

Original Paper

## “SEDEKAH LAUT” TRADITION FOR IN THE FISHERMEN COMMUNITY IN PEKALONGAN, CENTRAL JAVA

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### ABSTRACT

*Tradition of “sedekah laut” (sea thanksgiving) in the Pekalongan fishermen community is also “Nyadran” which is always celebrated every month of “Syuro”. This ceremony is the expression of gratitude to God having given safety and abundance of fortune in fish catching in the sea. In this tradition there are various manings, omens, symbols which can be used as philosophy of life for the fishermen. This tradition is unique and interesting; it is also the regional cultural wealth which should be preserved, especially for thourism interests.*

**Key words** : tradition; sea thanksgiving; fishermen; symbol; culture.

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### INTRODUCTION

“Sedekah Laut” tradition is conducted in several regions in Indonesia, one of which is Pekalongan. It is also called “Nyadran”. This tradition is held by the fishermen in Pekalongan in the Islamic month of *Syura* or *Muharram*. This is different from the society in interior land living on agrarian principles. They believe that Nyadran or Grada is a tribute-offering ceremony for the soul of the late ancestors which is conducted in the middle of Ruwah (*Sya’ban*) Islamic month, close to syiam in the grave. For Javanese people, tomb or graveyard of the ancestors is a sacred place and should be respected (Koentjaraningrat, 1981).

Pekalongan is one of the coastal areas located in the Central Java nothern coastal areas. The word coast means a plot of sandy land on the coast or at the edge of the sea (Depdikbud, 1996). Most of the people in the coastal areas live on fishing. In other words, people living on the Pekalongan coastal areas, especially in the northern part are, among other things, communities of boat makers, fishermen, etc. (Darmawan, 2006). In running their work as fishermen, they need infrastructures or equipment as their supports.

Pekalongan port has provided a lot of chances for the development of non-agricultural economic sectors, which are especially related to maritime fields practised by a group of people living around the port or coast, such as making boats, equipment or boat components (Widodo, 2005), fishermen, fish preservation industries, and salt production. In the boat making there are ceremonial traditions, called “*pemotongan lunas*” (lunas cutting) and “*peluncuran perahu*” (boat launching). This ceremony is a kind of ritual for the boat safety and maintenance of boat makers (businessmen) so that their boats will be more marketable. Accordingly, apart from the ceremonies described above, Pekalongan fishermen also carry out sea thanksgiving tradition which has broader meaning than “*pemotongan lunas*” and “*peluncuran perahu*”.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### *The Concept*

Before discussing Sedekah Laut tradition for the fishermen in Pekalongan further, we need to

discuss the concept of tradition, *Sedekah* (alms), fishermen, and Pekalongan.

- 1) Tradition—the discussion of tradition in the form of ritual or ceremony like *Sedekah Laut* cannot be separated from the culture as a whole knowledge of human beings which is considered as a guidance or interpretation of every act of mankind. Culture is guidance for society which is believed as true. Julian Steward is the one who firstly suggested the research on cultural ecology, which is a relation between the culture and the natural condition or environment around it (T. O. Ihromi (ed.), 1980).
- 2) *Sedekah* (alms)—derived from Arabic word “*sodaqoh*” which means putting aside a small part of one’s belonging to be given to those who need it. So, *Sedekah Laut* means putting aside a small part of one’s belonging from God Almighty through sea products and then giving it to those who need it sincerely. The giving may be food, toys, etc.
- 3) Fisherman—someone whose main job is catching fish in sea (Depdikbud, 1951:686 and Endang Retnowati et. al., 1991:84). Based on the activity, this job can be classified based on: a) fishing equipment and how to operate it, b) fishing location (Ary Wahyono et. al., 1991).
- 4) Pekalongan—this is closely related to fishery and fishing. The word Pekalongan is derived from Javanese word “*apek*” which means looking for and “*along*” which stands for many. This is related to the role of the sea in Pekalongan which is rich of its sea products, so the people had become fishermen (Buku Potensi Pariwisata (Book of Tourism Potential, 2001).

In the book of Poerwo Lelana, the name Pekalongan is derived from the word “*along*” which is closely related to fishery, catch from fishing in the sea, while in kromo Javanese, this word means *pengangsalan* or income (Encyclopaedia ven Naderlandsch-Indie (ENI) III, 1919: 372-375 and P. J. Veth, 1869).

Up to now, the word “*along*” is used by the fishermen in northern coast, especially in the central and east Java to call the catch in a big amount. The fishermen who use that word are from Pekalongan, Demak, Jepara,

Rembang, and Tuban (Sutejo K. Widodo, 2005).

There is a lot of information which explain the meaning of Pekalongan. One of them is closely related to Tumenggung Bahurekso and Dewi Lanjar when Mataram attacked Batavia (Onderzoek Naar de Mindere Welvaar, S de Deel, 1905 and Jaarverslag, 1938).

### *Research Method*

This paper is historical research, it is there for we applied historical approach. Method used in this historical research is critical historical method, which is the process of testing and analyzing critically any historical records (Luis Gottschalk, 1975). Principally, this method consists of four sequences. They are compiling the sources of historical information (heuristics), criticizing the sources of historical information externally or internally as well, analyzing or interpreting historical facts from the historical source, and writing the observation report (historiography) (H. C. Hockett, 1997 and Sarwono Pusposeputro, 1982).

Observation and interview are also done in order to enriching the limited information obtained from the written source (Luis Gottschalk, 1975). Interview is done to the respected figures in the society, related departments and tourism workers.

The significance of study was to discover and revitalize the sea thanksgiving ceremony. The ceremony is a social and spiritual activity for it expresses gratitude for the blessed day related to human request to the ancestors and the God for safety, peace, and salvation. This ceremony can also be a social control, social contact, interaction, integration, and communication.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*Sedekah Laut* ritual is a ritual which is conducted by the fishermen as an expression of gratitude to God Almighty and a prayer for asking prosperity and safety in living as fishermen (Pekalongan Tourism Office, 2001). In other regions, this ritual is conducted to sign the beginning of a fishing season, so that the catch will be better (Syam, 2005).

In this tradition, the fishermen and all people conduct a ritual called Nyadranan by decorating their boats which contain offerings such as buffalo's head, various traditional snacks, leather puppet of Dewi Sri and Pandawa Lima, and toys. After a series of activities and prayer for safety, the offerings are taken to the sea to be floated. This activity begins with the floating of a buffalo's head by a spiritual figure. Children will scramble for the offerings which are floated, hoping that they will get God's blessing.

The ceremony is conducted once a year in the Islamic month of Syura or Muharram, after the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Muharram. A Javanese puppet show is also held after the ceremony. In this occasion, the fishermen will know each other and make friends, enjoy the togetherness of them and all the people generally. They sail to the sea with their families, chatting and having meals on their boats. All of those things show their gratitude for the pleasure given by God Almighty (Wibowo, 2008). Why is the sea thanksgiving tradition always carried out every "Muharram" (month)? This is because Muharram becomes a *pendulum* of work implementation in catching the fish and the "*bulan penuh*" (full moon) signifies "*pudarnya*" (the decline) of fishing activities. At that time the fishermen do not go to the sea or fishing.

The yearly break may last for more than a month, even up to three months. However, after the break period is over, the harvest will follow, that is the fishermen will be able to produce the abundance of fish catching. The harvest periods will signify more zealous life as the proverb says: "*bila dayung basah, periuk akan berisi*" (When the boat oars get wet, the cooking pot will be full).

#### *Intention and Purposes of Sedekah Laut*

It has been mentioned before that *Sedekah* (alms) means putting aside a small amount of one's belonging to be given to those who need it. So, Sedekah Laut means putting aside some amount of one's belonging as a gift given by God Almighty from sea products to be given to those who need it. It can be food, toys, etc. sincerely.

Meanwhile, the word "ceremony" in the context of anthropology has two aspects. They are ritual and ceremonial. Ritual is a set or

series of act, usually involving religion or magic, strengthen by tradition. Rite is different from cult, because rite is a daily activity. Ceremony is a set of complex activity of human beings which is not always technical or recreational. It involves a proper model in a social relation, while ritual is more limited but symbolical and more complex because it deals with social and psychological matters (Syam, 2005).

Rasdjo Wibowo states that Sedekah Laut ritual is not a religious ritual. It is a cultural activity of Javanese fishermen. Ritual itself is derived from the word "*spiritual*". Spiritual is a sect of *ilmu kasunyatan* (sect of truth) which denies corporality and views everything from spiritual point of view. Spirit has the highest consciousness in the consciousness level of human beings. This is stated in the Qur'an, surah Al Isra' verse 85:

*"And they ask you (O Muhammad SAW) concerning the Rooh (the Spirit); Say: "The Rooh (the Spirit): it is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord. And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little".*

So, ritual is a part of spiritual exercises with symbols which have been believed and done by the Javanese fishermen from years ago up to now (Interview with Rasdjo Wibowo, April 15 2008).

Thus, the main purpose of Sadranan ritual is as a reflection of a fisherman's life in order to thank God for all the wealth he gains from the sea products.

A source states that Sedekah Laut ritual is related to the wealth. It means that this ceremony is an expression of gratitude for the wealth God has given to the fishermen. The wealth is the good and plenty catch. As a return for this wealth, the fishermen give a symbol of gratitude in the form of alms. The alms was formerly addressed to the guardian of the sea. However, the faith has been straightened now, so the meaning of alms is a symbol of gratitude for God. Alms ceremony means giving alms in various forms arranged into one to be floated to the sea (Interview with Trianggono, March 24 2008).

The conduction of "Sedekah Laut" before 2005 seemed mystical, but now it tends to be cultural. That is why "Sedekah Laut"

needs to be preserved as an effort to develop and increase the tourism rate in Pekalongan.

### *The Course and the Equipment of the Ceremony*

Before explaining the course of the ceremony, the equipments required of it needs to be mentioned first. Almost all of the things required in the ceremony are going to be floated to the sea. Those are including:

- a. *Kebo segluntung* (a whole body of a buffalo)
- b. 3 meters of calico
- c. *Tumpeng* (dish of yellow rice served in a cone shape) with *kluban* (mixed vegetables with grated coconut dressing), the side dish is all kinds of fish
- d. 12 portions of red and white porridge
- e. *Kembang setaman* (several kinds of sweet-smelling flowers)
- f. *Juadah pasar* (traditional snack sold in the market)
- g. Many kinds of fruits, *polo gemantung* (plant which fruit grows in the ground) and *polo gumantung* (plant which fruit grows on its branch or stem)
- h. Rice, sugar-cane, banana tree with its fruits
- i. Sweet and bitter coffee, sweet and bitter tea, fresh water, cigar, and betel
- j. Toys, including leather puppets, gamelan, etc.
- k. Three kinds of living fish with their containers
- l. Water from seven springs
- m. Replica of a house
- n. Money and money imitation
- o. A set of male and female clothing
- p. Woman's make up set
- q. Young yellow coconut leaves, yellow bamboo, and 17 jasmine buds arranged in five-colored cotton-waste thread.

The ceremony starts from the Pekalongan city hall. Then, all of the equipments are taken into a procession which leads to Pekalongan beach or harbor. The distance from the city hall to the harbor is approximately five kilometers. When the complete offerings are still in the city hall before the procession starts, the city mayor and several important persons related to this ceremony give their speeches.

After that, the procession moves to the beach in Pekalongan harbor. *Sedekah Laut* ceremony starts by taking all the offerings to

the sea. Before they are floated, a spiritual figure prays on those offerings, followed by all people attending the ceremony. Then, all of those offerings are floated to the sea, and many fishermen and their families follow them happily. Soon after the offerings have been floated, many children of the fishermen scramble for the toys (Interview with Trianggono, March 24 2008).

*Nyadranan* is related to Javanese mythology of wayang, especially in arranging the offering which consist of the characters of wayang. After the offerings have been floated, usually a Javanese puppet show is held. One of the equipments for offering is usually a set of Javanese puppets which consists of several characters such as Bima, Arjuna, Woro Sembodro, Kresno, Baladewa, and the other characters that have good characteristics and are considered as good models. Those puppets can be made of animal leather or cardboard. Those puppets are usually embedded in the boats and then floated to the sea, with the other toys.

After a spiritual figure has prayed, the first to be floated is a head of a buffalo and snacks. Several people believe that if the prayer is granted by God, the buffalo's head will spin in the water. Why should a head of a buffalo be floated? Although a buffalo is a symbol of ignorance, why is it only its head? Actually, although a head and some legs of buffalo are floated, those can be considered as a whole body of a buffalo. A whole buffalo was probably used in former time, but now, only the parts of it are required (Interview with Trianggono, March 24 2008).

After the ritual of floating the head had been done, a ceremony called *selamatan* is held. It consists of *tumpengan* (dish of yellow rice served in a cone shape) and *selamatan* prayer led by a spiritual figure. After that, in the afternoon, a Javanese puppet show is held. The values contained in the art of Javanese puppet have a large scope and are not in the contrary with the basic philosophy of unifying Indonesian people ( Guritno, 1988 and Brandon, 1970). The story which is usually played is "*Badug Basu*". This story is not well-known in Mahabarata and Ramayana. *Badug* means stinky, and *Basu* stands for God or Wasu. So, *Badug Basu* is a god or Wasu which smelled stinky. This performance is about a

story of a god, just as the story of Betari Sri, the goddess of wealth.

If Betari Sri and Bambang Sadono are always with giant in the story, which symbolizes the descent of the wealth on the land, Badug Wasu represents the descent of the wealth in the sea (Interview with Trianggono, March 24 2008).

#### *The Meanings of the Ceremony for the People*

The discussion of the meanings of the ceremony for the people relates to the symbols found in the Sedekah Laut ritual. This traditional ceremony contains lots of symbols which have educational values for the life of the society.

There are two values which can be gained by the society, they are: 1) the meanings in the ceremony it self; 2) social values. The meanings of the traditional ceremony are symbolized by the equipments of the ceremony. There are seven meanings which can be gained from Sedekah Laut ritual (Interview with Rasdjo Wibowo, April 15 2008), they are:

1. Water from seven source means that water is the source of life for human beings and all creatures in this world. There are many sources which can be used by man and other creatures, and those should be kept well by being grateful to God for the wealth He gave.
2. Toys, symbolizes happiness. For the fishermen, the pleasure they gained when scrambling and getting the toys is different with other pleasures. This feeling is the same as when a kid gets a toy from his parents. It will be different if he is given money or his parents promise him something, so the pleasure which comes from the toy will be different.
3. Red and white porridge, symbolizes safety.
4. Living fish symbolizes preservation of what is in the sea, so that the wealth from the sea, which is usually fish, can be gained continuously by the fishermen.
5. A head of a buffalo is a symbol of sincerity and sacrifice. Buffalo, as a symbol of ignorance, is slaughtered to eliminate ignorance among the fishermen.
6. Money, replica of a house, young yellow coconut leaf, and yellow bamboo symbolize nobility in man's life.

7. Banana tree, rice and sugar cane symbolize good examples. Those are usually called *polo kependem* (plant which fruit grows in the ground) and *polo gumantung* (plant which fruit grows on its branch or stem). The meaning of those is the hope that the wealth in the ground and above the ground will be given by God.

The meanings and symbolism of Sedekah Laut ritual was formerly not described by the respected old fishermen. So, this ritual which is also called Nyadran was known only as an activity of floating buffalo, snacks, toys, etc., while the puppet show was interpreted as ruwat sengkala (avoiding misfortune in life). In the show which has this purpose, the story which is performed is *Batara Kala* or *Buta Kala*. Buta is portrayed as a giant who likes eating man. Actually, sengkala does not mean misfortune, but it stands for Sang Kala (Javanese term for 'the time'). How is the incarnation of Sangkala? Rasdjo, who ever saw the statue of Sangkala in Tibet, described that Sangkala is a giant who is 12-meter-tall, holding a globe in his right hand and a baby in his left hand. Thus, Sangkala symbolizes a man who lives in the limitation of time. If he cannot spend his time well, he will suffer a great loss. If this man always thinks about the past without considering the present and future, the time will crush him. In conclusion, a man who cannot use his time well will be devoured by the time itself. Thus, symbol or also called sanepo is important for mankind as a warning to use the time well. Generally, sangkala is known as an obstacle which avoids someone to race against the time (Interview with Rasdjo, April 15 2008).

In more specific detail, the values of the ceremony in the society and the symbolism in life can be described as follows:

#### 1. Symbol of Life

The symbol or meanings of life on the society can be described as follows:

- a. Seven springs, means that the source of human life is symbolized by water, which is the source of life from the earth and sky (rain water). Besides, seven springs mean every day from Monday to Sunday as long as the life exists, God gives us wealth which comes from the ground and the sky.
- b. *Polo kependem* and *polo gumantung*, sugar cane, rice, and coconut, means

- that we ask for blessing to God Almighty who created this world, so that all the wealth in the sky or in the ground will be given to us and be useful for our descendants.
- c. *Juadah* or traditional snack, which is the whole kinds of snack which are sold in the market. It means that as the crowd of the market, the fishermen will catch more fish so that they can fulfill their family's needs.
  - d. Three kinds of salt-water fish and fresh-water fish, and seven springs, are for keeping and preserving the fish in the sea or in the land as ordered by God Almighty that we should take care, keep and preserve our means of living given by God.
2. Symbol of Safety  
Red and white porridge, red means brave and white means pure. In Javanese, red (*abang-nyimpang*) and white (*putih-nyisih*) mean that in earning a living in the sea, someone must be brave to face the big wave, strong wind, and leave his family. A fisherman must also be honest so that he will be safe from any natural threat and get the result from his effort, because honesty is the key for the peace of our soul.
  3. Symbol of Happiness  
Toys, means that the fishermen can share their sincere happiness to all people who live in their society, like when the children are given toys.
  4. Symbol of Nobility
    - a. *Kembang setaman* (some kinds of sweet-smelling flowers found in a garden), means that the fishermen have beautiful names as the beauty of a garden and vast knowledge as vast as a garden. The fishermen are expected to be known well as the scent of the flowers, not to be identical with poverty, slum, weakness, alcohol, spendthrift, etc., as what most people assume.
    - b. *Pring kuning*, yellow bamboo stem which is long and straight, means that all of the goals are straight or sincere only for kindness. The color yellow symbolizes nobility (to reach nobility) whether in front of God or among other people.
      - c. Jasmine symbolizes fragrance and pure, means that all people involved in fishery are expected to be known well, as the beautiful nice and pure jasmine arranged with cotton waste thread, janur kuning and bamboo.
      - d. *Janur kuning* (young yellow coconut leaf) means nur or light.
  5. Symbol of Sincerity
    - a. *Kebo Segluntung* (a whole body of a buffalo), is a form of a sincere sacrifice, throwing away ignorance.
    - b. *Tumpeng* (dish of yellow rice served in a cone shape) means all fishermen unite like the cone of tumpeng with a single goal to ask for God's blessing for safety, wealth and good prosperity which can be useful for all.
    - c. The offering is put on the boat and floated to the sea with the intention to train ourselves to be sincere in thinking and acting, and all of them are only because of God Almighty.
  6. Symbol of Boat  
In Sedekah Laut ritual, all equipments to be floated are placed in boat replica. A boat has a symbolic meaning for the society, as stated in a poem of Hamsyah Fansuri, a Sufi poet of 8th century, as follows:
- Syair Perahu**
- Wahai muda kenali dirimu  
Ialah perahu tamsil tubuhmu  
Tiadalah berapa lama hidupmu  
Ke akhirat jua kekal diammu
- Wujud Allah nama perahunya  
Ilmu Allah akan kurungnya  
Iman Allah nama kemudinya  
Yakin akan Allah nama pawangnya
- La ila ha ilallah itulah firman Tuhan  
Itulah pergantungan alam sekalian  
Iman tersurat pada hati insan  
Siang dan malam jangan dilalaikan
- La ila ha ilallah itu kesudahan kata  
Tauhid ma'rifat semata-mata  
Hapuskan hendak sekalian perkara  
Hamba dan Tuhan tiada berbeda

La ila ha ilallah itulah tempat musyahadah  
Menyatakan tauhid jangan berubah  
Sempurnakan jalan iman yang mudah  
Pertemuan Tuhan terlalu susah

### Poem of the Boat

Young man, recognize yourself  
That the boat is the imagery of your body  
Your life is not so long  
To the hereafter your eternal silent will be

The form of Allah is the boat  
The knowledge of Allah is the cabin  
The faith to Allah is the steer  
Believing in Allah is the diviner

La ila ha ilallah that is the God's decree  
That is the dependence of the whole nature  
The faith is written on man's heart  
Do not forget the day and night

La ila ha ilallah that is the end of the word  
Only the faith of understanding  
Erasing all the problem  
God and the follower have no difference

La ila ha ilallah that is the place to testify  
Never change in stating the faith  
Perfect the easy faith  
Meeting God is too hard

A Sedekah Laut ritual is usually followed by a Javanese puppet show. As stated in the previous section, the story of the puppet show in Sedekah Laut ritual is usually *Badug Basu*. How is the brief story? A source named Trianggono explained the story briefly.

*Badug Basu* was created by gods and he is accompanied by a goddess named Dewi Sri Kuaci. At the end of the story, the two characters will be separated. The story begins when *Badug Basu* was growing up. He wanted to marry the one he loved, Dewi Sri Kuaci. However, the gods did not allow him to do so because it was considered violating the rule. Because of his strong determination, while the purpose he was descended to the world is actually to deliver prosperity for human beings, the gods went down to the world in order to solve this problem. *Badug Basu* was actually the incarnation of Batara Narada.

Finally, the gods promised him that he could marry Dewi Sri Kuaci, but he had to

enter a box made of katimoho wood. Next, the gods ordered two persons to cut the tree, guarded by Dewa Wisnu. After the branch had been cut, the leaves turned into fish living in river, including snakes, etc. after the leaves had become the source of food for human beings in the land, Batara Narada made a box from its trunk.

After the box had been made, it was taken to the shore and the gods said to *Badug Basu*, "You may marry Dewi Sri Kuaci. She is inside the box." Then, *Badug Basu* entered the box and the gods closed it.

After the box had been closed, Dewa Yama was sent to take it to the sea shore with an order not to open the box until he had taken it to the shore. When he got there, he opened the box and found many kinds of fish as we can find in the sea now. It can be concluded that *Badug Basu* turned into many kinds of fish after entering the box, while Dewi Sri Kuaci became a ruler in the land. It is possible that Dewi Sri Kuaci in other version can be identical with Kwan Im goddess, just like Hanoman which has similarity with Chinese legend Sun Go Kong.

The story of *Badug Basu* was taken from heritable story of the ancestors. The stories of Javanese puppet shows as a complement of sedekah laut ritual differ in one region to others, for example, in Cirebon, the character Arjuna was played in the Sedekah Laut puppet show (interview with Trianggono, March 24 2008).

### Participation of the Society

Sedekah Laut ritual is still conducted up to now, and the next generations are expected to keep this tradition. Besides this tradition can increase and develop tourism rates, it contains lots of meanings and values for the life of the society, especially the fishermen. However, people who are not fishermen are also very supportive toward this tradition; even the city government of Pekalongan completely supports the conduction of this tradition too by giving direct financial aid from the city budget.

Before the city government gives financial support, this tradition used to be held using fund from the society, especially the fishermen. They collected and saved their money after they had gone fishing and sold their catch. The donation collection was done

by HNSI - *Himpunan Nelayan Seluruh Indonesia* (Indonesian Fishermen Association) of Pekalongan city (Interview with Trianggono, March 24 2008). The amount of the donation collected varied from 5.000 to 10.000 rupiah for each boat (Interview with Rasdjo, April 15 2008).

For conducting Sedekah Laut ritual, a great amount of money is needed. In 2000, it needed 10 million rupiah, and now the amount of money needed is getting bigger since the prices of the ceremonial equipments are getting more expensive. However, the city government can help to solve this problem by giving 40 million rupiah as financial support from governmental budget (Interview with Rasdjo, April 15 2008).

The participation of social figures in the conduction of Sedekah Laut ritual can be seen in the preparation of the committee. An organizing committee is usually prepared every year, which consists of every social elements and figures of Pekalongan. This committee is responsible to arrange everything, such as preparing, collecting donation, providing the equipments, and arranging the ritual completely (Interview with Trianggono, March 24 2008).

In the conduction of Sedekah Laut ritual, the participation of the society and figures is not only at the preparation and the conduction, but also at the number of the visitors and participants. After the offering has been floated, several art performances such as sintren, reog, and dances are performed. Thus, art groups from any social elements participate in cheering up the situation. The participants and visitors of Sedekah Laut ritual are not only from Pekalongan and surroundings, but they also come from other regions. Moreover, if there is a rowboat competition, the participants are mostly from other regions. Such as Brebes, Tegal, Kendal, etc. (Interview with Trianggono, March 24 2008).

The government's role is very important since this traditional ceremony has been one of the tourism objects. Thus, the effort for preserving the tradition of Sedekah Laut is supported directly by entire social level and various governmental institutions related to this.

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## CONCLUSION

Every region has its own different customs and traditions, just like Sedekah Laut ritual for fishermen in Pekalongan. This ritual is an expression of gratitude to God for prospering them.

Sedekah Laut ritual symbolically contains lots of values which can be used by the society especially the fishermen as a way of life. This tradition, as a part of cultural elements, is preserved well since the society support this event. Sometimes, Sedekah Laut ritual or Nyadran will differ in the meanings and the functions between societies in the coastal areas especially in north Coast of Java Island and people in the interior of Java Island. However, this tradition is very unique and interesting, so it needs to be preserved especially for the sake of the society and tourism.

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