

The Role of the Community in Preserving the Jamasan Pusaka Bende Tradition in Bumijawa Village, Tegal Regency: A Study from a Cultural Anthropological Perspective

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran masyarakat dalam melestarikan Tradisi Jamasan Pusaka Bende di Desa Bumijawa, Kabupaten Tegal, dalam perspektif antropologi budaya. Tradisi jamasan merupakan ritual pembersihan pusaka yang sarat nilai historis, simbolik, sosial, dan spiritual, serta menjadi bagian dari identitas kolektif masyarakat. Di tengah arus modernisasi, tradisi ini menghadapi tantangan berupa perubahan pola partisipasi serta pergeseran pandangan generasi muda terhadap budaya lokal. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam dan dokumentasi. Informan meliputi juru kunci, pemuda penggiat budaya, dan Kepala Desa Bumijawa. Analisis data menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman melalui tahap reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi ini dimaknai sebagai ungkapan syukur, simbol penyucian diri, serta sarana memperkuat solidaritas sosial dan identitas masyarakat. Pelestariannya didukung peran aktif warga dan pemerintah desa secara berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: peran masyarakat, pelestarian budaya lokal, jamasan pusaka bende.

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of the community in preserving the Jamasan Heirloom Bende Tradition in Bumijawa Village, Tegal Regency, from a cultural anthropological perspective. The Jamasan tradition is a ritual for cleansing heirlooms, rich in historical, symbolic, social, and spiritual values, and is part of the community's collective identity. Amidst the current of modernization, this tradition faces challenges in the form of changing participation patterns and shifting views of the younger generation towards local culture. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews and documentation. Informants included caretakers, young cultural activists, and the Head of Bumijawa Village. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles and Huberman through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results show that this tradition is interpreted as an expression of gratitude, a symbol of self-purification, and a means of strengthening social solidarity and community identity. Its preservation is supported by the active role of residents and the village government on an ongoing basis.

Keywords: the role community, preservation of local culture, jamasan pusaka bende.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural diversity, reflected in its customs, belief systems, religious rituals, traditional arts, and material heritage passed down across generations. From a cultural anthropological perspective, culture is not

merely a human creation but a system of meaning that shapes people's ways of thinking, behavior, and social interactions. Syafa & Khoirul (2024) assert that cultural practices serve as the primary medium for preserving moral, spiritual, and collective identity values within a community. Thus,

the preservation of local traditions plays a strategic role in maintaining social cohesion and cultural identity amidst the dynamics of changing times.

One cultural manifestation that remains preserved in Javanese society is the tradition of jamasan pusaka, a ritual of cleansing and purification for heirlooms such as keris, spears, and bende that hold historical, symbolic, and spiritual value. In the context of Javanese culture, heirlooms are not merely viewed as material objects but also as symbols of the presence of ancestors, guardians of cosmic harmony, and bridges connecting humans, nature, and the spiritual realm. Arisky & Fauzi (2024) explain that the jamasan ritual embodies respect for ancestors, efforts to maintain spiritual balance, and symbolic care for the collective identity of the community that upholds it.

From a symbolic anthropological perspective, the jamasan ritual is a culturally rich practice. Geertz (in Khiyaroh, 2025) conceptualizes culture as a symbolic system that facilitates human understanding of social and spiritual reality. Every element of the ritual including the timing, the role of the ritual leader, the use of jamasan water, prayers, and community participation carries symbolic meaning understood collectively. Therefore, jamasan functions not only as a ritual but also as a medium of cultural communication that represents the values, norms, and social structures of the

community (Salsabila et al., 2024). Thus, in practice, this ritual also fulfills a crucial social function.

From a symbolic anthropological perspective, Victor Turner (1969) in his work *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* views ritual as a social process that gives rise to *communitas* an intense, egalitarian experience of togetherness that transcends formal social structures. Through rituals, individuals not only fulfill symbolic obligations but also experience a strengthening of collective solidarity that reinforces group identity. In the context of Javanese society, the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition can be understood as the space where such *communitas* is formed, as it brings together multiple generations in a shared symbolic experience. This ritual serves as a medium for the transmission of cultural values, a vehicle for social interaction, and a mechanism for strengthening social cohesion. Values such as mutual cooperation, respect for ancestors, and collective responsibility are reproduced and internalized through shared participation in the Jamasan procession, so that this tradition functions not only as a ceremonial practice but also as an integrative mechanism within the social structure of the community.

Nevertheless, these ideal values are often at odds with contemporary social realities. Globalization, modernization, and digitalization have

transformed people's mindsets and lifestyles, particularly among the younger generation. Priambadi (2023) highlights that the decline in young people's interest in local traditions is driven by a tendency toward a more practical, individualistic lifestyle oriented toward modern popular culture, leading to traditions often being viewed as outdated, purely symbolic, and irrelevant.

A similar phenomenon is beginning to emerge in the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition in Bumijawa Village, Tegal Regency. Although this ritual is carried out routinely according to custom, community participation particularly among the younger generation remains suboptimal. Youth involvement is limited to technical or ceremonial aspects, while a deep understanding of the symbolic meaning and cultural value remains low. The execution of the ritual relies on traditional leaders and custodians, creating a risk of a generational gap in cultural transmission.

The Bende in Bumijawa Village is regarded as an ancestral heirloom of high historical and symbolic value, serving as the village's protector. The Jamasan ritual is performed to honor the heirloom and ancestors, while also maintaining the community's social-spiritual balance. Without the active involvement of all segments of society, particularly the younger generation, this tradition risks a shift in meaning, a reduction in social function, or even marginalization.

Hapsari et al. (2014) emphasize that the preservation of intangible cultural heritage depends on the active participation of the local community as its owners and inheritors. In cultural anthropology, traditions are dynamic and constantly negotiate with social change (Wibisono & Utami, 2021). Therefore, research is needed to understand how the people of Bumijawa Village interpret, practice, and preserve the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition amidst modern dynamics.

This research is relevant because it positions the community as the primary actors in cultural preservation, not merely as executors. Findings regarding the community's active role can be analyzed through the concept of local wisdom as a living value system embedded in daily practices. Noviani Achmad (2022) states that local wisdom facilitates the internalization of moral values, ethics, and collective identity through cultural transmission.

Thus, this study contributes to cultural anthropology, particularly the understanding of traditional rituals as systems of meaning and social practice. Furthermore, the results can serve as a foundation for a more participatory and sustainable preservation of the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition, both by the community of Bumijawa Village and the local government.

METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach from a cultural anthropological perspective. The choice of this approach is based on the primary objective of exploring in depth the role of the community, as well as the cultural meanings, values, and symbolism involved in the preservation of the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition in Bumijawa Village. Such cultural traditions cannot be measured solely through quantitative means but require an interpretation of social experiences, subjective perspectives, and the meanings inherent in the involved subjects. Through the lens of cultural anthropology, the research not only describes community practices but also uncovers the motives, values, and symbolic dimensions behind their involvement in preserving this tradition. This aligns with Notoadmodjo (2018), perspective that a qualitative approach can comprehensively reveal socio-cultural dynamics.

The research was conducted in Bumijawa Village, Bumijawa Subdistrict, Tegal Regency, which to this day preserves the Jamasan Pusaka Bende Tradition as a core element of local cultural identity. The location was selected through purposive sampling, given that this tradition has been passed down through generations with active community involvement in its preservation process. The research subjects included

the custodians of the heirlooms, village officials, community leaders, village youth, and general residents who possess knowledge and direct involvement with the tradition. Informant selection utilized purposive sampling, which was subsequently expanded through snowball sampling where initial informants recommended others deemed to possess relevant and in-depth information regarding the study (Fauzi et al., 2022).

Data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through semi-structured in depth interviews with key informants, which served as the primary method due to the ceremonial nature of the tradition, which had been practiced prior to the study. This approach allowed for the exploration of experiences, subjective perspectives, and interpretations regarding the roles of community actors, ritual symbolism, cherished cultural values, and the tradition's adaptation to social change.

Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from documentation, including village archives, local historical documents, photos and videos of previous years' Jamasan activities, and literature related to cultural anthropology and heritage preservation. This documentation reinforced the interview findings, provided historical context, and helped the researcher understand the development of the Jamasan Pusaka

Bende Tradition over time (Siregar et al., 2021).

Data collection relied on two main methods: semi-structured in-depth interviews and documentation. The interviews were designed to be semi-structured to allow informants to freely express their views, experiences, and interpretations regarding the community's role in preserving traditions. Documentation served as a supporting tool to enrich the interviews and verify the consistency of the information.

Data analysis adopts the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three main stages. The first stage is data reduction, which involves selecting, focusing, and simplifying the data from interviews and documentation to ensure relevance to the research objectives. The second stage is data presentation, which entails organizing the data into descriptive narratives so that patterns, relationships, and the role of the community in preserving traditions become clearly evident. The third stage is drawing conclusions, which involves the continuous interpretation of data meaning throughout the research process to achieve a deep and holistic understanding of the dynamics of preserving the Jamasan Pusaka Bende Tradition (Sugiyono, 2021).

Unlike previous studies that often positioned the Jamasan tradition as merely a normative or descriptive

practice, this research offers a novel perspective by emphasizing the role of the community as the primary actor in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage through a cultural anthropological lens that highlights symbolic, participatory, and adaptive aspects. This approach aligns with UNESCO's recommendations regarding the importance of local community involvement in ensuring the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage, and addresses the gap in empirical research at the village community level in addressing modern social dynamics (Wulf, 2025; UNESCO, 2016).

This methodology is expected to yield a deep understanding of the role of the Bumijawa village community in preserving the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition, the values and symbols it embodies, and its adaptation strategies in response to contemporary socio-cultural developments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings obtained through the collection of primary data in the form of in-depth interviews with the caretaker, young cultural activists, and the Village Head of Bumijawa, supplemented by relevant secondary data. The analysis focuses on the symbolic dimensions of the Jamasan Pusaka Bende Tradition, its social functions within the community's social

structure, the roles of the community and the village government in preservation efforts, as well as the dynamics of change and challenges to the tradition's sustainability.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the preservation of the Jamasan Pusaka Bende Tradition faces several challenges related to the social dynamics of Bumijawa Village. One of the main issues is a shift in participation patterns, particularly among the younger generation. Although the tradition is still carried out routinely, youth involvement tends to be limited to technical and ceremonial aspects, while understanding of the symbolic meanings and philosophical values embedded within it remains relatively superficial. This situation indicates a potential gap in the intergenerational transmission of cultural values.

Furthermore, the continuity of the tradition remains heavily reliant on central figures such as the caretaker and traditional leaders. This dependence risks creating structural vulnerabilities if not accompanied by systematic mechanisms for succession planning and the transfer of cultural knowledge. From a cultural anthropological perspective, this phenomenon reflects the challenge of maintaining the continuity of the symbolic system and collective meanings that underpin the existence of the ritual.

Another emerging dynamic is the differing interpretations among some members of the community regarding the jamasan practice, which is perceived as potentially inconsistent with religious teachings. Although the majority of the community interprets this tradition as an expression of gratitude, not a practice of worshipping heirlooms, these differing perceptions remain a social reality that requires prudent management to prevent value conflicts.

Furthermore, modernization and digitalization also influence the cultural orientation of the community. The tradition faces competition from popular culture and modern lifestyles that tend to be practical and individualistic. Without contextual adaptation, there is a risk of a reduction in meaning, causing the tradition to potentially shift into an annual ceremonial event that loses the process of internalizing local wisdom.

1. The Symbolic Meaning of the Jamasan Pusaka Bende Tradition

Based on the results of an interview with the first informant (the Keeper), the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition is rooted in the historical event of the discovery of the Bende Camuluk and the Bulakan Spring in 1819 AD. This event is interpreted as a divine blessing that serves as the foundation for the continued existence of the agrarian life of the Bumijawa community. Thus, the

Jamasan is not merely understood as a physical cleansing of the heirlooms, but as a symbol of gratitude for God's blessings and the abundance of natural resources.

This symbolic meaning is reinforced by the second informant (a young cultural activist), who states that the Bende Camuluk is regarded as a symbol of the village's collective identity and a representation of the community's historical memory. This heirloom is not interpreted as a sacred object to be worshipped, but as a symbol of the harmonization of relationships between humans and God (*ḥablum minallāh*), fellow humans (*ḥablum minannās*), and nature. The jamasan tradition serves as a medium for reflecting on moral and spiritual values passed down through generations.

Meanwhile, the third informant (the Village Head) emphasized that the meaning of the Jamasan also encompasses a symbol of human self-purification. In addition to maintaining the heirloom so that it remains well-preserved, the Jamasan is also interpreted as a symbol of moral and spiritual self-purification, reflecting the importance of maintaining one's heart, attitude, and behavior in social life.

Research findings regarding the symbolic meaning of the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition indicate that the ritual is not merely understood as a physical activity involving the cleansing of

heirlooms. More than that, this tradition is interpreted as a symbolic representation of expressions of gratitude, the formation of collective identity, and the manifestation of spiritual relationships between humans and God, ancestors, and nature. This perspective aligns with Geertz's (in Khiyaroh, 2025) view, which asserts that rituals are symbolic systems that enable communities to construct and interpret the social and spiritual realities they experience.

Within the context of the Bumijawa community, the Bende Camuluk is positioned as both a historical symbol of the village and a marker of the origin of the Bulakan Spring, which serves as the lifeblood of the local community. This finding reinforces the research findings of Arisky et al. (2024), who state that heirlooms in Javanese culture function as representations of ancestral power and guardians of social balance. Thus, the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition can be understood as a medium of symbolic communication that plays a role in reproducing and transmitting the cultural and spiritual values of the Bumijawa community sustainably across generations.

2. The Social Function of the Jamasan Tradition in Community Life

Research findings indicate that the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition plays a significant social role in strengthening social cohesion among community

members. The first informant explained that the series of Jamasan rituals involves various segments of society, including the caretaker, religious leaders, traditional leaders, village government officials, youth groups, and the general public. This multi-stakeholder involvement is manifested in the procession of the heirlooms, communal prayers, the tumpeng feast, and the distribution of Jamasan water, which simultaneously create an intense and participatory space for social interaction.

The second informant added that this tradition serves as a medium for intergenerational encounters, bringing together the elderly, adults, and youth within the same symbolic space. The community's active participation in the sacred relic procession, the Maulid carnival, and various forms of creative parades reinforces the development of social solidarity and a sense of togetherness. Thus, the jamasan serves not only as a ceremonial rite but also as an integrative mechanism that maintains the harmony and social order of the community.

A similar perspective was expressed by the third informant, who emphasized that although community social activities continue even without the performance of the jamasan, culturally this tradition has been internalized as an annual custom that brings inner peace and a sense of collectivity. The non-conduct of

this ritual is perceived as potentially causing social unease because it is seen as neglecting the ancestral heritage rich in symbolic meaning.

The collective involvement of the community from the preparation stage through the performance of the penjamasan and the procession of the heirlooms demonstrates the strong social dimension of this ritual. The perspective put forward by Turner (in Tawabie & Amin, 2024), regarding rituals as spaces for the formation of solidarity through shared symbolic experiences (*communitas*), is relevant to the findings of this study. The Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition has proven to be a social arena that strengthens cohesion, collective identity, and a sense of community among the people of Bumijawa Village.

The collective belief that neglecting the ritual could trigger social unrest or disruption indicates that the Jamasan has functioned as a social control mechanism supporting the stability and harmony of the community. These findings align with Salsabila et al. (2024), who assert that traditional rituals serve as social instruments in maintaining cultural stability and solidarity within local communities.

The shift in the timing of the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition from the night of Satu Suro to the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (Maulid Nabi Muhammad saw) reflects

dynamics of adaptation and cultural acculturation. Local traditions negotiate with Islamic values developing within society without losing their symbolic essence. The integration of the Jamasan ritual with the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday demonstrates that local culture can function as a medium for contextual and adaptive religious outreach.

These findings align with the perspective of Wibisono and Utami (2021), who argue that traditions are dynamic and capable of transforming in response to social change. This process of adaptation serves as a cultural strategy that enables traditions to remain relevant, gain social legitimacy, and endure amid the tide of modernization and technological advancement.

Furthermore, the active support of the Bumijawa Village community, in synergy with village government policies, demonstrates that cultural preservation is a collective responsibility. The community serves as the primary agent of preservation, while the village government acts as a facilitator through regulatory support, allocation of village funds, and strengthening of formal legal frameworks. This reinforces the argument by Hapsari et al. (2014) that the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage is heavily determined by the participation of local communities as the owners and inheritors of traditions.

Preservation efforts are also realized through cultural education strategies targeting the younger generation, whether through cultural events, cultural discussions, seminars, or the use of digital media. This strategy aligns with the findings of Priambadi (2023), who emphasizes the urgency of innovation and the integration of modern media as effective instruments in maintaining the existence of traditions in the era of globalization.

3. The Role of the Community in Preserving the Jamasan Tradition

Research findings indicate that the community of Bumijawa Village plays a central role as the primary actor in efforts to preserve the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition. According to the first informant, community involvement is comprehensive across the entire series of ritual activities, encompassing the spiritual preparation phase, the execution of the penjamasan procession, and the pusaka parade as the ceremonial climax. This participation demonstrates that the tradition is not merely preserved symbolically but is carried out through continuous collective engagement.

The contribution of the younger generation also shows a significant intensification. The second informant emphasized that youth groups, particularly through cultural activist communities such as Pagar Bumi, play an

active role in various supporting activities, including documenting events, organizing cultural discussion forums, hosting cultural exhibitions, and educating peers about the tradition. Additionally, the use of social media serves as an adaptive strategy to expand the reach of tradition dissemination without diminishing the substance of its values or its sacred dimensions. This reflects a transformation in preservation methods that is responsive to the times.

The transmission of cultural values is also carried out through oral inheritance mechanisms, such as the narration of history, local legends, and the periodic repetition of ritual practices every year. This strategy aims to foster young people's understanding of the essence of tradition, so that its existence is not perceived merely as a cultural performance, but as a representation of collective identity and local wisdom with profound meaning.

Theoretically, findings regarding the active role of the Bumijawa Village community in preserving the Jamasan Pusaka Bende Tradition can be analyzed through the perspective of local wisdom as a living values system that is internalized within the community's social practices. As emphasized by Noviani Achmad (2022), local wisdom functions as a source of social learning that transmits moral values, ethics, and collective identity

through cultural practices passed down from generation to generation.

Within this framework, the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition is not merely interpreted as a customary ritual but also as a medium for internalizing values of community, respect for ancestors, social responsibility, and the harmony of human relations with God, fellow humans, and nature. Thus, this tradition functions as a space for social learning that facilitates the informal transmission of values through participatory experiences and intergenerational interactions.

4. The Role of the Village Government in Supporting the Preservation of Traditions

Based on findings from an interview with the third informant (the Village Head), the Bumijawa Village Government plays a facilitative role in efforts to preserve the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition. This role is realized through the provision of supportive village funds, the formulation of regulations in the form of Village Regulations (Perdes) regarding the protection of historical and cultural sites, and the initiation of efforts to strengthen the legal status of the tradition by submitting a Decree to the Ministry of Law and Human Rights. These steps demonstrate the village government's structural commitment to

ensuring the sustainability of local cultural heritage.

In practice, the village government also integrates the Jamasan tradition into the village's cultural agenda and frames it as a medium for religious outreach linked to the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (Maulid Nabi Muhammad saw). Nevertheless, the government's involvement is not interventionist regarding the substance or ritual procedures. Instead, the village government provides a broad participatory space so that the community remains the primary actor in organizing the tradition.

At a broader level, the Bumijawa Village Government also promotes the Jamasan Pusaka Bende Tradition through various regional cultural programs, such as *Bangga Desa* and *Bangga Budaya*. This strategy aims to expand the tradition's exposure so that it is not only preserved within the local context but also gains formal recognition and sustainability within the framework of regional cultural development policies.

Theoretically, Noviani Achmad (2022) asserts that the preservation of local wisdom requires the active involvement of the community as active agents, not merely as objects of preservation. This perspective aligns with research findings showing the participation of the Bumijawa community, particularly the younger generation, in the processes of documentation, promotion,

and implementation of the Jamasan tradition. This involvement represents an effective practice of experiential cultural learning in transmitting cultural values amidst the dynamics of modernization.

Thus, the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition is not merely interpreted as a symbolic ritual but as a space for socio-cultural learning that contributes to strengthening the collective identity of the Bumijawa village community. The integration of local wisdom values into these ritual practices reflects a dynamic and adaptive approach to cultural preservation, the success of which is largely determined by the awareness and active participation of the community as the custodians of the tradition. Therefore, the preservation of local culture is not only oriented toward the continuity of ritual forms but also toward the internalization and actualization of values that remain alive and relevant in the social life of the community.

5. The Dynamics of Change and the Challenges of Preserving Traditions

The research findings reveal significant dynamics of change in the practice of the Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition. According to Informant 1 and Informant 2, historically, the jamasan ritual was held in the month of Suro with limited participation from the local community. However, due to the process of Islamic cultural acculturation and the

evolution of religious understanding, the event was subsequently moved to the month of Maulid and integrated with the commemoration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

Another notable change is the increased enthusiasm of the community, marked by the presence of participants from outside the village and even outside the city. The procession, which was once simple, is now enriched with various cultural creations and Islamic narratives, without losing the tradition's core essence.

Challenges to preserving the tradition include customary rules that restrict women's participation during menstruation, as well as the views of a minority of the community who consider the ritual potentially contrary to religious teachings. Nevertheless, the community and the village government consistently affirm that this tradition is a form of cultural expression and an expression of gratitude, not a practice of ancestor worship.

CONCLUSION

The Jamasan Pusaka Bende tradition in Bumijawa Village is a cultural heritage that embodies historical, spiritual, and social values that play a vital role in shaping the community's collective identity. Its continuity is sustained by the active involvement of the local community, supported by the village

government. However, its preservation faces challenges, including the younger generation's limited understanding of the ritual's philosophical meaning, reliance on traditional leaders, and differing religious perceptions among some community members. Therefore, the sustainability of this tradition requires strengthening leadership development, cultural education, and adaptive management to ensure that the values it embodies remain alive and relevant across generations.

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