

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SEDEKAH LAUT TRADITION IN FOSTERING SOLIDARITY AND EDUCATIONAL VALUES AMONG THE COMMUNITY OF TASIK AGUNG VILLAGE, REMBANG

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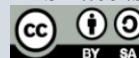
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the significance of the *sedekah laut* tradition in strengthening social solidarity and educational values within the community of Tasik Agung Village, Rembang. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving traditional leaders, fishermen, and local residents. The study is grounded in Symbolic Interactionism theory, which explains how social meanings are constructed through interaction and shared symbols. The findings show that the *sedekah laut* tradition functions not only as a cultural heritage ritual but also as a social mechanism that reinforces cooperation, mutual assistance, and communal harmony. In addition, the tradition serves as a medium of informal education through which younger generations learn responsibility, cultural awareness, environmental respect, and social solidarity. Ritual symbols such as offerings and communal prayers are interpreted as expressions of gratitude, safety, and respect for ancestral traditions. Therefore, the *sedekah laut* tradition contributes to cultural preservation while strengthening social and educational values within the coastal community of Tasik Agung Village, Rembang.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Indonesia is characterized by profound socio-cultural diversity, encompassing a wide range of ethnicities, traditions, and belief systems across its archipelagic regions. Each community develops distinctive cultural expressions that function as dynamic constructs shaping collective identity and social cohesion. Culture, in this sense, is not merely a set of inherited ideas, but also manifests through practices, behaviors, and tangible artifacts that are continuously reproduced within society. Tradition is commonly understood as a form of gratitude to God for prosperity and well-being, while simultaneously functioning as a mechanism for maintaining harmony between humans, nature, and ancestral values (Hidayah et al., 2023). One of the most enduring cultural expressions within Javanese coastal communities is the *sedekah laut* tradition, which reflects a socio-religious system of meaning deeply embedded in communal life..

The “sedekah laut” tradition is practiced by coastal communities, particularly in the coastal areas of Java, such as Balekambang Beach in Malang. This tradition involves throwing offerings such as food, flowers, clothing, or other items—into the sea as an expression of gratitude for fishermen’s catches, a plea for safety, and a prayer for prosperity. The sea offering tradition is also believed to be a form of respect from fishermen toward the mystical forces in the sea, which are seen as guardians of the ocean. This tradition also embodies life values that support the activities of fishing communities (Sapitri et al., 2025). In Indonesia, the sea offering tradition is practiced by Javanese communities, particularly in the village of Tasik Agung, Rembang, which continues to uphold this tradition to this day. This sea offering ritual is typically held after the Eid al-Fitr holiday (8th of Shawwal). This sea offering tradition has existed since the time of our ancestors until the present day (Rizki Sumardani et al., 2025).

In some regions, the sea offering is performed during the month of Suro or Muharram. Not only do the dates differ, but the sea offering traditions also vary in their events, such as cultural performances like wayang kulit (shadow puppet shows), ketoprak, and various entertainment stages. Although there are differences in the activities of the sea offering tradition, they share the same purpose: to pray for smooth livelihood at sea and safety (Kartika et al., 2024). Once a year, the sea offering tradition is held by the residents of Tasik Agung Village in Rembang with great solemnity. Residents prepare various offerings, including assorted foods, traditional snacks, and fruits, accompanied by various artistic and musical performances. This traditional ceremony is not merely a cultural activity but also holds significant values and meanings for the social life of the local community (Juwita et al., 2025).

Previous research has examined the sea offering tradition from various perspectives. A study conducted by (Retno Sari et al., 2025) explains that the sea offering tradition has undergone changes in both its implementation process and function due to the progression of time, yet the cultural values and sense of solidarity among coastal communities remain preserved. Additionally, the study by (Megawati & Ihsanuddin, 2021) indicates that the sea offering tradition in Cilacap Regency demonstrates acculturation between local culture and Islamic teachings, ensuring its continuity without compromising religious values within the community. Another study (Rohwati et al., 2025) indicates that the sea almsgiving tradition embodies local wisdom capable of fostering a spirit of cooperation and mutual aid, as well as strengthening the sense of community among coastal residents. From previous research, it is evident that the sea almsgiving tradition holds not only cultural significance but also encompasses social, cultural, and religious values that have undergone various adaptations over time. Unlike previous studies, this research, conducted in Tasik Agung Village, Rembang, focuses on understanding the significance of the sea offering tradition as a medium for fostering social solidarity and educational values in community life. This study highlights how this tradition can serve as a vehicle for social learning to instill attitudes of cooperation, compassion, responsibility, and cultural preservation among the community and the younger generation.

From the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, as proposed by George Herbert Mead and expanded upon by Herbert Blumer, the sea offering tradition emerges as a form of social interaction rich in symbolism and profound meaning. Certain offerings, such as food, traditional snacks, and fruits, are not merely ritual accessories; rather, they symbolize the community’s expression of gratitude to God for the bounty of the sea. Moreover, performances such as ketoprak, wayang kulit, and the sounds of local music serve as a bridge strengthening social bonds among residents, while also functioning as a tool for preserving the local cultural heritage (Birsyada et al., 2018)

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From a symbolic interactionist perspective, the symbols present in the sea offering tradition are interpreted through the social interaction processes taking place within the community of Tasik Agung Village, Rembang. Various elements, such as offerings, communal prayers, and traditional art performances, are not merely components of the customary ritual; they embody values of gratitude, hopes for safety, and respect for ancestral traditions that have been passed down through generations (Wahyudi & Sigit, 2011). Through community involvement in every series of

activities, the sea offering tradition fosters social solidarity, strengthens relationships among residents, and serves as a means of instilling educational values in the younger generation regarding the preservation and conservation of local culture (Tari & Timur, 2024).

METHODS

The study entitled “*The Significance of the Sedekah Laut Tradition in Fostering Solidarity and Educational Values Among the Community of Tasik Agung Village, Rembang*” applied a qualitative research design to explore the cultural and social meanings embedded in the Sedekah Laut tradition. Data were collected directly from the field through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. This approach allows researchers to obtain rich, contextual, and authentic information from real-life social settings. Qualitative field-based methods are widely recognized for their ability to capture complex social phenomena within their natural environments (Chand, 2025)

Primary data in this study were gathered through direct observation of the Sedekah Laut ceremony and interviews with selected informants who were closely involved in the tradition. The informants included community leaders, fishermen, and local residents, chosen purposively to ensure diverse and relevant perspectives. Secondary data were obtained from existing literature discussing coastal cultural traditions and their meanings, particularly through the lens of Symbolic Interactionism theory. This theoretical perspective emphasizes that social meanings are constructed through continuous interaction among individuals within a community.

The data analysis process followed a systematic qualitative procedure, beginning with data collection and continuing through data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The collected information was carefully organized and grouped into meaningful patterns before being analyzed to generate findings. This analytical process aligns with qualitative data analysis techniques that emphasize interpretation of social phenomena to produce credible conclusions (Eungoo & Hwang, 2021)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sedekah laut tradition practiced by the coastal community of Tasik Agung Village, Rembang, represents a culturally embedded system of meaning that continues to shape communal life in a meaningful way. Rather than functioning merely as a ritual expression of gratitude to God for abundant marine resources and prayers for safety at sea (Widyatwati & Mahfudz, 2021), the tradition operates as a form of ecological reciprocity, in which humans, nature, and spiritual beliefs are symbolically interconnected. Through collective participation in this ritual, community members continuously construct and negotiate meanings, reflecting the core principle of Symbolic Interactionism that social reality is formed through ongoing interpretive interaction among individuals. Findings from field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation reveal that the sedekah laut ceremony functions as a social integrator that strengthens experiential solidarity among fishermen and coastal residents (Tari & Timur, 2024). The ritual acts as a medium through which shared symbols such as offerings, prayers, and communal gatherings are interpreted and internalized, thereby reinforcing collective identity and mutual trust. From a Symbolic Interactionism perspective, these symbolic forms are not passive cultural artifacts, but active communicative mechanisms that shape social behavior and sustain group cohesion. Furthermore, the tradition serves as a space of informal pedagogy, where embodied knowledge is transmitted across generations through lived participation rather than formal instruction. Younger community members learn values such as cooperation, gratitude, and responsibility by directly engaging in ritual practices and observing social interactions within the ceremony. In this sense, *sedekah laut* functions as a culturally situated learning system in which meaning is continuously produced, reinforced, and transformed through social interaction, thereby strengthening both cultural continuity and social resilience within the coastal community (Indrahti et al., 2024)

The Significance of the Sedekah Laut Tradition for the Community of Tasik Agung

The people of Tasik Agung Village, Rembang, perceive the *sedekah laut* tradition as an inherited cultural legacy that continues to shape the collective identity of the coastal community. During the ritual, residents collaboratively prepare ceremonial offerings consisting of traditional foods, fruits, and agricultural products, which

are subsequently released into the sea. This practice is not solely interpreted as a symbolic expression of gratitude for the fishermen's livelihood, but also reflects a form of ecological reciprocity that emphasizes the interconnected relationship between humans and the marine environment. Informant I (Mr. B/Traditional Leader) explained the reason:

“Sesaji iki kaya matur suwun marang segara, ben isine akeh saben taun. Yen ora, segara nesu, ikane ilang. Saka biyen wong kene percaya nek laut kuwi kudu dijaga lan dihormati, merga kabeh urip masyarakat gumantung saka segara. Dadi sedekah laut ora mung tradisi biasa, nanging wis dadi bagian urip warga nelayan. Yen acara iki dianakake, warga padha guyub kerja bareng, mulai nyiapake sesaji, hiasan prau, nganti acara hiburan. Kuwi sing nggawe hubungan antarwarga dadi luwih cedhak lan rukun.”

Translation: “This offering is a way of expressing gratitude to the sea so that the catch remains abundant every year. If it is not performed, the sea might become angry and fish will be hard to come by. For generations, the people here have believed that the sea must be protected and respected because their livelihoods depend on it. Thus, the sea offering is not merely a customary tradition but has become an integral part of the fishing community's way of life. When this event takes place, the villagers work together—from preparing the offerings and decorating the boats to organizing the festivities. This is what brings the community closer together and fosters harmony.”



Picture 4.1 Sedekah laut Desa Tasik Agung Rembang

Source: Dokumentasi peneliti, 2026

The interview results show that the people of Tasik Agung Village view the sea not merely as a source of livelihood, but also as an integral part of life whose existence must be preserved and respected. The ritual of offering sacrifices to the sea is interpreted as an expression of gratitude to God for the catch obtained by the fishermen, as well as a symbol of respect for nature, which has long been the foundation of coastal communities' livelihoods (Rosdiana & Pradjoko, 2024). The belief reflected in the saying *“yen ora, segara nesu, ikane ilang”* illustrates the community's view that humans must maintain a harmonious relationship with nature to ensure the balance of life is preserved and the bounty of the sea remains abundant. The practice of the sea offering tradition also demonstrates the strong sense of solidarity within the Tasik Agung village community. This is evident in the residents' collective participation in every stage of the event, from preparing offerings, decorating the boats, to organizing folk entertainment. These cooperative activities foster closer social bonds and cultivate a sense of community among coastal residents (Sari et al., 2025)

Furthermore, the *sedekah laut* ceremony operates as a powerful social integrator that strengthens experiential solidarity among coastal residents. Community members collectively participate in preparing offerings, decorating fishing boats, and organizing cultural performances, creating intensive interaction throughout the ritual process. These collaborative activities foster emotional closeness, mutual trust, and collective responsibility within the fishing

community. Symbolic Interactionism explains that repeated communal actions gradually generate shared meanings that sustain social cohesion and reinforce collective identity. Consequently, the tradition functions not merely as a ceremonial activity but as a dynamic social mechanism that continuously nurtures harmony and social resilience among villagers. In addition to its social function, the *sedekah laut* tradition also serves as a form of informal pedagogy through which cultural and moral values are transmitted from one generation to another. Younger members of the community acquire embodied knowledge by directly participating in ritual activities and observing the practices performed by elders throughout the ceremony. Through this participatory learning process, values such as gratitude, cooperation, environmental awareness, and respect for ancestral heritage become internalized within everyday social life. Viewed through the lens of Symbolic Interactionism, these educational processes emerge through continuous interpretation of symbols and interactions embedded in the ritual tradition itself. Therefore, *sedekah laut* is not solely a customary celebration, but also a dynamic cultural mechanism that sustains cultural continuity and strengthens social resilience within the coastal society of Tasik Agung Village (Yahya, 2019)

The Sea Offering Tradition in Fostering Social Solidarity

Field findings reveal that the sea offering tradition in Tasik Agung Village, Rembang, plays a crucial role in strengthening social bonds among coastal residents. More than just an annual customary ritual, this activity serves as a bridge that brings residents closer through various collaborative actions and a spirit of mutual cooperation. The entire community participates in every stage, from preparing offerings, decorating boats, arranging the venue, to organizing folk entertainment. The full participation of residents in the Sea Offering tradition reflects the strong sense of camaraderie that remains deeply rooted in Tasik Agung Village. Residents work together without distinction regarding age, profession, or social status (Widati, 2011). This event unites all parties toward a common goal: preserving ancestral heritage while strengthening social bonds. An informant explained (Mr. T/Fisherman):

"Yen wis ana sedekah laut, warga mesthi padha melu kerja bareng. Ana sing nyiapake sesaji, ana sing ngias prau, lan liyane bantu-bantu supaya acarane lancar. Saka acara kaya ngene iki, warga dadi luwih akrab lan guyub."

Translation: When the sea offering ceremony is held, all residents take part. Some prepare the offerings and decorate the boats, while the rest help one another to ensure the event is a success. This helps foster a sense of camaraderie and harmony among the residents.

Informant III (Ms. N, a villager) described the solidarity among the residents of Tasik Agung Village, Rembang:

"Sedekah laut kuwi dudu mung acara adat, nanging wektu kumpule warga. Sing biyasane jarang ketemu dadi bisa kumpul lan kerja bareng. Mula hubungan antarwarga tetep apik."

Translation: The Sea Offering is not just a traditional ceremony; it's also a time for the community to gather. Even those who rarely see each other can meet and work together. That's why neighborly relations are always harmonious.



Picture 4.2 Gotong Royong Warga Desa Tasik Agung Rembang
Source: Dokumentasi peneliti, 2026

The interview results indicate that the tradition of sedekah laut plays a significant social role in the lives of the community in Tasik Agung Village, Rembang. This tradition serves as a platform that brings the community together in an atmosphere of togetherness, ensuring that relationships among residents remain strong and harmonious (Thea et al., 2026). Active participation in every stage of the sedekah laut ceremony reflects the persistence of mutual cooperation as a fundamental value within the coastal society of Tasik Agung Village, Rembang. Community members collectively contribute to preparing ritual offerings, arranging ceremonial equipment, decorating fishing boats, and organizing cultural performances without distinctions of age, occupation, or social background. This collective engagement illustrates how the tradition functions as a form of experiential solidarity, where social relationships are strengthened through direct communal involvement and shared cultural experiences. In addition, the ritual creates opportunities for residents who rarely interact in everyday life to reconnect and rebuild emotional closeness, thereby reinforcing social harmony within the village community. From the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, these repeated interactions generate shared meanings that gradually shape collective consciousness and strengthen the community's sense of belonging. Beyond its ceremonial dimension, the sedekah laut tradition also operates as a significant social integrator that sustains harmonious relationships among coastal residents. The community's involvement extends beyond passive attendance, as individuals actively participate in ensuring the continuity and success of the ritual. Such participation reflects a collectively constructed awareness regarding the importance of preserving ancestral traditions as part of communal identity.

Within the symbolic interactionist framework proposed by Herbert Blumer, social solidarity emerges through continuous interaction and interpretation of shared symbols embedded in communal activities (Siti & Siregar, 2016). Ritual practices such as collective labor, communal prayers, and collaborative preparation become symbolic mechanisms through which values of unity, cooperation, and social responsibility are continuously reproduced within society. Furthermore, the sedekah laut tradition serves as a medium of informal pedagogy through which social and cultural values are transmitted across generations (Triyanto et al., 2018). Through direct participation in ritual activities, younger community members acquire embodied knowledge concerning cooperation, togetherness, and respect for communal traditions. The meanings attached to these ritual practices are internalized through ongoing interaction with elders and fellow residents, allowing cultural values to become embedded within everyday social behavior. Symbolic Interactionism explains that these values are not inherited automatically but are continuously constructed and reaffirmed through social interaction and shared interpretation. Consequently, the solidarity cultivated through the sedekah laut tradition extends beyond the ceremonial context and becomes visible in daily community life

through mutual assistance, harmonious social relations, and the enduring culture of cooperation maintained by the people of Tasik Agung Village, Rembang (Hanifah & Nurdin, 2024)

Educational Value for the Younger Generation

Research findings indicate that the tradition of the sedekah laut in Tasik Agung Village, Rembang, is not only understood as the cultural heritage of coastal communities but also serves an important educational function for the younger generation. The educational values within this tradition are evident through the involvement of children and adolescents in various stages of the activities, ranging from event preparation and the performance of traditional rituals to participation in local arts performances (Kirana & Fauzia, 2025). This participation serves as a medium for social and cultural learning that is continuously passed down by the community from one generation to the next. Based on field observations, the younger generation takes part in community service activities, helping to prepare for the event, decorate boats, maintain environmental cleanliness, and participate in various traditional arts activities.

Informant IV (Mrs. Y/a villager) explained the educational value of the sea offering tradition in Tasik Agung Village, Rembang:

“Tradisi sedekah laut ugi ndadosake generasi muda langkung kenal kaliyan budaya daerahipun piyambak, kados wayang kulit, ketoprak, lan musik tradisional, supados budaya lokal mboten gampang ical amargi pengaruh budaya modern. Masyarakat ugi tansah ngandharake dhateng generasi muda bilih laut punika sumber panguripan ingkang kedah dijaga lan dipun hormati”

Translation: The tradition of sea offerings also helps the younger generation become more familiar with their own local culture such as wayang kulit, ketoprak, and traditional music ensuring that local culture does not easily fade away due to the influence of modern culture. The community also consistently teaches the younger generation that the sea is a source of life that must be protected and respected.

The sedekah laut tradition provides younger generations with social learning experiences that cultivate responsibility, cooperation, discipline, and empathy through direct participation in communal activities. These interactions function as a form of informal pedagogy, where cultural values are transmitted through lived experiences rather than formal instruction. From the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, meanings related to togetherness and shared responsibility are continuously constructed through social interaction, enabling children and adolescents to internalize collective values within community life. In addition, traditional performances such as *wayang kulit*, *ketoprak*, and regional music serve as symbolic media that introduce local cultural identity to younger generations. These cultural expressions operate as a social integrator that strengthens experiential solidarity between community members while preserving local traditions amid modernization (Birsyada et al., 2018). Through continuous interaction with these cultural symbols, young people develop a stronger sense of belonging toward their ancestral heritage.

Furthermore, the sedekah laut tradition reflects principles of ecological reciprocity by teaching communities to respect and protect the sea as a vital source of life. Rituals such as communal prayers and offerings symbolize gratitude toward God while simultaneously transmitting embodied knowledge related to environmental awareness and cultural preservation. Viewed through Symbolic Interactionism, these symbolic practices shape social behavior and strengthen cultural continuity within the coastal community of Tasik Agung Village, Rembang (Rahayu & Widiyanto, 2022)

CONCLUSION

The sedekah laut tradition practiced by the people of Tasik Agung Village, Rembang, continues to function as an important cultural mechanism within coastal society. The ritual is interpreted not only as an expression of gratitude for marine resources, but also as a symbolic effort to maintain harmony between humans, nature, and ancestral heritage. Through collective activities such as preparing offerings, communal prayers, and traditional performances, the tradition strengthens social relationships and reinforces values of cooperation, togetherness, and communal responsibility. From the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, these ritual practices become shared symbols through which community members continuously construct meanings related to solidarity, cultural identity, and environmental awareness.

In addition, the sedekah laut tradition serves as a form of informal pedagogy that transmits cultural and social values to younger generations. Direct participation in ritual activities enables children and adolescents to acquire embodied knowledge concerning mutual cooperation, gratitude, social responsibility, and respect for local traditions. The ritual also reflects principles of ecological reciprocity, emphasizing the importance of preserving the sea as a vital source of life for coastal communities. Through continuous interaction with ritual symbols and communal practices, younger generations gradually internalize these values within everyday social life.

Nevertheless, this study is limited to the social and educational dimensions of the *sedekah laut* tradition within a single coastal community, namely Tasik Agung Village, Rembang. As a result, the findings cannot fully represent the diversity of sedekah laut practices in other regions of Indonesia. Future studies are recommended to explore comparative perspectives across different coastal communities or to examine the influence of modernization and digital culture on the sustainability of local ritual traditions among younger generations.

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