

## IMMERSED IN TRADITION: THE INTRICATE WEAVE OF THE SAPARAN TRADITION IN LODOSEWU VILLAGE AND ITS VIBRANT IMPACT ON COMMUNITY LIFE

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### ABSTRACT

The Saparan Tradition for the Muslim community in Java, especially in Magelang is always eagerly awaited every year. Saparan can be referred to as Merti Desa, a term used by community to express gratitude to Allah who has given an abundance of blessings to the farmers for the harvest of the fields given. Saparan program invites relatives and friends from other areas. The Saparan Tradition in Lodosewu village has a different form of event from other areas, namely a tumpeng carnival and an arts carnival from the District Office to Lodosewu village. The carnival shows more meaning as the people's gratitude to Allah. The existence of Saparan in Lodosewu village has survived to this day because it has various functions for community. In this paper the author is interested in studying the Saparan Tradition and its function for the people of Lodosewu village. This research uses the theory of anthropology and symbolic interactionism to understand the meaning and the function of saparan tradition. This research is a field research using qualitative approach and the descriptive research is used to collect and analyze data. From the result of the analysis, it can be concluded that the result of the research is about the social cultural existence of the Lodosewu village people and the unique meaning from each process of Saparan.

**Keywords:** Meaning, function, Saparan Tradition, Lodosewu village.

### ABSTRAK

*Tradisi Saparan bagi masyarakat Muslim di Jawa, khususnya di Magelang selalu ditunggu-tunggu setiap tahunnya. Saparan ini bisa disebut sebagai Merti Desa, istilah yang dipakai oleh masyarakat untuk mengungkapkan rasa syukur kepada Allah, yang telah memberikan kelimpahan keberkahan kepada para petani atas panen ladang yang diberikan. Acara Saparan mengundang sanak saudara dan kerabat dari daerah lain. Tradisi Saparan di Dusun Lodosewu memiliki bentuk acara yang berbeda dari daerah lainnya, yaitu terdapat kirab tumpeng dan karnaval kesenian dari Kantor Kecamatan sampai Dusun Lodosewu. Kirab tersebut menunjukkan arti lebih sebagai rasa syukur masyarakat kepada Allah. Keberadaan Saparan di Dusun Lodosewu tetap bertahan hingga saat ini karena mempunyai fungsi yang beragam bagi masyarakat sehingga dalam tulisan ini penulis tertarik untuk mengkaji Tradisi Saparan serta fungsinya bagi masyarakat Dusun Lodosewu. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian yang pengumpulan datanya dilakukan di lapangan, menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Dari hasil analisis dapat disimpulkan bahwa Tradisi Saparan dapat bertahan hingga saat ini karena masyarakat lebih menitikberatkan akar dari perayaan Saparan, yaitu syukuran bersama. Dalam hal tersebut makan bersama dan bersilaturahmi merupakan inti dari perayaan Saparan. Keberadaan Saparan memiliki makna di setiap pelaksanaannya.*

**Kata kunci:** Makna, Fungsi, Tradisi Saparan, Dusun Lodosewu.

## **Immersed in Tradition: The Intricate Weave of The Saparan Tradition in Lodosewu Village and Its Vibrant Impact on Community Life**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Javanese people have a high culture and provide a variety of colors in each region. One of them is the community located between the slopes of Mount Merbabu, namely Lodosewu Village, Tejosari Village, Ngablak District, Magelang Regency. Lodosewu Village is a village at the eastern tip of Magelang Regency and directly borders Semarang Regency. This village still believes in one of the cultures passed down from their ancestors, namely Saparan. Saparan is one of the months in the Javanese calendar and comes from the word "Sapar" (Aminah, 2018). Sapar month according to the Islamic calendar is the second month in the Hijri calendar.

Saparan that takes place in Lodosewu Village is basically a form of the village Merti tradition. The village Merti tradition has become a habit and a normal thing in the lives of Javanese people. Merti Desa is a form of ceremony, one of which is a form of thanksgiving for the abundance of blessings in a village or village. The village celebration carried out by the people of Lodosewu village always takes place in the month of Sapar. Therefore, they call Merti as Saparan (Andyani, 2013). In implementing the Saparan Tradition, every village resident visits each other's houses to visit the homes of people they know. Even other villages in Tejosari Village and other villages will visit Lodosewu Village. Those who arrive to visit will be greeted and cared for with pleasure by the homeowner. The event also showed typical Javanese arts as entertainment for the attendees (Prasetyo, 2023).

The people of Lodosewu Village continue to establish and maintain Saparan as their tradition even though modernization has now entered society. The community really understands very carefully what their ancestors have believed and maintained it for generations. Even though there were challenges for the community around 1977 AD. In that year Saparan was prohibited from being implemented by the head of the sub-district level (Camat) of the Ngablak District area who at that time was still in office. A sub-district head will supervise several village heads and the village head will supervise the village head. So that the village head carries out his obligations under the supervision and direction of a sub-district head (Kartohadikoesoemo, 1984). The Saparan ban announced at that time also applies to Lodosewu Village because its area is included in the Ngablak sub-district. However, after some time, Saparan was held again in Lodosewu Village. Even now, Saparan is still an event or event that the people of Lodosewu Village look forward to every year (Susanti, 2023).

According to the author, so far there has been no previous research regarding the Saparan Tradition in Lodosewu Ngablak Magelang. However, similar research was found related to Saparan, namely entitled "Local Cultural Traditions of Saparan as Developing the Value of Islamic Religious Education in the Awang-Awang Village Community, Brenggong Village, Purworejo" (Aminah, 2018). This research examines the Saparan Tradition in Awang-Awang Village, Purworejo, seen from the aspect of the value of Islamic religious education. Meanwhile, the research conducted by the author examines the meaning and function of the Saparan tradition in Lodosewu Village, Ngablak, Magelang. Apart from that, research was found entitled "The Existence of the Saparan Tradition in the Community of Sumberejo Village, Ngablak District, Magelang Regency" (Andyani, 2013). The research discusses the Saparan Tradition in Sumberejo Village, while the research carried out by the author was in Lodosewu Village, Tejosari Village. Lodosewu Village in the implementation of Saparan is different from other areas in Ngablak District, where there is a Tumpeng Carnival which is a deeper sign of



gratitude towards God. Apart from that, the author's research shows the meaning of each Saparan ceremony in Lodosewu.

The author is interested in researching the Saparan Tradition because this event can be said to exceed Eid al-Fitr. All the residents of the village prepare a lot of food and dishes to serve to guests who visit during the Eid al-Fitr event. Saparan in Lodosewu is different from those in other areas because there is a tumpeng carnival event as a symbol of expressing gratitude to Allah for the harvest of the fields that have been given. Apart from that, the author chose Saparan as the focus because she saw that the existence of Saparan today is not only the result of ancestral and inherited heritage but also the result of the determination of the people of Lodosewu Village to maintain their culture. The author wants to know the meaning of Saparan itself so that it is considered important for the people of Lodosewu Village so that they remain persistent in maintaining Saparan and the values of its implementation in their social life. This research was also carried out to find out the unique meaning of each Saparan procession in Lodosewu in terms of Javanese customs. Therefore, this research would reveal the existence of Saparan in the people of Lodosewu Village as well as its function and meaning. To be able to observe the explanation above, it is necessary to observe the entire form of the event regarding the Saparan traditional procession in Lodosewu Village, the existence of Saparan which has survived to this day, the meaning of each procession, and its function in community life.

#### **METHOD**

This research on the Saparan Tradition is a field research. The theories used in this research are anthropological theory and symbolic interactionism to understand the meaning and function of the Saparan tradition in Lodosewu Village. This research is a qualitative research, namely research that creates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from humans and from observable behavior (Moleong, 2008). Meanwhile, the type of research used is descriptive research. Descriptive research is a type of research that provides a picture or description of a situation as clearly as possible (Kountoro, 2004). The researcher used a type of qualitative descriptive research, namely the researcher observed and interacted with the Head of Lodosewu Village through interviews and searched for data by asking for documentation. The main source in this research comes from the Head of Lodosewu Village, Joko Prasetyo and Eli Susanti. Other sources include books, journal articles and websites related to research. The analysis techniques in this research are data collection, data reduction, display (data presentation), and conclusion. The data were obtained through interviews, observations and other data obtained were then reduced and presented in a written form to then draw conclusions from the data that have been presented. The focus of the study in this research is the existence of the Saparan Tradition in Lodosewu Village which is seen from its function in community life and the meaning of each Saparan ceremonial procession.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Socio-Cultural Conditions of the Lodosewu Village Community**

Lodosewu Village is a part of Tejosari Village, Ngablak District, Magelang Regency. Ngablak District is located at the easternmost tip of the border with the Semarang Regency area. Lodosewu Village is located on the slopes of Mount Merbabu and Mount Andong. The village has cool air and tends to be cold. The average temperature there is around 20°C. Air with this temperature makes residents more concentrated on daytime activities. This air temperature also makes the nights foggy and the air temperature even drops. The average livelihood of Lodosewu residents is as farmers. Livelihoods are dominated by farmers compared to other livelihoods, making the Saparan tradition an integral part of the social life of the Lodosewu community. This is because Saparan is a thanksgiving ceremony for the abundance of the village in being given land that produces good or fertile harvests by Allah and the harvest is abundant. People need a belief that they will always be given advantages and prosperity. Lodosewu's main sources of income are green onions, fennel, tomatoes, cabbage, lettuce, broccoli, potatoes, mustard greens, chayote and tomatoes. Fennel greens are usually needed for medicines. Many of these vegetables are sent outside the Magelang area, such as Yogyakarta, Semarang and Purwodadi.

The social condition of the people of Lodosewu village is demonstrated by the friendliness and politeness of the residents. In Lodosewu village, cultural forms can be developed as benchmarks in society, most importantly through mutual cooperation activities. Apart from that, the Lodosewu people still maintain traditional arts such as warog, leak, gedrug, wayang, campursari, jathilan, gambyong dance, and others. These arts can be found in every event that is considered special, such as Saparan activities. Saparan is a village custom that is still maintained today. In Saparan, the Lodosewu community provides food and drinks for guests. Every guest who comes must enjoy the dish. Saparan is a forum for the community to build relationships (Prasetyo, 2023).

### **Saparan Tradition Procession in Lodosewu Village**

Saparan is one of the months in the Javanese calendar and comes from the word "Sapar". The implementation of Saparan is usually carried out in areas including Central Java and Yogyakarta. The process and form of each Saparan tradition in each region is different, what is common is that this tradition takes place in the month of Safar or Sapar. The Saparan tradition began as a form of Merti Desa which was carried out by residents of each region or village, one of which was Lodosewu Village. Merti Desa is a thanksgiving ceremony for the blessings and excess favors that residents have received. Apart from that, Saparan started as a form of expressing gratitude to God for the rice harvest given to them. The Merti Desa tradition has become a normal part of Javanese life. Saparan only takes place during the Safar Month, which is once a year in each region or village. Until now, Saparan has become an event that the people of Lodosewu village always look forward to every year. Entering the Safar Month, people are busy with various preparations to prepare for the Saparan Tradition.

Choosing the day Saparan will be held as part of the celebration, there are no certain conditions. To determine the day, usually each region in Ngablak District only reaches a joint consensus. Usually residents always use the same day every year. The implementation of Saparan in each region in Ngablak District is independent for each village/rural area. For Lodosewu Saparan Village, it is always agreed to celebrate every Kliwon Monday. The choice of day for determining Saparan is only based on agreement.



The agreement in choosing the day is usually agreed with regard to Saparan in the village and surrounding villages. This means that Saparan is also held in other villages so that they can visit each other during the celebration. The people of Lodosewu Village always observe it on that day and never change the day. This is so that the residents of the village and other surrounding villages will always remember the days when Saparan was implemented in each area so that it becomes a distinctive feature. Monday Kliwon is the identity of Saparan Lodosewu village (Prasetyo, 2023).

Preparations for implementing Saparan in Lodosewu were carried out by family members and village residents. Family members usually prepare small tumpeng, chicken ingkung and bananas for a meal together. Apart from that, preparing food and drinks will later be served to guests invited by the family. The invited guests who are usually invited to attend Saparan Lodosewu Village are relatives, neighbors, relatives and friends who live in other villages. The Lodosewu community usually invites them verbally when they meet at events outside the village, at work, at the market, on the road or in the fields. However, in this modern era, many people invite people via telephone or cellphone and social media. Those who were invited came to visit and have a meal together. The food served consists of food and drinks that have been prepared by the host (Susanti, 2023).

The residents' preparations include preparations for community service work to clean up the village, provision of artistic entertainment that will be held on Saparan day for the guests who will come, preparations for making a stage, preparations for the tumpeng carnival, and so on. The type of entertainment that will be displayed is a simultaneous agreement among Lodosewu residents. To make this determination, they held a joint meeting. Usually the residents hold a meeting one month before Saparan day takes place. Apart from preparations for holding entertainment, there are preparations for holding a tumpeng carnival as a symbol of the residents' gratitude to God.

The Saparan Tradition Celebration in Lodosewu Village starts in the morning at 07.00. Residents flocked to the Ngablak District Office to take part in the tumpeng carnival procession. The tumpeng that is brought during the carnival are rice tumpeng, vegetable tumpeng and fruit tumpeng. The tumpeng carnival was attended by the entire community of Lodosewu Village. The carnival route starts from the Ngablak District Office to Lodosewu Village, a distance of around 1.2 km. The tumpeng carnival is also accompanied by arts from Lodosewu Village such as Topeng Ireng and Gedruk. Arriving at Lodosewu Village, they would be greeted with the Gambyong Dance and continued with a welcome by the sub-district leaders (Camat) who was present. Apart from the sub-district head, there were remarks from the Sector Police (Polsek) and the chairman of the committee. At that time, each family also prepared small tumpeng, chicken ingkung, and bananas. Next, all the residents gathered with the food and there was a group recitation and prayer reading. The next procession is eating together food that has been prepared by each family. Furthermore, there are artistic entertainment performances that have been invited from other regions. Entertainment is held until midnight on the change of day (Susanti, 2023).

After the prayer together is over, the visitors invited by the Lodosewu residents begin to arrive at the homes of each known resident. In the Saparan celebration, family members invite people they know and their relatives to come and visit and enjoy the food that has been prepared by family members. Even the youth of Lodosewu Village

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invite many of their friends. Friends who live far away usually stay at home so that they can witness the festivity and splendor of Saparan. Eating the dishes that have been provided in each family member is an obligation to be done for the guests present. According to the Lodosewu community, the core thing in the Saparan tradition is the meal together. Mr. Joko said that calling and inviting relatives to Saparan is the same as inviting them to eat. The implementation of Saparan is a desire or will of the entire village. Anyone who comes to the village will be welcomed by all villagers, even many unknown people are also welcome to enter the house.

Therefore, in order to make the event as lively and festive as the village or village wishes, the residents will hold entertainment on the day of Saparan. The provision of entertainment is the result of simultaneous contributions from the people of one village, especially Lodosewu Village. Dues are collected one month before the Saparan event. Each family spends around Rp. 200,000 to Rp. 300,000. Entertainment that is performed is usually folk art such as Jathilan, Kuda Lumping, Reog, Wayang, Leak and others. But there are also those who carry out recitations together. The entertainment celebration in Lodosewu Village is held after the completion of the carnival event until the early evening (Prasetyo, 2023).

Saparan celebration is a part of the social life of the people of Lodosewu Village that is very important and awaited every year. The Saparan celebration has become more lively over time. The festivity of Saparan can be seen from its implementation since the last ten years. The implementation of Saparan in Lodosewu changed, previously the Saparan process did not have kirab tumpeng tradition, but in 2010 there was an addition to the kirab tumpeng event which was very meaningful, namely as a gratitude to Allah for giving abundant blessings to the farmers of Lodosewu residents. The people of Lodosewu Village emphasize the core of the Saparan celebration, namely slametan. So that the point is to eat together and stay in touch. In addition, Saparan seems to be open to other religions, not only Islam. This is what makes the existence of Saparan still inherent in the community.

### **The Meaning of Saparan Procession Tradition in Lodosewu**

The meaning of Saparan Tradition can be seen from the beginning of the event. The residents carry out tumpeng carnival as a form of gratitude for the abundance of grace from Allah for the harvest of the fields that have been given. The tumpeng that is brought during the procession is a cone of white rice, yellow rice, and vegetables from the harvest of the residents' fields. Tumpeng rice (rice that forms a mountain or cone) and vegetables that form the mountain is a meaning, namely spiritual meaning. In Javanese society, the mountain is identified as a place of the highest, where the ruler of nature is enthroned, and the place of God's glory. Even events that use gunung have been widely implemented in the Javanese tradition. The shape of tumpeng originated in Hindu mythology in the Mahabharata Epic (story). Although the majority of Javanese people today are Muslims, there are still many traditions that are based on the roots of Hinduism. This is because Hinduism entered Java first, followed by other religions. In the Javanese image, the mountain is a sacred place because it is believed to have a close relationship with heaven and earth. The shape of the tumpeng that forms the mountain in Javanese tradition has the meaning of wanting to place God in the highest position or peak, which controls nature and humans. The shape also illustrates that God is the beginning and the end. In this regard, the Javanese used to say Sang Sangkan Paraning Dumadi, meaning that God is the origin of all creation and the final destination



of all creation. Tumpeng is used as a symbolization of the nature of nature and humans who come from God and will return to Him. The shape of the tumpeng rice mountain is also believed to contain the meaning of hope that our lives will increase and get high welfare.

The tradition of bringing chicken *ingkung* made by each family seasoned with spices such as bay leaves, shallots, garlic, turmeric, lemongrass and coriander with the chicken's legs sitting up and intact means that Muslims submit and sit down to Allah in surrendering self. The food is made by each family member at night or in the morning and then gathered in the area in front of the arts event stage in Lodosewu Village which has been prepared. After the dishes were collected, precisely after carrying out the Tumpeng Carnival from the Ngablak District Office, the whole community and visitors gathered. That's when *Saparan* began to open which is held every year. Apart from that, the small tumpeng that each family carries is made from white rice, which is a symbol of purity of heart, and is cone-shaped (a circle that tapers at the top) to symbolize the existence of God who is the direction and goal in their prayers, like a mountain which has the properties of big and the peak towers high. Furthermore, the meaning of bringing bananas by every family is that in every Javanese ceremony and ritual, bananas always accompany the presentation of offerings and events. According to our ancestors, bananas are highly respected, because they have their own special qualities. This specialty is found in banana trees which will not die before producing fruit. This indicates that the banana wants to offer natural wealth to the Earth before it dies. The origin of the name banana can be seen from the words of the ancient Javanese who divided it from the words, "Pi and Sang". The word Sang itself has the meaning "Respected". For Javanese people and society, bananas are a symbol of prosperity, wealth and fertility which come and go. The meaning and philosophy is a hope or aspiration to achieve fertility, prosperity, wealth and hope. for humans in living their lives in this world, bananas will always be present in every ritual process in Javanese customs or traditions (Prasetyo, 2023).

The opening in the implementation of *Saparan*, from the chairman of the committee, the local sub-district head, and local traditional leaders is a sequence that is carried out every year. After the opening took place in front of the event stage, it continued with a joint *tahlilan* event led by the local religion or *mbah kitam*, all the community together recited *tahlil* and prayers together which was the main event for the community. In a joint prayer, the community together expresses gratitude to Allah for the abundance that has been given, namely the harvest of the fields. The community also prayed to Allah to be given another harvest in the fields for the future, mutual safety and prosperity in life.

The meaning of the arts that take part in the tumpeng carnival from Lodosewu Village itself as well as the arts invited to the event can be explained as follows. The *Saparan* traditional ceremony, which is carried out involving elements of performing arts, is an expression of gratitude to Allah residents of Lodosewu Village. People believe in the existence of supernatural forces that influence and control nature and their lives. Performing arts here actually do not only serve an entertainment function, but are more sacred in nature because they are performed for ritual ceremonies. The arts of *jathilan*, *reog*, etc. which are performed in the *Saparan* traditional ceremony are sacred arts. This art is used during carnival processions which function to repel reinforcements or aim to prevent evil forces from disturbing the people in Lodosewu



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Village, as well as providing protection. The movements in artistic dance also have meaning, both movements in the head, hands and all parts of the body. These movements are an unbroken movement and depict endless continuity, as an illustration of the human life cycle, from birth, life, and then development, until death. All Gamyong dancers are generally women because here women are considered to be able to create beautiful movements that the audience can enjoy (Susanti, 2023).

### **The Function of the Saparan Tradition for Society**

The Saparan tradition is known to have many functions for every family member and member of the Lodosewu Village community. These functions are interrelated, as a result causing the existence of the Saparan Tradition to remain sustainable. Apart from that, the survival of the Saparan celebration is because there has been a form of renewal in the implementation process, in Lodosewu Village there has been a Tumpeng Carnival since 2010. Because of this function, the Saparan tradition is still carried out by the residents of Lodosewu Village. Saparan's functions are:

#### ***As a supporter of prosperity***

The biggest livelihood in Lodosewu Village is in the agricultural sector, whether they are farmers who own land or as farm laborers. The people of Lodosewu Village have a belief that their fields will always be looked after. For the community, the implementation of Saparan believes that the Merti Desa tradition is carried out to cleanse the village of all evil spirits and so that prosperity remains in this village.

### ***Maintaining Kinship Ties, Solidarity and Community Harmony***

With the Saparan Tradition, Lodosewu residents invite relatives and friends to visit and stay in touch. That's why many brothers and sisters meet in Saparan. Especially relatives and friends who live in areas not far from Lodosewu Village and its surroundings. Residents of Lodosewu Village said that the Saparan Tradition allowed them to meet relatives and relatives. The friendship in Saparan is actually almost the same as the friendship during Eid al-Fitr.

People from other regions or other sub-districts in Magelang Regency are very enthusiastic and want to always attend or visit the homes of their relatives or relatives in Lodosewu Village during breakfast events. According to them, apart from the fact that there is a lot of food served, they also maintain friendly relations with relatives or relatives in Lodosewu Village. There is unique entertainment and you can interact with many people.

The bond of community harmony can be seen from fellow residents of Lodosewu Village in community service activities preparing for the event, praying together during the main event of Saparan. The community prayed together for the welfare of the village. The bond of solidarity can also be seen from the guests visiting each other. When residents visit each other from other villages, solidarity and harmony will always be maintained. Through friendship, visiting and eating together, they can get closer to each other.

#### ***Entertainment***

In the implementation of Saparan, various entertainment arts are included to be performed. This is of course a form of entertainment for the people of Lodosewu. This





reason is because apart from Saparan, in their village there are no other events that invite and present various entertainment and spectacles for the people of Lodosewu Village. Apart from that, the beautiful scenery in the Lodosewu area makes people from outside the area want to visit. There is unique entertainment and you can interact with many people.

#### ***Maintaining cultural heritage***

The people of Lodosewu Village really believe in and respect the traditions and customs inherited from their ancestors. They understand that the legacy of customs from their ancestors must always be maintained. This breakfast is also seen as good by the community. The people of Lodosewu Village think that the Saparan tradition is a heritage tradition that has a positive meaning for them (Prasetyo, 2023).

#### **CONCLUSION**

Lodosewu Village is located at the eastern tip of Magelang Regency and is on the border of Semarang Regency. Lodosewu still respects one of the cultures inherited from their ancestors, namely Saparan. Saparan is one of the months in the Javanese calendar and comes from the word "Sapar". Saparan comes from a form of expressing gratitude to God for the harvest of the fields given to them. There are no specific conditions for choosing the day to celebrate the Saparan Tradition and Lodosewu Village chose Kliwon Monday. The Saparan celebration in Lodosewu Village prioritizes celebration with a group slametan, so that the essence is eating together and staying in touch. This shows that Saparan still exists today.

There is a meaning in each procession of the Saparan Tradition, one of the most prominent of which is the making of Tumpeng rice for the carnival. Because the carnival is the main procession in Lodosewu. Tumpeng rice in Javanese society has a spiritual meaning, namely in the form of a cone-shaped mountain with the meaning of going to "God" as a form of gratitude to God Almighty for the abundance of mercy and favors given by harvesting the fields for a community where the majority of the population makes their living as farmers. In this Saparan activity, each family invites relatives, family and friends to visit their home. They were treated to various kinds of food. There was also entertainment for visiting guests. This entertainment usually takes the form of regional arts. The Saparan tradition has several functions, including the function of supporting prosperity, kinship ties, solidarity and harmony among citizens, entertainment, and preserving cultural heritage.

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