

Hermeneutics of Transcultural Space: Reading *Bersih Desa* as a Cultural Text in Musi Rawas

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Received: 2026-02-06; Revised: 2026-05-22; Accepted: 2026-05-26; Published: 2026-05-26
DOI:10.15575/Jaqfi.v11i1.54630

Abstract: *This article critically analyzes the philosophical significance of the Bersih Desa tradition in Musi Rawas Regency through the lens of transcultural hermeneutics. Drawing on the interpretive perspective of Clifford Geertz and the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, this qualitative research examines the ritual as a living “cultural text.” Through fieldwork involving traditional, religious, and community leaders, the study explores how symbol systems operate in a multicultural society. The results show that Bersih Desa goes beyond physical rituals to become a symbol system that integrates cosmological values, social ethics, and collective solidarity between transmigrants and residents. This phenomenon reflects a process of “fusion of horizons,” in which Javanese traditions undergo contextual adaptation and hybridization of values within the transcultural space of Musi Rawas. Ritual symbols are reinterpreted as a medium for value negotiation, giving rise to hybrid identities. Philosophically, Bersih Desa plays a fundamental role in shaping meaning, identity, and social harmony among transmigrant communities.*

Keywords: *Clean Village; transmigrants; symbolic meaning; Clifford Geertz; Hans-Georg Gadamer; cultural philosophy.*

1. Introduction

Transmigration is a state social policy that aims not only to address population and economic issues but also has significant cultural impacts. ¹Historically, this program was designed to equalize population distribution, open new territories, and improve community welfare. ²However, more than just a structural policy, transmigration creates a new social space where diverse cultural backgrounds converge. ³Population movement between regions involves not only physical mobility but also the transfer of values, social relationship patterns, languages, and cultural symbols that shape a community's collective identity. Therefore, transmigration can be understood as a dynamic process of cross-cultural encounter, where integration, adjustment, and potential cultural tensions occur simultaneously.⁴

Musi Rawas Regency is one of the regions that has experienced an intensive transmigration process since the New Order era. ⁵The arrival of transmigrants, particularly from Java, brought with them an agrarian cultural heritage that has been deeply internalized in their daily lives. This heritage is reflected not only in livelihood systems but also in ritual traditions, social ethics, and a harmony-oriented outlook on life. In this new social space, transmigrants do not live in a cultural vacuum but interact with local communities with their own value systems and traditions. This interaction gives rise to a dynamic culture that is constantly evolving, negotiating meaning, and forming new, hybrid cultural patterns.⁶

One tradition that remains enduring and prominent in the context of the Javanese transmigrant community in Musi Rawas is the *Bersih Desa* tradition. This tradition is an interesting cultural phenomenon to study because it demonstrates the vitality of culture amidst changes in geographic and social space. *Bersih Desa* is not merely maintained as a ceremonial ritual, but is continually practiced and reinterpreted according to the local context. The persistence of this tradition demonstrates that culture is not a static entity, but rather a dynamic, living process, constantly reinterpreted by its proponents.

In practice, *Bersih Desa* serves as a means of building social cohesion and strengthening the community's collective identity. Through shared engagement in rituals, community service, prayer, and celebrations, people renew their social commitment as a community. Furthermore, *Bersih Desa* serves as a symbolic medium for maintaining harmonious relations between humans, nature, and the transcendental dimension. This dimension demonstrates that traditions not only

¹ Patrice Levang, *Let's Go to the Land Across: Transmigration in Indonesia* (Jakarta: KPG, 2003), 1-10.

² Joan M. Hardjono, *Transmigration in Indonesia* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 15-22.

³ Koentjaraningrat, *Introduction to Anthropology* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2009), pp. 150-152.

⁴ Koentjaraningrat, *Introduction to Anthropology*, 155.

⁵ Novita Wahyu Setyawati, "Study of Entrepreneurship Development in Transmigration Areas," *Jurnal Maksipreneur: Management, Cooperatives, and Entrepreneurship* 8, no. 2 (April 2019): 131, <https://doi.org/10.30588/jmp.v8i2.413>.

⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 37-39.

function socially but also contain philosophical values rooted in the worldview of their supporters.

Historically, *Bersih Desa* (Village Cleansing) is known as a Javanese agrarian ritual intended to express gratitude for the earth's bounty while simultaneously praying for safety and cosmic balance. This ritual stems from a Javanese cosmological perspective that places humans as part of a broader universal order. Nature is not viewed merely as an object of exploitation, but as a living space with a spiritual connection to humans. Therefore, *Bersih Desa* contains symbols that represent the interconnectedness between the social order, nature, and supernatural powers.⁷

The interpretive anthropological approach developed by Clifford Geertz offers a relevant analytical framework for understanding this phenomenon. Geertz views culture as a web of *meaning* spun by humans themselves, within which humans are entangled in these meanings. Thus, the task of social scientists is not to seek universal laws of culture, but rather to interpret the symbolic meanings contained in social practices.⁸ However, to deepen the analysis of how these interpretations operate in the space of cultural encounters, Geertz's approach needs to be combined with the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer emphasized that understanding tradition is a dialectic involving a 'fusion of horizons' (*Horizontverschmelzung*), namely the meeting between the past horizons inherent in tradition and the present horizons faced by society in its new context. This synergy allows the *Bersih Desa* tradition to be read not as a static entity, but as a living 'conversation' that continues to move in the tension between historical heritage and dynamic social realities.⁹

From Geertz's perspective, rituals and traditions can be understood as cultural texts that contain symbolic messages about a society's outlook on life, moral values, and structures of meaning. Interpreting these cultural texts requires a deep reading (*thick description*) so that the hidden meanings behind symbolic actions can be comprehensively revealed. This approach allows for a more contextual analysis and is sensitive to the subjective experiences of cultural actors. Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics strengthens this framework by offering the concept of the fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*). For Gadamer, understanding cultural texts is not simply an objective reconstruction of the past, but rather a dialectical event in which the horizons of past traditions merge with the horizons of the present situation, thus giving birth to understandings that are always new and relevant.¹⁰

Furthermore, an analysis of *Bersih Desa* (Village Cleanup) is also relevant to understanding how transmigrant communities build social harmony amidst cultural plurality.

⁷ Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Javanese Ethics: A Philosophical Analysis of Javanese Life Wisdom* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2001), 83.

⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.

⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd revised edition (London & New York: Continuum, 2004), 305-306.

¹⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 6-10.

This tradition serves as a cultural mechanism that enables social integration without eliminating differences. Through symbols and rituals with shared meaning, communities create common ground for values that strengthen solidarity and a sense of togetherness. From this perspective, local traditions play a strategic role as a buffer for social stability and as a medium for the transformation of cultural values.¹¹

The study of the *Bersih Desa* tradition has become a rich subject in anthropological and sociological discourse in Indonesia. Classically, research on Javanese culture often positions this ritual as a primary instrument in maintaining social harmony and the integration of agrarian communities.¹² Clifford Geertz, in his landmark study of Javanese society, dissected how similar rituals functioned as a symbolic system that integrated aspects of *abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi* into a coherent system of meaning.¹³ In the context of transmigration, previous research often focused on the sociological function of tradition as a strategy for “identity preservation” for immigrant communities in unfamiliar environments. For example, studies of transmigrant communities in various regions of Indonesia show that preserving original traditions is an effort to minimize culture shock *and* strengthen networks of solidarity among transmigrants.¹⁴

Furthermore, references to ethical values in Javanese tradition are often linked to concepts of harmony and social order, as analyzed by Franz Magnis-Suseno. Recent research has begun to view ritual as a space of cultural hybridization, where negotiations occur between old customs and changing times.¹⁵ However, most of these studies tend to be descriptive-sociological, emphasizing the functional aspects of ritual for social stability or focusing on the preservation of static cultural artifacts.¹⁶

This research offers theoretical and empirical novelty by going beyond the functional-descriptive approach. First, theoretically, this article synergizes Clifford Geertz's interpretive approach with Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics to view *Bersih Desa* not merely as a preserved artifact, but as a dynamic “event of understanding.” Through the concept of fusion of *horizons*, this research reveals how Javanese tradition not only adapts but also engages in ontological dialogue with the local reality of Musi Rawas to give birth to new, transcultural meanings.¹⁷

¹¹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 59-61.

¹² Abdul Sair, “Cultural Adaptation of Javanese Transmigrant Communities (Study in Tugumulyo Village, Musi Rawas Regency),” *Journal of Society, Culture and Politics* 26, no. 1 (2013): 35-46.

¹³ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, 5-10.

¹⁴ Koentjaraningrat, *Introduction to Anthropology*, 160.

¹⁵ W. Utami, “Cultural Hybridity and the Resilience of Transmigration Community Traditions in South Sumatra,” *Journal of Social and Political Studies* 5, no. 2 (2021): 201-215.

¹⁶ Magnis-Suseno, *Javanese Ethics*, 38-42.

¹⁷ Saiful Rizal and Sugiarto, “Cultural Hybridization in the Katoba Ritual of Muna: Negotiation of Custom and Change,” *Journal of Islamic and Indonesian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2021): 45-66.

Second, in terms of locus, this research examines the dynamics of transmigrants in Musi Rawas Regency, which has a history of intense transmigration since the New Order era, making it a unique cultural laboratory. The analysis focuses on how ritual symbols such as offerings and communal prayers undergo inclusive theological and social reinterpretations, involving figures from various religions and local cultures. Thus, this research makes a significant contribution to the study of cultural philosophy by emphasizing that transmigrant identity is *becoming*. (the process of becoming) through the dialectic of cultural texts that are continuously rewritten, not just a static legacy from the past.¹⁸

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with field research *to* uncover the meaning, values, and symbols of culture from the subject's perspective.¹⁹ The main analytical framework is built through a synergy between Clifford Geertz's symbolic interpretive approach and Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.²⁰ Geertz is used to dissect culture as a “web of significance” where the *Bersih Desa* tradition is positioned as a “cultural text” that requires in-depth reading (*thick description*).²¹ Meanwhile, Gadamer's theory is applied to understand the process of horizon fusion (*Horizontverschmelzung*), namely the dialectic between the horizon of Javanese tradition brought by transmigrants and the horizon of socio-cultural reality in Musi Rawas today.²²

Data was collected through participant observation to capture the full symbolic expression of rituals, as well as in-depth interviews with purposively selected traditional, religious, and community leaders. Data analysis was conducted hermeneutically through a dialectic between empirical description and theoretical reflection. Within the Gadamerian framework, this analysis aims not only to reconstruct the past of traditions, but also to understand how these traditions “speak” and experience updating of meaning in the effective historical consciousness (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*) of their supporting communities.²³ The stages of analysis include data reduction, categorization of themes of meaning, philosophical interpretation, and drawing reflective conclusions. Through this method, the research is expected to be able to explain the dynamics of cultural hybridization and the formation of transmigrant community identities in the transcultural space of Musi Rawas.

¹⁸ Levang, *Let's Go to the Land Across*, 110.

¹⁹ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2013), 44.

²⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305-307.

²¹ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5-6.

²² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305-307.

²³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David E. Linge, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976, 28-32.

3. Results and Discussion

Village Cleaning Tradition as a Symbolic System

Among the transmigrant communities in Musi Rawas Regency, the village cleaning tradition is a cultural practice with complex and layered symbolic meaning. This tradition is carried out collectively, involving all elements of the village community, from traditional leaders and religious figures, village officials, to the general public. Village cleaning activities are not only oriented towards cleaning the physical environment such as village roads, water channels, and public facilities, but also accompanied by a series of symbolic rituals such as communal prayers, the presentation of offerings, and the use of certain traditional symbols passed down through generations.

From Clifford Geertz's perspective, culture is understood as a web of meaning spun by humans and then becomes a frame of reference in interpreting social reality.²⁴ Based on this assumption, the Village Cleansing Tradition in Musi Rawas Regency cannot be reduced to a series of repetitive ritual actions, but rather must be read as a symbolic system that contains moral, cosmological, and social messages that live in the collective consciousness of the transmigrant community. This tradition functions as a symbolic medium that connects the historical experiences of the transmigrant community with the new socio-cultural context they face in the Musi Rawas region.

In this context, *the Bersih Desa tradition* can be understood as a symbolic system that serves to convey social values, collective beliefs, and the outlook on life of transmigrant communities. The various ritual symbols that accompany its implementation serve not only as ceremonial activities but also as a means of expressing meaning that reflects the relationship between humans and the natural environment, social relations between residents, and their connection to transcendental powers.²⁵

Within this framework, the presentation of offerings in the village cleaning tradition can be read as part of a symbolic system that represents human respect for nature and shared living spaces. For transmigrant communities originating from diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly Javanese, this practice demonstrates the continuity of old cultural values undergoing a process of adaptation in a new social context. Offerings are not merely understood as a mystical practice, but rather as a symbol of gratitude for the continuation of life, respect for ancestral traditions, and a collective effort to maintain harmony between humans, the natural environment, and the cosmic order. Thus, this tradition functions as a medium for negotiating cultural meanings that are continually updated in accordance with the social dynamics of transmigrant communities.

²⁴Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5-6

²⁵ A. Suharyanto, "The Existence of Village Cleaning Rituals in Javanese Communities Abroad," *Journal of Anthropology: Socio-Cultural Issues* 18, no. 2 (2016): 145-158.

The main symbols in the Village Cleansing Tradition such as offerings, communal prayers, community service, and ritual timing have interrelated representational functions. Offerings, for example, are not simply interpreted as material offerings, but as symbols of gratitude and requests for safety, representing the reciprocal relationship between humans and transcendent powers. This is as stated by Minsudiharjo:

*Lambang iki nuduhake roso matur nuwon marang Gusti lan alam amargo wis menehi asil bumi lan slamet ing urip saben dino. Dudu kanggo nyembah utawo nyekutokake opo wae, nanging luwih dadi simbol adat lan tradhisi sing wis ono soko jaman mbiyen. Tradhisi iki diwarisake dening poro leluhur minongko coro ngelingi keseimbangan urip, rukun karo alam, lan ngajeni warisan budoyo sing isih dijogo nganti saiki.*²⁶

This statement indicates a reinterpretation of symbols that adapts to the theological framework of the local community without eliminating their cultural meaning. In Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical perspective, this phenomenon is a manifestation of the fusion of horizons, where the horizons of past traditions brought by transmigrants meet and merge with the horizons of the current situation in the new environment of Musi Rawas.²⁷ Collective prayer in the Village Cleansing Tradition serves as a symbol of spiritual and social integration. This prayer not only represents the vertical relationship between humans and God but also serves as a means of horizontal consolidation among community members. In practice, prayers are often led by local religious figures using language and narratives that have been adapted from the transmigrants' traditions of origin. This demonstrates that religious symbols in rituals are not static but rather constitute a living "conversation" that is continuously negotiated to align with the values of the dominant religion and local social realities.²⁸

The community service that accompanies the Village Cleanup Tradition is a symbol of social ethics that emphasizes the values of cooperation and collective responsibility. Cleaning the village environment, graves, or water sources is interpreted as a symbolic act to cleanse not only the physical space but also social relations of potential conflict and disharmony. A local community leader, Musi Rawas, emphasized this integrative dimension:

*"Bersih Dusun tu jadi caro wong kampung buat ngerapike hubungan sesamo. Di situlah kito biso saling negor, ngobrol baik-baik, sambil nginget lagi kalo dusun ini punyo kito besamo. Lewat acara ini, wong-wong jadi lebih akur, idup dak saling jauh, dan tumbuh rasok tanggung jawab buat samo-samo ngurus, njago, dan merawati desa biar tetep aman, nyaman, dan ayem".*²⁹

²⁶ Interview with Mbah Minsudiharjo (Transmigrant Community of F. Trikoyo Village), Musi Rawas, November 9, 2025.

²⁷ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 28-30.

²⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 307-310.

²⁹ Hendry Abror, *Tokoh Masyarakat Kecamatan Tugumulyo Kabupaten Musi Rawas*, Senin 10 November 2026

Based on these data, *Bersih Desa* cannot be understood solely as a symbolic practice to clean graves or honor ancestral spirits. This tradition also serves as a means of social interaction that strengthens relationships between residents. From a Geertzian perspective, this practice can be read as a cultural symbol that conveys a moral message about the importance of social cohesion and togetherness in a pluralistic society. For Gadamer, this process of understanding is a form of application, where traditional values are not merely remembered but applied in real life to address existential challenges in the new space.³⁰

The timing of the ritual also has an important symbolic dimension. Specific times, usually associated with the agricultural calendar or religious moments, are chosen to symbolize cosmic order and harmony between the rhythms of nature and human life. For transmigrant communities, many of whom rely on the agricultural sector, this symbol of time represents hopes for soil fertility, sustainable harvests, and stability in life. Thus, the Village Cleansing Tradition serves as a symbolic means to affirm the ontological relationship between humans, nature, and cosmic order.

In the context of transmigration, these symbols not only reproduce the memories of their original culture but also undergo a process of adaptation and reinterpretation according to the local context of Musi Rawas. This process reflects the dynamics of an open and dialogical culture. Cultural symbols are not rigidly maintained, but rather reinterpreted to remain relevant to local social, ecological, and religious conditions. This demonstrates that the Village Cleansing Tradition functions as a space for negotiation of meaning, where the cultural identity of transmigrant communities is formed and reinforced through ongoing symbolic interactions. This tradition, in Gadamer's terms, possesses an effective historical consciousness, where it continues to influence the present precisely because of its ability to dialogue with change.³¹

Thus, the village cleaning tradition among transmigrant communities in Musi Rawas is not simply a routine activity or ceremonial custom, but rather a system of cultural symbols rich with meaning. This tradition serves as a means of communicating values of togetherness, social solidarity, environmental awareness, and religiosity, while also strengthening the collective identity of transmigrant communities amidst the dynamics of social and cultural change.³²

Philosophical Meaning: The Relationship between Humans, Nature, and Transcendence

Philosophically, the Village Cleansing Tradition reflects an ontological view of the existential connection between humans, nature, and the Transcendent. Within the framework of cultural philosophy, this ritual assumes that humans do not exist as autonomous subjects detached from their environment, but rather as relational beings whose existence is always within a broader cosmic network.³³ This view aligns with the understanding of interpretive anthropology that

³⁰Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 315.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 299.

³²Sutiyono, *Axis of Javanese Culture* (Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu, 2013), 154-160.

³³Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 31-33.

culture provides a framework of meaning that guides humans in interpreting their position in the world and determining the ethical orientation of their lives. Through the perspective of Hans-Georg Gadamer, this relational position is understood as a manifestation of the “fusion of horizons” (*Horizontverschmelzung*), where Javanese traditions brought by transmigrant communities are not simply repeated, but rather dialogue and merge with the horizons of socio-cultural reality in Musi Rawas to give birth to a new, authentic understanding.³⁴

The relationship between humans and nature in the Village Cleansing Tradition is not understood utilitarianly or instrumentally, but rather symbolic and normative. Nature is interpreted as a living space that possesses moral and spiritual values. As Gadamer emphasized in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, tradition is something we “inhabit” and a language that allows us to dialogue with the universe. The practice of cleaning the village environment, water sources, and communal spaces is not simply an activity of physical cleanliness, but a symbol of ecological awareness articulated through ritual actions. This ritual becomes a medium through which the “truth” of cosmic order reveals itself amidst the dynamics of social change, a process that in another work of Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, is described as a human effort to maintain balance and harmony through symbolic forms.³⁵ This is as conveyed by Mbah Mat Mukiye:

*Carané ngélingké awak dhéwé yaiku kudu tansah éling menawa lemah iki sing maringi urip. Saka lemah, awak bisa mangan, nyambut gawe, lan urip tentrem. Mula aja nganti lemah dirusak, dibuwang sampah sembarangan, utawa dieksploitasi tanpa mikir akibaté. Yen lemah dirumat lan diajani, urip manungsa uga bakal luwih becik lan Lestari.*³⁶

Based on these data, the Village Clean-Up activity is interpreted as a collective effort to reactivate community awareness that land is a primary source of life that provides livelihood, shelter, and space for daily existence. In Gadamer's hermeneutic perspective, this “remembering” process is a form of application (subtitled *applicandi*), where tradition is not seen as a silent artifact, but as an ethical guideline that demands moral responsibility to preserve nature.³⁷ Through Village Clean-Up, communities build a reciprocal relationship with nature that goes beyond the logic of exploitation, ensuring the land remains sustainable for future generations.

In the context of transmigration, this symbolic interpretation of nature becomes a crucial instrument for communities moving ecological landscapes. The Village Cleansing tradition serves as a cultural medium for horizon-melting (*Horizontverschmelzung*), enabling transmigrants to affirm their sense of *belonging* to the Musi Rawas environment.³⁸ Here, nature is no longer perceived instrumentally as a mere economic domain but has transformed into a

³⁴Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 28-30.

³⁵Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, 31-33.

³⁶ Interview with the Transmigrant Community of Tugumulyo District, Musi Rawas, November 10, 2025.

³⁷Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 307.

³⁸Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 28.

sacred and revered symbolic space.³⁹ This transformation demonstrates that the truth of tradition is discovered through a continuous dialogue between past experiences and new spatial realities. This is as conveyed by Dariyadi:

If we participate in preserving nature and respecting local customs, we are considered part of the same family as the villagers. We are no longer outsiders, but part of this village, sharing its joys and sorrows, championing its natural beauty, and preserving the traditions inherited from our ancestors.⁴⁰

The data above demonstrates that community participation in preserving nature and traditions demonstrates a shared responsibility to maintain environmental balance while simultaneously continuing the cultural values inherited from their ancestors. This attitude emphasizes that active involvement in traditional practices is an important indicator of social acceptance and a sense of belonging to village life.

The transcendent dimension of the Village Cleansing Tradition is articulated through the practice of communal prayer and the symbol of surrender to the Divine. Prayer is understood as an expression of awareness of human limitations and an acknowledgment of the existence of a transcendent power that governs the cosmic order. From an ontological perspective, this practice affirms that human existence is contingent and dependent on the will of the Divine. A local religious figure stated that the ritual:

The Village Cleanup serves as a reminder to humanity that human capabilities are limited by effort and effort. Safety, peace, and balance in life ultimately depend on God's will. Through this tradition, the community is encouraged to always remember their limitations, maintain humility, and remember to pray throughout their lives.⁴¹

Interview data shows that awareness of human limitations is crucial, necessitating a sincere effort in living life. In the Village Cleansing Tradition, the relationship between humans, nature, and the transcendental dimension does not stand alone, but is interconnected and mutually reinforcing, forming an ethos of shared life. Concern for the environment grows alongside religious belief, while religious practices acquire moral meaning through social and ecological responsibility. From Geertz's interpretive perspective, this ritual can be understood as a cultural expression that embodies a view of harmony in life, where balance between material and spiritual aspects is the foundation of a good life.

For transmigrant communities, the internalization of these philosophical values occurs gradually through repeated ritual participation. The Village Cleansing tradition serves as a symbolic mechanism for transmitting ethical values across generations, both to younger transmigrants and to the local community. This is as conveyed by Alwi Fatoni, a young villager

³⁹Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, 31-33.

⁴⁰ Interview with Dariyadi (Local Community Leader), Tugumulyo, Musi Rawas, November 10, 2025.

⁴¹ Interview with Misbahul Arifin (Religious Figure and Chairman of FKUB), Musi Rawas, November 11, 2025.

in Tugumulyo District, who said that involvement in the Village Cleansing activity taught him many things about how to live together, according to him:

“This village cleanup activity has taught residents to respect each other, maintain good relationships, and care more about the environment. These habits have led to greater harmony in the community, fewer conflicts, and a greater effort to avoid hurting or harming one another. Residents have also become more aware that nature and the people around them play equally important roles in our shared life.”⁴²

This phenomenon demonstrates that rituals have a profound pedagogical function in shaping collective moral consciousness. From Gadamer's perspective, this process can be understood as *Bildung* (self-formation), in which individuals not only absorb information but are also shaped by tradition to become part of a community of meaning. Thus, the philosophical significance of the Village Cleansing Tradition lies in its ability to simultaneously nurture the ontological relationship between humans, nature, and the Transcendent. This ritual not only maintains cultural continuity but also strengthens the ethical foundation of the lives of transmigrant communities in Musi Rawas in the face of ongoing social, economic, and ecological changes. Through a Geertzian *thick description*, this ritual becomes an instrument for the community to maintain “world balance” amidst the uncertainties of the times.⁴³

Furthermore, *Bersih Desa* serves as a mechanism for preserving the collective identity of transmigrant communities amidst massive social change. Modernization, social mobility, and the influx of foreign cultures have the potential to erode local cultural practices, but the continuity of this tradition demonstrates the vitality of tradition as a constantly shifting horizon. Gadamer emphasized that tradition is not a static burden of the past, but rather a force that provides a foundation for understanding the future.⁴⁴ The continuity of *Bersih Desa* demonstrates the community's active efforts to negotiate identity through a “conversation” between ancestral heritage and the realities of modernity. Tradition here serves as an anchor point for transmigrant identity, ensuring it maintains strong cultural roots in the transcultural space.⁴⁵ As a village official stated:

“Today, many things have changed, from the way of life to daily habits. But we still maintain the Clean Village tradition. For us, this is not just an event, but has become a characteristic of the village and a valuable relic that we want to continue to pass on to our children and grandchildren so that it is not lost to time.”⁴⁶

The existence of *Bersih Desa* emerges as an organic semiotic configuration, transcending formal rituals to flexibly articulate the transmigrants' *worldview*. Rather than being an obsolete

⁴² Interview with Alwi Fatoni (Teenager of Transmigrant Descendants), Musi Rawas, November 11, 2025.

⁴³ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 126-127.

⁴⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 281-285.

⁴⁵ Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 9.

⁴⁶ Interview with Hendi Muchtar (Village Head of G.1. Mataram), Tugumulyo, Musi Rawas, November 12, 2025.

artifact, it operates as a sociocultural navigation that allows the community to align collective memories of the past with the demands of present-day reality. Within an interpretive horizon, this phenomenon reveals how the architecture of meaning works to unite social fragments into a unified communal cohesion, while simultaneously maintaining the existential roots of society amidst the currents of global disruption.

Dynamics of Cultural Hybridization

The interaction between the transmigrant communities' original cultures and the local culture in Musi Rawas Regency has given rise to a gradual and dialogical process of cultural hybridization. In this context, hybridization is not understood as a total fusion that eliminates the original cultural identity, but rather as a process of encounter, negotiation, and symbolic adjustment that produces new cultural forms.⁴⁷ This process is not simply an accumulation of foreign and local elements, but rather an ongoing negotiation that opens up new identity spaces between the two⁴⁸.

In contemporary anthropology and cultural studies, hybridization is often discussed as part of the theory of *postcolonial hybridization*, where cultural encounters do not result in one-sided domination but rather a space for creative negotiation a “third *space*” where new meanings are formed through interaction.⁴⁹ This idea moves us away from viewing culture as a static or pure entity, but rather as something that is constantly in process and transforming in everyday social practices.

In Musi Rawas, the Village Cleansing Tradition serves as a concrete example of how this hybridization occurs. Empirically, changes in ritual procedures are evident in the integration of transmigrant cultural elements for example, the anatomical structure of rituals brought from their home regions with local symbols and practices, including the use of local language in communal prayers, the arrangement of offerings, and patterns of mutual cooperation adapted to the local social context. A transmigrant informant, who has lived in Musi Rawas since the beginning, stated that:

*Sawetoro, elements of the ritual sing awake dhewe gowo soko, Kadhang village experienced owah-owahan, the form of time was acted upon, neng kene. Nanging, kuwi kabeh still nduwèni teges kanggo awake dhewe. In fact, saka kahanan kuwi, awake dhewe sinau kanggo ngajeni and respect the way local people nindakake tradition follow the customs and customs of sing wis ono.*⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Dede Arisandi, “Acculturation of Javanese and Local Culture in Transmigrant Communities in South Sumatra,” *Journal of Theology and Culture* 11, no. 2 (2017): 120-135.

⁴⁸ Saiful Rizal and Sugiarto, “Cultural Hybridization in the Katoba Ritual of Muna: Negotiation of Custom and Change,” *Journal of Islamic and Indonesian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2021): p. 45-66

⁴⁹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 36

⁵⁰ Interview with Mbah Maskan (First Transmigrant), Tugumulyo, Musi Rawas, November 13, 2025.

Based on the data obtained, it appears that several rituals brought by transmigrant communities from their areas of origin have undergone changes and shifts when practiced in their destination areas. These changes indicate a process of cultural hybridization, in which elements of transmigrant traditions interact with the local culture. Through these hybrid cultural practices, harmonious social relations, mutual respect, and strengthening of togetherness between the two communities are formed.

Furthermore, this ritual transformation also involves a process of social legitimacy. When transmigrants and local residents participate in updating the ritual together, the tradition experiences an expansion of social meaning. It is seen not only as a transmigrant community ritual, but also as a shared practice representing the cultural plurality of Musi Rawas. This aligns with Sujatmoko's view that:

“With Clean Village, the bonds between residents are strengthened because it combines old and new customs. This tradition isn't just for one group but is shared. This is why residents feel a sense of ownership, a sense of responsibility, and a willingness to participate in the village's unity.”⁵¹

The same thing was also conveyed by Misbahul Arifin, chairman of the Musi-Rawas FKUB, that:

The Village Clean-Up ritual in Musi Rawas Regency is now more than just a symbolic ritual, but also a way to strengthen ties between residents. This tradition has indeed shifted, emphasizing togetherness without losing its fundamental meaning. All residents participate, including religious leaders who lead prayers according to their respective beliefs. Through Village Clean-Up, relationships between residents become stronger and more harmonious.⁵²

Based on research findings, the hybrid practice of the village cleaning tradition is not merely understood as a symbolic cultural ritual but has evolved into an inclusive and dynamic social space. Through this practice, transmigrant and local communities engage in intense social interactions, build communication, and strengthen ties. Village cleaning serves as a medium for social integration, strengthening collective bonds, fostering a sense of togetherness, and strengthening social cohesion across cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, in Clifford Geertz's perspective, culture is a symbolic text that is continuously rewritten through social practices; therefore, this hybrid tradition is a form of cultural text that is rich in meaning and is never final.⁵³ The Village Cleaning Ritual is interpreted as a text that contains layers of meaning both originating from the traditions of the transmigrants and those combined with local culture which are then integrated into the community's way of acting, thinking, and feeling. This phenomenon shows that culture experiences an evolution of meaning through dialogical social interactions, not just passive adoption.

⁵¹ Interview with Sujatmiko (Cat of Tugumulyo District), Musi Rawas, November 13, 2025.

⁵² Interview with Alwi Khayubi (Transmigrant Youth), Megang Sakti, Musi Rawas, November 14, 2025.

⁵³ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 3-5

Furthermore, this hybridization is not merely ritualistic or symbolic but also has implications for the formation of a new collective identity. For the younger generation of transmigrants, involvement in these hybridized traditions provides a more inclusive identity space: they not only maintain their ancestral cultural heritage but also integrate it with the local experience of Musi Rawas. This is in line with the statement of Alwi Khayubi, a transmigrant, who stated that:

*“Village cleaning is not understood simply as a practice inherited from the past. According to him, this ritual has become part of their current identity, formed from the intersection of traditions brought from their hometowns with life experiences in their new environment.”*⁵⁴

Based on the research findings, the *Bersih Desa* tradition is no longer merely understood as a repetition of past rituals but has transformed into a fundamental element in the construction of the identity of transmigrant communities.⁵⁵ In Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic horizon, this phenomenon reveals the occurrence of a fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*), where the horizon of the transmigrant's origin tradition engages in a dialectical dialogue with the horizon of the local reality of Musi Rawas to give birth to a new, hybrid understanding.⁵⁶

Through this lens, culture sheds its static nature and emerges as an entity that continually moves in response to the effective historical consciousness encompassing the social and historical situations of society. *Bersih Desa* then transforms into a “shared space” that allows for dialogue and negotiation of meaning between cultural groups. Within this space, each subject actively participates in producing dynamic practices, symbols, and collective identities.⁵⁷

This process confirms that cultural identity in a pluralistic and post-territorial society is more accurately understood as a productive event⁵⁸ *of understanding. It is the result of constantly renewed symbolic interactions and agreements, rather than being viewed as a frozen legacy passively accepted without change.*

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the *Bersih Desa* tradition in the lives of transmigrant communities in Musi Rawas Regency is a manifestation of a complex and layered architecture of meaning. Through the synergy between Clifford Geertz's interpretive perspective and Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, this practice is no longer understood as a frozen artifact of the past, but rather as a living cultural text that is continuously rewritten through events of understanding. *Bersih Desa* functions as a symbol system that allows for a fusion *of horizons*, where the memory

⁵⁴Interview with Alwi Khayubi (Transmigrant Youth), Megang Sakti, Musi Rawas, November 14, 2025.

⁵⁵ Sutyono, “Revitalization of Ritual Arts in the Village Cleansing Ceremony Type in Kebumen Regency,” *Journal of Humanities Research* 15, no. 1 (2010): 1-14.

⁵⁶Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

⁵⁷Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 9.

⁵⁸Cf. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, 5.

of Javanese traditions engages in a dialectical dialogue with the socio-ecological reality of Musi Rawas to give birth to new and relevant meanings.

These findings demonstrate that the ongoing process of cultural hybridization is not one of uniformity, but rather a negotiation of identity within a dynamic transcultural space. *Bersih Desa* (Clean Village) has become a “third space” that integrates cosmological values, social ethics, and collective solidarity without eliminating the diverse backgrounds of its supporters. Philosophically, the continuity of this tradition demonstrates the existence of an effective historical consciousness, in which culture emerges as an adaptive and inclusive entity. The identity of the transmigrant community in Musi Rawas is ultimately understood as a process of “becoming” that constantly moves in a creative tension between maintaining traditional roots and being open to changing times.

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