



A Functional Analysis of the The End Station Ritual US Human-Nature Integration in the Kerinci Community

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ABSTRACT: Traditional rituals are an important part of culture, reflecting how people understand and build relationships with nature. One of the sacred rituals of the Kerinci people is Nyujung Stai, which serves as a procession to crown women as gurus and as a medium for unification human self with natural And world spiritual. Study this aims This study analyzes the function of the Nyujung Stai ritual in the lives of the Kerinci people by emphasizing its role as a cultural system containing cosmological and ecological knowledge. using a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods, through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation in Empih Hamlet, Sungai Penuh City, Jambi Province. The results of the study indicate that Nyujung Stai functions as a mechanism for transmitting ecological values, social legitimacy for teachers, and a means of establishing a life ethic that places nature as a living, sacred entity, and its harmony must be maintained. This ritual not only regulates human relations with nature, but also maintains social balance and the sustainability of indigenous knowledge. The conclusion of the study confirms that Nyujung Stai is a cultural system that This article is relevant for understanding the role of traditional rituals as adaptive strategies in dealing with social change and environmental crises. It is hoped that this article will re-awaken readers' attention to the power of local rituals in building harmonious relationships between humans and nature.

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional rituals are a form of cultural practice that plays a crucial role in shaping people's perspectives on themselves, their communities, and the environment in which they live. In many traditional societies, rituals serve not only as spiritual expressions but also as social and ecological mechanisms that symbolically and practically regulate human relations with nature. Through rituals, values, knowledge, and ethics are passed down, negotiated, and reinforced through collective experience. However, amidst accelerating modernization and changes in value systems, and the increasingly real environmental crisis, the existence of traditional rituals often experiences a narrowing of meaning, even being marginalized from people's lives.

The Kerinci people of Jambi Province are known for their culture, which thrives on a strong connection to nature. The natural environment is understood not only as a living space but also as a sacred space that holds power, knowledge, and the sustainability of life. One form of cultural expression that represents this relationship is the Nyujung Stai ritual, a sacred ritual that serves as a procession of perfection and the coronation of women as gurus. This ritual not only marks a change in an individual's social status but also serves as a means of connecting humans, nature, and ancestral spirits within the Kerinci cosmology.

In practice, Nyujung Stai incorporates various symbols, movements, and uses of natural elements that reflect the Kerinci people's view of cosmic balance. Nature is positioned as a friend, teacher, and a living entity that must be respected. Through this

ritual, individuals appointed as gurus gain not only social legitimacy but also cosmological legitimacy to fulfill their roles as guardians of tradition, spiritual mediators, and protectors of harmonious human-environmental relations. Thus, Nyujung Stai functions as a cultural system that unites spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions within a single, coherent ritual practice.

Various previous studies have shown that rituals and traditional arts have a strategic role in preserving cultural values, character education, and forming collective awareness in society. Studies on the revitalization of performing arts confirm that the practice of Culture can be a medium for transforming values and a bridge between tradition and contemporary life (Aditya, 2024; Jazuli, 2008). Meanwhile, the ethnoecological approach positions rituals as a repository of local knowledge about the environment and human ways. adapt with nature (Ahimas, 2022). However, studies that specifically examine the function of Nyujung Stai as a ritual of unifying humans with nature, especially through a functional analysis perspective, are still relatively limited.

This situation becomes increasingly relevant as the practice of Nyujung Stai becomes less common. The weakening of the ritual not only results in the loss of tradition but also has the potential to disrupt the transmission of cosmological and ecological knowledge within the Kerinci community. This shift in perspective on nature—from a sacred entity to an economic resource—indicates a shift in value systems that directly impacts sustainability. environment And cohesion social public. By Because That, required study who is able to re-read the function of the Nyujung Stai ritual in the context of the life of the Kerinci people, not merely as a cultural heritage, but as a cultural work system that has real relevance to current issues.

This research aims to analyze the function of the Nyujung ritual Stai in The study focuses on the life of the Kerinci people by positioning it as a ritual for uniting humans with nature. The focus of this study is directed at how symbols, movements, and ritual practices function as mechanisms for transmitting ecological knowledge, legitimizing the social legitimacy of gurus, and establishing a life ethic in harmony with the cosmos. The main questions posed in this research are how Nyujung Stai functions as a cultural system that unites humans, nature, and the spiritual world, and what implications the weakening of these ritual practices has for the sustainability of the cultural and environmental values of the Kerinci people.

Through an ethnographic qualitative approach, this article presents a functional analysis of Nyujung Stai based on the perspective of cultural actors and an anthropological theoretical framework. The research findings are expected to not only enrich studies of art and cultural anthropology but also provide conceptual contributions to understanding the role of local culture as an adaptive and sustainable strategy. Thus, this study positions the Nyujung Stai ritual as a relevant source of cultural knowledge to address the challenges of human-nature relations amidst the dynamics of contemporary society.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic method, because the focus is directed study on understanding meaning, function, And ritual role The End Station in the life of the Kerinci people as a living cultural system. This approach was chosen to allows researchers gain a deep understanding of the practice rituals, symbols, and human-nature relations from the perspective of the cultural actors themselves. Ethnography is used as framework methodological For describe culture in a way holistic through direct involvement of researchers in the field

The research population was the Kerinci indigenous community who still possess knowledge and experience related to the Nyujung Stai ritual. Informants were selected purposively, taking into account direct involvement, depth of traditional knowledge, and social roles in ritual practices. The primary informants were the two guriu who had led or been directly involved in the Nyujung Stai ritual, while supporting informants included traditional and community leaders who understood the cultural context of the ritual. This sampling technique enabled the researcher to obtain relevant and qualitatively rich data, although it was not intended for statistical generalization.

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher herself, in keeping with the characteristics of qualitative research. To support the data collection process, an observation guide, a semi-structured in-depth interview guide, and documentation tools in the form of field notes, a voice recorder, and a camera were used. These instruments were used flexibly to allow the researcher to adapt to the dynamics of the field and the local socio-cultural context.

The research procedure was carried out through several interconnected stages. The research was conducted in Empih Hamlet, Sungai Penuh City, Jambi Province, as one of the Kerinci traditional area still keeping Knowledge of the Nyujung Stai ritual. Data collection was conducted during the field research period.

This approach adapts to the availability of informants and the community's social activities. Data were obtained through participant observation of the social environment and ritual symbols, in-depth interviews to explore the meaning, function, and subjective experiences of informants, and documentation of cultural artifacts, ritual spaces, and the community's collective narratives.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively, following the principles of ethnographic analysis. The collected data were transcribed, classified, and analyzed through a gradual process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis focused on interpreting the function of the Nyujung Stai ritual within the framework of human-nature relations, the social legitimacy of the guru, and the role of symbols and ritual practices in maintaining the cosmological balance of the community. The researchers used an emic approach to understand the meaning from the community's perspective, then ethically linking it to anthropological theory and cultural studies.

Data validity was maintained through several strategies, including source triangulation by comparing information from primary and secondary informants, technical triangulation through observation, interviews, and documentation, and member checking by reconfirming findings with key informants. Furthermore, researchers engaged in continuous critical reflection to minimize interpretation bias and maintain analytical consistency.

This research starts from the assumption that the Nyujung Stai ritual is a meaningful cultural practice that remains alive in the collective memory of the Kerinci people, despite its increasingly infrequent implementation. Therefore, the experiences, narratives, and knowledge of informants are seen as valid and relevant sources of data for understanding the ritual's cultural function.

The scope of this research methodology is limited to the local context of Empih Hamlet and is not intended to represent the full range of Nyujung Stai ritual practices in the Kerinci region. Another limitation lies in the lack of direct observation of the ritual's full implementation due to its infrequent performance. Nevertheless, the ethnographic approach employed allows researchers to reconstruct the ritual's function and meaning in depth through the experiences, memories, and interpretations of cultural participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results show that the Nyujung Stai ritual functions as a cultural system that regulates the relationship between Kerinci people and nature in a comprehensive and multi-layered manner. This ritual cannot be understood simply as a procession of coronation of women as gurus, but rather as a symbolic mechanism that reorganizes the individual's position in the cosmos—connecting the human body, social space, nature, and the spiritual world in a unified meaning. In this context, Nyujung Stai functions as an integration ritual that unites humans with nature through symbolic experiences directly experienced by the ritual participants and their supporting community.

Functionally, Nyujung Stai serves as a means of internalizing the Kerinci people's perspective on nature. Nature is understood not as a passive backdrop to life, but as a living entity possessing will, power, and knowledge. This function is reflected in the use of natural elements—such as flowers, forest plants, water, and so on. smoke incense, And orientation room ritual—which No nature decorative, but Symbolic. Every natural element presented in the ritual serves as a link between humans and the cosmic forces believed to reside in the surrounding environment. Thus, the Nyujung Stai ritual can be read as a form of ecological communication, in which humans express respect, dependence, and readiness to live. in harmony with nature.



Picture 1. Implementation Ritual The End Station

From an ethnoecological perspective, Nyujung Stai functions as a medium for transmitting environmental knowledge that is informal and embodied. Knowledge about nature is not taught through didactic narratives, but is experienced through the body—through movement, rhythm, fatigue, and emotional engagement. ritual. This aligns with Ahimas's (2022) view that local wisdom is often embedded in performative cultural practices. Through Nyujung Stai, prospective teachers not only "learn about nature" but "learn with nature," making the ritual experience the foundation of an ecological ethic they will carry throughout their lives.

Another important function of Nyujung Stai is as a mechanism of social and cosmological legitimacy. A person's appointment as a guru is not solely determined by human social structures but must also be recognized by nature and ancestral spirits. Signs such as dreams, unexplained illnesses, or specific behaviors serve as indicators that an individual has been "called" by a non-human power. Functionally, this mechanism ensures that customary authority is not generated haphazardly, but rather through a rigorous symbolic selection process. Thus, Nyujung Stai functions as a system of controlling customary power, while also maintaining the morality and responsibility of those who hold supernatural knowledge.

From a symbolic anthropological perspective, Nyujung Stai can be understood as a cultural text containing cosmological

messages from the Kerinci people. The movements resemble an eagle, tiger, water, And wind is not just imitation of nature, but a representation of values ideals that a teacher should have. Eagle symbolizes the breadth of vision and the sharpness of knowledge, the tiger represents strength and self-control, water and wind represent flexibility and usefulness for life. These symbols serve as an ethical framework that guides the guru in carrying out his role as a teacher. guard balance between man And natural. Findings This strengthen Geertz's view (1992) is that ritual is a system of symbols that enables humans to understand and organize the reality of their lives.

Socially, Nyujung Stai also serves as a means of community cohesion and integration. Its communal nature, requiring mutual cooperation, and involving broad community participation, make this ritual a space for Social consolidation. In this context, nature exists not only as a symbolic entity but also as a shared space that binds community solidarity. When these rituals are rarely performed, this social function weakens, resulting in a diminished collective awareness of traditional and environmental values.

The research also shows that the weakening of Nyujung Stai practices correlates with changes in people's perspectives on nature. Nature, previously understood as a friend and sacred space, is slowly shifting to a purely economic resource. This condition aligns with the findings of Sunliensyar (2021) and Kurniawan & Fufita (2025), which show that environmental degradation in the Kerinci region is inextricably linked to changes in cultural value systems. Thus, functionally, Nyujung Stai can be viewed as a cultural instrument that plays a role in maintaining ecological balance by strengthening cosmological values.

Transformation values The End Station to in dance creation Repeat Kasoah demonstrates that ritual functions can be reactualized in the medium of performing arts. This dance does not aim to replace ritual, but rather serves as a symbolic representation that echoes Nyujung Stai's central message of the unity of humans and nature. In this context, dance serves as a new articulation space for ancient values, allowing local wisdom to remain present and relevant in modern society. This finding aligns with the views of Aditya (2024) and Jazuli (2008) who position performing arts as a strategic means of cultural revitalization and values education.

However, this analysis has limitations due to its reliance on the local context of Empih Hamlet and the limited direct observation due to the infrequent rituals. Therefore, the functions described in this discussion are the result of contextual ethnographic interpretation, not an absolute generalization for the entire Kerinci community.

Overall, these findings and discussion confirm that Nyujung Stai functions as a cultural system that unites humans with nature through symbols, ritual experiences, and social structures. These rituals not only reflect traditional beliefs but also contain ecological knowledge and ethical principles relevant to addressing the current environmental crisis. By analyzing Nyujung Stai through functional analysis, this study demonstrates that local culture is not a remnant of the past, but rather an adaptive strategy that has the power to address the challenges of contemporary life.



Picture 2. Arrangement *Jambe* (offering) rituals *Reach the station*
Source: Tory Praetya, 2024.

CONCLUSION

The Nyujung Stai ritual in the Kerinci community is a cultural system that functions to unite humans with nature. through practice symbolic, structure social, And an integrative ritual experience. This ritual not only marks the elevation of women to the position of guru, but more deeply serves as a mechanism for transmitting cosmological and ecological knowledge that positions nature as a living, sacred entity. And not inseparable of human life. Through movement, mantra, and the use of natural elements, Nyujung Stai forms a collective awareness of the importance of human-environmental harmony and confirms the role of the guru as guardians of the social and ecological balance of society.

This research is important because it demonstrates that traditional rituals are not merely relics of the past, but rather local knowledge systems with real relevance to contemporary issues, particularly the environmental crisis and the weakening of human ties with nature. By reading Nyujung Stai functionally, readers are invited to understand that local culture works as an adaptive

strategy that shapes life ethics, regulates social relations, and maintains environmental sustainability through meaningful collective symbols and practices.

The implications of these findings emphasize that cultural preservation efforts are not sufficient to be carried out through documentation alone, but need to be directed at re-interpreting. Cultural functions in the contemporary context. The transformation of Nyujung Stai values into performing arts mediums, such as creative dance, demonstrates the realistic possibility of maintaining the continuity of the ritual's cosmological and ecological messages without losing its fundamental meaning. Thus, this study positions Nyujung Stai as a strategic source of cultural knowledge to strengthen ecological awareness, cultural education, and the sustainability of the Kerinci community's life in the future.

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