

# The Meaning of Javanese *Slametan Arwah* in The Perspective of Eucharistic Theology Through Umberto Eco's Sign of Production Theory

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## Abstract

Death is a universal experience that brings profound grief to the surrounding family and community. While the journey of grieving is deeply personal—shaped by each individual's unique relationship with the deceased—cultural factors play a significant role in how humans derive meaning from death and navigate the accompanying grief. In a context in which culture and Catholicism are interwoven, like the case in the Javanese Catholic community, it is not uncommon that there would arise questions on meaning and confusion on the rites associated with death. This research discusses the resonance and dissonance between the *slametan arwah* rite in Javanese culture and the rite to commemorate the deceased in the Eucharistic celebration. Utilizing the framework of 'mode of sign production' by Umberto Eco, this study shows that *slametan arwah* rituals share some similarities with the Eucharist: in them, the centrality of communion expressed and strengthened through prayer and shared meals, the remembrance of the deceased as a way of maintaining harmony between the deceased with the living, and the ceremonial structure both practices hold. However, the critical point to observe is that there are distinctions between them in their perspectives on salvation, the presence of death remembrance is not central within the Eucharist, and an understanding of Christ's sacrificial offering in the Eucharist. This study is organized into four sections based on Umberto Eco's Semiotics of Signs: Recognition, Ostentation, Replica, and Invention. Before these analyses, an overview of the *slametan arwah* rite within the Javanese worldview will be provided. Through these discussions, the study aims to help Catholic Javanese deepen their understanding of both practices to prevent theological confusion. It also aims to contribute to the vision of inculturation advocated by Vatican II, fostering a richer integration of local customs with church theology.

Keywords: *Slametan Arwah*, Eucharist, recognition, ostension, replica, invention

## Introduction

The Javanese concept of death is always associated with the concept of harmony. Harmonization is certainly not solely interpreted in a cosmological sense but also in an anthropological sense, namely the harmonious relationship between humans and nature (universe) and between individual's relationship with society. Therefore, for the Javanese, the ability to maintain or create harmony itself becomes very important. Being harmonious is a kind of art *par-excellence* in Javanese life. The conception of harmony itself paradigmatically stands firmly on the foundation of another equally fundamental idea, namely that humans as "*jagad cilik*" are representations of the universe as "*jagad gede*". We usually call them the macrocosm and microcosm paradigm model, where the relationship between the two is actually very intertwined both physically and mentally. "i" or macrocosm is presupposed to be a representation of, or always moving towards, the existence of harmony itself. Thus, the principle of harmony that exists in the structure of this big universe is then placed as a kind of natural law, where our awareness as a small universe in its participation in the life of this universe must be directed towards the existence of this harmony model (Kuning, 2018).

From this nature of mind, it can be seen that the Javanese inner world is clear that the realm of here and the realm of there, *lair kalawan batin*, or the realm of *wadak* and the realm of the supernatural is not something that is immediately separated and sharply separated but a solid unity that is assumed to still have harmony. Thus, implicitly in the Javanese paradigm, death is not an absolute disconnection, but there is still a continuity between the realms. The existence of this continuity It is also what gave rise to the ritual of *nyekar-nyadran* or grave pilgrimage or the Javanese custom to have a large family grave (Kuning, 2018). Furthermore, according to Koentjaraningrat, due to the existence of harmony and the understanding that life is continuous, Javanese people believe that the spirits of the dead can still be summoned by relatives who are still alive in the world if needed, and can still roam around their place of residence or *gentayangan* or often called the spirit is not yet calm (Laksana, 2014). Geertz, said that *slametan* is usually performed at night and attended by adult men. Those who come for *Slametan* sit in a circle around the *ubarampe* placed on mats that have been spread out and are accompanied by prayers. Subagya explains that one of the *ubarampe* or typical dishes in *slametan* for the dead is *apem* and *tumpeng*. *Apem* is a small food made from rice flour that is round and flat (Subagya, 2004). This symbolizes a sincere attitude (Geertz, 2014), namely that in life humans must show a flat attitude: they should not be too sad or too happy in life. Food is served together with *tumpeng*. There will be a contrast between the two. *Tumpeng* as a symbol of life that points upwards and *apem* as a symbol of the dead state that is flat without romance (Geertz, 2014).

The whole series of ceremonies and *slametan* held by the Javanese has a function to help overcome grief with a stoic disposition without severe emotional turmoil. *Ikhlas* is a state of being consciously guided even though it is difficult to work on. All of these leads people not to linger in sadness but to complete the task without an atmosphere of severe emotional turmoil (Geertz, 2014). This is where, for Javanese society, the event of death also has social significance, not only for the family left behind. With death the idea of living together in community is refreshed, safeguarded, and the future of humanity is envisioned and discussed (Laksana, 2014). *Slametan* is also a community platform that brings together various aspects of social life and individual experience in a way that minimizes uncertainty, tension and conflict (Geertz, 2014). According to Beatty (1999), *slametan* is a means for bringing together people who have a diversity of worldviews and even social status (Laksana, 2014).

According to Geertz (2014), Javanese *slametan* has its own day calculation or what is often referred to as *petungan*. *Petungan* is Javanese which when translated means "to count". *Petungan* is a

calculation system to determine certain days to hold a ceremony, where the selection of the day symbolizes the hope for the smooth running of the ceremony and the positive effects or special grace that will be obtained from holding the ceremony. Geertz suggests that the series of death *slametan* commonly performed by Javanese people starts from the first night after the burial ceremony, until the one thousandth day after death. *Slametan* performed on the first day is called *Slametan geblak*, *surtanah* or *ngesur tanah*, or *ngesur siti*. Then another *slametan* is performed on the third day after death, commonly called *Slametan nelung dina*, which aims to make the process of separating the spirit from the body of the deceased go smoothly. The next *Slametan* is performed on the seventh day or *mitung ndina*, the fortieth day or *matang puluh* or *nyekawandasa*, the hundredth day or *nyatus*, the one-year anniversary or commonly called *mendhak sepisan*, the two-year anniversary or commonly called *mendhak pindho*, and the last *slametan* obligation is *nyewu* or the thousand-day anniversary as the last obligation that must be fulfilled by the family, even though in other commemorations such as forty days or *mendhak sepisan* there is no *slametan* ceremony is held (Kuning, 2018).

According to the Javanese view, there are several important elements associated with *slametan*: the gathering of the community (*communio*) to pray, the meal as an expression of gratitude to God, prophets, saints, and ancestors. *Slametan* is one of the most central ways in which the Javanese express their relatedness with God and His saints as a community through the categories of “slamet” (derived from the Arabic *salāma*, the Javanese holistic notion of well-being) and “berkah” (Ar. *baraka*, blessing, blessedness) (Laksana, 2014).

In this respect, one should not fail to notice the centrality and ubiquity of the *slametan* in Javanese religious tradition, beyond the particular context of pilgrimage, but still in an organic relationship to the larger veneration of saints and loving devotion to (and remembrance of) ancestors. Traditional Javanese of all faiths hold the *slametan* in the face of every important life event such as rites of passage, communal festivities and so forth, in order to secure the blessing of God and His spiritual company of saints and their ancestors, precisely because these figures are an integral part of their community, on whose blessings the wellbeing of the community depends. The crucial section in this ritual meal is the invocation of the saints and spirits to whom the ritual food is symbolically offered, before being shared to the participants. Interestingly, at least in the original and complete form, the saints and spirits have to be invited by name to the ritual (Laksana, 2014).

According to Laksana (2014), *slametan* is practiced in a different way by contemporary Javanese society. Contemporary Javanese society refers to Javanese society that has been influenced by Islam. This contemporary Javanese society is divided into two streams. The first stream is those who prioritize religious values over Javanese culture. But the second stream is those who emphasize Javanese rituals/cultural values over the Islamic religion they profess. Although divided into two major streams, the original and complete form remains the same, which has the characteristic of calling prophets, saints, Javanese kings, ancestral spirits, local guardian spirits and so on. In this case, the Muslim *santri*, those who are not too influenced by Javanese culture, generally invite more Arab saints. Meanwhile, Muslims who are more influenced by Javanese culture are more interested in praying to the spirits of Hindu-Javanese kings, many of whom are said to have converted to Islam before their deaths (Laksana, 2014). What about those Javanese who do not follow Islam but rather Catholicism? Researchers have seen various reviews of previous journals, such as the meaning of the *slametan* tradition in the perspective of Islamic traditions such as in the writing of Hendrajaya and Almu'tasim (2020) entitled “Tradisi Selamatan Kematian Nyatus Nyewu: Implikasi Nilai Pluralisme Islam Jaw” in the *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, 17(2), 431–460. Apart from the Islamic perspective, there are also those who have

discussed *Slametan* in the Sundanese tradition such as in the journal article of the International Journal of Indonesian Philosophy & Theology with the writing of Nikasius Jatmiko (2022) with the title *Sawur or Sawyer Rite: the Perspective of Death Javanese-Sundanese Tradition In Catholic Church*. However, not many have discussed the *slametan Arwah* or *memule* in the perspective of Catholicism and in the Javanese perspective. Does the role of the *slametan* tradition in Javanese culture have a place in Catholic religious practices/rites? How does Catholic theology view the tradition of spirit memorial *slametan*? This study will answer these questions and will specifically relate them to the Eucharist.

## Method

In this study, the method used is a qualitative research method with a literature review to explore the tradition of Slametan Arwah or *memule* in the perspective of Christian theology. According to Sugiyono (2017) qualitative research methods are research in which the researcher becomes the main instrument, then data analysis is inductive and the results of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization. By using this method, researchers can carefully dissect the phenomenon of *slametan arwah (memule)*.

The researcher considers that qualitative research with literature review is the right method to theologially describe the phenomenon of *slametan arwah* or *memule* specifically in the study of Eucharistic Theology. Literature review can be defined as a research process whose emphasis is on written sources (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Subekt et al., 2017). First, this research will dissect the meaning of the commemoration of the dead in the perspective of the Christian faith from primary sources such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), Documents Encyclical Letter “Ecclesia de Eucharistia” 2003, *Memule Inkgang Sampun Sumare*, (Komisi Liturgi Keuskupan Agung Semarang, 2017), *Ekaristi: Tinjauan Teologis, Liturgis, dan Pastoral* (Martasudjita, 2005). Then to see the parallels between *slametan* in Islamic and Catholic traditions, researchers will also use the book *Muslim and Catholic Pilgrimage Practice: Explorations Through Java* (Laksana, 2014). The books above will be used by researchers as primary sources (primary data). Then related to secondary data, researchers use several journals that have discussed death.

Regarding the relationship between the Javanese *slametan arwah* tradition or *memule*, the researcher will use Umberto Eco's (1976) semiotic method on the theory of sign production. Umberto Eco (1976) makes a typology table of forms of sign production to show how (as an expression) through physical labor becomes a sign function that contains certain content. Umberto Eco (1976) distinguishes the physical labor into four, namely 1) *recognition* is the act of acknowledging/recognizing; 2) *ostension* is the act of pointing to something; 3) *replica* is the act of making a replica/imitation; 4) *invention* is the act of creating something new. From the results of these findings, the researcher will then analyze the relationship between *slametan/memule* in the Javanese tradition with the Sacrament of the Eucharist. For the Javanese, *slametan/memule* is the summit of all celebrations while the Sacrament of Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian celebrations (Paul II, 2003).

## Findings and Discussion

### *Slametan Arwah (Memule) & Eucharist in Umberto Eco's Semiotics*

The analysis of the link between *slametan-arwah memule* and the Eucharist will be discussed within the framework of Umberto Eco's (1976) Semiotic Theory of Sign Production with four stages:

| Umberto Eco's Semiotics of Signs | <i>Slametan Arwah - Memule</i>   | Eucharist of Remembrance  |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Recognition</b>               | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prayer &amp; Food are essential. Personal safety please.</li> <li>2. Pray for the peace of the departed soul: <i>tahlil</i> - Javanese Islam</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Eucharistic Prayer and communion, but in the Eucharist: sacramental.</li> <li>2. Ask for peace of spirit: to obtain God's mercy through Christ, i.e. to experience union with God in heaven</li> </ol>  |
| <b>Ostension</b>                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The center, the peak of Javanese celebrations</li> <li>2. Remembrance of the dead and maintaining solidarity</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The source and summit of Christian life (LG 11).</li> <li>2. <i>Communio sanctorum</i>: The Church that consists of 3 <i>communio</i> (the living, the saints, and souls in the purgatory)</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Replica</b>                   | <p><b>Ceremonial Structure</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Invitation and welcoming stage</li> <li>2. Blessings and Prayers: <i>Tahlilan - Yasinan</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Safety, Life protection</li> <li>b. Salvation and peace who died</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Have a meal together                     <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Offerings</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Bringing blessings → food in baskets</li> </ol> | <p><b>Ceremonial Structure:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Opening Rite</li> <li>2. Liturgy of the Word</li> <li>3. Eucharistic Liturgy. Eucharistic Prayer calls the departed souls                     <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Institution Words</li> <li>b. Anamnese</li> <li>c. <i>Holy Communion</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Rite Cover. Blessing's unity with God in mission</li> </ol>  |
| <b>Invention</b>                 |  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>The point of departure of the salvation</b> being requested. <i>Slametan</i>: people who seek God. Eucharist: God who sends, the mystery of the Holy Trinity.</li> <li>2. <b>Content:</b> <i>Slametan</i> →harmony between the living and the dead, the divine and the human.<br/>Eucharist→ God's work of salvation through Christ: union with the Triune God→work of redemption, forgiveness of sins: God's mercy that allows spirits to experience salvation (aspect grace). Christ 's resurrection death opened a new perspective on the reality of life and death</li> <li>3. <b>Symbols.</b> <i>Slametan</i> through food. The Eucharist is not just a symbol but a real symbol: the bread and wine that become the Body and Blood of Christ.</li> </ol> |

Table 1. Umberto Eco's Semiotic Theory of Sign Production of Slametan Arwan and Eucharist

Eco understands semiotics as a collection of semiotic functions (or sign-functions). The semiotic theory he developed is non-referential, meaning that an expression (sign) can be used to designate a particular thing or state (object), but it depends on the culture and content it is assigned to (Guillemette & Cossette, 2006b). For Eco, language is not static, but develops within a linguistic system. Therefore, Eco's important contribution to the study of semiotics is his attempt to show the code of language that

is renewed in meaning by those who use it, through activities that take place within a semiotic system. Eco calls these semiotic systems modes of sign production.

One of Umberto Eco's semiotic contributions to the process of inculturation is how he sees that a sign is not a frozen sign. A sign can be replicated and even a new meaning can be created, which in turn can give a new meaning to the old sign. If you look at Table 1. Umberto Eco's Semiotics of Signs from the *slametan arwah* performed by the Javanese people, it can be seen that there is a similarity or replication process with the Eucharist. The next research analysis will use Umberto Eco's semiotic framework to see the relationship between the *slametan arwah* or commonly called *memule* and the Eucharist. In process I, II, III in Umberto Eco's semiotics, respectively, is a process of identification that leads to the findings of replication. In the identification process through three processes, namely recognition, ostension, replica, the researcher also tries to see the position of *memule* with the Eucharist. Then at stage IV, namely invention, researchers will present new findings that are interpreted by Javanese Catholics about the Eucharist of *memule*.

### **Recognition**

Recognition is the process where an event or object is identified by a person as representing certain content (Polidoro, 2015). Eco states that some sign functions are formed either through existing correlations or by creating new ones by the person recognizing them. There are three types of sign functions identified by Eco: imprints, symptoms, and clues. An example of an imprint is footprints, which indicate that humans were present in that location. Understanding what a print signifies relies on prior experiences (Polidoro, 2015). Symptoms indicate the occurrence of an event and point to a cause, such as smoke signaling a fire. Clues serve as signs that not only lead to something but also suggest the presence of an agent that left the clue (e.g., a human or vehicle). Recognizing clues requires understanding their sign function.

In examining the recognition stage prior to a deeper meaning process, two traditions of *slametan Arwah* and the Eucharist reveal important aspects. The meaning of *slametan arwah* involves praying for the spirits and ancestors of the host, followed by distributing blessed food to attendees (Laksana, 2014). According to both Laksana (2014) and Sutrisnaatmaka (1987, 1989), in the Javanese *slametan arwah*, intertwined with Islamic traditions, the communal meal involves prayers as a core part of the ritual. The sharing of food is essential in this practice.

The researcher also finds that the equivalent of the *slametan* rite in the Eucharist aligns with the Eucharistic Prayer. Historically, the earliest form of the Eucharist was connected with a communal meal known as *Agape* (Martasudjita, 2005). In the *Agape*, the Eucharist is celebrated following Jesus' last supper model, which includes a blessing over bread before the meal and a blessing over the chalice afterward. While these parts are distinct, they are viewed as one act. Over time, the blessing over bread and the chalice became more unified, creating a single Eucharist. Both the *slametan arwah* and the Eucharist highlight the significance of prayers for the deceased, followed by sharing a meal as an important celebration.

In the Eucharist, components of the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion can be specifically noted. The *slametan arwah*, in its Islamic interpretation, involves the *tahlilan* prayer, while the Eucharist features the Eucharistic prayer, particularly prayers of supplication. These prayers typically cover the needs of the Holy Church, including petitions for the Pope, Bishops, priests, and all faithful individuals. Moreover, the Eucharistic Prayer includes supplications for the deceased, allowing for specific mention of those being prayed for, often referred to as the memento, which starts with "remember." This indicates

that not only deceased Christians are prayed for, but all deceased individuals, whose faith is known only to God. This reflects the universal salvation aspect of Christ's sacrifice (Martasudjita, 2005). Martasudjita emphasizes that the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion are core components of the Eucharistic Liturgy. The term communion originates from Latin and implies a sense of shared concern or common property. According to Martasudjita, communion has two meanings: 1) individuals participating in God's saving work through Christ in the Eucharistic Prayer, and 2) individuals receiving the Body and Blood of Christ (Martasudjita, 2005). The researcher juxtaposes the Javanese *slametan arwah* with the Eucharist, particularly in their respective prayers and food sharing elements. Although both celebrations are similar in form, a key difference lies in meaning, specifically the sacramental nature of the Eucharist. The Eucharist represents the sacrificial offering of Christ on the cross, presented symbolically through bread and wine. Unlike a repetition of Christ's sacrifice, the Eucharist continuously presents the singular sacrifice of the cross without re-enactment.

In the recognition phase between the *slametan arwah* and the Eucharist, it is clear that both share fundamental elements: prayer and communal meals, oriented towards asking for peace for the spirits. However, researchers note a critical difference: in the Eucharistic perspective, seeking peace for the spirits is merely part of a broader ritual framework, where the sacrifice of Christ holds primary significance.

Besides the above theological comparison, it's much more critical to highlight and appreciate the communion concern, which has both traditions expressed and strengthened. Modern science on human development also puts emphasis on supportive relationships in various aspects of our lives. Especially in the past thirty years, much research has come to the forefront to emphasize the major role supportive relationships play in fostering resilience in the face of trauma and adversity rather than individual grit and inborn personal strength. Many studies have indicated receiving support is pivotal in alleviating psychological distress following a traumatic experience (Hone, 2023). In the context of grief, the current study by Dr. Hone Lucy shows that the vital role of supportive relationships remains true. Indeed, our relationships with others are paramount during grief.

Considering this psychological perspective, the centrality of communion in *slametan arwah* and eucharistic celebration seems to align with the essence of human science on resilience. In both practices, the Catholic theological vision and the Javanese cultural practices resonate with findings from modern psychology, which highlight a fundamental truth: other people matter. Mainly, in grieving time, sharing the experience of loss is essential; grievers require the support of others to express their emotions openly and find comfort, preserve the memories of those they have lost, and continue the bond of connection with the departed. These essential needs are facilitated in *slametan arwah* and Eucharistic celebrations through prayer and shared meals, which make the notion of communion spiritually and physically felt. The practical help and emotional support the grievers need can only be provided in tangible ways through the community.

All said above seems to underscore that the practices of *slametan arwah* and Eucharist carry theological views and serve as valuable devices for boosting resilience during grief. Even more, when those are well integrated, it seems that, especially for Javanese Catholics, the interwoven spiritual and practical meanings of both practices would bold and actualize the theology of the Eucharist as a sacred Paschal banquet where the faithful commune with the Lord's body and blood. Theologically speaking, the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed towards the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion; thus, receiving this sacrament strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ and reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.

Given this, in the context of hardship, such as grieving, the real presence of communion, assisted by the Holy Spirit and supported by a kinship with one another that runs deeper than blood, is not only expressed but also strengthened relational resilience, which is also frequently described in the Gospel, especially Johannine texts (Cook & White, 2020). In short, arguably, the resonant nature of the *slamten arwah* rite to the Eucharistic celebration can, when properly understood, bring charitable unity within the local community and enforce resiliency in grieving.

### ***Ostension***

Ostension is the act of pointing to something, which can occur when a natural or human action is highlighted as an example of its category. It happens in various contexts related to communication, synecdoche, and metonymy. For instance, a tourist who cannot speak the local language might point to cigarettes to signal a desire to buy them. In synecdoche, one might refer to a Starbucks to imply belonging to a certain economic class. Metonymy includes terms like "White House" representing the U. S. government or "Vatican" for the Pope's authority. In the context of *slametan arwah* and the Eucharist, ostension reveals important meanings in their celebrations. For Javanese people, *slametan arwah* is a ritual expressing their connection to God and ancestors. Similarly, according to the Second Vatican Council, the Eucharist is viewed as the center of Christian life and is crucial to the Church's activities, blending with daily living as an act of worship. Thus, the idea of the Eucharist as the source and summit of Church life underscores its link to the spiritual life of the believers. The second aspect of ostension relates to the remembrance of the dead in both practices. *Slametan arwah* has evolved to include invocations for spirits and maintaining harmony in the community, seen as a means to assist the souls of the deceased and to ensure order in life. The Javanese perceive death not as an end but as a transition, suggesting a lasting relationship between the living and the dead.

In the Eucharistic Prayer, especially in the Roman Canon, the Church remembers many saints, highlighting a communal connection with those in heaven. This remembrance serves to express hope for their intercession and acknowledges the Church's journey toward unity with God. Catholic tradition includes prayers for the dead, often tied to specific days for remembrance, such as All Souls' Day, when gatherings occur to pray for those who have departed. The Church emphasizes *communio sanctorum*, or communion of saints, which represents unity among all believers, both living and deceased, based on shared spiritual treasures like Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains this communion as a shared bond through faith, sacraments, and mutual love between heaven and earth. Documents such as *Lumen Gentium* expound upon the idea of fellowship within the Church, reaffirming the connection between the living Church and those who have passed on. This sense of community extends to praying for souls undergoing purification, as believers support their journey toward salvation. The Catholic Church recognizes that all faithful, whether living, purified, or in bliss, form a single Church bound together by God's love and by the prayers offered.

Praying for the deceased is deeply linked to the understanding of purgatory, a belief rooted in traditions dating back to the early Church. Practices like the Eucharist for the departed have been observed since the third century. The relationship between *slametan arwah* and the Eucharist is further supported by the document *Ecclesia in Asia*, which states that culture is essential for encountering the Gospel. The integration of local culture with faith can enhance the living of that faith, reinforcing its significance in the process of evangelization.

### **Replica**

Replica is a type of sign production that gathers the most frequent elements of expression, as described by Eco in 1976. It involves copying a previously formed sign function, creating a new sign with a similar expression but possibly a different message. There are five key elements of Replica: (1) stylization, (2) vector, (3) combinational units, (4) pseudo-combinational units, and (5) programmed stimuli.

First, stylizations are iconic expressions recognized not for resembling a specific model but for sharing less strict expression types that allow variation. Second, vectors are features added to systems to create recognizable functions, conveying instructions depending on context; examples include directional arrows and pointing fingers. Third, combinational units refer to various forms of communication such as words, symbols, musical notation, and gestures. Fourth, programmed stimuli are non-semiotic elements that trigger direct responses from the audience, like lights or sounds in performances, which can have impacts that are hard to measure. Lastly, pseudo-combinational units appear in abstract art, where patterns can also be replicated.

In examining Eco's (1976) concept of the replica stage alongside the Javanese *slametan arwah* and the Eucharist, researchers note similarities in the structure of these ceremonies. The welcoming phase in the *slametan* tradition corresponds to the Opening Rite in the Eucharist. The welcome in *slametan* represents gratitude from the host and prepares guests for prayer, while the Opening Rite in the Eucharist aims to unite attendees to effectively celebrate together. The replication element in Eco's framework appears in the combinational units as both traditions use verbal expressions to convey meaning. The prayers in *slametan*, like *tahlilan* and *yasinan*, can be linked to the Liturgy of the Word in the Eucharist. This connection reflects Eco's stylization through iconic expressions, much like the prayers in *slametan* and the biblical readings in the Eucharist. Both traditions utilize sensory language in prayer and music, highlighting their combined use of programmed stimuli. For example, prayers in *slametan* often follow Javanese rhythms, resembling how psalms are musically integrated into the Eucharist. Next, the offerings in both ceremonies align closely, particularly with the Eucharistic Prayer and Holy Communion (Martasudjita, 2005). In *slametan*, after prayers, the host presents a tray with offerings, which symbolize the deceased's presence. In the Eucharist, offerings of bread and wine symbolize Christ's presence and are central to the liturgy, showcasing a blend of gratitude and divine unity between humanity and Christ. Following the offerings, the meal at Slametan reflects the communal aspect of Holy Communion. In Slametan, guests are invited to eat after prayers, paralleling the act of taking Holy Communion in the Eucharist, which signifies participation in Christ's redemptive sacrifice (Martasudjita, 2005).

Finally, blessings in *slametan* include a meal known as *beseq*, shared with families as a form of charity, while in the Eucharist, the blessing embodies the presence of God in the community (Hendrajaya & Almu'tasim, 2020). The elements of programmed stimuli and stylization effectively show the replication happening between the two traditions, illustrating how their intense cultural interactions led to mutual influence without altering the core meanings within each celebration. In Eco's terms, this interaction represents a significant phase of invention, culminating the research findings on the practices of *slametan arwah* and the Eucharist.

### **Invention**

Eco defines invention as a type of production where the creator selects new, unstructured material to form a new organization. Invention differs significantly from recognition, ostension, or

replica since the sign-maker must establish a connection that did not exist before. Eco explains that in cases of invention, the expression often appears as content is defined for the first time. Discoveries in science serve as examples, where new terms or symbols must be created for newly found molecules or genes. Eco sees invention as crucial in classifying methods of sign production, as it involves transforming previously undefined elements (Guillemette & Cossette, 2006a). The integration of Javanese *slametan arwah* and the Eucharist shows a new level of meaning. The meaning of *slametan arwah* is enhanced when associated with the Eucharist, leading to three main refinements in meaning. In *slametan arwah*, upward movement signifies human effort, reflecting the philosophy of *sangkan paraning dumadi*, which discusses the human journey from God and back to Him (Laksana, 2014). In contrast, the Eucharist's meaning is linked to Trinitarian mysticism or perichoresis, a term popularized by theologians Karl Rahner and Jurgen Moltmann. *Perichoresis*, which can imply a dance, represents the unity among the three divine persons within the Oneness of God. Rahner emphasizes God's self-giving through history, specifically through the incarnation of the Word into humanity (Sunarko, 2011). This incarnation allows humans to receive God's revelation and grace directly (Groppe, 2002).

Rahner argues that the Economical Trinity, as immanent, sees each divine person communicate grace to humanity in their unique distinctiveness. This relationship highlights both the bonds among the Trinity and its connection to humanity. God's initiative in self-communication is shown through the Son's historical appearance in human form and the Spirit's role in fostering acceptance through faith, hope, and love. Compared to *slametan arwah*, Christian theology, as seen in the Eucharist, illustrates that God takes the first step. Rahner and Moltmann stress the Triune God's freedom in creating salvation as a perichoresis that resembles a dance of communion among His roles (Panda, 2020). This freedom culminates in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, exemplifying love and encouraging humanity to engage in self-actualization through loving others in faith. Additionally, it is important to recognize the theme of communion that both traditions share and promote. Modern research in human development has highlighted the significance of supportive relationships in our lives. Recent studies emphasize the role of these relationships in building resilience during trauma rather than relying solely on personal strength. Research indicates that receiving support is crucial in easing psychological strain after traumatic experiences. In the context of grief, Dr. Lucy Hone's current study underscores the importance of supportive relationships during times of loss.

From a psychological viewpoint, the value of communion in *slametan arwah* and eucharistic celebration aligns with resilience in human science. Both practices emphasize that relationships are vital, particularly in grieving, where sharing loss experiences is necessary. Grievers need support to express emotions, find comfort, preserve memories, and maintain connections with those who have passed (Hone, 2023). These needs are met in *slametan arwah* and Eucharistic celebrations through communal prayers and meals, making the idea of communion significant both spiritually and physically. The practical and emotional assistance that grievers need must come from the community. Overall, the practices of *slametan arwah* and Eucharist reflect theological views and act as effective tools for enhancing resilience in grief. When combined, these practices provide Javanese Catholics with intertwined spiritual and practical layers of meaning, bringing forth the Eucharist as a sacred Paschal feast where the faithful partake in the body and blood of the Lord.

## Conclusion

In this study it can be concluded that through Umberto Eco's semiotic theory of sign production, namely the stages of recognition, ostension, replica, invention, it can be seen how the meaning of the

Javanese *slametan arwah* tradition align with the Eucharist. From these stages, the researcher wants to show that each stage of the production of the Javanese *slametan arwah* sign with the Eucharist already has a close meaning. As in the findings and the novelty of this research, *slametan arwah* is an important ritual that can even be said to be a peak celebration in the Javanese cultural tradition. Likewise, the Eucharist is a sacred form of ritual and has a major role and also a summit in the lives of Christian believers. With this finding, the researcher wants people who live the Catholic faith and Javanese traditions, especially specifically in the *slametan arwah*, to be able to interpret deeply and accurately. From this research, the researcher also wants to invite that the inculturation of culture and the tradition of Catholic faith in Java can go hand in hand, or in a more theological language is with anthropological, praxis and synthesis models and can even form new discoveries.

The novelty of this research, the researcher wants to educate the people about how to interpret inculturation. The problem of inculturation in the celebration of the Eucharist is not first of all about Javanese songs, processions with dances, umbrellas, gongs, batik clothes, and decorations but more about the understanding and appreciation of the basic faith in the encounter with the values and religious elements of a culture concerning its salvation dimension. The direction and purpose of inculturation in a concrete and practical sense becomes clear, namely to make the Eucharist and the tradition of *slametan arwah* understood precisely, deeply and lived more vividly and deeply in the hearts of the people local. It is this concrete appreciation and understanding that will determine the weight of the inculturation process, so that the manifestation of faith can become more genuine, authentic and meaningful. Theologically speaking, the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed towards the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion; thus, receiving this sacrament strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ and reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. Given this, in the context of hardship, such as grieving, the real presence of communion, assisted by the Holy Spirit and supported by a kinship with one another that runs deeper than blood, is not only expressed but also strengthened relational resilience, which is also frequently described in the Gospel, especially Johannine texts. In short, arguably, the resonant nature of the *slametan arwah* rite to the Eucharistic celebration can, when properly understood, bring charitable unity within the local community and enforce resiliency in grieving.

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