

## The Phenomenological Study on the Tradition of *Duduk Senden* Among Postpartum Mothers

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**ABSTRACT** The tradition of caring for mothers after giving birth is still widely found in society. As is the case in Java, postnatal care habits are believed to come from generation to generation. This belief has implications from a medical and philosophical perspective, which includes the desire to understand events wisely and wisely. This research attempts to examine the tradition of *duduk senden* for mothers after giving birth and its philosophical meaning. The type of research used in this research is phenomenology with ethnographic methods. The results of the research show 1) The practice of *duduk senden* begins with reading *toyyibab* and *shalawat* sentences, the *senden* position is carried out by sitting half asleep with pillows stacked as support for the mother's back and the legs together. 2) The philosophical meaning of *duduk senden* contains the meaning of monotheism (faith), the meaning of ethics and manners, and the meaning of protecting the body and soul.

**Keywords:** *Tradition, Senden sitting, philosophical meaning*



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### INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists argue that societies across different parts of the world generally view the processes of fetal development, birth, and the postnatal period as natural stages within the human life cycle. Nevertheless, each community may display distinct cultural responses to these life phases, depending on their value systems, beliefs, and health practices. In the context of postnatal care, alongside the use of biomedical health services, there also exists a wide range of local knowledge, cultural practices, and traditions that have developed and been passed down across generations, shaping patterns of maternal and infant care within each community. (Andhikatis et al., 2021)

The healing system in Indonesia is inseparable from pluralism, where various methods of treatment work together, such as humoral medicine and magical elements. The Javanese are one of the largest ethnic groups in Indonesia, with unique cultural perceptions and healing methods. Various community groups, along with their cultures spread throughout the world, have different ways of understanding various health issues, especially those related to childbirth. Koentjaraningrat states that Javanese tradition always prioritizes harmony, balance, and coherence. All aspects of life must be appropriate, balanced, and coherent, in essence. All elements of human life in Javanese society are inseparable from rituals and beliefs, including postpartum care. (Sule & Mainiyo, 2024)

Sitting in the *senden* position is an important tradition in Javanese culture, referring to the typical sitting style or habit of Javanese people, rooted in their history and cultural values. This practice is not merely a matter of body position, but also reflects the social interaction norms and ethics inherent in this sitting behavior. In the postpartum context, *duduk senden* is theoretically

understood as a leaning sitting position practiced by Javanese women during their recovery period, generally within forty days after giving birth. This tradition serves as part of self-care that is believed to aid physical recovery while maintaining bodily balance according to local health beliefs. (Baroroh & Chikmah, 2023) In addition to the belief that the *senden* ritual has supernatural powers for the Javanese, mothers who give birth are also bound by the myths that circulate in Javanese society. Myths have become customs that are passed down from generation to generation, and Javanese people see myths as something that can be trusted and practiced. (Azharhany, 2020)

According to Simamora, myths are opinions, stories, or assumptions that exist in a culture and are considered to be true about an issue that existed in the past, even though the truth is sometimes not always accurate. They are a trusted tradition that reveal certain things, and they are also a type of oral folklore that is passed down from mouth to mouth. This myth is still widely practiced by Javanese women, especially mothers after giving birth. (Ariwibowo et al., 2023)

Myths originate from a natural tendency to cloak every idea in concrete terms, according to Tylor. He believes that the law of development applies to myths that arise in both primitive and modern cultures. Myths serve to express, elevate, and create beliefs, protect, and strengthen culture. Tylor states that tradition is the totality of patterns of behavior and patterned behavior that are acquired and passed down through explicit and implicit symbols, which ultimately have the ability to form something unique to human groups, including its manifestation in material objects and customs (Sri Yudari et al., 2021). On the contrary, because of the community's belief in traditions, which are always considered true and contain elements of belief, sanctity, and magic, people often try to avoid (abstain from) things that may have a negative impact. Traditions that contain these taboos are also myths that apply to new mothers. Basically, myths are a way for people to communicate with one another.

Many mothers who have given birth accept and carry out the tradition of *duduk senden*. However, they do not understand the basis, purpose, and meaning of this tradition. They only abstain because they believe they will not be cursed. They do not dare to ask their parents about the purpose because it is considered argumentative and disrespectful. This belief often causes stress for the mother. It even disturbs the mind and soul of the mother who should be protecting and loving her baby. (Nurhayati et al., 2023)

People still believe that sitting *sen* has many benefits, especially for mothers in maintaining their health after giving birth. In the tradition of sitting *sen*, various rituals are performed from birth to the end of the postpartum period. In fact, many traditional postpartum treatments are still practiced in Indonesian culture, especially in Java. The goal is to speed up recovery after childbirth so that people can comfortably resume their activities. On the one hand, adherence to traditions or myths about postpartum customs tends to make mothers feel more at ease. On the other hand, not following these customs causes anxiety for mothers and their partners.

To this day, the people of Rejosari Village still practice a traditional healing ritual called *duduk senden*. Many rituals performed after childbirth are specifically for mothers so that they do not experience health problems in the following years. The ritual process continues until the postpartum period is over. To this day, the *duduk senden* method is still widely used, although some members of the Rejosari community have abandoned it for various reasons. The tradition of *duduk senden* in Rejosari Village is reinforced by the arguments of traditional birth attendants. In the ritual process of *duduk senden*, it begins with determining the direction of the bed that will be occupied by the mother who has given birth. *Senden* is performed with the mother lying in a half-sitting position with a high pillow behind her and support for her feet. According to local traditional birth attendants, *duduk senden* is a form of medical care and has a deep traditional meaning. Medically, *duduk senden* speeds up recovery after childbirth so that the mother can carry

out activities comfortably. The deep traditional meaning is that *duduk senden* for mothers after childbirth is actually the most polite sitting position in Javanese tradition.

From a health perspective, previous studies have shown that upright or semi-sitting positions after childbirth can facilitate uterine involution and improve maternal comfort during recovery (Zang et al., 2023). In addition, research by (Gholitabar, 2013) on postpartum care traditions in Javanese communities found that cultural practices endorsed by traditional birth attendants contribute positively to mothers' psychological well-being and sense of security during the postpartum period. Culturally, *duduk senden* reflects the most polite and respectful sitting posture in Javanese tradition, symbolizing propriety, respect, and adherence to ancestral values that continue to guide postpartum care practices in Rejosari Village.

Cultural beliefs about postpartum care are still widely found in society. People believe that these cultural practices are beneficial for them. In Java, for example, beliefs and customs regarding postpartum care are considered to have been passed down from generation to generation and are still practiced today. These beliefs have medical and philosophical implications, which involve interpreting phenomena in a wise and prudent manner. (Hertati et al., 2024) This study attempts to explore the tradition of sitting on a sender chair for mothers after giving birth and the philosophical meaning behind this tradition.

## METHOD

This study uses a phenomenological approach. It employs ethnographic methods that have long been used by researchers because they cover the tradition of sitting with mothers after childbirth. This study uses a qualitative approach. The subjects from whom data is obtained are referred to as data sources. Persons, place, and papers are used as data sources. (Mochamad Nashrullah, Okvi Maharani, Abdul Rohman, Eni Fariyatul Fahyuni, Nurdyansyah, 2023) Persons involve mothers who give birth traditionally (normally), by surgery (Caesarean section), or through a traditional birth attendant. Place includes the location of Rejosari Village, and paper refers to its profile. This study uses observation, interviews, and documentation to collect data. In this study, the data analysis method is described by three activity streams: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data analysis was conducted using a content analysis approach, examining the content and meaning of various references. Grouping data based on themes of Quranic values, internalization methods, and learning strategies, and synthesizing various expert opinions to identify patterns, relationships, or ideal models for internalizing values through Arabic language teaching.

The framework of thinking in this study is how the tradition of *duduk senden* for mothers after giving birth is carried out and the philosophy behind this tradition. Tradition is a collection of customs or beliefs that have existed for a long time. One tradition that continues to exist in society today is the tradition of *duduk senden* for postpartum mothers in the village of Rejosari, Kalidawir District, Tulungagung Regency. The tradition of *duduk senden* is one of the traditional healing practices that is still practiced by the Javanese people today.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Tradition of *Duduk senden* for Mothers After Childbirth

Sitting in the *senden* position is a sitting position with a leaning posture, which involves sitting in the *senden* position for less than forty days after childbirth. The purpose of sitting in the *senden* position is to maintain health, and as a form of politeness and etiquette in Javanese sitting behavior. Sitting in the *senden* position actually means sitting with a leaning posture on a pillow and keeping both feet together. According to Javanese society, sitting position shows how important it is to respect other people. By applying this principle in daily life, it is said that respecting others is

a form of politeness that everyone should have. As with *duduk senden*, mothers who have given birth are reminded to sit in the *duduk senden* position as a form of politeness and ethics after giving birth.

For the people of Rejosari Village, sitting down is a top priority for mothers after giving birth. Mrs. Dasiyem, the village traditional healer, said that “*As much as possible, postpartum mothers should sit cross-legged because it has many benefits. They should not sit with their legs spread apart.*” Regardless of manners and etiquette after giving birth, sitting properly is a priority for the health of mothers after giving birth. The sitting position after giving birth with stitches that should be avoided is sitting cross-legged. Sitting cross-legged stretches the skin, causing the stitches to reopen. Therefore, this sitting position after a normal delivery with stitches is highly discouraged. The sitting position after a normal delivery with stitches that should be avoided is sitting with legs spread apart. Similar to the cross-legged position, sitting with legs spread apart causes the skin to stretch, making the stitches more likely to reopen.

In terms of history and origin, it is unclear when the tradition of *duduk senden* began in Rejosari Village. No one knows for sure the origin of *duduk senden*, not even the elders of Rejosari Village. “*No one knows for sure the origin of duduk senden, not even the elders of Rejosari Village. The community simply follows the traditions of their ancestors. Duduk senden begins with a reclining position adopted by mothers after giving birth in Rejosari Village.*” Said Mrs. Diana, a postpartum mother in Rejosari Village. Local traditional healers also say the same thing: “*We don’t know. Just follow what our ancestors did, as long as it doesn’t violate Islamic law.*” The community simply follows the traditions of their ancestors. *Senden* sitting begins with a sitting position that is passed down from mother to daughter in the village of Rejosari after giving birth. This tradition is a culture passed down from previous generations, so the community does not know its historical origins.

Since the majority of Javanese people are Muslim, they still cannot abandon Javanese customs and culture. Javanese people greatly value these traditions and culture. They perform rituals and traditions such as *duduk senden* to preserve their culture, maintain their health, or ask for blessings and receive certain requests. Since these traditions do not conflict with the teachings of Islam as set forth in the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, they are still practiced today.

Before performing the tradition of *duduk senden* on the mother after giving birth, the family is given several requirements, including several types of food. Mrs. Dasiyem said that “*the way to perform sendenan is usually during the sepasaran ubo rampe, which includes Cok Bakal, sengko, and buceng sengko. Then it is given to the shaman and prayed over.*” The requirements for the mother and family before performing the sitting ceremony are to prepare offerings in the form of *Cok Bakal*, sengko, and buceng sengko. These offerings will be given during the ceremony or four to five days after giving birth. *Cok Bakal*, sengko, and buceng sengko are given to show respect, appreciation, and gratitude to God for the ease of childbirth and the gift of a baby. The *ubo rampe* is given to the traditional healer to be prayed over during the *sepasaran*.

*Cok Bakal* is an offering made to obtain God’s safety and blessings as well as protection from disaster. *Cok Bakal* is often used in Javanese traditions, especially in the *duduk senden* tradition of the Rejosari Village community. *Cok Bakal* contains various foods and spices. Each food and spice has its own philosophical value related to the tradition being performed. A collection of food, drinks, devices, or tools used for rituals is called *ubo rampe*. *Cok Bakal*, *ubo rampe*, and *sesajen* are usually meant to be the same, but *ubo rampe* refers to all the tools needed for *sesajen*. (Twin Hermadi & Winarno, 2024)

*Cok Bakal*, in the form of *jenang kembo*, will be placed under the *senden*. When positioning the body to sit on the *senden*, it represents the philosophy of among *jabang bayi* or caring for babies. *Cok Bakal* in the form of *jenang kembo* contains flowers and *boreh* that are given water in a glass. The *kembo* jelly also symbolizes a smooth delivery and the safety of the baby and mother

during childbirth. It is hoped that the jelly can also be used as an offering for the land that the unborn baby will inhabit. It is hoped that the unborn baby will not experience difficulties in leaving the womb or the mother's uterus.

Technically, the practice of sitting in Rejosari Village begins with the shaman determining the direction of sitting, preparing a pillow and a used can filled with sand, and reciting the *toyyibah* sentence before sitting. The pillow serves as a backrest and the can serves as a footrest to keep the legs straight. Mrs. Mar'ah explained the initial procedure for sitting in meditation: “*My method is to first ask for forgiveness, recite the salawat 5 times, read al-Fatihah, read qulhumwallahu ahad, then recite the prayer of the grandmaster. This prayer must not be spoken aloud or shared with others. It is a prayer that mentions the name of Allah.*”

*Duduk senden* is performed by mothers after giving birth for up to 36 days or one month after the postpartum period is over. *Duduk senden* is performed for 30 to 40 days after giving birth to coincide with the mother's postpartum period. According to the people of Rejosari Village, this period is relevant to the healing of the mother's uterus and abdomen after giving birth. After pregnancy, the uterus must recover for six weeks, or forty-two days, after giving birth. The uterine wall thickens during pregnancy to facilitate fetal growth. (Ratna Wijayanti et al., 2023)

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that the tradition of *duduk senden* for mothers after giving birth is 1) It is not clearly known when the tradition of *duduk senden* in Rejosari Village began. The community simply follows the traditions of their ancestors. 2) The tradition of *duduk senden* in Rejosari Village aims to maintain health, restore postpartum conditions, and promote polite and ethical behavior in Javanese sitting customs. 3) The requirements before performing *duduk senden* are to prepare *ubo rampe* in the form of *Cok Bakal*, *sengko*, and *buceng sengko*. 4) The practice of *duduk senden* in Rejosari Village begins with determining the direction of sitting, preparing pillows and used cans, and reciting the *toyyibah* before sitting. Before sitting, the shaman recites *istighfar*, reads *sholawat*, recites *Al Fatihah*, *Al Ikhlas*, and then prays. The *senden* position is performed by sitting half-lying down with pillows stacked as a backrest for the mother, the legs are closed with a used can filled with sand as a support, and the hands are placed on the thighs and cannot be used as a support behind the body. 5) The direction of sitting facing the *sendenan* in Javanese tradition is done by turning your back to *Nogo Taun*. The direction of *Nogo Taun* is determined by the Javanese calendar and moon phases. 6) The tradition of sitting in the *senden* position also requires wearing a *bengkung* (*stagen*) or *gurita* and a *jarik*. 7) Sitting in the *senden* position is done by the mother after giving birth until 36 days or one month after the postpartum period ends. This sitting period also coincides with the *pagut* or *selapanan* period for babies.

### **The Philosophy Behind the Tradition of Sitting on a Cushion for New Mothers After Childbirth**

One tradition that still exists in society today is the practice of *duduk senden* for mothers after giving birth in the village of Rejosari, Kalidawir District, Tulungagung Regency. The tradition of *duduk senden* is one of the traditional healing practices that is still carried out by the Javanese community today. Many rituals are performed after childbirth specifically for mothers so that they do not experience health problems in the following years. Until the postpartum period is over, the ritual process will continue. To this day, the *duduk senden* method is still widely used. However, there are some members of the Rejosari community who have abandoned it for various reasons.

The community still believes that sitting in a certain position has many benefits, especially for mothers in maintaining their health after giving birth. In the tradition of sitting in a certain position, there are various ritual processes that are carried out from after giving birth until the end of the postpartum period. The ritual process of sitting in a certain position begins with determining the direction of the bed that will be occupied by the mother who has given birth. The implementation of this tradition has an impact on mothers after giving birth. The philosophical

meaning comes from human thinking about how to assess an object wisely and prudently. In this case, the philosophical meaning contains the intention of interpreting a phenomenon, such as the custom of *duduk senden* for mothers after giving birth in the community of Rejosari Village, Kalidawir District, Tulungagung Regency.

Due to the community's belief in traditions, which are always considered to be true and contain elements of belief, sanctity, and magic, people often try to avoid (abstain from) things that can have a negative impact. Traditions that contain these taboos are also myths that apply to new mothers. Basically, myths are a way for people to communicate with one another.

Many mothers who have given birth accept and carry out the tradition of *duduk senden*. However, they do not understand the basis, purpose, and meaning of this tradition. They only abstain because they believe they will not be cursed. They do not dare to ask their parents about the purpose because it is considered argumentative and disrespectful. This belief often causes stress for the mother. It even disturbs the mind and soul of the mother who should be protecting and loving her baby.

It is unclear when the tradition of *duduk senden* began in Rejosari Village. The origins of this tradition are not particularly important, as the majority of Javanese Muslims are still unable to abandon their Javanese customs and culture. The Javanese people, especially those who are *abangan*, greatly value these Javanese customs and culture. Performing the ritual and tradition of *duduk senden* in an effort to preserve culture, health, or ask for blessings and fulfill certain requests is not contrary to the teachings of Islam as set forth in the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, so the tradition is still practiced.

Tradition is the similarity of objects and ideas that have existed for a long time. However, repeated habits do not occur by chance or intentionally. From this understanding, anything that humans do from generation to generation to make their lives easier is called a "tradition," which means that it is part of culture, especially the tradition of *duduk senden*. The philosophy behind the tradition of sitting in a certain position for mothers after giving birth involves the meaning of sitting, the meaning of the direction of sitting, and clothing.

The philosophical meaning of *duduk senden* includes the meaning of *ubo rampe* as a requirement that must be fulfilled, as well as its practice and sitting direction. The requirements before performing *duduk senden* are to prepare *ubo rampe* in the form of *cok bakal*, *sengko*, and *buceng sengko*. Philosophically, *cok bakal* represents among *jabang bayi* or baby care. *Sengko* and *buceng sengko* have the meaning of always thinking positively and honestly, like a sturdy mountain. This implies that in starting the tradition of *duduk senden* for mothers after giving birth, one must fulfill the requirements of hoping for safety and always thinking positively and honestly. Baehaqie argues that *ubo rampe* in childbirth is a symbol of the request for physical freshness for women after pregnancy and newborns. It also becomes a symbol of respect and gratitude to the creator. Thus, *ubo rampe* around childbirth represents the noble cultural heritage of the community. (Khoiri & Thoriqul Aziz, 2022)

The philosophical meaning of the practice or position of sitting in *senden* contains the meaning of *tauhid* (faith), the meaning of ethics and manners, and the meaning of maintaining the soul and body. The meaning of *tauhid* (faith) is implied by reciting the *toyyibah* and *sholawat* sentences when beginning to sit in *senden*. Reciting the *toyyibah* and *sholawat* serves as an initial intention to worship Allah SWT for all activities that will be carried out. In addition, drawing closer to Allah SWT increases one's awareness and conviction, strengthening the heart and mind. In Javanese culture, praying is usually done in a series of traditional ceremonies to ensure peace in times of crisis and in recurring social events. (Anggraeni et al., 2024)

The philosophical meaning of the direction in which one sits contains the meaning of the direction of sustenance, the direction of safety, and the direction of misfortune. *Nogo Taun* is a

concept similar to *Nogo Dino*, but focuses on a person's year of birth or that of an unborn child. For mothers after giving birth, they must face their backs towards the direction of *Nogo Taun* as an effort for safety and not face the *Nogo Taun*, which will result in bad luck (negative energy). According to Javanese beliefs, if someone does not face the direction of *Nogo Taun*, they will achieve success in everything without being limited to a certain direction. In addition to promising success, the concept of *Nogo Taun* is also believed to provide protection for security and safety. (Prafita et al., 2023)

The theory presented by Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1871). In his theory, tradition is a collection of knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and other responsibilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society. Tylor then stated that tradition is the whole pattern of behavior and patterned behavior that is acquired and passed down through explicit and implicit symbols. These patterns can ultimately form something unique to human groups, including their manifestation in material objects and customs. (Pangestu, 2024)

Tylor emphasized that Javanese traditions are part of Javanese culture because they originate from Javanese thinking and have been translated into traditions that still exist today. In Javanese culture, the teachings known as *budi lubur* are teachings found in the Javanese belief system. The Javanese philosophy known as *budi lubur* is implemented in the behavior and beliefs of the Javanese people. In everyday life, *budi lubur* demonstrates *budi lubur*. As quoted by Merrill, Tylor argues that culture is a collection of knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, and all the skills, traditions, and customs that each person possesses as part of society. (Suharti, 2021)

The tradition of sitting in a specific position after giving birth is a result of cultural customs and habits acquired by humans as members of society. It is a pattern of behavior and patterned behavior that is passed down from generation to generation, which makes it unique to a group of people. The behavioral patterns of the tradition of sitting in a certain position describe a structured form of attitude that is repeated over and over again. Patterned behavior describes that the tradition of sitting in a certain position includes the meaning of *ubo rampe*, the requirements that must be met, and the practice and direction of sitting.

From an Islamic perspective, the *duduk senden* tradition practiced in Rejosari Village can be understood as a form of local wisdom (*'urf*) that is permissible as long as it does not contradict the core principles of Islamic teachings. The ritual elements such as reciting *istighfar*, *shalawat*, Surah Al-Fatihah, and Al-Ikhlās before sitting reflect an explicit orientation toward *tawhid* and reliance on Allah, which aligns with Islamic values (Khoiri & Thoriqul Aziz, 2022). In the framework of *fiqh al-'urf*, customs that bring benefit (*maṣlahah*) such as supporting maternal health, psychological comfort, and ethical conduct are acceptable provided they are free from elements of *shirk*, superstition, or beliefs that attribute supernatural power independently of Allah. The philosophical meanings embedded in *duduk senden*, including faith, manners, and the preservation of body and soul, resonate with the objectives of *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah*, particularly *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (protection of life) and *ḥifẓ al-din* (protection of faith). Therefore, Islam can respond to this tradition in an accommodative manner, positioning *duduk senden* as a cultural practice that complements Islamic values rather than contradicts them, as long as it is understood as a means of effort (*ikhtiar*) accompanied by prayer, not as a ritual with autonomous sacred power.

## CONCLUSION

The practice of sitting in the *senden* position in Rejosari Village begins with determining the direction of sitting, preparing pillows and used cans, and reading the *toyyibah* sentence before sitting. Before sitting, the shaman recites *istighfar*, reads *sholawat*, reads Al-Fatihah, reads Al-Ikhlās, and then prays. The *senden* position is performed by sitting half-lying down with pillows stacked as a backrest for the mother. In Javanese tradition, the direction of sitting facing the *sendenan* is done with the back facing *Nogo Taun*. *Senden* sitting is performed by mothers after

giving birth for up to 36 days or one month after the postpartum period is over. This period of sitting in the senden position also coincides with the *pagut* or *selapanan* period for the baby. The philosophical meaning of sitting in the senden position contains the meaning of tauhid (faith), ethics and manners, and maintaining the soul and body.

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