

Symbolism and Cultural Meaning in the *Sedekah Bumi* Tradition of Sukadiri Village, Banten: An Ethnographic Study

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Abstract This research examines what the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in Sukadiri Village, Banten, symbolizes, and the significance of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in Sukadiri Village, Banten, and understanding the need for emphasis in modern-day Islamic society. The objectives are: (1) to decipher the description of the symbols of the *Sedekah Bumi* ritual, (2) to interpret the meaning contained in the symbols *Sedekah Bumi*. With the assumption of the phenomenon in qualitative ethnographic approach, the author studies the offering tradition in *Sedekah Bumi* and the ritual itself, the author substantive the people and culture by the which the Sukadiri people interpret the offering intrapersonal and the offering meditation and ritual dialogue by the interdisciplinary means of Sukadiri people and culture, the author studies the primitive documentation and her narrative, the dialog and cultural documentation. The author transcribes cultural documentation, draws conclusions, presents information, and records reinformation. The author provides documentation, her narrative, the dialogue, and cultural documentation. Analysis aims to order ideas and her narration to serve as the primary information.

Abstrak Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pentingnya memahami simbolisme dan makna dalam tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* di Desa Sukadiri, Banten, yang masih terus dipertahankan di tengah dinamika masyarakat Islam modern. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mendeskripsikan simbol-simbol yang digunakan dalam tradisi *Sedekah Bumi*, (2) menganalisis makna yang terkandung dalam setiap simbol tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan etnografi. Sumber data diperoleh melalui observasi langsung, wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh adat dan masyarakat setempat, serta studi dokumentasi terkait tradisi ini. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan adalah reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa simbol-simbol yang digunakan dalam tradisi *Sedekah Bumi*, seperti sesajen, tumpeng, dan ritual doa bersama, memiliki makna filosofis yang mendalam, antara lain sebagai bentuk rasa syukur kepada Tuhan, permohonan keberkahan, serta simbol harmonisasi antara manusia dan alam. Tradisi ini tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai warisan budaya, tetapi juga sebagai media perekat sosial yang memperkuat identitas masyarakat Sukadiri.

Keywords *Sedekah Bumi* tradition; Symbols and Meanings; Banten



Introduction

Defined as a ritual, the Sedekah Bumi tradition in Sukadiri Village is an act with important symbolic values as well. These values capture the relationship of humanity, nature, and God Almighty.¹ The Sedekah Bumi is a folk asset and a reminder of the relationship of humankind with the earthly terrain and the Divine.² A ritual folk tradition, the Sedekah Bumi is also an expression of care for the soil and its bounty. Protection of earthly natural resources is an important aspect of the symbolic values in the Sedekah Bumi tradition.³ Unfortunately, the symbolic values of the Sedekah Bumi tradition are still an understudied aspect of this tradition.

This study examines and documents the symbolic meanings of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition, which constitutes an integral part of Sukadiri Village's cultural heritage. At a time of rapid modernization and globalization, many local traditions face the risk of disappearance.⁴ By studying and documenting this tradition, the research contributes to preserving valuable cultural heritage.⁵ This research helped reveal the meaning behind the symbols used in the tradition, thus improving the community's interpretation of the cultural values contained in this tradition. This research strengthens the local identity of the Sukadiri community. In the context of globalization, which tends to be homogeneous⁶, traditions such as *Sedekah Bumi* become identity markers that distinguish and enrich cultural diversity⁷. Understanding and appreciating these traditions can strengthen the sense of pride and social cohesion among the local community. Islam develops society through education, as the educational process is considered one of the most powerful methods of shaping and strengthening society.⁸

The *Sedekah Bumi* ritual embodies a worldview that emphasizes respect for nature and the balance between humans and the environment.⁹ This concept encourages harmonious coexistence with nature, respect for the rights of nature, and preservation of the environment.¹⁰ In *Sedekah Bumi*, humans do not merely act as implementers of nature management, but are also present as an essential

¹ (Aceng, Wawancara, Serang 4 Juni 2024)

² Aidil Haris And Asrinda Amalia, "Makna Dan Simbol Dalam Proses Interaksi Sosial (Sebuah Tinjauan Komunikasi)," *Jurnal Dakwah Risalah* 29, No. 1 (2018): 16.

³ Gesta Bayuadhy, *Tradisi-Tradisi Adiluhung Para Leluhur Jawa* (Yogyakarta: DIPTA, 2015).

⁴ Hildgardis M.I Nahak, "Upaya Melestarikan Budaya Indonesia Di Era Globalisasi," *Jurnal Sosiologi Nusantara* 5, No. 1 (2019): 65–76.

⁵ Een Nuraeni, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Di Dusun Cigintung Desa Sadabumi Kecamatan Majenang Kabupaten Cilacap," 2018, <https://repository.uinsaizu.ac.id/Id/Eprint/4016>.

⁶ Nuraini Nuraini, Waharjani Waharjani, And Mohammad Jailani, "From Textual To Contextual: Contemporary Islamic Thinker Abdullah Saeed On Qur'anic Exegesis," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah* 21, No. 1 (2024): 32.

⁷ Sri Rahayu, Muhammad Mona Adha, And Devi Sutrisno Putri, "Pengaruh Globalisasi Terhadap Eksistensi *Sedekah Bumi* Pada Masyarakat Sunda Pekon Merbau," *Jurnal Pekan* 7, No. 2 (2022): 114–127.

⁸ article History, "Harmonizing Paths : Unveiling The Dichotomy Between Islamic Education And General Education In Indonesia," *Jurnal Afkaruna Vol. 20 No. 1 June 2024* 20, No. 1 (2024).

⁹ E M Putri, V I S Pinasti, And S G Apriantika, "Interaksi Manusia Dan Alam Pada Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Di Japon Blora," *Dimensia: Jurnal Kajian ...* 12, No. 02 (2023): 151–160, <https://journal.uny.ac.id/Index.php/Dimensia/Article/View/60988>.

¹⁰ Teresia Noiman Derung, "Interaksionisme Simbolik Dalam Kehidupan Bermasyarakat," *SAPA - Jurnal Kateketik Dan Pastoral* 2, No. 1 (2017): 118–131.

component that is integrated with the sustainability of nature itself.¹¹ This concept is particularly relevant to the current environmental crisis, where environmental degradation and global warming pose a significant threat to human survival.

Faced with increasing threats from climate change, environmental degradation, and natural disasters, it is imperative to implement sustainable practices and mitigate their impacts.¹² The *Sedekah Bumi* encourages individuals to take responsibility for their actions and their consequences on the environment. By prioritizing social responsibility, we can foster a sense of community and collective action to protect the environment¹³. Grounded in Islamic values and principles, *Sedekah Bumi* emphasizes the importance of earth management and care. By exploring this concept, we can enhance our understanding of Islamic teachings and their relevance to contemporary environmental issues.¹⁴ This can lead to a deeper appreciation of the interconnectedness between human well-being and the environment.¹⁵

Various studies related to the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition have been carried out by many researchers, namely research by Ristiani and friends in 2024, revealing the important role of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition as a symbol of asking for safety as well as respect for the ancestral culture that has been passed down.¹⁶ Heny and Yanti's research in 2024 explored the Symbolic Meanings in the Traditional Ceremony of Earth Alms in Pelem Village, Gabus District, Grobogan Regency. using a phenomenological approach to explore the symbolic meanings in this tradition. *Sedekah Bumi* tradition, known by various terms such as nature alms, clean village, merti village, or gunung gugur, is a form of Javanese respect for nature and the environment.¹⁷ Research conducted by Shevia Putri Permatasari and Agus Machfud Fauzi in 2024 aims to dig deeper into the practice of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in Nanggulan Hamlet. This research specifically explores how the community responds, preserves, and adapts the tradition in relation to the development of religious understanding. Using a qualitative approach, this research provides in-depth insight into the way this tradition is integrated into the social and spiritual life of the

¹¹ Ahmad Abdullah, "Integrasi Agama Dan Sains Dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Pilar: Jurnal Kajian Islam Kontemporer* 13, No. 1 (2022): H.2.

¹² Nuraeni, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Di Dusun Cigintung Desa Sadabumi Kecamatan Majenang Kabupaten Cilacap."

¹³ Hesti Agusti Saputri Et Al., "Peran Sosial Umat Dalam Membangun Solidaritas Menurut Tafsir Surah," *Jurnal Budi Pekerti Agama Islam* 2, No. 4 (2024): 232–250.

¹⁴ Muh Barid, Nizarudin Wajdi, and Yuli Marlina, "Resonating Culture and Religion : A Comprehensive Examination of The Tingkeban Ceremony in Nganjuk" 24, no. 1 (2024): 37–50, <https://doi.org/10.21154/tahrir.v24i1.7330>.

¹⁵ Nuraeni, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Di Dusun Cigintung Desa Sadabumi Kecamatan Majenang Kabupaten Cilacap."

¹⁶ Ristiani Ristiani, Much Arsyad Fardani, And Lovika Ardana Riswari, "Makna Sesaji *Sedekah Bumi* Di Desa Triguno Kecamatan Pucakwangi," *Jurnal Artefak* 11, No. 1 (2024): 27.

¹⁷ Yanti Haryanti Henny Puspita Sari, "Makna Simbolik Dalam Upacara Adat *Sedekah Bumi* Desa Pelem Kecamatan Gabus Kabupaten Grobogan," *Jurnal Indonesia : Manajemen Informatika Dan Komunikasi* Vol 5 No 1 (N.D.).

community, as well as a form of reflection on the harmony between customs and religious values.¹⁸

Further research was conducted by Nabila Masruroha and friends in 2021, exploring the Existence of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in the Modern Era: Plesungan Tourism Village, Gondangrejo District, Karanganyar Regency. This research aims to examine the history and meaning of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in the modern era. This research also explores the process of implementing the tradition and the factors that influence its development.¹⁹ Rachmawati and friends' research in 2021 explained that the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition Model of Thanksgiving and Community Resilience in the North Coastal Community of Central Java aims to model thanksgiving and community resilience in the Rembang community. This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods with a phenomenological approach through in-depth interviews, observation, and literature study.²⁰ Research by Heri Susanto and friends in 2021 aims to describe the process of implementing the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition carried out by the people of Medani Village, Cluwak District, Pati Regency. This research is descriptive qualitative research. Data collection methods are carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation, and data validity techniques through triangulation techniques.²¹

Various previous studies have shown that some problems related to the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition still exist. What are the symbols used in the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in Sukadiri Village, Banten? What is the form and function of each symbol in the Earth Alms procession? What are the philosophical, social, and religious meanings contained in the symbols used in the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition? How are these symbols interpreted by the people of Sukadiri Village, both from the perspective of local culture and Islamic teachings? What is the role of symbols in maintaining the sustainability of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition amid social change and community modernization? Religious/ritual values create norms and prohibitions. Religion and religious values influence perceptions and behaviors toward nature.²² The results of quantitative meta-analyses show strong evidence that sacred forests/groves often harbor higher biodiversity and play an important role in ecosystem function.²³

Based on issues that have not been studied by previous researchers, the focus and objectives of

¹⁸ Agus Machfud Fauzi Shevia Putri Permatasari, "Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Di Dusun Nanggulan: Perspektif Sosiologi Agama," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia (Jsai)* Volume 5, (2024): 4.

¹⁹ Nabila Masruroh, Abdul Rahman, And Yosafat Hermawan, "Eksistensi *Sedekah Bumi* Di Era Modern: Desa Wisata Plesungan Kecamatan Gondangrejo Kabupaten Karanganyar," *Satwika : Kajian Ilmu Budaya Dan Perubahan Sosial* 5, No. 2 (2021): 268–283.

²⁰ Nikmah Rachmawati, Mizano Liongga Alhassan, and Mukhammad Syafii, "*Sedekah Bumi* : Model Kebersyukuran Dan Resiliensi Komunitas Pada Masyarakat Pesisir Utara Jawa Tengah," *JURNAL PENELITIAN* 15, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.21043/jp.v15i1.9075>.

²¹ Marjianto Heri Susanto, Situ Asih, "Makna Simbolik Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Di Desa Medani Kecamatan Cluwak Kabupaten Pati," *Jurnal Parawisata Dan Budaya* Volume 2 N (N.D.): 123.

²² Christopher D. Ives et al., "The Role of Religion in Shaping the Values of Nature," *Ecology and Society* 29, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-15004-290210>.

²³ Megan K. Sullivan et al., "Sacred Forest Biodiversity Conservation: A Meta-Analysis," *Conservation Science and Practice* 6, no. 1 (2024): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.13055>.

this study are (1) to describe the symbols used in the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition, (2) to analyze the meaning contained in each symbol. To achieve this goal, researchers used an ethnographic approach with the perspective of symbolic interactionism theory.²⁴

This research presents a novelty in the study of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in Sukadiri Village, Banten, by revealing the symbolism and meaning behind each element of the ritual that still survives amidst modernization and Islamization. Different from previous studies that focus more on the sociological or historical aspects of this tradition, this study will examine in depth the symbolic interpretations that develop in local communities and how these meanings adapt to changing times. The *Sedekah Bumi* tradition has been the object of study in various academic perspectives, especially in the discourse between the Islamization of local culture and the preservation of agrarian community traditions. Some studies consider that *Sedekah Bumi* is a Hindu-Buddhist heritage that was later absorbed into the Muslim belief system with various theological adjustments. This opinion is in line with studies that see this tradition as syncretism, where pre-Islamic elements are preserved despite being reinterpreted in an Islamic context.

However, some other scholars argue that this tradition is not simply a pre-Islamic heritage, but a form of reinterpretation of Islam Nusantara that accommodates local values without eliminating the substance of Islamic teachings. This approach emphasizes that the symbolism in *Sedekah Bumi* shows a dynamic inculturation of Islam, not just a mixing of cultures. This debate is still ongoing in the anthropology of religion and the study of Islam in Nusantara.

Although many studies have examined *Sedekah Bumi* from social, cultural, and historical perspectives, there remains a gap in the analysis of the symbolism and meanings that have developed within the local community of Sukadiri. Previous studies have tended to highlight only general aspects of the tradition, without specifically examining the symbolic representations and philosophical values embedded in the ritual, particularly within the context of modern Islamic society. Furthermore, few studies have investigated how the people of Sukadiri Village understand and interpret the symbolism of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by analyzing how symbolism is expressed and understood in the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition.

This research is significant as the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in Sukadiri Village is not only a cultural heritage but also serves social and religious functions in strengthening social cohesion, ecological awareness, and community spirituality. Amid modernization and the influence of puritanical Islam that often rejects local traditions, this study contributes to documenting and interpreting the symbolic meanings of *Sedekah Bumi* from the perspective of the local community. This research can also be a

²⁴ Derung, "Interaksionisme Simbolik Dalam Kehidupan Bermasyarakat."

reference for local governments and cultural practitioners in their efforts to preserve traditions and design strategies so that local culture can remain relevant in the modern era without losing its identity. Through a critical and interdisciplinary academic approach, this research contributes to understanding how the symbolic meaning of this tradition can be understood by the community.

The Practice of Earth Alms Tradition in Sukadiri Village, Banten

The tradition of *Sedekah Bumi* in Sukadiri Village, Banten, is a form of local wisdom that is still sustainable today²⁵. This tradition is a form of community gratitude for the crops they have obtained throughout the year. As a village that still upholds cultural and religious values, the people of Sukadiri consider *Sedekah Bumi* not just an annual ritual, but also a symbol of harmony between humans, nature, and the Creator. The ritual is usually performed after the harvest as a form of respect to the earth that has provided prosperity for the villagers²⁶.

The perpetrators of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in Sukadiri Village, Banten, consist of various elements of society who have an important role in the implementation of this ritual²⁷. Traditional leaders and village elders act as the main leaders in a series of processions, from preparation to execution of the ceremony, including the recitation of prayers and the meaning of ritual symbols. In addition, farmers and fishermen, as community groups that depend on crops, participate in this procession as a form of expression of gratitude for the sustenance obtained²⁸. Religious leaders also play a role in giving the tradition an Islamic flavour, such as through the joint prayers and recitations that often accompany the *Sedekah Bumi* ritual. The public, including young people and women, participates in various activities such as the presentation of offerings, the organization of local arts, and the gotong royong in preparing for the celebration. This collective role shows that the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition is not just a traditional ritual, but also a means of strengthening social relations and maintaining harmony in the lives of the people of Sukadiri Village²⁹.

The *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in Sukadiri Village, Banten, is typically held annually after the harvest season as an expression of gratitude for agricultural abundance. While the exact timing is not fixed, it is generally determined through traditional Javanese or Islamic calendar calculations, such as in the months of Muharram or Sha'ban, which are regarded as auspicious. In some cases, the schedule

²⁵ Lisa Nurmaya, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* (Studi Kasus Pada Masyarakat Di Dusun Suka Mulya, Desa Arul Pinang, Kecamatan Peunaron, Kabupaten Aceh Timur)," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 3, No. 2 (2016): 189–201, <https://journal.iainlangsa.ac.id/index.php/ikhtibar/article/view/3191>.

²⁶ (Rachmawati Et Al., 2021)

²⁷ Aceng, "Wawancara."

²⁸ Martin Rizaldi And Anin Lailatul Qodariyah, "Mengkaji Manfaat Dan Nilai-Nilai Dalam Pelaksanaan Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Dari Sudut Pandang Teori Fungsionalisme," *Jurnal Artefak* 8, No. 1 (2021).

²⁹ M Thoriqul Huda, "Harmoni Sosial Dalam Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Masyarakat Desa Pancur Bojonegoro," *Religió: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 7, No. 2 (2017): 267–296.

is further adjusted based on consensus among village elders and the local community. The celebration involves a sequence of activities, including communal prayers, offerings, and ritual animal sacrifices. By maintaining its implementation time in accordance with local customs and beliefs, *Sedekah Bumi* continues to be an important part of the social and spiritual life of the Sukadiri community.³⁰

This tradition is based on local wisdom values that have been passed down from generation to generation and is influenced by the teachings of Islam, which is adhered to by most of the community³¹. The main basis for the implementation of this tradition is an expression of gratitude to God for the harvest and sustenance given, as well as a form of respect for nature that has provided life. In addition, this tradition aims to strengthen togetherness and social solidarity among residents, given that its implementation involves mutual cooperation and collective participation³². Spiritually, *Sedekah Bumi* is also intended as a prayer that the community is always blessed with prosperity, kept away from disasters, and given an abundance of sustenance in the next planting season. Thus, this tradition is not just a cultural ritual, but also has deep religious and social meanings in the lives of the people of Sukadiri Village³³.

The symbols in the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in Sukadiri Village, Banten, use Bamboo Awi, which is used by the community to make decorations or place offerings, usually prepared by villagers before the event. Tumpeng is prepared by the villagers, usually during the prayer together on the day of the tradition. The slaughter of a physically healthy goat, black chicken, or red chicken is carried out by the designated community, usually at the beginning of the event. Sprinkling flowers on the grave is done by the community, especially families who have a relationship with the grave that is pilgrimaged, carried out on the same day as the *Sedekah Bumi* event. Burning Frankincense is carried out by traditional elders or religious leaders, usually during joint prayers and certain rituals. The Labuh Sesaji Ritual is carried out by designated villagers, usually after joint prayers and offerings are taken to the river or sea. Tawasul recitation is done by religious or traditional leaders, usually after the collective prayer ritual begins. Closing Prayer is performed by the community, especially families and religious leaders, as a closing at the end of the series of events³⁴.

³⁰ Wahyu, *Wawancara Oleh Lutfiyah Aspita Septiani* (Serang, N.D.).

³¹ Nuraeni, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Di Dusun Cigintung Desa Sadabumi Kecamatan Majenang Kabupaten Cilacap."

³² Masruroh, Rahman, And Hermawan, "Eksistensi *Sedekah Bumi* Di Era Modern: Desa Wisata Plesungan Kecamatan Gondangrejo Kabupaten Karanganyar."

³³ Herliyan Bara Wati, "Pengaruh Dan Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Upacara *Sedekah Bumi* Terhadap Masyarakat Desa Bagung Sumberhadi Kecamatan Prembun Kabupaten Kebumen," *Jurnal Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Jawa Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo* 02, No. 04 (2013).

³⁴ Aceng, "Wawancara."

Symbolic Interactionist Theory

Symbolic Interactionism Theory was developed by Herbert Blumer, who focused on the way individuals and groups create meaning through their social interactions³⁵. In this perspective, symbols are not just physical objects, but have meanings that are shaped through communication and social experiences. Symbols become important tools in human interaction as they allow individuals to communicate and negotiate the meaning of their lives³⁶. In a cultural context, symbols play a role in shaping identity, behavior, and social norms within a society³⁷.

In the tradition of *Sedekah Bumi* in Sukadiri Village, symbols such as tumpeng, bamboo awi, and offerings have meanings that develop through social interactions between community members. Villagers, through social processes that occur in daily life, give certain meanings to these symbols. For example, tumpeng, which is considered a symbol of gratitude, is not only seen as food, but also as a sign of social and spiritual relationships between the community and nature and God³⁸.

In addition, symbolic interactionism theory also emphasizes the importance of social processes in shaping the meaning of these symbols³⁹. The symbols in the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition do not have fixed meanings that are passively accepted by the community but are formed through dynamic interactions between the younger and older generations, as well as between individuals involved in the procession⁴⁰. People create and change the meaning of these symbols based on their experiences and understanding of religion, customs, and social life⁴¹.

Thus, in the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition, these symbols function as a medium of communication that allows people to convey their hopes, prayers, and identity. The interaction between individuals and groups involved in this ritual not only strengthens the collective understanding of cultural values but also forms a strong social identity, strengthens social relations, and ensures the continuation of the tradition in the context of changing times.

³⁵ Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism Perspective An Method* (London: First Paperback Printing, 1986).

³⁶ George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self & Society* (London: The University Of Chicago, 2015).

³⁷ Ristiyanti Wahyu, "Makna Simbolik Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Legenanan Pada Masyarakat Desa Kalirejo Kecamatan Talun Kabupaten Pekalongan Skripsi," *Makna Simbolik Tradisi Sedekah Bumi Legenanan Pada Masyarakat Desa Kalirejo Kecamatan Talun Kabupaten Pekalongan* (2016).

³⁸ Aceng, "Wawancara."

³⁹ Bagaskara Bayutirta Reseruna Koenunu And Benni Setiawan, "Pesan Simbolik Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Apitan Di Desa Sedadi Penawangan Grobogan," *Lektur: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 4, No. 2 (2022).

⁴⁰ Lutfiana Dwi Indah Sari Et Al., "Nilai Budaya *Sedekah Bumi* Desa Turigede, Kepohbaru, Bojonegoro," *Edu-Kata* 8, No. 1 (2022).

⁴¹ Aceng, "Wawancara."

The Meaning of Symbols in the Earth Alms Tradition of the Sukadiri Village Community

The symbolic meaning of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition is rich in symbolism, where the symbol has a meaning that contains certain understandings⁴². This ritual also symbolises the relationship between humans and nature, highlighting the importance of reciprocity and balance in our relationship with the environment. The symbolic meaning of earth alms in Sukadiri Village is as follows:

1) Meaning of the Awi Bamboo Symbol

The meaning of bamboo here is Gotong royong, which is interpreted as strengthening the relationship between the people of Sukadiri village. Gotong royong is carried out in the Sukadiri neighborhood, starting from cleaning the gutters, pulling the grass⁴³. In Islamic tradition, silaturahmi refers to the bonds of kinship and friendship that exist within a community. Gotong royong is a way to strengthen these bonds by promoting co-operation, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging among community members⁴⁴. Gotong royong is an important component of the Earth Alms celebration, as it fosters a sense of togetherness, strengthens social bonds, and improves mutual welfare. By working together and providing mutual support, the people of Sukadiri affirm the importance of friendship and ensure a more harmonious and prosperous society⁴⁵.

2) Meaning of the Tumpeng Symbol

Tumpeng is usually made with cone-shaped yellow or white rice surrounded by various side dishes. The cone shape symbolises the mountain, which in many agrarian cultures is considered a source of prosperity, blessings, and protection. Tumpeng symbolizes the community's gratitude to God for the harvest and the blessings that have been given. This tradition is often a collective medium to offer prayers to the Almighty. The various side dishes that surround the tumpeng reflect the diversity of natural products. This symbolises the harmony between humans, the environment, and the Creator, while emphasising the importance of maintaining a good relationship with nature.

In the context of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition, tumpeng is often considered as a medium that connects the material and spiritual dimensions. The cone top on the tumpeng symbolises human orientation to God, which is to make Him the purpose of life. Tumpeng is not only interpreted individually but also collectively. During the peak of the *Sedekah Bumi* event, tumpeng is usually eaten together, which signifies the close social ties and solidarity between residents. Javanese philosophies contained in tumpeng, such as *manunggaling kawula lan Gusti* (the union of man with God) and *urip iku mung mampir ngombe* (life is a temporary journey), are also understood through the presentation

⁴² Heri Susanto, Situ Asih, "Makna Simbolik Tradisi *Sedekah Bumi* Di Desa Medani Kecamatan Cluwak Kabupaten Pati."

⁴³ Sidik, *Warga Desa, Wawancara Oleh Lutfiyah* (Serang, N.D.).

⁴⁴ M Pangesti And J Dan, "Tafsir Indonesia Tentang Silaturahmi," *Repository.iainpurwokerto.Ac.Id* (2020), [Http://Repository.iainpurwokerto.Ac.Id/9781/1/Cover Bab I_Bab IV_Daftar Pustaka.Pdf](http://Repository.iainpurwokerto.Ac.Id/9781/1/Cover%20Bab%20I_Bab%20IV_Daftar%20Pustaka.Pdf).

⁴⁵ Sidik, "Warga Desa, Wawancara Oleh Lutfiyah."

and enjoyment of tumpeng.⁴⁶

3) Symbolic Meaning of Cutting a goat or a chicken

Cutting a healthy goat or a black, red chicken is interpreted as a sense of joy and happiness. The sense of joy and happiness in Javanese culture is that the act of slaughtering animals, especially goats or chickens, is seen to express gratitude, happiness, and joy for the community. Animal sacrifice is seen as a way to share the joy and abundance of the harvest with the community. Goats or chickens are often considered symbols of fertility, abundance, and prosperity. By slaughtering the animal, the community expresses gratitude for the blessings received from the earth and the abundance of the harvest. The act of slaughtering animals is also believed to release negative energy and purify the community. Animal blood is seen as a symbol of purification, and the act of slaughter is believed to cleanse the community of negative influences. The slaughtering of goats or chickens in *Sedekah Bumi* is a complex ritual that embodies values of gratitude, joy, and celebration, while recognizing the interconnectedness of all living things and the cycle of life and death⁴⁷.

4) Symbolic meaning of scattering flowers at the graveyard

Sprinkling kemakan flowers is interpreted as a form of honoring and preserving the good name of the ancestors of Sukadiri village. In Javanese culture, sprinkling flower petals, particularly kemakan flowers, is a common practice in traditional ceremonies and rituals⁴⁸. In the context of *Sedekah Bumi*, this act is a way of honoring and thanking the ancestors of Sukadiri Village. Symbolized by scattering flower petals, the community pays homage to their ancestors, recognizes their contributions to the village, and expresses gratitude for their blessings. This act is a way to connect with the ancestors and seek their guidance and protection. In the word “keeping a good name” means “maintaining a good reputation”. In this context, the community ensures that the good name and reputation of their ancestors are upheld and respected. By performing these rituals, communities demonstrate their commitment to preserving their cultural heritage and honoring the legacy of their ancestors. The symbol of flowers is often associated with spiritual growth, beauty, and fragrance. The act of scattering flower petals is believed to bring blessings, peace, and prosperity to the community. The fragrance of the flowers is also thought to purify the environment and repel negative energies. Overall, the act of sowing flower petals is a meaningful way for the community to express respect, gratitude, and appreciation to the ancestors, while maintaining the good name and reputation of Sukadiri Village.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Aceng, “Wawancara.”

⁴⁷ Urip, (Sesepuh Desa) (Serang, 4 Juni 2024).

⁴⁸ Edi Sedyawati, *Tradisi Jawa: Kearifan Lokal Dalam Menghadapi Globalisasi* (Yogyakarta: Sinar Harapan, 2010).

⁴⁹ Urip, “(Sesepuh Desa) Wawancara Oleh Lutfiyah Aspita Septiani.”

5) Symbolic meaning of burning incense

The burning of incense (*kemenyan*) in the *Sedekah Bumi* ceremony serves as both a symbolic and practical marker of ritual commencement. In Javanese culture, as in many Asian traditions, the burning of incense (*kemenyan*) is a common practice in traditional ceremonies and rituals. Incense is usually made from aromatic biotic materials, such as wood, bark, or plant resin, which emit fragrant smoke when burned.⁵⁰ By burning incense, the community signals that the *Sedekah Bumi* ceremony is about to take place. This serves as a notification to the community that the ritual is about to begin, and they are invited to participate. The burning of incense is also a way to invite the community to participate in the ceremony. The aroma of incense wafts through the air, carrying the message that the ritual is about to begin, and everyone is welcome to participate. Frankincense not only serves as a sign and invitation but also scents the area, creating a sacred and peaceful atmosphere. The fragrance of incense is believed to purify the environment, repel negative energy, and bring blessings to the community.⁵¹ In many cultures, frankincense is associated with spirituality, purification, and meditation. The smoke of frankincense is believed to bring prayers and offerings to ancestors and deities, while the fragrance is thought to bring peace, calmness, and clarity to those participating in the ritual.⁵² Overall, the act of burning incense is an important part of the *Sedekah Bumi* ceremony, serving as a notification, invitation, and purification ritual that encourages the community to gather and honor their ancestors and land.

6) Symbolic Meaning of Labuh Ritual

The Labuh ritual, locally known as Paprahan, is a communal feast held after the harvest through a communal meal. This traditional ceremony is usually held as part of the *Sedekah Bumi* celebration, as a form of gratitude for the abundant crops. The term *Labuh* means “to descend”, while *Paprahan* means “gathering” or “assembling”, underscoring its collective character. The Labuh ritual is a form of gratitude, where the community gathers to express gratitude for the bountiful harvest. It is a way to acknowledge the blessings they have received and celebrate the fruits of their labor. The ritual involves eating together, where the community gathers to share food and drinks.⁵³ This act of sharing a meal is a symbol of unity, togetherness, and gratitude. The food is often traditional Javanese cuisine, such as rice, vegetables, and meat or fish, which is prepared and shared among community members. In Javanese culture, eating together is an important aspect of social bonding and community building⁵⁴. Eating together strengthens social bonds, fosters a sense of belonging, and promotes harmony among

⁵⁰ Suci Norma, *Tradisi Bakar Menyan Dalam Pra Acara Pernikahan Di Dusun Plandi Desa Sumberejo Kecamatan Lamongan Kabupaten Lamongan Perspektif Aqidah Islam* (Fakultas Ushuluddin, UIN Sunan Ampel, 2018).

⁵¹ Urip, “(Sesepuh Desa) Wawancara Oleh Lutfiyah Aspita Septiani.”

⁵² Norma, *Tradisi Bakar Menyan Dalam Pra Acara Pernikahan Di Dusun Plandi Desa Sumberejo Kecamatan Lamongan Kabupaten Lamongan Perspektif Aqidah Islam*.

⁵³ Urip, “(Sesepuh Desa) Wawancara Oleh Lutfiyah Aspita Septiani.”

⁵⁴ Sedyawati, *Tradisi Jawa: Kearifan Lokal Dalam Menghadapi Globalisasi*.

community members. During the Labuh Ritual, eating together is also a way to redistribute surplus crops, ensuring that everyone in the community has access to food and resources⁵⁵. The Labuh ritual is the community's way of expressing gratitude and appreciation for the land, ancestors, and blessings they have received. By coming together to share a meal, the community recognizes the interconnectedness of their lives and the importance of working together to ensure a bountiful harvest⁵⁶. By reinforcing values of cooperation and collective identity, it demonstrates how cultural traditions sustain both material and spiritual well-being in agrarian societies.

7) Symbolic Meanings of Reading Tawasul

The recitation of *Tawasul*, a prayer offered to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, aiming for blessings, and of Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani's *Manaqib* (Maca Sheikh), Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jailani's life history, form respects and prayer for a smooth life. Both rituals are part of traditional ceremonies that contain spiritual meanings and wishes for goodness together.⁵⁷ In Islamic tradition, Tawasul means seeking a means or intermediary to get closer to Allah SWT through the prayers of pious people, such as prophets, saints, or devout people. In this context, reciting Tawasul is a prayer offered to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, asking for his blessings and intercession. Tawasulan, as the Tawasul recitation is called, is an expression of devotion and respect for the Prophet Muhammad, with the aim of invoking his blessings and intercession. Together, these recitations embody values of piety, reverence, and collective supplication, highlighting the continuity of Islamic spirituality within local cultural practices.

8) Symbolic Meanings of Grave Pilgrimage

People gather to make a pilgrimage to the graves of their ancestors and loved ones, known as the Grave Pilgrimage. This act of remembrance and respect is a way to honor the deceased and to seek their blessings and guidance. The celebration continues with the reading of prophecies or wisdom from Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani, a renowned Islamic scholar and saint. The reading of his teachings and prophecies is a way to seek guidance and wisdom, and to reflect on the importance of gratitude, generosity, and togetherness⁵⁸.

9) Symbolic Meaning of Closing Prayer

These celebrations end with a prayer led by an ustadz. Thanks are given to Allah SWT for the abundance received during the harvest, and afterwards, there is a communal meal, and the meal is the most important symbol of the unity and togetherness of the community. Food is availed to all participants, and social bonds created by the meal aid a community in surplus harvest. Providing meals to participants strengthens social bonds and community solidarity. Providing meals helps a community

⁵⁵ Sedyawati.

⁵⁶ Urip, "(Sesepuh Desa) Wawancara Oleh Lutfiyah Aspita Septiani."

⁵⁷ Urip.

⁵⁸ Riha Fadilah, "Wawancara Oleh Lutfiyah Aspita Septiani" (Serang, 2024).

with surplus harvest.⁵⁹

Anxiety and the social function of land as a foundation of all human life are important elements of the ritual. As community elders promote, the ancestors of the people of Banten said the land should be referred to as "the great hero for human life on earth". As land is to be the foundation of life, it must be held to the highest esteem. The closing elements of the Sedekah Bumi ritual are an expression of reverence to the community and nature that embraces celebration and gratitude.⁶⁰

Conclusion

The *Sedekah Bumi* tradition in Sukadiri Village embodies a deep interconnection between humans, nature, and spirituality. Its symbols, ranging from bamboo and *tumpeng* to ritual prayers and communal practices, serve as expressions of gratitude to God, aspirations for prosperity, and markers of social and ecological harmony. Within cultural studies, these symbols demonstrate dynamic meanings, continually reinterpreted by the community in accordance with their beliefs and social values. To ensure its sustainability, this study recommends the transmission of cultural knowledge to younger generations through education, while encouraging religious leaders and policymakers to support reinterpretations that maintain relevance to Islamic values without erasing local identity. Future research could further examine how the evolving symbolism of *Sedekah Bumi* strengthens the dialogue between Islam and local wisdom. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in demonstrating how cultural symbols operate as integrative media, connecting spirituality, ecology, and social identity in contemporary society.

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⁵⁹ Urip, "(Sesepuh Desa) Wawancara Oleh Lutfiyah Aspita Septiani."

⁶⁰ Aceng (Sesepuh), Wawancara.

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