

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Traditions and Culture

In the context of cultural heritage, tradition refers to the legacy of a group, society, or community that includes both tangible and intangible elements, which collectively help define its identity (Dhungel, 2025). Traditions are shaped by values and practices that are continuously developed and passed down through generations, while also adapting to changes over time. The identity embedded in tradition may be reflected through celebrations, codes of conduct, myths, as well as expressions such as clothing and cuisine. Culture, on the other hand, refers to the system of values, beliefs, customs, norms, and practices that are shared and performed by a community. It encompasses various elements such as art, language, and social behavior, all of which are transmitted across generations and evolve with the passage of time (Cruz et al., 2023).

While the concepts of tradition and culture are often interconnected, there are distinct differences between them. Tradition is generally viewed as a legacy that must be preserved and maintained, whereas culture is seen as a dynamic system that continues to evolve and adapt to contemporary changes. The presence of both tradition and culture within a community plays a vital role in shaping its identity, helping to distinguish it from others. Furthermore, tradition and culture serve as sources of knowledge and guidance, forming a social framework that is passed down across generations. This continuity ensures that values and practices remain alive and relevant amid the constant changes brought by globalization (Syihabbudin, 2021; Mufidah, 2019).

2.2 Pekojan Village, Semarang

Generally, the naming of Pekojan Village comes from the word 'Koja' which comes from the name of a city or region in India as well as marking a

community with Gujarati descendants who have settled. The Koja ethnic group is an ethnic group that migrated from India with the intention of spreading religion and conducting trade in search of land in Java, especially in Semarang. The Koja ethnic who came did not necessarily come individually but in groups bringing their families. Not only did they bring their descendants and families, but they also brought their customs, culture and beliefs from their native areas to be built and developed in overseas areas, especially in Semarang City (Pradipta & Haryono, 2021). Pekojan Village is specifically located in Semarang City, Purwodinatan Village, Central Semarang District. This historical village has a very important role in the development of Semarang City. Pekojan Village, Semarang is inhabited by several multi-ethnic groups such as Arabs, Koja, Chinese and Javanese. The cultural acculturation that occurs is related to the location of Semarang City which is located on the border of the Java Sea and has become one of the cities in Central Java which has developed very rapidly into a port city since the colonial period (Wahjoerini, 2019).

One form of cultural acculturation that developed in Pekojan Village is in the form of physical buildings: Jami' Pekojan Mosque. The building of the Jami' Pekojan Mosque in Semarang is closely related to the acculturation between Arabic, Koja, Chinese and local cultures, which can be seen through specific building details. Through the Mayor Decree No. 646/50/2992, the Jami' Pekojan Mosque was designated as a cultural heritage building by the Semarang City Government, due to its architectural features and traces of Islamic history in Semarang City. The building of Jami' Pekojan Mosque was established on 15 Sya'ban 1309 H or equivalent to March 15, 1892 AD. The mosque building was originally a small wooden prayer room with an area of about 16m² which was later renovated on top of the previous building (Savitri, Karim, & Mutadin, 2022). Cultural acculturation can be seen not only in the building, but also in the traditions that continue to be developed from generation to generation at the Jami'

Pekojan Mosque in Semarang. One of the most famous is the tradition of Indian porridge.

Indian porridge is cooked in a large pot on a hundred-year-old wood-burning stove from after the Dhuhr prayer until the Asr call to prayer. Originally, it was served to Muslim traders from Arabia and India, but Indian traders introduced the rich flavors of Indian porridge. Over time, this tradition was not only enjoyed by the Muslim community of Pekojan Village, but also by residents from other areas who came to the mosque with various purposes, such as curing stomach aches or waiting for blessings (Maziyah et al, 2021). The Indian porridge tradition is routinely carried out by the Jami' Pekojan Mosque in Semarang and has been going on for about 100 years in the month of Ramadan. According to the Manager of Jami' Pekojan Mosque, the tradition of Indian porridge is distributed to local residents in the amount of 200 to 300 servings every day during the month of Ramadan (Shirin, personal communication, March 7, 2025).

In a feature article published on March 3, 2025, Masjid Jami' Pekojan is highlighted as more than just a historical building (Purbaya, 2025). It is a living space where the spirit of community thrives, especially during Ramadan. One of its most beloved traditions is the serving of Indian porridge, or bubur India, a warm and fragrant dish prepared and shared during communal iftar. Beyond its culinary legacy, the mosque remains a vital place of worship for local residents. On the 27th night of Ramadan, the mosque becomes especially sacred as people gather to celebrate Lailatul Qadr. It is a night filled with prayer, spiritual reflection, and togetherness, where the community comes closer in devotion and remembrance. This tradition illustrates the high spiritual values of the Muslim community, as it is a moment where they gather to perform night prayers, also known as *qiyamul lail*. In Surah Al-Qadr, verse 3: "The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months." Therefore, this tradition serves as a reminder of the importance of spirituality within urban Muslim communities. Besides performing night prayers, the recitation of the Qur'an and communal chanting of

dzikir are also conducted daily throughout Ramadan. Local residents gather at the mosque for *tadarus* sessions in the evening, lasting until just before *maghrib* or the breaking of the fast. This becomes a communal activity that strengthens social ties among residents and reinforces the Islamic identity of the Pekojan community.

Masjid Jami' Pekojan is not only a place of worship but also a pilgrimage site to the tomb of Syarifah Fatimah binti Husein Al-Aidrus, a woman revered as a saint by the community. According to Savitri et al., (2022), the tomb is located within the mosque complex and is considered one of the most significant religious pilgrimage sites, especially on Fridays and during *khaul* or death commemoration days. This pilgrimage is not only carried out by local residents but also by visitors from other regions. This phenomenon shows that the mosque functions not only as a daily place of worship but also as a spiritual site associated with the concept of *karomawali* in the Nusantara Islamic tradition. This pilgrimage tradition is seen as a way to honor sacred figures and is still actively practiced in Central Java. It also has a social impact, creating a forum for interaction between outsiders and local residents. Additionally, the *khaul* event is usually accompanied by public religious lectures, the recitation of *talil* (prayers for the dead), and food distribution to the community, further enhancing the social and charitable aspects of the event.

Beyond the tomb, the architecture of Masjid Jami' Pekojan also holds distinctive cultural and historical value. The mosque building is known for its unique architecture and high aesthetic value. The influence of Gujarati culture is a key feature in its shape and ornamentation, setting it apart from other mosques in Semarang. Carvings and inscriptions on the walls enhance their historical value. The distinctive structure and detailed ornaments testify to the influence of traditional Gujarati architecture, evident in the use of carvings and characteristic geometric patterns. Although the mosque has undergone several renovations, parts of the building such as the floor and four main pillars remain original.

According to Baharun (personal communication, March 7, 2025), the floor features unique hand-painted floral motifs created by earlier generations during the initial construction. The four pillars are made of wood and stone at their base, providing structural stability.

Thus, Pekojan Village is a multicultural area that reflects cultural acculturation, as seen in the Masjid Jami' Pekojan building and the traditions maintained, such as Indian porridge and other practices, especially during Ramadan. Masjid Jami' Pekojan is living proof of the fusion of Gujarati, Chinese, Arab, and Javanese architecture, while the Indian porridge tradition highlights the values of unity and the identity of the Indian Muslim community in Semarang. This demonstrates that local cultural heritage and religious practices can survive and thrive in a diverse society.

2.3 Documentary Film

According to Nichols (1991) in the book *Television Documentary* (Halim, 2018), a documentary is defined as an effort to retell an event or reality based on facts and data. Documentary films are one form of digital media that can be published just like other social media content. In this era, documentary films can be a powerful medium for shaping public opinion and inspiring the younger generation (Astuti et al., 2022). In the context of tradition and cultural preservation, documentaries serve as a window that can portray a community at a particular moment in time, although they are often influenced by the filmmaker's perspective. According to Wintle (2021), a senior film archivist, said, "Film is always a snapshot in time. It has content, but it also reflects an attitude. We can use it when we want to look back on how we were showing our world." This highlights that documentaries not only present content but also reflect the attitudes and views of society at the time, making them valuable tools for anthropologists and communities to understand their history (Wintle, 2021).

Documentary films are effective tools for recording traditions in audiovisual form and have a broader scope than text or photographs alone,

making them more impactful in educating the public about existing traditions. With engaging formats and easy access in the digital era, documentaries attract young people to connect more deeply with cultural heritage and traditions, encouraging future generations to continue efforts in preservation (Mentari & Syaputra, 2024). As a digital medium that can produce realistic imagery, documentaries are highly effective tools for recording, communicating, and preserving long-standing cultural and traditional values. Through narrative and moving images, cultural messages become more accessible to viewers from diverse backgrounds, making documentary films essential for documentation and education in preserving the cultural heritage of Pekojan, which is rich in historical, architectural, and traditional values such as the serving of Indian porridge during the fasting month of Ramadan. By using visual and narrative methods, this documentary not only documents the existence of the culture but also raises awareness of the importance of preserving and passing down Pekojan's local wisdom to future generations.

2.3.1 Title of Documentary Film

The title *The Hidden Soul of Pekojan* was chosen because it reflects the main objective of this research: to uncover the cultural identity and historical values of Kampung Pekojan in Semarang, which have long been undocumented. This multicultural neighborhood has historically been home to various ethnic groups, such as Arabs, Indians, and Malays, since the colonial era. However, urban development and modernization have gradually faded and forgotten the historical values and cultural heritage of Pekojan. The word "hidden" represents important aspects no longer visible in daily life, and "soul" refers to the essence or spirit shaping this area's identity socially, historically, and culturally.

The title also reflects the documentary's narrative approach, which aims to highlight Pekojan's deeper dimensions through community experiences and historical relics. The documentary serves as both a creative product and an effort to reconstruct collective memory and preserve local heritage. The reflective and

poetic title is intended to draw the audience in, encouraging them to understand Pekojan more deeply and not merely see it as an ordinary urban neighborhood. The title provides space for hidden narratives to emerge through the visual medium. Therefore, "The Hidden Soul of Pekojan" is considered relevant and representative of the documentary's content and spirit.

2.4 Pre-Production

In the pre-production stage, the research team began by determining the theme and title of the documentary. After conducting preliminary research and location surveys, the team agreed on the title *The Hidden Soul of Pekojan*. The title reflects the idea that there are valuable cultural and religious values in Pekojan that are still hidden or unfamiliar to the public, especially the younger generation. Following that, the team prepared a synopsis and script draft, then created a shooting schedule and list of interviewees, including youth representatives, local residents, religious figures, academics, and the general public.

The team also gathered supporting data through literature studies and interviews with expert informants. Expert informants included the imam of Masjid Jami' Pekojan, the cook of the Indian porridge, and academic supervisors who guided the media and language aspects. This stage is crucial for preparing the required materials and logistics, including cameras, tripods, microphones, and transportation. At this stage, the narrative style was also determined informative and poetic, similar to *Muslim Traveler*, to make it both educational and emotionally engaging.

2.5 Production

The production stage involved capturing footage at various locations around Pekojan Village, particularly at Masjid Jami' Pekojan and the surrounding environment. Interview recordings with key informants were conducted directly at the location to obtain authentic and contextual information.

The team also documented the tradition of Indian porridge preparation, including the cooking process and distribution to the community. In addition to interviews, the production team recorded ambient visuals of the mosque architecture, congregational activities, Qur'anic recitations, *tadarus*, and residents' routines during Ramadan.

The production team consisted of camera operators, audio recorders, directors, and script supervisors. All scenes were taken according to the shooting script and schedule, with attention to lighting, composition, and sound quality. Interviews were conducted using an open-ended format to allow speakers to share experiences and perspectives freely, especially regarding the meaning and significance of tradition, the role of the mosque, and the identity of the Pekojan community.

2.6 Post-Production

Post-production marks the final stage in the documentary filmmaking process. It is where all the visual and audio elements come together through editing to form a finished piece that aligns with the original vision. As explained by Muafa and Junaedi (2020), this stage typically includes editing footage, adding narration, background music, sound effects, and additional visual elements like graphics. The main goal is to craft a clear, engaging, and cohesive story. Post-production marks the final stage in the documentary filmmaking process. It is where all the visual and audio elements come together through editing to form a finished piece that aligns with the original vision. As explained by Muafa and Junaedi (2020), this stage typically includes editing footage, adding narration, background music, sound effects, and additional visual elements like graphics. The main goal is to craft a clear, engaging, and cohesive story. Post-Production Steps:

1. Data Transfer; All recorded video and audio files are moved from the camera or storage devices to a computer or editing system for processing.

2. File Import, video, audio, and any supporting media are uploaded into the editing software to begin the editing workflow.
3. Footage Arrangement; Clips are roughly organized into a sequence that follows the intended storyline or narrative flow.
4. Audio Editing; The sound is refined by removing unwanted noise, adjusting volume levels, and adding background music or sound effects to enhance clarity and emotional tone.
5. Video Editing; Video clips are trimmed, reordered, and combined into a structured, coherent narrative that reflects the documentary's message.
6. Subtitling; Subtitles or captions are added often in multiple languages to help viewers understand spoken content and key information on screen.
7. Color Grading; Colors and lighting are adjusted to improve the visual appeal, ensure consistency between scenes, and support the mood or tone of the story.

2.7 YouTube

According to Daraini and Masnawati (2024), YouTube is a free digital platform that allows users to upload, view, discuss, and share videos. Due to its monetization potential, YouTube has become one of the most popular social media platforms, with more than 65,000 videos uploaded every day (Pamungkas, 2023). YouTube also provides a glimpse into local culture by showcasing traditions, cultural events, and daily life. The platform encourages viewers to gain a deeper understanding of local heritage. As a tool for cultural education, YouTube requires active participation from its audience. Viewers are no longer passive recipients of information but are invited to engage in building their own understanding. By offering content that stimulates critical thinking and active involvement, YouTube has the potential to be an effective medium for constructive learning about local culture (Zain, Tasya & Indra, 2023).

2.8 Previous Work

In preparing and developing this documentary film, one of the most essential foundational elements was the formulation of the project's idea, theme, and overall concept. In determining these elements, the author had to sharpen their creative thinking, influenced by both internal and external factors. Therefore, the author conducted research on documentary references that aligned with the initial vision and production plan outlined during the pre-production stage. The aim of this research was to identify key aspects that must be considered in producing a documentary film.

The author referred to three documentary films as comparative materials. These films were selected due to their conceptual similarities, with the hope that relevant elements could be adapted to support the development of the narrative structure and desired cinematographic techniques.

The first reference is a documentary titled *Keraton Yogyakarta, Pancering Kauripan*, published on the YouTube (Paniradya Kaistimewan, 2023). This documentary explores culture and local wisdom, providing an in-depth explanation of the role and importance of the Yogyakarta Palace in the life of the community. It also highlights cultural figures of Yogyakarta with the aim of fostering appreciation and preservation of local heritage. This 18-minute documentary was produced by Paniradya Kaistimewan and directed by Thomas Chris.



Figure 2.1 The documentary film 'Kraton Yogyakarta, *Pancering Kauripan*' on YouTube

The documentary film "Kraton Yogyakarta, *Pancering Kauripan*" was chosen as one of the main references for this project due to its similar theme and a color palette that aligns with the visual concept of the author. During the review process, the author analyzed the cinematographic techniques used and the diction chosen for the narrator. The film's opening narration is one of the segments the author plans to adapt and tailor for use in their own documentary production.

The second reference documentary is titled "Exploring Islamic Heritage in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina – Muslim Travellers". The video is narrated by Armalina and produced by Muhammad Yasin (MDTV, 2024). This 21-minute documentary presents Armalina's exploration of Islamic heritage sites in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The narrator provides historical context and current conditions of each site visited and engages in local cultural activities, such as horseback riding, to deliver an immersive experience.



Figure 2.2 Exploring Islamic Heritage in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina – Muslim Travellers, on YouTube

The author selected this documentary video as a reference work due to its thematic similarity; both works explore the topic of Islamic heritage in a specific location. The author referred to aspects such as camera angles and the narrative structure of the film. For example, the video uses long shots when the narrator is walking and medium shots when she explains particular places. Moreover, the narrative structure of the documentary offers valuable insights into how a narrator can develop a story about a place into a coherent and engaging narrative.

The third documentary used as a reference has a style similar to the second one, although it carries a different title. Titled "*The Development of Islam in Shymkent, Kazakhstan – Muslim Travelers*," this video presents information about the emergence and growth of Islam in the city of Shymkent, Kazakhstan. An Indonesian narrator, Nabila Ishma Nurhabibah, delivers the historical story. The 22-minute-and-18-second video was uploaded and produced by Muhammad Yasin (MDTV, 2024).

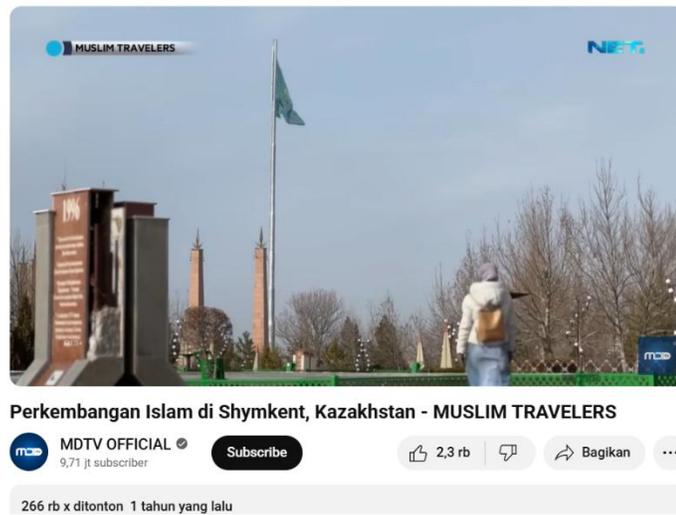


Figure 2.3 The Development of Islam in Shymkent, Kazakhstan – Muslim Travelers, on YouTube

This documentary film covers activities similar to those in the author's own work, such as depicting a mosque and tasting local cuisine. By analyzing the video from a different perspective, the author gained valuable insights into how the story was structured, how the narrator conducted interviews, and how inspirational quotes were integrated into the narrative. In addition, the author reviewed the cinematography of the video and found it to be well-executed and appropriate, resulting in a visually appealing and engaging presentation. Therefore, the author applied a similar approach in developing the documentary project.

Most Islamic heritage-themed documentaries referenced by the author predominantly emphasize physical aspects of historical architecture or deliver formal, chronological historical narratives. For instance, *Kraton Yogyakarta, Pancering Kauripan* (2023) and *The Development of Islam in Shymkent* (2024) highlight architectural documentation and the contributions of key historical figures in the spread of Islam within particular regions. These documentaries often adopt a static presentation style, offering limited exploration of the current cultural practices or social lives of local communities.

At the same time, there appears to be a lack of documentaries that deeply and specifically focus on the contemporary socio-cultural life of communities in Kampung Pekojan, Semarang especially those that center on religious practices and local traditions such as the distribution of Indian porridge during Ramadan. This observation stems from the author's initial searches on digital platforms like YouTube and Google, using keywords such as "Pekojan Semarang documentary", "Islamic heritage Semarang", and "Indian porridge tradition". These searches revealed a significant gap in visual documentation that employs a narrative and humanistic approach, particularly in the form of comprehensive, publicly accessible documentary films.

This lack is further reinforced by findings discussed in Chapter I of the final report, which highlight the absence of sustained digital documentation on the history and culture of Kampung Pekojan. Without deliberate preservation efforts, this void risks eroding the collective memory surrounding the area's long-standing values of cultural richness, tolerance, and diversity. In fact, cultural documentation plays a crucial role in building visual archives that can serve multiple fields of study from anthropology and local history to heritage education.

Addressing this gap became the primary motivation behind the creation of *The Hidden Soul of Pekojan*, a documentary designed to fill this absence through a visually engaging and inclusive storytelling approach. Unlike conventional documentaries that primarily convey historical facts, this film brings cultural heritage to life by centering on people's experiences, the atmosphere of Ramadan, and living traditions that continue today. By incorporating poetic narration, traditional Javanese music, and English subtitles, the documentary appeals not only to local viewers but also to international audiences. Furthermore, its publication on the official YouTube channel of Universitas Diponegoro reinforces the film's academic validity and its accessibility as a socially inclusive cultural archive. Thus, *The Hidden Soul of*

Pekojan stands not only as a documentary project but also as a meaningful contribution to cultural preservation and the nurturing of intergenerational awareness.