

Ritual Communication in the Fulfillment of Promises (Nazars) at the Tomb of Puyang Serunting (Study in Pelangkenidai Village)

Shefa Gustaza Putri*, Kun Budianto, Muslimin Ritonga

Ilmu Komunikasi, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang

Email : 2220701045@radenfatah.ac.id

Article Info

Article history:

Received 14 Apr, 2026

Revised 19 May, 2026

Accepted 10 Jun, 2026

Keywords:

Ritual Communication,
Vows, Ritual
Implementation Process,
Form of Ritual
Communication, tomb of
Puyang Serunting,
Pelangkenidai Village

ABSTRACT

This study examines ritual communication in the fulfillment of promises (vows) at the tomb of Puyang Serunting, Pelangkenidai Village, with a focus on: the process of implementing ritual communication and the form of ritual communication that appears during the fulfillment of vows. The research uses a qualitative ethnographic approach; Data was collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with key informants (traditional leaders, grave holders, and pilgrims), and field documentation. The results of the study showed that the process of implementing ritual communication included the preparation stage (intention and formulation of promises), ritual implementation (prayer reading, joint procession, and other symbolic actions), and socio-religious follow-up (reporting of promise fulfillment and community recognition). The process is colored by the negotiation of roles between ritual actors, customary norms, and local religious interpretations that determine the sequence of actions and the legitimacy of the ritual. The forms of ritual communication found included verbal communication (pronunciation of vows, prayers, and narratives of gratitude), nonverbal communication (body gestures, ritual clothing, and physical procedures at the tomb), and collective communication (procession rituals, joint prayer readings, and social affirmation ceremonies). This communication serves to represent individual intentions, build common meaning, and reproduce the social structure and religious values in Pelangkenidai Village. These findings enrich the understanding of local ritual dynamics and provide a basis for recommendations for the preservation of cultural practices.

INTRODUCTION

Tradition is an activity carried out by the community to meet the needs, both belief systems, social systems, and entertainment. This activity has become a habit in society and has become a cultural feature in society. Tradition is an expression of cultural elements in the form of valuable human activities. Tradition is the customs and practices of a society that must be preserved wherever it is. This preservation process is sought so that the existing culture does not just disappear (Fitria Anggita Permata Sari, Murdiati, and Hamandia 2024).

Tradition also teaches people the values necessary to assume the responsibility of preserving nature, contributing to the enhancement of human dignity and improving relationships between communities. In every society, traditions are preserved with the aim of preserving the heritage of our ancestors and as a means of spreading Islamic teachings. This tradition is also maintained as a means of collecting prayers to Allah SWT so that they always get abundant nutrition in this fertile realm and are always safe in any situation. Like the Four Lawang tradition, including the Beniat tradition (Selfia, Kherrmarinah, and Sari 2024).

Pilgrimage to the grave is a familiar thing in society, especially in a Muslim society. Pilgrimage to the grave is a teaching of the Prophet Saw to be carried out without a certain time limit. At the beginning of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) forbade Muslims to visit graves, because there was polygamy and worship of the grave. Then after the Islamic faith becomes strong and controlled in the hearts of the people, the law and its objectives have been known and understood, then the pilgrimage to the grave is allowed (Putri Sari Simatupang 2021).

In subsequent developments, Muslims tend to respect sacred graves with various activities in the cemetery, such as reading prayers, doing 'itikaf and dhikr. But on the other hand, there are also people who break their vows (promises) by hiding livestock such as goats and chickens in the sacred tomb complex, because of the vows they utter. This tradition of vows has been preserved from ancestors to generations until now, considering that what people have done in the past is believed to bring blessings. (Mirdad, Helmina, and Admizal 2022).

However, a provision that has already been pronounced in the vow will cause anxiety if the vow is not kept, such as coming to oneself. The fear of calamity makes the community fulfill (release) their vows with the provisions of what is their vow. Like slaughtering goats in a tomb complex that is believed to be sacred and then served to orphans and pilgrims around it (Asqalani 2021).

Indonesia is a country with a very high cultural diversity, where each region has unique traditions that are inherited from generation to generation. The tradition of distributing promises (vows) at the tomb of Puyang Serunting in Pelang Kenidai Village is one of the cultural heritages that still exists today. The local community makes this tradition a form of respect for ancestors and a form of gratitude for the blessings obtained in daily life. This tradition plays not only a role in the spiritual context, but also as a social binder within the community. This form of respect and gratitude is practiced consistently and is a characteristic of the local community who further preserve the ancestral heritage with full awareness.

The cultural ritual that contains the Prayer at the Tomb is not just a personal affair between individuals and God, but has become a collective practice involving the participation of family, neighbors, traditional leaders, and community elements. The form of ritual is generally characterized by the reading of prayers, the giving of offerings in the form of produce, and the slaughter of animals carried out in the grave area as a form of fulfilling the promised promise. This collective practice shows the existence of strong social bonds between citizens in maintaining their ancestral traditions. The presence of various elements of society shows how important this ritual is in maintaining social and spiritual harmony (Selfia, Khermarinah, et al. 2024).

In its implementation, there are several important stages, including the preparation stage with the procurement of offerings and tent preparation, the implementation stage in the form of the reading of the intention and slaughter of animals under the supervision of the traditional chief, and the closing stage with the distribution of the offerings to local residents. This entire process shows the relationship between humans and ancestors, traditional leaders, and the surrounding community directly. This stage emphasizes the importance of coordination and the participation of various parties in preserving traditions and strengthening socio-cultural relations that have lasted for centuries. The process of communication in rituals is also very important because it is a means of transferring cultural values and meanings from generation to generation (Fitria Anggita Permata Sari et al. 2024).

Communication rituals are a unique form of communication because of compliance with the standard rules agreed upon by the community, both in language, aesthetics, and the relationship between the ruler and the participants. The language used in communication rituals is very different from everyday language because it will symbolize cultural canonism that is not freely chosen by the participants, but is inherited through tradition. In its implementation, communication rituals reaffirm the emotional commitment of individuals to the values of family, tribe, nation, state, ideology, or religion, as well as strengthen the sense of togetherness and unity of meaning.

In Pelangkenidai Village, Pagaralam, South Sumatra, the Puyang Serunting Tomb is not just a burial site, but a center of living rituals that serves as a place to present promises or vows. This ritual involves communication through prayer, offerings such as offerings, animals, and food between the individual and the spirit. Where vows that are spoken orally or heartily become a sacred bond that must be kept to avoid bad luck or ask for blessings such as healing, sustenance, or protection.

The ritual communication in pouring the vows at the tomb is unique because it combines verbal (promises), non-verbal (gestures and offerings). For example, a pilgrim who intends to ask for the smooth running of his trading business, then promises: "if my sustenance is slow and the turnover doubles in six months, I will return to the tomb of the serunting puyang with the produce as a form of reciprocity to the spirit of the ancestors".

This research is expected to provide a deep understanding of how cultural values and kinship are intertwined in a collective practice rooted in ancestral traditions. This ritual practice not only strengthens social and spiritual relationships between individuals, but also maintains the sustainability of cultural heritage in the midst of changing times and the increasingly strengthening currents of globalization. Thus, this research not only serves as a documentation of local wisdom, but also as an effort to preserve traditions as well as strengthen community identities that are very relevant to be studied in the context of the development of modern society today (Sintya, Hendriyanto, and Zuniar Kamaluddin Mabruri 2025).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with the ethnographic method of communication. This method allows researchers to understand communication practices in cultural and social contexts in depth by observing, interviewing, and documenting firsthand the ritual activities of vows as a complex communication event. This communication ethnography focuses on the analysis of communication components such as settings, participants, interaction patterns, symbols, and norms underlying the ritual practice, which is very suitable for examining how ritual symbols and actions become a medium for expressing promise and gratitude in the Pelangkenidai Village

community. This approach also uses the theory of symbolic interactionism to understand the symbolic meanings that are awakened in rituals that are constructively explained through their social and spiritual contexts (F, Adil, and Bukhori 2020)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Process of Ritual Communication in the Fulfillment of Promises (Nazars) at the Tomb of Puyang Serunting

Preparation Stage for the Ritual of Prayer

The tomb of Puyang Serunting itself has provided quite complete facilities to support the implementation of the vow ritual. In the cemetery area, there is a special place for the slaughter of animals so that the slaughter process can be carried out in a more orderly and clean manner. In addition, there is also a large enough cooking place so that people can cook together comfortably. Not only that, the cemetery area has also been provided with a place to eat together that the community uses to enjoy dishes after the ritual process is completed. The place is usually used by the community alternately between men and women in accordance with the customary customs that apply in the implementation of the vow ritual.

Other facilities such as toilets, ablution places, and prayer places are also available around Puyang Serunting's tomb. The existence of these facilities is very helpful to the community, especially since the implementation of rituals usually lasts quite a long time and involves many people from various regions. Ablution places and prayer places are provided so that people can continue to carry out worship properly while participating in vow ritual activities. Based on the results of the research, the completeness of the facilities at the tomb of Puyang Serunting shows that the place is not only a place for ordinary pilgrimages, but has also become a center for cultural and social activities of the community in the implementation of the vow tradition. The available facilities make the implementation of the ritual more orderly, comfortable, and organized.

In addition, the preparation of ritual equipment also shows the value of responsibility and seriousness of the votive in fulfilling the promises that have been spoken. The community views that the vows that have been spoken must be fulfilled seriously as a form of keeping promises to Allah SWT. Therefore, all preparations are carried out seriously and attentively so that the implementation of the ritual runs well according to the customs and habits of the local community.

Stages of Ritual Implementation at the Tomb of Puyang Serunting

In the process of implementing this ritual, there is a strong social interaction between communities. Each stage is carried out together and full of a sense of family. In addition, each activity in the ritual has certain rules, symbols, and meanings that are understood by the community. Therefore, the implementation of the vow ritual at the tomb of Puyang Serunting is not only a personal activity of the zazar, but also part of the social and cultural activities of the local community.

Words of Appreciation and Presentation of the Purpose of the Vow

Based on the results of the researcher's observations, the atmosphere at the welcoming stage took place in an orderly and respectful manner. All the people present listened calmly and appreciated the submission of the vows. This shows the value of manners and respect for customs that are still maintained by the people of Pelangkenidai Village. The words of remarks are also a symbol of openness to the public that they are fulfilling the promises that have been made. Thus, the ritual of vows is not only seen as a personal relationship between humans and Allah SWT, but also as part of the social life of the community which is carried out openly and together.

Joint Prayer Led by Jurai Tue

Based on the results of the researcher's observations, the atmosphere of joint prayer took place with full of calm and a sense of solemnity. No one spoke or did any other activities during the prayer. This shows that the community respects the ritual process and understands the sacred value contained in these activities. Joint prayer also has a social meaning because the entire community gathers in the same activity. Through joint prayer, the community feels togetherness, unity, and closer social relations between others.

Pilgrimage to the Tomb of Puyang Serunting

The statement shows that the community has a collective awareness to maintain attitudes and respect customary rules while at the tomb of Puyang Serunting. Even though the rules are not officially written, people still obey them as part of cultural values and traditions that are passed down from generation to generation.

Slaughter of Animals of Vow

The statement shows that the vow ritual not only has spiritual value, but also has cultural and social value in people's lives. This tradition teaches the community to keep promises, maintain togetherness, and maintain relationships with customs and cultures that have been inherited by ancestors.

Stage of Vow Fulfillment**Eating Together**

Based on the results of the researcher's observations, the atmosphere of eating together took place with a sense of family. People sit together without distinguishing social status, age, or position in society. All the people who attended got the dish evenly and enjoyed the meal together in a warm and intimate atmosphere. This tradition of eating together has become an important symbol in the social life of the people of Pelangkenidai Village. Eating together is understood as a form of gratitude for the fulfillment of vows and as a medium to strengthen social relations between communities. In this activity, it can be seen that there is a sense of togetherness, solidarity, and kinship that is still very strong in people's lives. In addition, eating together is also a form of respect for the vow to the community who have attended and assisted in the implementation of the vow ritual. Through these activities, the community is not only present as guests, but also part of the ritual process that is carried out together.

Prohibition of Bidders from Eating the Proceeds of Promises

The prohibition of the vow of the vow also has moral and spiritual meaning. This tradition teaches the community about the importance of keeping promises and being consistent with what has been said. In addition, these rules are also a form of self-control and a person's seriousness in fulfilling their vows. In the perspective of ritual communication, the prohibition becomes a cultural symbol that is understood by the community. Even though it is not officially written, the rule is still maintained and obeyed because it has become part of a hereditary tradition that has an important meaning in the life of the people of Pelangkenidai Village.

Eating With Women

Based on the results of the researcher's observations, the atmosphere of eating with women also took place with full of familiarity and family. The community talks to each other, enjoys food together, and shows harmonious social relations between fellow citizens. This tradition of eating with women shows that the vow ritual not only functions as a spiritual activity, but also as a means of strengthening social relations of the community. Through eating together, the community can gather, interact with each other, and strengthen the sense of brotherhood between residents. In addition, this tradition also shows that the people of Pelangkenidai Village still maintain traditional and cultural values in their daily lives. The procedures for carrying out rituals that are carried out in an orderly manner show that the community still respects the customary rules inherited by their ancestors.

From the perspective of ritual communication, eating with women is also part of the symbol of togetherness and social solidarity of the community. Rituals are not only understood as religious or spiritual activities, but also become a socio-cultural media that strengthens relationships between members of the community.

Post-Ritual Stage**Mutual Cooperation to Clean the Tomb Environment**

Based on the results of the research, the community views that maintaining the cleanliness of the tomb is part of respecting the place used in the implementation of traditional and cultural traditions. Therefore, the community feels that they have a responsibility to maintain the cleanliness and order of the tomb environment after the event is over. In addition, gotong royong activities are also a means of strengthening family relations between communities. During the process of cleaning the cemetery environment, the community interacts, talks, and works together so that social relations between residents become closer and more harmonious.

Distribution of Food Waste

Based on the results of the researcher's observations, the community received the distribution of food with a sense of joy and family. There was no scramble or difference in treatment in the distribution of food. This shows that people still uphold the value of togetherness and mutual respect in their social lives. From the perspective of ritual communication, the distribution of food is a form of symbolic communication that shows social relations and community solidarity. The act of sharing food is not only understood as an ordinary gift, but also a symbol of togetherness, gratitude, and harmonious social relations between communities.

In addition, the tradition of distributing food also shows that the vow ritual at the tomb of Puyang Serunting has a fairly strong social function in people's lives. The ritual is able to create social interaction, strengthen relationships between residents, and maintain the value of mutual cooperation and togetherness which is still maintained today. Thus, the post-ritual stage in the tradition of fulfilling vows at the tomb of Puyang Serunting is not only the closing of the activity, but also an important part in showing the social, cultural, and togetherness values of the people of Pelangkenidai Village.

Forms of Ritual Communication in the Fulfillment of Promises (Nazars)

Verbal Communication

Speech of the Vow

Based on the results of the interview, it can be seen that vows are made when a person is in a difficult condition and needs inner peace and hope for the help of Allah SWT.

Penazar's Speech

This delivery was carried out in front of jurai tue, traditional leaders, families, and the community so that it has an open nature and is known by many people. A speech is also a means to express gratitude for the fulfillment of long-awaited hopes or desires. In this process, the penazar shows respect for the community present and appreciates the traditions that are being carried out.

Joint Prayer

Joint prayer is a form of verbal communication that is very important in the ritual of fulfilling vows at the tomb of Puyang Serunting. The prayer was led by jurai tue and followed by all the people who attended the activity. Based on the results of the research, the prayers that are recited usually contain supplications to Allah SWT, prayers for salvation, prayers for blessings, and prayers for ancestors and the entire community present. Prayer together is a form of spiritual communication that connects humans with God and is a means to ask for goodness and salvation. In addition, joint prayer also has a social meaning because it is carried out collectively by the community. Through joint prayer, a sense of togetherness, unity, and solidarity is created between the people present in the ritual.

Presentation of the Closing Ritual

The delivery of the closing ritual is a form of verbal communication carried out by the jurai tue after the entire series of rituals has been carried out. In this delivery, jurai tue explained that the vow payment process had been completed in accordance with customary rules and the intention of the voter. Based on the results of the research, this submission has a function as an affirmation that all stages of the ritual have been completed. In addition, this delivery is also a sign that the penazar has fulfilled his promise to Allah SWT. In the context of ritual communication, the closing delivery has a symbolic meaning as the end of a series of traditional activities. Even though it is done simply, this speech has an important value in the structure of the ritual implementation because it is an official marker of the end of the activity.

Nonverbal Communication

a. Attendance at the Tomb, Community attendance at the Puyang Serunting Tomb is a form of nonverbal communication that shows respect for traditions, ancestors, and cultural values in the community. The arrival of the lucky man with his family and community is a symbol of seriousness in carrying out the vows that have been spoken.

b. Solemn Attitude During Prayer, Solemn Attitude During Prayer can be seen from the behavior of people who bow their heads, sit quietly, do not speak, and follow prayers attentively. This attitude is a form of respect for the ritual process and shows the spiritual awareness of the community.

c. Pilgrimage to the Tomb, to the tomb of Puyang Serunting is a symbol of respect for the ancestors. In this activity, the community not only prays, but also shows respect for places that are considered to have historical and cultural value. Pilgrimage is a form of symbolic communication that connects people with ancestral history and traditions.

d. Slaughter of Vow Animals, The slaughter of vow animals is the main symbol in the implementation of rituals. Slaughtered animals are a form of repayment of promises that have been made to Allah SWT. This action has the meaning that the vow has been paid and settled according to the original intention.

e. Mutual Cooperation in Cooking, Cooking activities together show the value of togetherness and social solidarity in society. All communities work together regardless of social status to prepare food from the proceeds of the vows.

f. Eating Together, Eating together is a symbol of gratitude and brotherhood between communities. This activity shows that the results of the vow ritual are not only enjoyed by the voter, but also distributed to all the people present.

g. Prohibition of Penazar to Eat the Results of the Vow, The prohibition of the Penazar not to eat the results of the vow is a symbol that the animal has been fully surrendered as a form of repayment of the promise to Allah SWT. This rule shows seriousness in keeping vows and maintaining the customary values that apply in the community.

h. Cleaning the Grave Environment, The activity of cleaning the cemetery environment is a form of nonverbal communication that shows social concern and shared responsibility for the community. Mutual cooperation in cleaning the tomb shows that the community not only uses the place for rituals, but also maintains its cleanliness and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The ritual communication process in fulfilling promises (vows) at the tomb of Puyang Serunting is carried out through several stages, namely the ritual preparation stage, the ritual implementation stage, the vow fulfillment stage, and the post-ritual stage. At the preparation stage, the vow first says a vow to Allah SWT and prepares all ritual equipment such as vow animals and consumption needs. The stages of implementing the ritual include the remarks of the voter, joint prayers led by jurai tue, pilgrimages to the tomb of Puyang Serunting, slaughter of vow animals, and joint cooking activities in mutual cooperation. Furthermore, at the stage of fulfilling the vow, a meal is carried out together as a symbol of gratitude and togetherness of the community, accompanied by a customary rule in the form of a prohibition for the vow to eat the proceeds of the vow animal that has been used as the payment of the vow. The last stage, namely after the ritual, was carried out with mutual cooperation activities to clean the tomb environment and distribute leftover food to the people present. All of these stages show that the vow ritual not only has spiritual meaning, but also contains social, cultural, togetherness, and mutual cooperation values that are still maintained by the people of Pelangkenidai Village.

The form of ritual communication in the fulfillment of promises (vows) at the tomb of Puyang Serunting consists of verbal communication and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication can be seen through vows, remarks, joint prayers, and the delivery of the closing ritual by jurai tue. The verbal communication is a means of conveying intentions, gratitude, prayers, and affirmation that the vow has been fulfilled. Meanwhile, nonverbal communication can be seen through various ritual actions and symbols such as the presence of the community at the tomb, solemn attitudes during prayers, grave pilgrimages, slaughter of vow animals, cooking mutual cooperation, eating together, prohibiting the vow from eating vows, and activities to clean the tomb environment. All forms of communication show that communication in the vow ritual not only functions as a message delivery, but also as a means of maintaining traditions, strengthening social relations, preserving culture, and strengthening the value of togetherness in the community of Pelangkenidai Village.

SUGGESTIONS

For the people of Pelangkenidai village, it is hoped that they will continue to maintain and preserve the tradition of vow rituals as part of the local culture that has the value of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and social solidarity, while still understanding that all forms of requests are only addressed to Allah SWT.

For traditional leaders and religious leaders, it is hoped that they can continue to provide understanding and direction to the community regarding the implementation of vow rituals so that the traditions carried out remain in accordance with cultural values and do not conflict with the teachings of Islam.

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