



## THE TRADITION OF "NYANGOIN KEMANTAN" AS A PRACTICE OF SYMBOLIC CAPITAL: THE CONSTRUCTION OF MADURESE WOMEN'S PRESTIGE

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### Abstract

*This study examines the symbolic meaning of money in the Nyangoin Kemantan tradition and its role in building women's prestige within Madurese society in Darungan Village. In this tradition, the groom's family provides money during the engagement ritual, which is socially interpreted as a sign of respect and seriousness. Previous studies have largely addressed this practice from legal and economic perspectives, while its symbolic and gender dimensions remain under-explored. This study positions Nyangoin Kemantan as a symbolic practice that transforms economic capital into symbolic prestige. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Findings indicate that money functions not only as material support but as symbolic capital that shapes women's social value and family honor. Women's prestige is often measured through the financial capacity of the groom's family, revealing the operation of symbolic power and gender-based assessments within local culture. This study contributes to cultural and gender studies by demonstrating how local traditions serve as arenas for symbolic power and the formation of prestige.*

**Keywords:** *Symbolic Capital, Women's Prestige, Nyangoin Kemantan, Symbolic Power, Madurese Culture*

### A. Introduction

From a sociocultural perspective, marriage serves as a tool for social integration capable of uniting two extended families with potentially differing social, economic, cultural, and even value backgrounds. Through the bonds of marriage, a new social cohesion is created that expands kinship networks and solidarity within the community, so that interpersonal relationships are no longer merely personal but communal and structural (Hermawan, 2024). To achieve this noble goal, the marriage process generally begins with a premarital phase designed to strengthen family ties, known in Indonesian tradition as the engagement *khitbah*, or *lamaran*. This phase serves as a fundamental first step in building a bridge of communication

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and mutual understanding between both parties before moving on to a more serious stage (Widodo et al., 2023)

The engagement ceremony is a complex social event, whose primary function extends beyond mere formalities. As a cultural practice passed down through generations, the engagement serves as a medium of interaction where noble values, social etiquette, and cultural symbols are presented to foster mutual understanding between the two families. At this juncture, negotiations of values and character assessments take place, shaping the first impression that will influence the dynamics of the future relationship. Therefore, the entire sequence of events from the protocols to the body language employed reflects the local wisdom and customs held in high regard by each party (Daud & Hambali, 2022). The power of the message in a marriage proposal is often conveyed through nonverbal language manifested in the form of material symbols, such as money, jewelry, clothing, and other traditional objects. These items are not merely viewed for their economic value but hold philosophical significance as representations of the man's seriousness, responsibility, and readiness both mentally and physically. The presentation of these items serves as the highest form of respect toward the female party and her family, while also actively shaping social assessments of the status, dignity, and commitment of the individuals involved (Rosmalina & Satinem, 2025).

A tangible manifestation of the use of these material symbols is found in the Ontalan or Nyangoin Kemantan tradition among the community of Darungan Village. In this practice, the gift of a sum of money by the groom's family to the bride's family symbolizes sincere appreciation for the bride's willingness to build a deeper familial bond. This gift transcends material significance as it functions as a symbolic message demonstrating the self-respect and sincerity of the groom's family in upholding their moral responsibilities and ethical values within the community (Sulalah et al., 2022). However, this phenomenon also reveals how the monetary amount in *Nyangoin Kemantan* serves further as a guardian of the family's honor and social dignity. In reality, the amount of this monetary gift often becomes the primary measure of a proposal's success in the public eye. Consequently, a woman's prestige undergoes a shift in the valuation of her honor; it is no longer assessed based on personal qualities such as intelligence, achievements, or kindness, but is concretely measured by the amount of money the male party can provide as a reflection of social status and the seriousness of their commitment to honoring her (Safriyanto et al., 2024).

Discussions regarding the Nyangoin Kemantan tradition have previously been conducted by experts from various perspectives; Subadar et al. focused their research on the economic function of the Nyangoin Kemantan tradition as financial assistance for newlyweds, and the legal framework of its provision, viewed from the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence, is considered a gift and a debt based on the giver's intent (Subadar et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Musta'in describes how communities resolve disputes arising from the *Nyangoin Kemantan* tradition while upholding legal norms and the value of solidarity within indigenous communities (Musta'in et al., 2025). In their research, Habiburrahman and Muhammad highlight that the dowry given to a woman in marriage is determined by the woman's social status and education (Habiburrahman, 2025).

Although numerous studies have been conducted on Madurese traditions, most previous research has focused on limited aspects. The first study emphasized economic functions and Islamic legal perspectives, while the second focused on conflict resolution and community legal norms, and the third highlighted the correlation between dowry and women's educational status. None of these studies have specifically examined the symbolic mechanisms of the *nyangoin kemantan* tradition in shaping prestige for women. From a sociocultural perspective, the giving of money during the proposal ceremony can be interpreted as the conversion of material value into symbolic honor. In this context, women become subjects of social evaluation whose prestige is shaped through symbols controlled by men.

Given these conditions, this study aims to analyze the symbolic meanings embedded in the nyangoin kemantan tradition and to uncover how the use of money as a symbol within this tradition constructs women's prestige in Darungan society. The results of this study can contribute to the study of culture, gender, and symbols in traditional marriage and can enrich the literature on how economic symbolic capital operates as symbolic capital in society.

## **B. Method**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a mini-ethnographic design, as the research aims to understand the symbolic meanings and social relations within the tradition aspects that cannot be measured quantitatively and do not require a lengthy duration (Fusch et al., 2017). This approach allows the researcher to delve deeply into cultural practices and the community's interpretations of the " " tradition. The research was conducted in Darungan Village, Lumajang Regency, because the Nyangoin Kemantan tradition is still practiced and serves as a crucial component of the marriage proposal rituals among the local Madurese community.

This local context provides an opportunity to directly observe cultural practices within their social environment, which the researcher conducted intensively following the issuance of an official letter from the relevant agency during February–March 2026.

The researcher here is part of the research subject (an insider) who has direct access to the subjects and the cultural context. To maintain objectivity and reduce subjective bias, the researcher applied reflexivity by separating personal experiences from field data and engaging in critical discussions with peers (*peer debriefing*). Research informants were selected purposively. This selection aims to obtain a variety of perspectives regarding the meaning and symbolic function of money within this tradition (Rhinnells, 2005). The criteria for selected informants include having been involved in this tradition for at least 10 years; more specifically, they are as follows:

Table 1. Informants Criteria

| Informants                                                 | Selection Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                | Discussion                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Money Recipients<br>(initials: Mrs. Siti and Mrs. Gina) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Madura women in Darungan village</li> <li>• Have received ritual engagement money (Nyangoin Kemantan)</li> </ul>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the subjective meaning of money as a form of validation and respect to avoid being looked down upon</li> <li>• Conversion of economic capital into symbolic capital</li> </ul> |
| 2. Male Family<br>(initials: Mrs. Darmi and Mr. Arif)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acting as the fund provider in the Nyangoin Kemantan tradition</li> <li>• Understanding the social norms that apply in the domestic sphere</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyzing money as a platform for representing social status, reputation, and the identity of the male-headed family</li> <li>• Discussing the concept of cultural habitus</li> </ul>  |
| 3. Community Leader<br>(initials: Mr. Ahmad)               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding local history, norms, and cultural practices</li> <li>• Identifying the social impact of whether an allowance is small or large</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyzing the operation of symbolic power and the construction of women's prestige in the public eye</li> <li>• Examining the dynamics of cultural patriarchal power</li> </ul>        |

Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to explore informants' interpretations of the symbols of money and social prestige. Observations were conducted to examine social practices and interactions during the courtship process. Documentation served as supporting data in the form of notes and photographs related to traditional customs. Data analysis was conducted thematically through the stages of data reduction, categorization, and interpretation of meaning. The data was then analyzed using the perspectives of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital and Clifford Geertz's theory of symbolic interpretation to understand how money functions as a symbol of honor and shapes women's prestige within society.

To ensure the validity of the data collected, the author employed source triangulation by cross-checking and reviewing the information obtained from in-depth interviews with one informant against that from another, ensuring that the data was not reliant on a single source. The researcher systematically cross-checked the data from various perspectives of the informants and verified it through field observation notes to ensure the consistency and credibility of the findings before drawing final conclusions. (Nurfajriani et al., 2024)

### **C. Results And Discussion**

This section will delve into the Nyangoin Kemantan tradition of the Darungan Madurese people, from its procedures to its social and gender impacts. To clarify the analytical flow and establish appropriate conceptual boundaries, the explanations in this journal article follow a systematic framework shown in Figure 1 below.

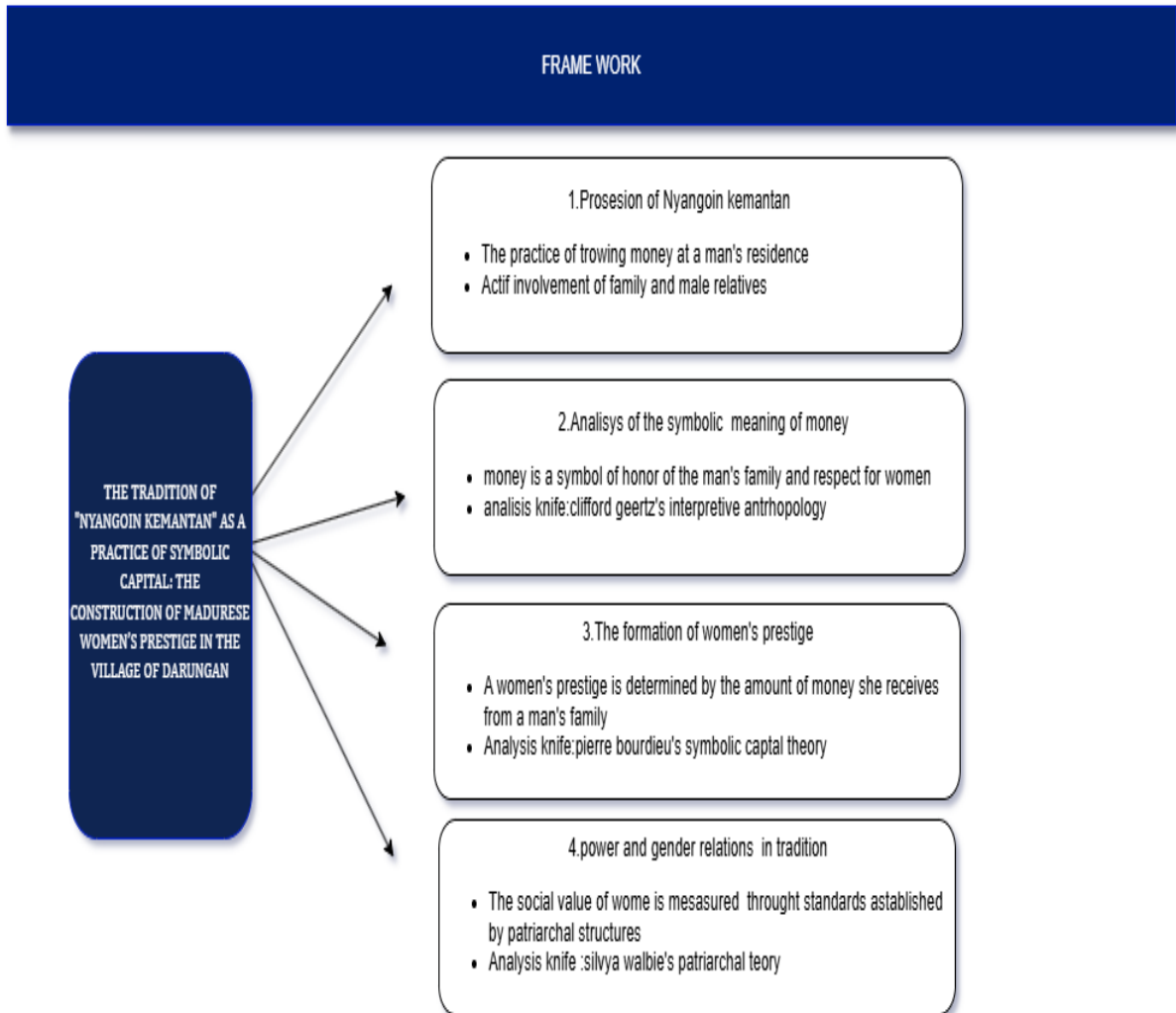


Figure 1. The Tradition of "Nyangoin Kemantan"

As seen in Figure 1, the analysis process was conducted in several layers. The discussion began with a mapping of the process's facts, then continued with an interpretation of cultural symbols, an analysis of class struggles, and an analysis of gender-based power relations.

### 1. The Practice of the Nyangoin Kemantan Tradition in Darungan Village

The *Nyangoin Kemantan* tradition is a customary practice that forms part of the marriage proposal process and is still consistently practiced today by the Madurese community in Darungan Village. The local community is known to firmly uphold these customs in their daily lives as a form of cultural identity preservation

(Mahardhani et al., 2017). This tradition marks a crucial moment for a woman about to enter marriage, during which she receives significant social recognition within her community. Etymologically, the term "*Nyangoin Kemantan*" derives from the word "*sangoh*," meaning pocket money or provisions, and "*Kemantan*," which refers to the bride. In practice, this tradition involves giving pocket money to the prospective bride, although the term "kemantan" here refers to the engagement stage, not after the official marriage (Darmi, 2026).

As part of the engagement process, *Nyangoin Kemantan* is not an independent ritual but a manifestation of prevailing social values and norms. It is conducted at the groom's residence as the culmination of the engagement proceedings. At this moment, the domestic space transforms into a social space where the two extended families interact to formalize their future relationship. The use of the groom's family home holds profound significance; the house is not merely a dwelling but a symbol of the male family's identity, symbolically opening the space to welcome and accept the woman as a new member within their family structure (Geertz, 1973).

Operationally, this ceremony is conducted by placing the two prospective bride and groom side by side in a designated area. Members of the groom's family ranging from aunts, uncles, relatives, to neighbors take turns giving pocket money by "*ontal*" (throwing it). This act of throwing or *tossing* symbolically represents an outpouring of collective joy and a prayer for blessings to "pour down" abundantly upon the couple, while distinguishing it from ordinary private economic transactions. The public presentation of this exchange ensures that the act gains strong social legitimacy. At the end of the procession, the groom's parents provide additional money to "round out" the total amount collected. This is crucial because the amount of money received often becomes a hot topic of discussion in the community after the event concludes, which indirectly shapes public perception of the family (Siti, 2026).

On the surface, *Nyangoin Kemantan* appears to be a material gift, but substantively it is a symbolic communication demonstrating the groom's sincerity. Money in this context is not viewed as a means of purchase, but rather as the highest form of respect for the woman (Hasan & Susanto, 2019). As the recipient, the woman occupies a central symbolic position; she is the central figure who receives recognition, respect, and validation of her worth in the presence of the man's extended family. Accepting this money signifies the woman's openness to accepting the man's family's proposal as a strong initial bond (Geertz, 1973).



Furthermore, the amount of money received is closely correlated with the social status of the families involved. For the community of Darungan Village, this financial figure serves as an indication of the man's seriousness, readiness, and economic capability in establishing a household. This amount functions as an informal community benchmark to gauge how much a man values his prospective wife. Thus, money serves as a social tool that reveals a family's reputation and standing. Participation in this practice serves as a platform for social expression where material contributions transform into symbols of honor and dignity (Ahmad, 2026).

Thus, the concept of *nyangoin kemantan* should not be viewed merely as a monetary exchange, as it carries deeper social significance: this tradition is closely tied to family dynamics, serves as a gesture of respect toward women, and functions as a sign of a man's sincerity. The process of giving and receiving transforms into a form of symbolic interaction that reinforces dedication and earns recognition from the local community. Beyond its financial implications, the funds associated with *ontalan* carry symbolic connotations linked to dignity and obligation, allowing the community to simultaneously preserve the social principles they hold dear.

## **2. The Symbolic Meaning of Money In The Nyangoin Kemantan Tradition**

In the *nyangoin kemantan* tradition, money transcends its function as a material medium of exchange and acts as a symbol within a network of meanings created by the community. Through a *thick description* approach, money is interpreted as a medium of social communication that represents the groom's sincerity, commitment, and respect toward the bride. This meaning is not singular but is shaped by a deep social context regarding who gives, to whom it is directed, and how the act is performed as part of a larger cultural framework (Geertz, 1973).

In this tradition, money holds a relational symbolic meaning; it derives its significance from its role within the social network connecting two extended families. The deeper meaning of money is understood as an indicator of self-worth for both the groom's family and the bride. The larger the amount received through the alternating contributions by relatives, the higher the perceived honor and social status of the groom's family in the eyes of the community, as it reflects their capacity for mutual aid and economic solidarity (Arif, 2026). For the bride-to-be, the amount of money serves as a symbol of recognition of her value as a Madurese woman worthy of honor, providing a sense of pride and emotional security because the acceptance process is conducted openly and with dignity, thereby strengthening her



position within the new kinship structure without causing her to feel belittled or treated as a commodity in the presence of her own family (Sahar, 2020).

Interview results with field informants further underscore the central role of the dowry amount as a determinant of self-worth. According to Mr. Ahmad, a traditional leader: "The amount of the ontalan money directly reflects a family's self-worth in others' eyes. If it's small, neighbors might whisper that the family isn't serious or has nothing to offer. But if many *contribute* or give large sums, the bride-to-be smiles broadly because she feels valued and that's what keeps this tradition alive." He also added that, in his experience, families who successfully collect millions of rupiah often receive praise across villages, which extends their good reputation for years (Ahmad, 2026)

Meanwhile, Mrs. Siti, who has also experienced the Nyangoin Kemantan tradition, added that the money demonstrates the seriousness of the groom's family; the money given to the woman symbolically signifies that she is accepted by her future husband's family and serves as a form of respect to ensure she is not belittled. This statement underscores that the money is not a burden to be borne by the individual, but rather a collective instrument symbolizing the support and respect given by the man's family to the woman (Siti, 2026)

The money involved in the nyangoin kemantan tradition has a representational aspect, conveying not only a symbolic message but also demonstrating the family's social standing and their ability to fulfill marital obligations. Simultaneously, the presence of this money highlights the woman's status as a valued individual within the societal framework. Therefore, the significance of money in the ontalan is relational; that is, its value is not isolated but shaped by networks of social connections, cultural principles, and societal norms. Material symbols found in wedding ceremonies often serve as a means to express moral values, dignity, and social acceptance within society (Susanto, 2017).

However, this interpretation of money as a symbol of honor is not without internal criticism within society. Although considered a form of respect, there is a shift where this tradition is sometimes trapped in the logic of status competition. For families with low economic backgrounds, the pressure to collect large sums of money to maintain their reputation can become a heavy psychological and financial burden. Criticism arises when the essence of sincerity is reduced to merely a display of wealth (the commodification of tradition), which has the potential to trigger social exclusion for those unable to meet public monetary expectations. Thus, *nyangoin the bride* functions as a dual symbolic mechanism: on one hand, it strengthens social

cohesion and honors the marriage, yet on the other, it serves as a space for the negotiation of class identity one that is constantly redefined by the community.

### **3. The Role Of Money In Building Prestige For Women**

The tradition of *nyangoin kemantan* in Darungan society holds significance not only as a cultural practice or social ritual but also plays a role in shaping the structure of social recognition within the community. One key element of this tradition is the giving of money from men to women. This practice is not merely understood as an economic act but carries symbolic meaning related to recognition, honor, and the social prestige of women (Hasan & Susanto, 2019).

Within the social order of the Darungan community, a woman's status is established through unwritten symbolic practices (Nurafifa et al., 2025). Receiving a substantial amount of money in the *Nyangoin Kemantan* ceremony indicates that the woman is viewed as important and respected, which strengthens her ability to negotiate. This also signifies that the family is considered honorable and the men are taken seriously. On the other hand, a modest amount can lead to stigma or overly simplistic judgments, which can result in a decline in how women are socially perceived by the community (Gina, 2026).

Money is essentially a form of economic capital, a tangible asset with financial value. However, in certain social customs, economic resources can shift into symbolic resources when society assigns social meaning to them. In this tradition, the giving of money by men is valued not only for its financial purpose but also for the social meaning embedded in the act. The amount of money given typically signifies the level of respect or recognition bestowed upon the woman. A larger sum indicates a higher symbolic value associated with the woman from the community's perspective (Amin et al., 2023).

Bourdieu's perspective helps explain how money functions as a form of capital exchanged for respect for women in the *nyangoin kemantan* tradition. Bourdieu demonstrates that various forms of capital exist within this social interaction, including economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Economic capital, represented by tangible resources, can be transformed into other forms of capital through specific social processes. In this tradition, money acts as economic capital that transitions into symbolic capital. This shift occurs because money is presented in a ritual setting and is collectively recognized by the community. During the engagement ceremony, the cash exchanged transcends its basic monetary value to become a representation of prestige and legitimacy. This is referred to by

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Bourdieu as symbolic capital, which derives its power from social recognition and trust (Bourdieu, 1984).

Symbolic capital does not directly translate into direct authority; rather, it functions through group recognition and interpretation. Men use economic capital specifically money to acquire symbolic capital, which manifests as honor and social recognition; women, as the recipients, also gain symbolic value in the form of respect and recognition. The transformation of money from economic capital into symbolic capital occurs due to social recognition from the community. When society perceives the giving of money as a form of respect toward women, that money no longer holds merely material value but also becomes a symbol of prestige. Thus, women who receive large sums of money can attain higher social recognition compared to other women. In this context, women's prestige is shaped through material symbols displayed within such traditional practices (Hasan & Susanto, 2019).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus can help explain how the ontalan practice continues to recur. It refers to a set of dispositions embedded within individuals through extensive social interaction. The act of giving money in the nyangoin kemantan tradition is not a spontaneous or personal gesture; rather, it is part of a socially embedded pattern. Here, money emerges as a component of a system that is continuously repeated through social behavior. Beyond serving as a sign of respect and a means of exchanging capital, money in the ontalan tradition also functions as a tool for distinguishing social status. The amount given can influence how an individual is perceived within society. Although nyangoin kemantan is typically viewed as a sign of sincere intent, in practice it can also indicate a family's social standing. The symbolic meaning of money in the nyangoin kemantan tradition demonstrates that the value of an object is never neutral. That value is always influenced by social frameworks and cultural meanings. Therefore, understanding the role of money in this context means understanding how society forms, maintains, and replicates its value system through tangible symbols (Bourdieu, 1984).

Thus, the giving of money in the ontalan tradition cannot be understood merely as an economic act. This practice has a symbolic dimension that plays a role in shaping a woman's prestige within society. Through the process of converting economic capital into symbolic capital, the money given by men becomes a symbol of respect that is socially recognized. This recognition then shapes the woman's social position within the community and reinforces the prevailing value structure in society.

#### **4. Power Relations And Gender In Tradition**

In the traditional practices observed in Darungan Village, the amount of money given during the marriage proposal ceremony is not merely understood as a material gift but also carries symbolic meaning related to a woman's social prestige. The amount of money received by the woman's family often serves as an indicator of the social value the community ascribes to her. The larger the sum given, the higher the prestige associated with the woman in the community's social perception. In this context, money functions not only as a form of economic support but also as a symbol of honor that signifies respect for the woman and the social status of her family. The community's assessment of the size of this gift then shapes a symbolic hierarchy among women within the village, where women who receive larger gifts tend to be viewed as having higher social value. This situation demonstrates that material symbols within traditions can serve as tools representing social recognition and shaping societal perceptions of women's positions within the social structure (Ahmad, 2026).

Power relations between men and women are often internalized within various cultural practices and traditions that have developed in society. In many social contexts, women are positioned as the party evaluated based on symbolic standards determined by the broader social structure (Fazilah & Fadilah, 2025). Such evaluations do not always manifest as direct domination but operate through symbolic mechanisms present in cultural practices considered normal and passed down through generations. In this context, families or male-dominated groups often hold greater authority in determining the social standards of recognition applied to women. This indicates that cultural practices not only serve as expressions of a society's collective identity but can also function as vehicles for reproducing unequal gender power relations (Bourdieu, 1984).

The power relations that shape women's prestige can also be understood through a patriarchal lens. According to Sylvia Walby, patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices that enables men to dominate, oppress, and control women across various aspects of life. Walby explains that patriarchy operates not only within the domestic sphere but also through broader social institutions such as culture, the state, sexual relations, and the labor market. Thus, male domination over women is not merely a personal relationship between individuals, but rather an organized social system that is continuously reproduced through various social and cultural mechanisms (Walby, 1991).

When viewed through this lens, such conditions can be interpreted as a form of cultural patriarchy that is, domination that operates through cultural values, norms, and symbols perceived as natural. Within this system, women are often positioned as symbols of family or community honor. Consequently, women's social value is often measured against specific standards shaped by patriarchal structures, such as moral codes, norms of propriety, and traditions governing women's behavior in social life. When these standards are controlled by men or male-dominated institutions, women are indirectly placed in a subordinate position within the social structure (Hafani & Buldani, 2025).

Power relations in shaping women's prestige demonstrate that cultural practices are not always neutral. Traditions and social norms can serve as arenas where gender power relations are produced, maintained, and negotiated within society. Cultural symbols associated with women, such as the magnitude of gifts in marriage proposal traditions, can function both as markers of social esteem and as mechanisms that shape prestige hierarchies within the community. However, for the community of Darungan Village, this practice is not understood as a form of patriarchal domination or gender inequality. On the contrary, the community tends to view it as part of customs and traditions that have been passed down through generations and whose continuity must be preserved. This tradition is regarded as a form of respect for local cultural values as well as a symbol of appreciation for women and their families. Therefore, the practice is perceived more as a manifestation of cultural preservation than as a mechanism that reproduces gender power relations within society (Made et al., 2025).

Therefore, to understand how cultural customs perpetuate social inequality, it is crucial to critically examine the dynamics of power and gender relations within the tradition. Tradition is not inherently neutral; rather, it can serve as a space where various interests and power dynamics are mediated. Within this framework, cultural symbols can have dual interpretations: while they may represent admiration for women, they can also function as tools of social regulation that maintain gender inequality in society.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The Nyangoin Kemantan tradition in Darungan Village demonstrates that the giving of money in a marriage proposal serves not only as an economic aspect but as a social symbol imbued with meanings of honor and worthiness. Money becomes a medium for converting economic capital into symbolic capital that shapes a woman's prestige in the eyes of the community. This prestige is not entirely  
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determined by the woman's personal qualities, but rather by the man's family's ability to provide the Nyangoin Kemantan. This finding reveals that the proposal tradition serves as a symbolic exchange arena steeped in power dynamics.

From Bourdieu's perspective, this practice demonstrates the operation of symbolic power, which is accepted as a given within the cultural structure. Meanwhile, Geertz's approach helps us understand that the symbolic meaning of money is shaped by the community's local interpretations. This study contributes to the study of cultural symbols and gender by demonstrating that traditions can simultaneously serve as spaces for honoring and reproducing power relations. This study acknowledges the limitations associated with its short duration; future research could examine comparisons of similar practices in other communities to explore variations in symbolic meanings and gender relations within marriage traditions.

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