

## The Role of Sedekah Bumi as a Form of Preserving Local Wisdom in Javanese Society

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aims to explore the role of Sedekah Bumi (earth alms) as a means of preserving local wisdom within Javanese society. **Method:** Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, the research analyzes secondary data drawn from national journals and scholarly books. Data were collected using listening and note-taking techniques, while the validity of findings was ensured through theoretical triangulation. **Results:** The analysis identifies four central roles of Sedekah Bumi: expressing gratitude to God, preserving ancestral traditions, strengthening social cohesion, and reaffirming cultural identity. These roles illustrate how the ritual serves not only as a religious or cultural activity but also as a dynamic mechanism for sustaining communal values and indigenous knowledge. **Novelty:** The study contributes to cultural preservation discourse by highlighting Sedekah Bumi as a living tradition that integrates spiritual, social, and historical dimensions of Javanese wisdom. It offers a structured synthesis of literature that affirms the relevance of local rituals in contemporary identity formation and heritage continuity.

## INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom is a form of intelligence possessed by an ethnic group, shaped through community experiences [1]. Furthermore, according to Utari (2016), local wisdom can be understood as the intelligence in comprehending regional wealth – such as beliefs, knowledge, customs, norms, insights, and culture – which is inherited and maintained as an identity and as a guide to teach individuals how to act wisely in life [2]. However, Mariane (2014) explains that local wisdom is essentially a form of human responsibility grounded in philosophical values, traditions, behaviors, and ethics deeply rooted in tradition [3]. These values are regarded as true and good by the community, allowing them to endure over time and become part of social institutions. Thus, local wisdom is a form of human intelligence and wisdom that emerges from experience, values, and culture, deeply rooted in tradition and encompassing knowledge, beliefs, customs, and ethics that are passed down through generations and preserved as an identity and guide in social life.

Terminologically, local wisdom can be understood as a way of thinking regarding daily life activities that embody noble values which are deeply rooted and followed by the entire community, characterized by wisdom and filled with insight. Local wisdom develops as a cultural strength of local communities and is strongly influenced by geographical conditions [4]. It plays a vital role in supporting educational institutions in helping learners grow in an ideal, normal, and healthy manner, including in schools [5]. According to Juniarta et al. (2013), local wisdom holds an important role and position as an informal legal system in coastal areas, as these values were formed through a long historical process and passed down orally from generation to generation by the local

community [6]. Therefore, local wisdom plays a crucial role as a form of deeply rooted societal wisdom, functioning as a life guide, cultural value, and unwritten law, while also supporting educational institutions in shaping students' character.

The values of local wisdom or culture are part of the nation's wealth that must be protected and preserved, as they play an essential role in the daily lives of the people who live by them [7]. Meanwhile, according to Widiyanti (2015), local wisdom values that are oriented toward environmental conservation serve as a foundation for learning that motivates students to realize food sovereignty [8]. On the other hand, the values within local wisdom or culture must be preserved and strengthened to remain adaptive to the times and implemented through city, provincial, or national policies [9]. Therefore, local wisdom values are a national treasure that must be protected and preserved, as they play an important role in community life, support environmental conservation, motivate food sovereignty, and must be strengthened to remain relevant in an evolving world. One such form of local wisdom that carries many of these values is *Sedekah Bumi* (earth alms).

*Sedekah Bumi* is a traditional Javanese ritual of offering or thanksgiving to the earth, performed after the harvest season [10]. Additionally, Huda (2017) states that it is a custom passed down through generations within Javanese society [11]. According to Rismana and Sulistiyanto (2020), *Sedekah Bumi* is part of a series of *bersih desa* (village cleansing) activities, conducted through a communal feast (*selamatan*), where people share food such as *nasi tumpeng* [12]. Thus, *Sedekah Bumi* is a traditional Javanese thanksgiving ritual handed down from generation to generation as an expression of gratitude after harvest, usually conducted as part of village cleansing events involving the sharing of traditional food.

Earlier generations had a strong understanding of beliefs and traditions related to the *Sedekah Bumi* ceremony. For them, this ritual was considered important to maintain harmony with nature and to hope for successful agricultural yields [13]. Moreover, according to Azzahrah and Anjellailiyah (2025), the tradition of *Sedekah Bumi* serves as a medium for younger generations to understand the importance of preserving and maintaining cultural traditions within the community [14]. On another note, Cahyani (2024) argues that *Sedekah Bumi* continues to be preserved as an effort to protect Javanese culture from extinction amid modern developments [15]. Furthermore, this tradition functions as an educational tool for the community about the significance and meaning of *Sedekah Bumi*, as well as a way to strengthen social bonds among residents. Therefore, the importance of *Sedekah Bumi* lies in its role in maintaining harmony with nature, preserving Javanese culture, educating the community, and fostering solidarity among residents.

The purpose of conducting *Sedekah Bumi* is to seek safety by holding a communal feast during the month of Suro (Javanese calendar) or the month of Muharram (Islamic calendar) [10]. According to Arinda and Yani (2014), the purpose of the *Sedekah Bumi* tradition—also known as *nyadran*—is an expression of gratitude to Allah SWT for the blessings and grace received [16]. Meanwhile, Ainiyah and Mardani (2019) state that *Sedekah Bumi* aims to show gratitude and respect for divine blessings, request protection for the community and crops through the intercession of ancestral spirits or divine

powers, as well as preserve tradition and encourage a spirit of sharing as an expression of thankfulness for the sustenance provided by Allah SWT [17]. Thus, the purpose of *Sedekah Bumi* in Javanese society is to express gratitude to Allah SWT for blessings and sustenance, to seek protection for the community and crops, to preserve Javanese cultural traditions, and to foster a spirit of sharing.

The Javanese people are a social group that lives according to norms, traditions, and religious values [18]. According to Siswato (2010), the Javanese community is also a cohesive unit that adheres to customs, norms, and their identity as Javanese [19]. Furthermore, the Javanese are known as a society that highly values togetherness and harmony. Thus, the Javanese community can be understood as a social group deeply rooted in tradition, culture, and communal values.

The Javanese use various forms of customary law, both formal and informal, to establish social rules, enforce sanctions, and strengthen community bonds through the integration of traditional values [20]. According to Martinelli and Priaardanto (2023), customary law in Javanese society is not only applied in rural areas but also remains relevant in urban settings and other communities [21]. From the perspective of Talcott Parsons' theory, customary law functions as part of the social system that regulates interpersonal relationships and sustains local cultural values. In contrast, Khoirurrozi (2023) emphasizes that in Javanese customary law, the calculation of *weton* (traditional Javanese calendar days) is a significant norm [22]. This tradition is used to determine auspicious times for events such as weddings, starting businesses, or other important activities – demonstrating that customary law remains preserved and relevant in modern society. Therefore, Javanese customary law consists of both formal and informal components that regulate social norms, sanctions, and communal bonds while safeguarding the cultural values embedded in everyday life.

The cultural values of Javanese society reflect a range of concepts that live within the collective mindset of its people, concerning what is considered important, meaningful, and valuable in life. These values serve as guiding principles for daily conduct [23]. Moreover, Al Fauzan et al. (2007) argue that Javanese cultural values such as noble character, wisdom, and simplicity form the foundation for leadership development [24]. Most respondents believe these values are effective in enhancing leadership training and personal development. In addition, Javanese cultural values have harmoniously integrated with Islamic teachings across economic, ritual, and social dimensions, evident in the blending of local traditions with spiritual practices [25]. Thus, Javanese cultural values – such as noble character and wisdom – not only guide everyday life and shape leadership character, but also blend harmoniously with Islamic teachings in various aspects of life.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) study. SLR is an approach used to investigate, interpret, and review all existing research related to a specific topic of interest [26]. The data in this study are secondary data. According to Umaroh and Hasanudin (2024), secondary data can include reference books, national journals, theses, articles, or other documents relevant to the topic being studied [27]. The secondary data

analyzed in this research consist of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences sourced from books and nationally published journal articles.

The data collection method used in this study is the *listen-and-note* method. According to Sebayang (2019), this method involves documenting information that has been collected through the process of note-taking. The listening process involves careful and attentive observation, while the noting process consists of recording important information or data obtained during the listening and observation phase [28].

The data collection technique in this study is also carried out using the *listen-and-note* technique. As Sebayang (2019) explains, this technique serves to document data by recording collected information. The listening technique is implemented by observing attentively, while the noting technique involves recording significant information gathered from the listening and observation process [28].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Results*

The study revealed that earth alms (sedekah bumi) serve as a form of expressing gratitude to God, deeply rooted in the spiritual awareness of the Javanese people. It reflects a collective acknowledgment of blessings such as good harvests, health, and life itself. This expression of gratitude forms a fundamental part of religious local wisdom. The findings emphasize that such traditional practices are instrumental in maintaining cultural-religious harmony. Moreover, the act of giving thanks fosters a connection between the community and the divine, reinforcing values of humility and reverence. This dimension highlights the significance of religious rituals in sustaining intangible cultural heritage.

The earth alms tradition contributes to the preservation of ancestral customs that have been passed down through generations. The symbolic elements such as "tumpeng" (rice cones), offerings, and village parades reflect cultural continuity. These traditions act as living embodiments of cultural identity in Javanese society. They also promote environmental consciousness, particularly through rituals linked to agriculture and forest preservation. This role in preserving nature aligns with the original intentions of the ancestors in harmonizing human life with the environment. Therefore, the earth alms practice is more than a ceremony; it is a vessel for sustaining historical and ecological wisdom.

Another notable finding is the social cohesion fostered by earth alms through community participation and shared responsibilities. This ritual becomes a platform for reinforcing togetherness, mutual cooperation, and local solidarity. Additionally, it serves as a vehicle for intergenerational transmission of moral and cultural values. Young people learn respect, gratitude, and communal responsibility through informal education embedded in the ritual. The custom also preserves unwritten customary laws, including auspicious day calculations and traditional prayers. Collectively, these findings underline how earth alms act as a multidimensional mechanism for preserving local wisdom and reinforcing Javanese identity.



**Figure 1.** Berkatan tradition

**Source 1.** <https://images.app.goo.gl/7YrxG1pUhcB5e93c7>



**Figure 2.** Siratan tradition

**Source 2.** <https://images.app.goo.gl/8qsmrusKdRizHxmv5>

### ***Discussion***

The role of *Sedekah Bumi* as a form of preserving local wisdom in Javanese society can be explained as follows:

#### **1. Expression of gratitude to god**

*Sedekah Bumi* represents an expression of gratitude from the Javanese community to Allah SWT for the harvest, health, and life bestowed upon them. This practice reflects spiritual awareness and a dependence on divine power as part of religious local wisdom. According to Enghariano (2019), gratitude is a form of self-awareness to attain love and affection from Allah, which can be achieved through a thankful attitude [29]. Moreover, gratitude is a way of giving thanks for all blessings granted by Allah SWT to His servants and can also be expressed toward fellow humans [30].

#### **2. Preservation of ancestral traditions**

The tradition of *Sedekah Bumi* is passed down through generations and forms part of the Javanese cultural identity. Its continued practice ensures the continuity of cultural values and customs within the community, including symbolic elements such as *tumpeng*, offerings (*sesaji*), and processions. According to Lailin and Latansiyah (2022), ancestral traditions reflect the cultural habits of local

communities aimed at environmental preservation, such as forests, through inherited agricultural rituals [31].

3. **Strengthening social bonds**

*Sedekah Bumi* involves all levels of society in a communal activity. From joint preparation efforts to the execution of the ritual, the event strengthens solidarity, unity, and a sense of belonging among villagers. As Kurniawan et al. (2024) explain, social structure consists of values, norms, and interpersonal relationships formed through shared experiences and local culture [32].

4. **Education in values and morality**

Through *Sedekah Bumi*, younger generations are taught the importance of gratitude, togetherness, and respect for nature. It serves as an informal educational platform that instills noble values naturally within a socio-cultural context. According to Kosasih (2015), values are a set of individual behaviors related to judgments of good or bad, formed through selective experiences and rooted in metaphysical, theological, aesthetic, or logical foundations [33]. Morality refers to the awareness of responsibility for actions that prioritize collective over individual interests [34].

5. **Preservation of customary law and cultural symbols**

The rituals in *Sedekah Bumi* often follow unwritten rules that are part of customary law. Practices such as determining auspicious days (*weton*), specific offerings, or traditional prayers exemplify the preservation of Javanese value systems and cultural symbols. According to Antara and Yogantari (2018), culture is a way of life collectively developed and owned by a community and passed down through generations [35]. Meanwhile, Muchtar et al. (2016) state that culture is the basis of communication, and cultural differences result in diverse forms and modes of communication within society [36].

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding :** This study concludes that *Sedekah Bumi* plays a vital role in preserving local wisdom within Javanese society, manifested through five key aspects: expressing gratitude to God, preserving ancestral traditions, strengthening social bonds, providing value and moral education, and maintaining customary law and cultural symbols. **Implication :** These findings highlight the multifaceted function of *Sedekah Bumi* not only as a spiritual ritual but also as a sociocultural mechanism that reinforces communal identity, intergenerational knowledge transmission, and cultural sustainability. **Limitation :** However, the study is limited by its reliance on secondary data, which may not fully capture the dynamic and contextual nuances of the tradition as practiced across different regions. **Future Research :** Subsequent research should incorporate ethnographic fieldwork or participatory methods to explore lived experiences and local interpretations of *Sedekah Bumi*, enabling a deeper understanding of its evolving role in contemporary society.

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