



The Philosophical Significance of the *Naber Laut* Tradition in Shaping the Cultural Identity of Batu Beriga Village (1963–2018)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the philosophical significance embedded in the *Naber Laut* tradition practiced by the community of Batu Beriga Village, Central Bangka Regency, from 1963 to 2018. The *Naber Laut* tradition is a customary ceremony rooted in animistic and dynamistic beliefs, serving as an expression of gratitude for the bounty of the sea as well as a plea for the safety of fishermen. This research employs historical methods with a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing interviews, observations, and documentation techniques. The findings indicate that this tradition embodies spiritual, social, and cultural values that strengthen local identity and serve as a form of resistance against the tide of modernization. The *Naber Laut* tradition also represents the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, passed down through generations. This study's findings strengthen efforts to preserve local culture amidst the dynamics of social change. This study sheds new light on how local traditions function as dynamic cultural adaptation strategies in the face of modernization.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, with its rich diversity encompassing languages, customs, beliefs, and traditions, is one of the most socially diverse countries in the world. Although numerous studies have examined various aspects of Indonesian culture, certain local traditions, such as *Naber Laut* practiced by the fishing community in Batu Beriga Village, Central Bangka Regency, have often been overlooked in academic discussions on cultural preservation and local identity. Most cultural studies focus on general concepts of culture or widely recognized traditions. In contrast, community-based coastal traditions like *Naber Laut* receive relatively little attention, especially within the context of social change and modernization that threaten their continuity.

Koentjaraningrat (2002) explains that Indonesian culture is the product of human creativity, feeling, and intention, encompassing knowledge, belief systems, art, morality, and customs passed down through generations. Similarly, Soekanto (1990) asserts that traditions serve as a medium for preserving ancestral values and are often rooted in animistic and dynamistic beliefs that acknowledge the existence of supernatural forces influencing community life.

Current academic research increasingly highlights a significant gap in comprehending how belief-driven traditions endure amidst modernization and globalization. Most current research portrays local traditions as mere vestiges of the past, overlooking their continued relevance within present-day social dynamics. However, studies of the nadran tradition along Java's northern coastline reveal that sea thanksgiving rituals serve not only as expressions of gratitude but also as vital mechanisms for nurturing social solidarity and reinforcing the cultural identity of fishing communities (Rafianti & Sabrina, 2014; Yogi, 2013). Similarly, research conducted in Tambak Lorok, Semarang, underscores the symbolic richness of these ceremonies, highlighting their role in cultivating interconnectedness between humans, nature, and the divine. These rituals are also essential conduits for transmitting local values to younger generations (Megawati & Ihsanuddin, 2021). In the fishing communities of Cirebon, such practices continue to play an essential role in maintaining social cohesion (Ramadhan, 2017).

Likewise, studies in Tambak Lorok, Semarang, show that the symbolic aspects of sea thanksgiving ceremonies are vital for fostering the bonds among humans, nature, and the divine. These rituals act as powerful means to convey local values to the younger generations (Megawati & Ihsanuddin, 2021). These practices remain crucial instruments for fostering social cohesion, as demonstrated in the fishing communities of Cirebon (Ramadhan, 2017).



Further, the work of Lumbaa, Mukramin, and Damayanti (2023) underscores the value of examining customary rituals through human-nature relationships. However, their research remains geographically concentrated in Toraja, requiring broader investigations. This past research leaves a gap to explore comparable traditions, such as *Naber Laut*, and to assess how these practices sustain culturally resonant values in contemporary local contexts while contributing to the broader discourse on national cultural diversity in an era of globalization. However, their findings primarily pertain to Toraja, leaving a gap concerning coastal communities like Batu Beriga. Although many studies focus on mainstream traditions, localized coastal traditions like *Naber Laut* remain underexplored, particularly regarding their resilience amid modernization and globalization.

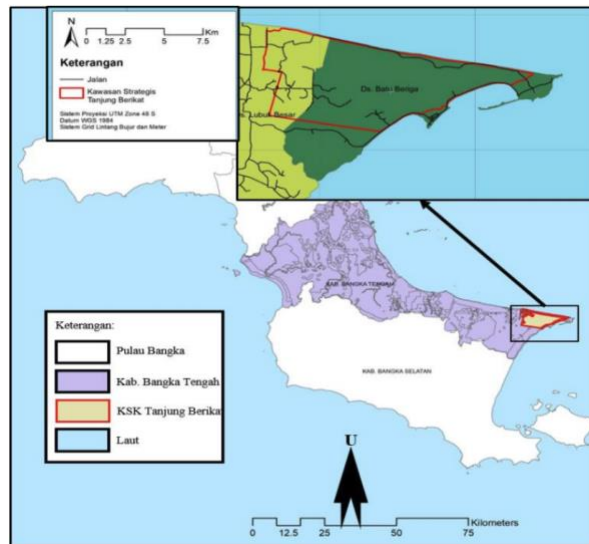


Figure 1. Map of Batu Beriga Village, Central Bangka Regency
Source: Priyansah & Kurnia (2022)

Interviews with Jamal, the *Ketua Adat* (traditional leader) of Batu Beriga Village, indicate that the community continues to uphold the *Naber Laut* tradition despite modernization's encroaching influences. This ritual conveys gratitude for the ocean's abundance and serves as a collective invocation for the safety of fishermen who depend on the sea for their livelihoods. The present study explores the philosophical underpinnings and cultural values embedded within the *Naber Laut* tradition, focusing on how the community interprets and sustains its cultural heritage amid ongoing social and cultural transformations.

Thus, this study is focused on two key questions: How do the residents of Batu Beriga Village comprehend and uphold the *Naber Laut* tradition amidst social transformation and modernization? What cultural ideologies are reflected in this practice, and how do they aid in shaping local identity and safeguarding cultural heritage? Through these questions, the research intends to provide a detailed understanding of the modern relevance of local customs such as *Naber Laut* in a progressively globalized society.

METHOD

This research employed the historical approach to explore the philosophical significance embedded in the *Naber Laut* tradition observed by the Batu Beriga Village community in Central Bangka Regency. According to Garraghan (Abdurrahman, 2011), the historical method includes a systematic collection of rules and principles for critically gathering, assessing, and arranging historical sources. Its main objective is to analyze historical occurrences, organize them methodically, and extract subtle insights into particular socio-cultural settings.

Daliman (2012) highlights that this approach entails verifying and thoroughly analyzing historical documents and artifacts to depict past realities accurately. Consistent with this framework, the current study utilized a qualitative descriptive method to collect, organize, and examine data related to the *Naber Laut* tradition and its fundamental philosophical aspects.

Direct observation, interviews, and the evaluation of documentary resources gathered the data. Observational data were collected by participating in the *Naber Laut* ceremony, where different aspects—including the environment, order of activities, and community engagement—were documented. To understand the ritual's symbolic and philosophical importance, interviews were conducted with important individuals, such as the *Ketua Adat* (traditional

leader), local fishermen, and various community members. Supplementary materials, including archival documents, images, and written records, were utilized to enhance and provide context for the results.

Triangulation was utilized to guarantee the data's credibility and reliability by comparing information gathered from interviews, field observations, and documentary sources. Source criticism was used in two separate phases: external criticism to verify the materials' authenticity and internal criticism to assess the reliability of the content. After validation, the data underwent interpretive analysis to create a cohesive narrative outlining the *Naber Laut* tradition's historical evolution and philosophical significance.

The concluding phase entailed historiographical writing—a coherent and methodical development of an academic story, which aims to clarify the relationships between tradition, cultural values, and social transformation in the Batu Beriga community. This research aims to significantly enhance Indonesia's broader conversation on protecting local cultural values.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Background of the *Naber Laut* Tradition

Naber Laut, or *Taber Laut*, is an annual cultural tradition performed between March and June by coastal communities in Batu Beriga Village, Central Bangka Regency, Bangka Belitung Province. This tradition is a communal expression of gratitude to God for the abundant marine resources throughout the year. Symbolically, *Naber Laut* is perceived as a sacred act of 'locking the sea' for three days, during which strict prohibitions are observed to honor the sea and seek even greater future marine harvests. Variations of the *Naber Laut* tradition are widely practiced among Malay ethnic groups across the Bangka Belitung Archipelago. According to Ismi on *Mongabay Indonesia*, the ritual is also celebrated by the Malay and Sea Nomad (Suku Laut) communities in areas such as Lepar-Pongok Islands (South Bangka), Tanjungputat Beach, Pejem, Tuing (Bangka Regency), Baskara Bakti Village (Central Bangka), Rambat Village (West Bangka), and throughout Belitung Island. More broadly, the customary marine territory spans approximately 80,000 hectares, stretching from the Koba coastline (west) to Gelasa Island (north) and Kelapan Island (south), encompassing the traditional waters of the Malay communities residing in Koba, Lubuk Besar, Tanjung Berikat, Batu Beriga (Central Bangka), and Kelapan Island (South Bangka) (Ismi, [2022](#)).

The *Naber Laut* tradition originated in response to a traumatic incident within the fishing community of Batu Beriga Village when one of its members disappeared at sea. This incident instilled a profound sense of fear and uncertainty, prompting the community to initiate a ritual to pray for safety. From this event, the *Naber Laut* tradition began to be practiced as an act of reverence for the sea and an effort to safeguard the lives of fishermen (Jamal, personal communication, April 27, 2018).

In addition, the community's customary practice of holding thanksgiving ceremonies for abundant catches further reinforced the establishment of this tradition. Given their heavy dependence on the sea for their livelihoods, spiritual practices became an inseparable part of daily life in Batu Beriga Village (Endang Setiawan, personal communication, September 23, 2018). The tradition was also strengthened by the belief in ancestral spirits who conveyed messages through the dreams of the traditional leader, serving as the basis for the collective performance of the ritual. In this context, the *Naber Laut* tradition functions as a form of spirituality and a social adaptation to environmental and social challenges.

The *Naber Laut* Procession

The *Naber Laut* ceremony is held annually, typically in the morning during April. However, the exact date is flexible and depends on when the traditional leader receives a dream message from ancestral spirits. Upon receiving such a dream, the leader announces the date to the entire village, usually via the mosque (Endang Setiawan, personal communication, September 23, 2018).

Items Used in the Ritual

- 1) Kranusa and ati-ati leaves: These leaves serve as the primary ritual materials. The wife and children of the traditional leader prepare them by finely slicing the leaves, which are then placed in a container and blessed with special prayers by the leader. The community subsequently scatters the leaves along the shoreline. The remaining leaves are distributed among the fishermen to serve as protective talismans at sea (Jamal, personal communication, April 27, 2018).

- 2) **Gaharu (Agarwood or Frankincense):** Agarwood incense is burned during the ceremony to serve as a spiritual communication tool with the spirits of ancestors. The smoke is believed to help "call" the sea guardians to attend the ritual (Endang Setiawan, personal communication, September 23, 2018).
- 3) **Water:** Freshwater (plain water) symbolizes purification. It is blessed during the ceremony and then poured into the sea to pray for safety and abundant marine harvests (Jamal, personal communication, April 27, 2018).
- 4) ***Nanggung Sepintu Sedulang:*** *Nanggung* refers to a communal meal where participants bring food on trays (*dulang*) and share a meal at the seashore after the ritual concludes. This tradition reinforces social solidarity and strongly expresses Malay communal culture (Sunjata, [1997](#)).
- 5) ***Dambus* Music:** *Dambus* is a traditional Bangka musical style that features call-and-response *pantun* (poetic verses) containing advice, folktales, and expressions of local culture. During the *Naber Laut* ceremony, *dambus* music elevates the sacred atmosphere and entertains formal rituals (Sunjata, [1997](#)).

Stages of the *Naber Laut*

The ceremony officially begins with the traditional leader striking a brass gong, signaling the start of the ritual (Endang Setiawan, personal communication, September 23, 2018). All ritual offerings—including fresh water, *kranusa*, *ati-ati* leaves, and agarwood—are blessed. The traditional leader leads the prayers over the water and agarwood, while his deputy offers prayers over the leaves. These prayers are kept secret and known only to them (Jamal, personal communication, April 27, 2018).

The ritual proceeds with freshwater pouring into the sea and scattering the *kranusa* and *ati-ati* leaves. This act symbolizes the purification of the sea and the community's prayers for the safety of the sea guardians (Endang Setiawan, personal communication, September 23, 2018). The remaining leaves are then distributed among the fishermen, who are believed to be protected from harm while at sea (Jamal, personal communication, April 27, 2018).

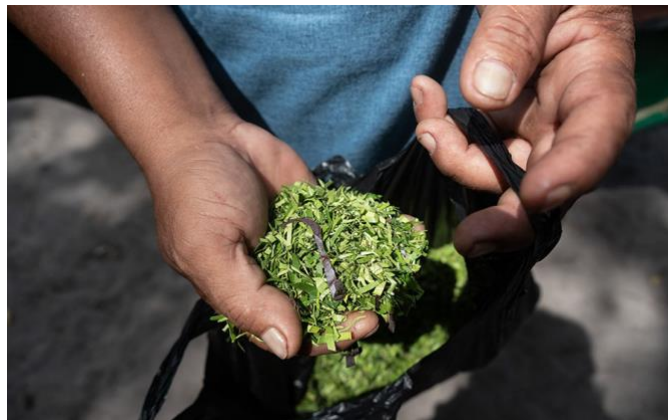


Figure 2. Slices of *kranusa* and *ati-ati* leaves
Source: (Ismi, [2022](#))



Figure 3. Scattering of the *kranusa* and *ati-ati* leaves
Source: (Ismi, [2022](#))

The ceremony concludes with the *nanggung sepintu sedulang* communal meal, where the entire community sits in rows along the seashore to share food brought from their homes. This moment is a powerful expression of unity and social cohesion (Sunjata, [1997](#)).

After the ceremony, the community observes for three days, suspending fishing activities. This period lasted seven days in the past, but it was shortened due to the community’s growing economic needs. Additionally, during these three days, residents are forbidden from discarding fish or any other objects into the sea as an act of respect toward the sea and its guardians (Jamal, personal communication, April 27, 2018).

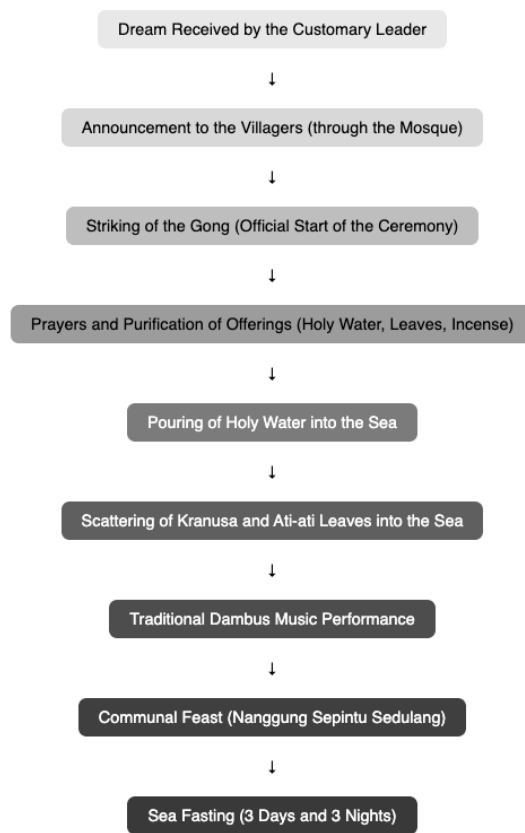


Figure 4. Stages of the *Naber Laut* Tradition

Philosophical Meanings of the *Naber Laut*

Every traditional ceremony embodies noble values that serve as a cultural legacy. The *Naber Laut* tradition means invoking safety, warding off misfortune, honoring ancestors, and expressing gratitude for the abundance of the sea (Endang Setiawan, personal communication, September 23, 2018).

The traditional leader stated that the *Naber Laut* ceremony's purpose is "to ensure the safety of fishermen from the time they leave their homes until they return and to pray for abundant catches" (Endang Setiawan, personal communication, September 23, 2018). Meanwhile, the deputy traditional leader explained that the ritual serves "to purify the sea and ward off misfortune for the fishermen of Batu Beriga Village" while expressing gratitude for the sea’s bounty (Jamal, personal communication, April 27, 2018). The village head of Batu Beriga further emphasized that *Naber Laut* holds a philosophical meaning as "an act of gratitude for the safety and prosperity provided by the sea each year" (Endang Setiawan, personal communication, September 23, 2018).

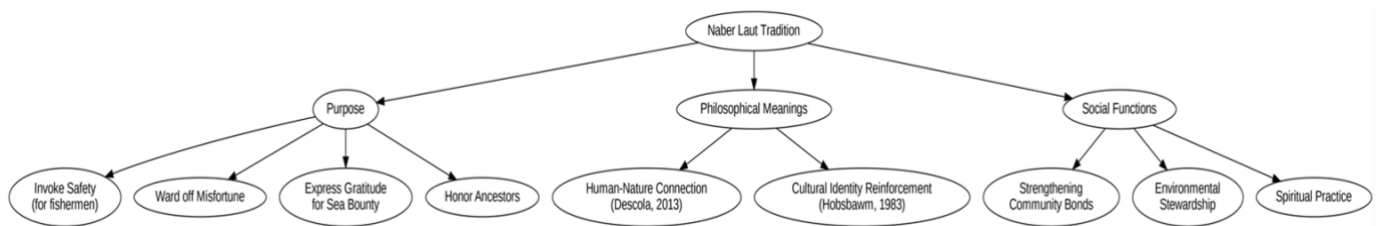


Figure 5. *Naber Laut* Tradition: Philosophical Meanings, Social Functions, and Purposes

Thus, the tradition is not merely an annual ritual but a manifestation of spiritual and social values that strengthen the bonds between humans, nature, and their ancestors. It illustrates how local culture can balance economic needs, spirituality, and environmental stewardship. Through the perspective of human–nature relationships outlined by Descola (2013), the *Naber Laut* tradition represents a worldview where humans and nature are

interconnected through spiritual and social bonds. Furthermore, Hobsbawm's (1983) concept of the "invention of tradition," *Naber Laut* can be understood as a conscious community approach to reinforce cultural identity in the face of modernization and changing social dynamics.

CONCLUSION

Philosophically, the *Naber Laut* tradition embodies various fundamental values: a communal request for safety, the prevention of misfortune, expressions of thankfulness for the ocean's bounty, and reverence for ancestral spirits. Aside from its ceremonial aspect, the tradition serves as a means to strengthen social unity, encourage ecological balance, and preserve cultural identity in the face of continuous social change. In the end, this study enhances comprehension of the sustainability of local customs amid modernization. The *Naber Laut* not only protects the spiritual and cultural heritage of ancestors but also serves as a means to foster harmonious connections between people and the natural world. In theory, this study highlights the fluid function of local customs as adaptive cultural tactics that react to and develop alongside broader social transformations. The theoretical implications emphasize the essential function of local customs as active cultural adaptation methods in reaction to social transformation. Essentially, the results of this research highlight the significance of recording, renewing, and enhancing local traditions as vital elements of national cultural conservation initiatives. Enhancing cultural understanding through formal and informal education is a strategic effort to protect the longevity of local values for upcoming generations.

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Personal communication*:

- 1) Endang Setiawan, *Ketua Adat*, personal communication, September 23, 2018
- 2) Jamal, *Ketua Adat*, personal communication, April 27, 2018

*All interviews were conducted with participants' informed consent, ensuring the data collection's ethical integrity.