

# Strategy for preserving the ithuk-ithukan tradition as the cultural identity of the Osing tribe in Rejopuro Hamlet, Banyuwangi

Nabila Syakila Putri<sup>a,1</sup>, Sugeng Harianto<sup>b,2</sup>, Rizky Trisna Putri<sup>c,3</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Undergraduate Student of Sociology Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Surabaya State University, Surabaya

<sup>b,c</sup>Lecturer of the Undergraduate Program in Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, State University of Surabaya, Surabaya

<sup>1</sup>[24040564019@mhs.unesa.ac.id](mailto:24040564019@mhs.unesa.ac.id); <sup>2</sup>[sugengharianto@unesa.ac.id](mailto:sugengharianto@unesa.ac.id); <sup>3</sup>[rizkyputri@unesa.ac.id](mailto:rizkyputri@unesa.ac.id)

INFO ARTICLE	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Sejarah Artikel:</i> Received: June 21, 2025 Revised: August 14, 2025 Approved: October 15, 2025 Available Online: November 1, 2025</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Cultural preservation Ithuk-ithukan Osing tribe Younger generation Digital technology</p>	<p>This study examines strategies for preserving the Ithuk-ithukan tradition as part of the cultural identity of the Osing tribe in Rejopuro Hamlet. The research focuses on how this tradition is passed down and preserved amid modern social changes. The objectives of the study are to investigate preservation practices, the role of the younger generation, and technological adaptation efforts in maintaining cultural sustainability. The method used is qualitative research with a case study approach, involving interviews with traditional leaders, participatory observation, and documentation of ritual activities. The results show the active involvement of the younger generation in ritual processions, the making of Ithuk, and the use of social media as a means of education and cultural preservation. The involvement of traditional leaders as cultural mentors has proven vital in maintaining traditional values and the continuity of rituals. The conclusion of the study confirms that a combination of cultural, social, and technological approaches is an effective strategy for preserving the Ithuk-ithukan tradition. Recommendations include increasing government support, empowering the younger generation, and optimizing information technology for sustainable cultural preservation. This research makes an important contribution to the study of anthropology and cultural sociology in Indonesia and provides a basis for the development of cultural policies that are responsive to social dynamics.</p>

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## 1. Introduction

The preservation of local culture has become a crucial issue as many indigenous communities face the pressures of modernization and rapid changes in social values. Intangible cultural heritage in various countries is threatened by social mobility, technological developments, and global cultural homogenization (Zhang et al., 2024). In Indonesia, the urgency of cultural preservation is heightened as 1,728 Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) sites have been designated between 2013 and 2022, but not all have robust preservation strategies (Kemdikbudristek, 2022). This situation indicates that state recognition is insufficient to ensure cultural sustainability without community participation. Furthermore, local traditions play a crucial role in maintaining social identity and strengthening community cohesion (Huang et al.,

2023). Therefore, cultural preservation is a crucial component of social studies and cultural policy in Indonesia.

Banyuwangi, as a region of Osing culture, boasts a rich tradition that is still practiced by the local community. Research shows that Osing culture holds strong historical value and local wisdom, but not all traditions have been comprehensively documented or studied in depth (Lestari et al., 2023). Several studies also emphasize the importance of identifying Banyuwangi's cultural heritage as part of efforts to maintain community historical awareness (Miskawi et al., 2022). However, most research still discusses Osing culture in general and has not paid specific attention to the Ithuk-ithukan tradition. Yet, this tradition holds important spiritual and social values for the Osing community in Rejopuro Hamlet. Therefore, more focused research on this tradition is crucial.

National and international research confirms that youth engagement is a key factor in maintaining cultural sustainability (Humaeni, 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). Furthermore, the development of digital technology opens up new opportunities to more effectively document local traditions. This is reinforced by 2024 BPS data, which shows that 72.78% of Indonesia's population has internet access and 68.65% own a mobile phone, enabling technology to be utilized as a means of cross-generational cultural preservation. However, research on the engagement of Osing youth through digital media is still limited and has not been explained in the context of preserving the Ithuk-ithukan tradition. Existing studies are mostly descriptive and have not yet examined the mechanisms of community adaptation to modernization. Thus, there is a research gap that needs to be filled through more in-depth ethnographic studies.

To understand the social dynamics in preserving tradition, this study uses Ferdinand Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* theories as an analytical framework. *Gemeinschaft* describes social relationships based on intimacy, emotional closeness, and mutual cooperation, as reflected in the implementation of the Ithuk-ithukan tradition. However, modernization has encouraged the emergence of rational and individualistic *Gesellschaft* elements, especially among the younger generation (Iskandar & Iskandar, 2020). This change requires the Osing community to balance traditional values with the demands of modern life. Tönnies's theory helps explain how society maintains shared values while adapting to technological developments and social change (Huang et al., 2023). Thus, this theory is highly relevant to understanding the dynamics of preserving the Ithuk-ithukan tradition.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the preservation strategy of the Ithuk-ithukan tradition by combining an ethnographic approach, Tönnies' theory, and an analysis of the use of digital technology. Previous studies have not focused much on the mechanisms of cultural value transmission from traditional leaders to the younger generation in the Osing community context. Furthermore, the integration of digital technology as a cultural documentation tool has not been discussed in depth in previous research. This research approach combines social, cultural, and technological aspects to provide a comprehensive overview of tradition preservation. Thus, this research offers a new perspective in the study of Osing culture. This study also strengthens the literature on the preservation of intangible culture in Indonesia.

This study aims to analyze the preservation mechanisms of the Ithuk-ithukan tradition as a cultural identity of the Osing community in Rejopuro Hamlet. This study also aims to explain the roles of traditional leaders, the community, and the younger generation in maintaining the sustainability of this tradition. Furthermore, this study identifies social challenges arising from modernization and the forms of adaptation undertaken by the community, including the use of digital technology in the cultural documentation process. The research findings are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the social dynamics in the process of cultural inheritance. Thus, this study is an important contribution to efforts to maintain the sustainability of local

traditions. This research is also relevant in developing cultural preservation policies in Indonesia.

This research's contributions encompass both theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of cultural preservation by applying the *Gemeinschaft–Gesellschaft* theory to the Osing community. Practically, this research provides recommendations for preservation strategies that can be used by local governments, traditional leaders, and cultural communities. This research also demonstrates the potential of utilizing digital technology as a means of cultural documentation and education. Furthermore, this research can serve as a reference for the younger generation to understand the importance of preserving local traditions. Thus, this research makes a significant contribution to the sustainability of Osing culture in the modern era.

## **2. Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with cultural ethnography methods to deeply understand the *Ithuk-ithukan* tradition as part of the cultural identity of the Osing tribe in Rejopuro Hamlet, Banyuwangi. This approach was chosen because ethnography allows researchers to explore symbolic meanings, cultural practices, and social contexts through direct interaction with the indigenous community (Zhang et al., 2024). This method is suitable for studying traditions that are still alive in society because it provides an opportunity to comprehensively understand the cultural values and practices passed down through generations that are still maintained to this day (Santoso et al., 2023). Direct research was conducted by researchers by going directly to Rejopuro Hamlet to interact with the community and observe the social conditions that support the tradition. This qualitative approach provides researchers with the opportunity to understand cultural realities naturally and deeply according to the context of Osing community life.

The primary data source for this study was obtained through semi-structured interviews with traditional leaders and community members involved in the *Ithuk-ithukan* tradition. The researcher directly interviewed one of the traditional leaders, Mr. Sarino, because he was considered to have a deep understanding of the history, symbolic meaning, and implementation of the tradition. The interviews focused on several topics, such as the meaning of the ritual, the mechanism of tradition inheritance, the role of the younger generation, the role of traditional leaders, and changes in the implementation of the tradition (Humaeni, 2023). Furthermore, the researcher also interviewed several community members to obtain more data and strengthen the source triangulation process. All interviews were conducted with respect for the values, norms, and customs of the Osing community as a form of respect for research ethics.

In addition to interviews, data was also obtained through direct observation of the *Ithuk-ithukan* ritual and other cultural activities that support the tradition. Through direct observation, researchers were able to understand the stages of the ritual, cultural symbols, and how the community interacts during the event. This approach helps understand social processes and the role of each individual in maintaining the sustainability of the tradition (Iskandar & Iskandar, 2020). To strengthen the information collected, documentation such as photographs, field notes, and interview recordings was also used. Additional data sources, such as Osing cultural books, local documents, and previous research results, were also utilized to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth interpretation of the findings.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, information relevant to the research focus is selected, filtered, and grouped to make the analysis more focused (Huang et al., 2023). In the data presentation stage, information is presented in the form of descriptive and interpretive narratives to illustrate how

the Ithuk-ithukan tradition is preserved in the lives of the Osing people. The drawing conclusions stage is carried out continuously by exploring the patterns, relationships, and cultural meanings that emerge during the analysis, resulting in a deeper understanding of the strategies for preserving this tradition. To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the research results, the data validation process was carried out using the source triangulation method, namely comparing information from traditional leaders, community members, and existing documents.

### 3. Result and Discussion

The Ithuk-ithukan tradition is a traditional ritual of the Osing people in Rejopuro Hamlet, Banyuwangi, which has been passed down from generation to generation. This tradition essentially serves as a form of prayer for safety and spiritual protection for family members, especially infants or those deemed in need of ancestral blessings. Although there are no written documents regarding its origins, the collective memory of traditional elders indicates that this tradition has existed since the village's cultural formation. Religious values, social solidarity, and respect for ancestors are the main factors that maintain the tradition's continuity. This tradition also symbolizes the identity of the Osing people, who are known for strongly preserving their local culture. Thus, Ithuk-ithukan is not merely a ritual, but a reflection of the close social relationships within the Osing community.

The Ithuk-ithukan ceremony takes place in residents' homes or traditional halls in Rejopuro Hamlet. The timing of the ritual is not based on a specific calendar, but rather flexibly, depending on family moments such as births, harvest celebrations, or special circumstances. Some residents still use auspicious day calculations based on the Javanese primbon (traditional Javanese calendar), while others are more attuned to modern social conditions. This flexibility demonstrates a balance between traditional values and the realities of contemporary life. The ritual continues to be performed despite increasingly diverse community activities and increasing economic demands. This emphasizes that the Ithuk-ithukan tradition still holds a vital place in the dynamics of Osing life today.

The ritual begins with the preparation of offerings consisting of a small tumpeng (rice cone), holy water, and leaves considered to have symbolic power. Once all the equipment is ready, the traditional elders lead a prayer to ask for God's protection and ask for the blessings of the ancestors for safety for the individuals undergoing the ritual. The core stage involves the "ithuk-ithuk" movement, which involves rubbing the head or specific body parts while reciting traditional prayers or mantras. In some rituals, Osing songs are sung as a means of spiritual communication. After the core ritual is completed, a communal meal is held to strengthen emotional and social bonds between residents. This sequence demonstrates the balance between spiritual and social aspects of the tradition.



**Figure 1. The core procession of Ithuk-ithukan is led by traditional elders**



It contains profound cultural meaning. Tumpeng is interpreted as an expression of gratitude for sustenance and life, holy water as a symbol of purity and hope for safety, and leaves as a symbol of protection from negative influences. The chanting of songs and mantras reflects the spiritual connection still maintained within the Osing community. Eating together symbolizes unity and the spirit of mutual cooperation that is at the heart of local social life. This combination of symbols demonstrates that Ithuk-ithukan is a ritual that maintains the continuity of ancestral values. This tradition serves to maintain spiritual balance and strengthen social solidarity within Osing families and communities.



**Figure 2. Ritual offerings as a symbolic medium**

The Ithuk-ithukan tradition in Rejopuro Hamlet remains actively practiced as an important part of the Osing community's cultural identity. Interviews with traditional leaders and direct observations by researchers reveal that the younger generation demonstrates strong enthusiasm for each ritual. They not only participate but also participate in preparing offerings, carrying out the procession, and documenting the event on social media. This demonstrates that the cultural regeneration process is proceeding well, as local wisdom values are passed on to the next generation. Furthermore, families in Rejopuro hold that this tradition must be carried out when a family member needs spiritual protection. Thus, the tradition remains intact, both in meaning and practice, amidst modern social and technological developments.

The Ithuk-ithukan tradition in Rejopuro remains active today. Based on field observations in 2025 and previous documentation from local media and community archives from 2020–2024, the ritual is still routinely performed annually. The younger generation not only attends as participants but also actively participates in ritual preparation, implementation, and documentation—including using digital media to record and distribute cultural activities. This demonstrates that the process of cultural regeneration is still well underway and that traditions are not solely the preserve of the older generation. Family and community documentation demonstrates that cultural values are valued and passed on. Therefore, Ithuk-ithukan remains a vital part of the Osing community.

**Table 1. Status of the Implementation of the Ithuk-ithukan Ritual in Rejopuro (2020–2025)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Ritual Status</b>	<b>Youth involvement</b>	<b>Data source</b>
2020	Carried out routinely	Active	Media Archives
2021	Implemented	Active	Local media
2022	Implemented	Active	Community archives
2023	Implemented	Active	Resident documentation
2024	Implemented	Active	Community documentation
2025	Carried out routinely	Very active	Direct Researcher Observations

Indonesia has 1,728 officially recognized Intangible Cultural Heritage Sites (ICHs) a testament to the national importance of cultural preservation. Furthermore, internet penetration in Indonesia is very high; by 2024, 72.78% of the population had internet access, and 68.65% used mobile phones as their primary means of communication. The combination of cultural richness and digital advancement creates significant opportunities for preserving local traditions such as Ithuk-ithukan through digital documentation, online publications, and cross-generational education. This strategy allows traditions to not only survive within local communities but also receive wider attention. Digitalization is an adaptive way to maintain cultural relevance in the modern era without losing core values. Younger generations with digital skills play a key role in preserving, disseminating, and passing on traditions to the future.

According to Ferdinand Tönnies' social theory, traditional societies based on solidarity, togetherness, and emotional bonds fall into the category of *Gemeinschaft*. The practice of the Ithuk-ithukan tradition reflects these *Gemeinschaft* values through the involvement of families, traditional elders, and the community as a whole. However, modernization and technological advances bring elements of *Gesellschaft* a society with an individualistic, rational, and modern orientation. Uniquely, in the Rejopuro context, modern adaptation (digitalization) does not destroy tradition, but strengthens its sustainability in new ways. The younger generation combines traditional values with modern tools to document and publish rituals. This integration keeps traditions alive, relevant, and able to be passed on to future generations. Thus, the *Gemeinschaft*–*Gesellschaft* theory serves as a relevant analytical framework for understanding the dynamics of local cultural preservation in the modern era.

The research proves that the Ithuk-ithukan tradition remains intact and consistently practiced in Rejopuro, thus achieving the primary objective of the study. The younger generation plays an active role in the implementation and documentation of rituals, indicating that cultural regeneration is progressing well. These findings demonstrate that traditions remain relevant despite modernization. Technological advances and digitalization provide a bridge for cultural preservation without sacrificing the spiritual and social significance of traditions. This research also demonstrates that cultural adaptation can be achieved through a combination of traditional values and modern innovation. Therefore, the results of this study provide theoretical and practical contributions to the preservation of local culture in Indonesia.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The conclusion of this study confirms that the preservation of the Ithuk-ithukan tradition as the cultural identity of the Osing tribe in Rejopuro Hamlet is effective through community empowerment and the active involvement of the younger generation. The preservation strategy combines cultural, social, and digital technology approaches that mutually support the sustainability of this tradition amidst the dynamics of modern social change. The involvement of traditional leaders as cultural motivators and mentors is crucial to maintaining ancestral values without losing their relevance to the current context. This study also proves that the Ithuk-ithukan tradition plays a central role in strengthening social solidarity and valuable local cultural heritage. The main recommendation is to optimize the use of technology as a medium for education and documentation and to increase the involvement of the younger generation in direct traditional activities. The implementation of these findings is expected to form the basis for developing sustainable and responsive cultural policies.

The implications of this research include the importance of maintaining the role of traditional leaders in maintaining ritual integrity and mentoring future generations. The government and cultural institutions are advised to support preservation programs that involve information technology as a means of training and cultural promotion. Furthermore, the active participation of the younger generation must be continuously facilitated so that they become

adaptive and innovative agents of cultural preservation. This study makes a significant contribution to the development of cultural sociology and anthropology studies on the preservation of traditions in the era of globalization. Sustainable preservation will enrich cultural identity while supporting the social development of local communities. Therefore, collaboration between the community, traditional leaders, academics, and the government is key to the successful preservation of Osing tribal culture in the future.

## **5. Acknowledgement**

The author would like to thank the lecturers in charge of the course, Mrs. Rizky Trisna Putri, S.P., M.Si., and Mr. Dr. Sugeng Harianto, M.Si., for their guidance and academic support during this research process. Thanks are also extended to Mrs. Putri Dwi Permata Indah, S.Sos., M.Sosio., who has provided special guidance during extracurricular lectures. The author is also very grateful to Mr. Sarino, the traditional leader and resident of Kampung Anyar Village, Rejopuro Hamlet, and Panggang Hamlet, for the availability of time and knowledge provided as an important part in the implementation of this research. The assistance and support from all parties are very meaningful for the smoothness and success of this research. Hopefully all assistance provided will be well received.

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