members	6	Community perceptions, social values, cultural participation	Social harmony; collective identity; multicultural coexistence	The tradition is perceived as a symbol of unity and tolerance among diverse communities.
Festival Organizers	4	Festival transformation, tourism promotion, public engagement	Cultural commodification ; urban cultural branding; preservation strategies	Dugderan has evolved into a tourism and cultural branding event while maintaining local identity.
Youth Participants	5	Digital representation, social media engagement, cultural awareness	Digital culture; youth engagement; cultural sustainability	Younger generations increasingly recognize Warak Ngendog through social media and digital content.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis process involved data reduction, coding, categorization, interpretation, and theme development. The researcher identified recurring themes related to cultural hybridity, multicultural identity, tolerance, cultural transformation, digitalization, and cultural preservation. The findings were interpreted using theoretical perspectives of cultural hybridity, symbolic culture, multiculturalism, urban identity, and cultural commodification.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of Interview Data

Main Theme	Description of Theme	Supporting Participant Perspectives	Interpretation
Cultural Hybridity	Warak Ngendog represents the blending of Javanese, Chinese, and Arab cultural elements.	Participants described the symbolic body parts as representing different ethnic traditions.	The symbol functions as a representation of multicultural coexistence in Semarang.
Symbol of Tolerance	The tradition promotes unity,	Community members emphasized harmony	Warak Ngendog acts as a cultural mediator

Main Theme	Description of Theme	Supporting Participant Perspectives	Interpretation
	respect, and peaceful coexistence.	among ethnic and religious groups during Dugderan celebrations.	fostering social cohesion.
Urban Identity	Warak Ngendog is recognized as a cultural icon of Semarang.	Participants stated that the tradition differentiates Semarang from other Indonesian cities.	Local traditions contribute to the construction of urban identity and collective belonging.
Cultural Transformation	The tradition has transformed into a tourism and public cultural attraction.	Organizers explained the increasing involvement of tourism institutions and media promotion.	Local culture adapts to modernization and globalization processes.
Digital Representation	Social media increasingly shapes public understanding of Warak Ngendog.	Youth participants reported learning about the tradition through Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.	Digital media plays a significant role in cultural dissemination and preservation.
Cultural Commodification	Commercialization influences the meaning and function of the tradition.	Some participants expressed concerns regarding excessive commercialization.	Economic adaptation may strengthen visibility while risking symbolic authenticity.
Cultural Preservation	Preservation requires collaboration across generations and institutions.	Participants highlighted the importance of education and community involvement.	Sustainable preservation depends on active cultural transmission and participation.

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, the study applied triangulation techniques by comparing findings from observations, interviews, documentation, and digital sources. Member checking was also conducted by confirming several interview interpretations with participants to ensure the accuracy of cultural meanings and contextual understanding. Furthermore, prolonged engagement during cultural observations helped strengthen the depth and validity of the findings.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the study. All participants were informed about the research objectives, and their participation was voluntary. Interview data were treated confidentially, and participants' identities were anonymized when necessary. The study also respected local cultural values and community norms during data collection and interpretation processes.

Result and Discussion

This study employs four complementary data collection methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the Warak Ngendog phenomenon. The first method is participant observation conducted during the Dugderan Festival in 2025, where the researcher directly observed cultural practices, community participation, and the symbolic representation of Warak Ngendog within the festival context. The second method is semi-structured interviews with cultural practitioners, community leaders, artists, and local residents to explore their meanings, perceptions, and interpretations of the Warak Ngendog tradition. The third method is document analysis, which includes various sources such as local government archives, cultural publications, academic articles, and visual documentation related to the history and development of Warak Ngendog. The fourth method is digital ethnography focusing on the representation of Warak Ngendog on social media platforms, including content from Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and online news portals, in order to understand how the tradition is reproduced and interpreted within contemporary digital spaces.

Table 3. Data Collection Methods and Research Outputs

Data Collection Method	Description	Data Sources	Type of Data Generated	Key Outputs for Analysis
Participant Observation during Dugderan Festival	Direct observation of cultural performance and public participation in Warak Ngendog-related activities during the festival	Dugderan Festival events, public rituals, community interactions	Field notes, visual records, behavioral observations	Symbolic practices, public engagement patterns, cultural interaction forms, spatial-cultural expression
Semi-Structured Interviews	In-depth interviews with cultural practitioners and community members to explore meanings and interpretations of Warak Ngendog	Cultural experts, festival organizers, local residents, artists, youth participants	Verbal narratives, interview transcripts	Perceptions of cultural hybridity, meanings of tolerance, identity construction, generational perspectives
Document Analysis	Analysis of written and visual documents related to Warak Ngendog tradition and	Local government archives, cultural books, academic articles, festival	Textual and visual documents	Historical context, symbolic meanings, institutional narratives, cultural

Data Collection Method	Description	Data Sources	Type of Data Generated	Key Outputs for Analysis
	Dugderan Festival	reports, photographs		evolution patterns
Digital Ethnography of Social Media	Analysis of online representation and circulation of Warak Ngendog in digital platforms	Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, online news portals, digital posters	Digital content, posts, comments, hashtags, videos	Digital representation of culture, youth engagement, commodification trends, cultural dissemination patterns

The table presents a structured overview of the four data collection methods used in this study, along with their respective data sources, types of data generated, and key analytical outputs. It demonstrates how participant observation during the Dugderan Festival captures real-time cultural practices and symbolic interactions, while semi-structured interviews provide in-depth insights into participants’ meanings and interpretations of Warak Ngendog. Document analysis contributes historical and institutional perspectives by examining written and visual records, whereas digital ethnography extends the analysis to contemporary representations of Warak Ngendog in social media and online platforms. Together, these methods ensure data triangulation and provide a comprehensive understanding of Warak Ngendog as a hybrid cultural symbol in both physical and digital cultural spaces.

Warak Ngendog as a Representation of Cultural Hybridity

The findings reveal that Warak Ngendog functions as a hybrid cultural symbol that reflects the multicultural identity of Semarang society. Based on observations during the Dugderan Festival and interviews with local cultural figures, the physical form of Warak Ngendog embodies the acculturation of three dominant ethnic cultures in Semarang, namely Javanese, Chinese, and Arab communities. The dragon-like head symbolizes Chinese cultural influence, the goat-like body represents Arab-Islamic traditions, while the overall structure and local interpretation are closely connected to Javanese cultural values. This hybrid representation demonstrates that cultural identity in Semarang is not constructed through a single ethnic narrative but through continuous interaction among diverse communities.

Table 4. Findings

Main Theme	Findings	Interpretation	Theoretical Perspective	Implications
Cultural Hybridity of Warak Ngendog	Warak Ngendog combines elements of Javanese, Chinese, and Arab cultures through its	The symbol reflects intercultural interaction and the blending of ethnic identities in Semarang society.	Cultural Hybridity (Bhabha, 2010)	Demonstrates how local traditions can promote multicultural coexistence.

Main Theme	Findings	Interpretation	Theoretical Perspective	Implications
Symbol of Tolerance and Social Harmony	symbolic physical form. Communities perceive Warak Ngendog as a representation of unity and peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic and religious groups.	The tradition strengthens social cohesion and collective identity in multicultural urban communities.	Symbolic Interactionism; Multiculturalism (Kambali et al., 2022; PERRY-SHELDON, 1994)	Supports intercultural understanding and social integration.
Transformation into Urban Cultural Icon	Warak Ngendog has evolved from a religious-cultural symbol into a tourism and urban branding icon.	The tradition adapts to modernization and digital culture while maintaining its local identity.	Urban Cultural Identity; Glocalization (Robertson, 1992)	Enhances cultural visibility and local economic potential.
Digitalization and Youth Engagement	Younger generations increasingly recognize Warak Ngendog through social media and digital platforms.	Digital media reshapes cultural transmission and public participation in local traditions.	Digital Heritage Theory (Cameron & Kenderdine, 2010)	Encourages innovative approaches to cultural preservation.
Commodification of Local Culture	Warak Ngendog is reproduced in souvenirs, festivals, commercial products, and tourism campaigns.	Commercialization increases popularity but risks reducing philosophical meanings.	Cultural Commodification Theory (MacCannell, 1976)	Highlights the need for balanced cultural preservation strategies.
Construction of Urban Multicultural Identity	Warak Ngendog serves as a cultural marker distinguishing Semarang from other Indonesian cities.	Local traditions become instruments for negotiating identity in urban multicultural society.	Urban Identity Theory (Castells, 2010)	Reinforces collective belonging and regional cultural pride.
Educational and Cultural Preservation Values	The tradition contains values of tolerance, cooperation, and	Warak Ngendog can function as a medium for multicultural	Local Wisdom Education; Character Education	Relevant for educational curriculum and cultural literacy programs.

Main Theme	Findings	Interpretation	Theoretical Perspective	Implications
Sustainability Challenges	respect for diversity. Informants expressed concerns about excessive commercialization and declining philosophical understanding among youth.	and character education. Cultural sustainability requires active intergenerational transmission and community involvement.	(Nucci et al., 2015) Cultural Preservation Theory (Blake, 2023)	Calls for collaborative preservation among government, schools, and cultural communities.

From the perspective of cultural hybridity proposed by Homi K. Bhabha (Bhabha, 2010), Warak Ngendog can be understood as a “third space” where cultural negotiation occurs. Rather than preserving rigid ethnic boundaries, the symbol creates a shared cultural space that allows different communities to coexist within a collective urban identity. The findings indicate that the people of Semarang perceive Warak Ngendog not merely as a festival ornament but as a symbol of social harmony and intercultural coexistence. This finding strengthens previous studies on Indonesian local wisdom by demonstrating that hybrid cultural symbols can function as instruments of social integration in multicultural urban societies (Hasanah, 2019; Triyanto et al., 2013).

The Symbolic Meaning of Tolerance and Social Harmony

The study found that Warak Ngendog contains moral and philosophical values associated with tolerance, unity, and mutual respect among ethnic groups. Informants explained that the tradition of Dugderan, where Warak Ngendog appears prominently, historically served as a communal celebration welcoming the holy month of Ramadan. However, over time, the festival evolved into a collective cultural event involving not only Muslim communities but also people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

This phenomenon reflects the role of local culture in strengthening social cohesion in urban environments (Oldenburg, 1999). Participants emphasized that the symbolic combination of different animal forms in Warak Ngendog represents the importance of maintaining harmony despite cultural differences. In this context, Warak Ngendog acts as a cultural mediator that reduces social boundaries and reinforces a sense of belonging among Semarang citizens.

The findings also suggest that local cultural symbols can contribute to multicultural education and interethnic understanding. In contemporary Indonesian society, where issues of identity politics and social polarization increasingly emerge, the preservation of symbols such as Warak Ngendog becomes socially significant. The tradition provides an alternative narrative emphasizing coexistence rather than division.

Transformation of Warak Ngendog in Contemporary Urban Culture

Another important finding concerns the transformation of Warak Ngendog from a traditional religious-cultural symbol into a modern urban cultural icon. Field observations revealed that Warak Ngendog is now widely reproduced in public festivals, tourism branding, souvenirs, social media content, educational activities, and commercial products. This transformation indicates the adaptation of local traditions to contemporary urban and digital contexts.

Several younger participants acknowledged that they first became familiar with Warak Ngendog through social media platforms rather than through direct participation in traditional ceremonies. This demonstrates that digital culture plays a crucial role in reshaping cultural transmission among younger generations. At the same time, the increasing popularity of Warak Ngendog in tourism and commercial sectors reflects the commodification of local culture.

While commercialization potentially increases public awareness and economic value, some cultural informants expressed concern that excessive commodification may gradually reduce the philosophical and spiritual meanings embedded within the tradition. The festival risks becoming merely performative and entertainment-oriented rather than functioning as a medium for cultural reflection and social values transmission. Therefore, the sustainability of Warak Ngendog depends not only on public celebration but also on efforts to preserve its historical and symbolic meanings.

Warak Ngendog and the Construction of Urban Multicultural Identity

The findings further demonstrate that Warak Ngendog contributes significantly to the construction of Semarang's urban multicultural identity. In a rapidly modernizing city shaped by globalization, migration, and digital transformation, local cultural symbols become important markers of collective identity. Informants described Warak Ngendog as a unique cultural icon distinguishing Semarang from other Indonesian cities.

The annual Dugderan Festival reinforces this collective identity by bringing together communities from different social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds in a shared public space. This collective participation strengthens emotional attachment to local heritage and creates a sense of cultural continuity amidst urban change. In this sense, Warak Ngendog operates not only as a cultural artifact but also as a social mechanism that connects historical memory with contemporary urban life.

Moreover, the study reveals that urban identity in Semarang is negotiated through inclusivity rather than cultural domination. The hybrid form of Warak Ngendog symbolizes the acceptance of diversity as a foundational aspect of local identity. This finding contributes to broader discussions on multiculturalism in Southeast Asia by showing how local traditions can become effective platforms for negotiating diversity in plural societies.

Implications for Cultural Preservation

The study highlights the importance of integrating local cultural symbols into educational, cultural, and tourism programs to ensure their sustainability. Warak Ngendog

has strong potential to be utilized as a medium for multicultural education, particularly in promoting values of tolerance, cooperation, and cultural appreciation among younger generations.

The findings also suggest that cultural preservation should involve collaboration between local governments, educational institutions, artists, cultural communities, and digital media creators. Preservation efforts should not only focus on maintaining physical performances but also on documenting philosophical meanings, oral narratives, and historical values associated with the tradition.

In the context of globalization, preserving hybrid cultural symbols such as Warak Ngendog is essential for maintaining local cultural resilience. The tradition demonstrates that multicultural coexistence can be represented positively through local wisdom, thereby offering valuable insights for other multicultural urban societies facing identity fragmentation and cultural homogenization.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Warak Ngendog functions as more than a traditional cultural artifact; it operates as a dynamic symbol of multicultural negotiation within the urban context of Semarang. The hybrid characteristics embodied in the figure of Warak Ngendog reflect the long historical interaction among Javanese, Chinese, and Arab communities that have shaped the social structure of the city. This supports Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 2010), which argues that cultural identity emerges through continuous interaction and negotiation rather than through fixed or singular cultural origins. In the context of Semarang, Warak Ngendog represents a "third space" where cultural boundaries become fluid and inclusive, allowing different ethnic identities to coexist within a shared urban culture.

The symbolic structure of Warak Ngendog also reinforces the importance of local wisdom in maintaining social harmony within multicultural societies. The findings indicate that the community interprets the symbol as representing tolerance, unity, and peaceful coexistence. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing that local cultural traditions in Indonesia often function as social instruments for strengthening communal solidarity and reducing interethnic tensions. Unlike modern political narratives that may emphasize differences, Warak Ngendog offers a cultural narrative centered on collective identity and mutual respect. Therefore, the tradition contributes not only to cultural preservation but also to the construction of inclusive social values in contemporary urban society.

Another significant finding concerns the transformation of Warak Ngendog in response to modernization and globalization. The tradition has evolved from a primarily religious-cultural practice associated with Dugderan into a broader urban cultural icon integrated into tourism, public festivals, social media, and commercial activities. This transformation illustrates the adaptive nature of local culture in contemporary society. From the perspective of glocalization theory, Warak Ngendog demonstrates how local traditions can survive by adjusting to global cultural and economic dynamics while maintaining distinctive local characteristics. The increasing visibility of Warak Ngendog in digital spaces

indicates that cultural preservation is no longer limited to physical rituals but increasingly occurs through virtual representation and digital participation.

However, the study also reveals tensions between cultural preservation and commercialization. The commodification of Warak Ngendog through tourism branding, souvenirs, and entertainment festivals has contributed to greater public recognition and economic opportunities. Nevertheless, several informants expressed concern that excessive commercialization may gradually weaken the philosophical and spiritual meanings embedded within the tradition. This finding is consistent with cultural commodification theory, which argues that transforming cultural heritage into market-oriented products may reduce its symbolic authenticity. Consequently, preserving Warak Ngendog requires a balanced approach that supports economic sustainability without neglecting the cultural values and historical narratives associated with the tradition.

The findings further suggest that Warak Ngendog plays an important role in shaping Semarang's urban multicultural identity. In rapidly modernizing cities, local traditions often become symbolic anchors that connect communities to collective memory and regional identity. The annual Dugderan Festival creates a shared public space where people from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds participate collectively, reinforcing emotional attachment to local culture. This demonstrates that urban identity is not solely formed through economic development or political structures but also through shared cultural experiences and symbolic traditions.

From an educational perspective, the study highlights the potential of Warak Ngendog as a medium for multicultural and character education. The values embedded in the tradition—including tolerance, cooperation, respect for diversity, and social harmony—are highly relevant to contemporary educational challenges in Indonesia. Integrating local cultural symbols into educational practices may strengthen students' cultural awareness while simultaneously promoting inclusive attitudes in plural societies. This finding supports the growing discourse on culturally responsive education and local wisdom-based learning, particularly within the context of preserving intangible cultural heritage among younger generations.

The study contributes to broader discussions on multiculturalism, cultural hybridity, and urban identity in Southeast Asia. Warak Ngendog demonstrates that local traditions can function as effective mechanisms for negotiating diversity within multicultural societies. Rather than viewing cultural differences as sources of fragmentation, the tradition presents diversity as a foundation for collective identity and social integration. In this sense, Warak Ngendog serves not only as a local cultural symbol of Semarang but also as a relevant example of how hybrid traditions can foster intercultural coexistence in contemporary global society.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Warak Ngendog represents a significant hybrid cultural symbol that reflects the multicultural identity of Semarang society through the acculturation of Javanese, Chinese, and Arab cultural elements. As a product of historical interaction and coexistence, Warak Ngendog functions as a medium of cultural negotiation that promotes tolerance, unity, and social harmony within a multicultural urban environment. The findings reveal that the tradition plays an important role in constructing urban multicultural identity amid the pressures of globalization and modernization, as evidenced by its transformation from a religious-cultural ritual into a widely recognized urban cultural icon. Its increasing presence in tourism, festivals, digital media, and commercial activities demonstrates the adaptive capacity of local wisdom in contemporary society. Nevertheless, challenges related to cultural commodification and the declining philosophical understanding of the tradition among younger generations remain significant concerns. While commercialization enhances cultural visibility and economic opportunities, excessive market-oriented representation may weaken the symbolic and spiritual meanings embedded within the tradition. Therefore, sustainable preservation requires collaborative efforts among local governments, cultural communities, educational institutions, and digital media actors to maintain both the visibility and authenticity of Warak Ngendog. Furthermore, the tradition possesses considerable educational potential as a source of multicultural and character education, particularly in promoting values of tolerance, cooperation, and respect for diversity. Overall, this study contributes to discussions on cultural hybridity, urban identity, and multiculturalism by demonstrating that local traditions can serve as effective instruments for negotiating diversity, strengthening social integration, and fostering cultural resilience in contemporary global society.

This study is limited by its focus on a single cultural tradition within the specific socio-cultural context of Semarang, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other multicultural settings. In addition, the research primarily relies on qualitative data collected from local stakeholders and cultural observations, which may not fully capture broader regional or international perspectives on cultural hybridity and identity formation. Future studies are therefore encouraged to conduct comparative cross-city and cross-country research involving similar hybrid cultural traditions in other multicultural urban contexts. Comparative investigations across cities in Indonesia or between countries in Southeast Asia and beyond could provide deeper insights into how local traditions negotiate cultural diversity, respond to globalization, and contribute to urban identity formation. Such comparative studies would strengthen the theoretical understanding of cultural hybridity and multiculturalism while expanding the applicability of the findings to broader cultural and geographical contexts.

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