

Research Article

Sea Alms Tradition from the Perspective of Network Actor Theory in Coastal Communities of Rowo Village, Kebumen

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Kasirul Mubarak: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8329-2362>**Abstract.**

This study analyzes the relationship between the fishing community and the sea which is manifested through the ritual of sea alms. The theory used is Bruno Latour's ANT theory which has five concepts, namely actors, networks, actants, translations, and intermediaries. The researcher focuses on the concept of network actors, and translations. The research method used is the descriptive qualitative research method. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The informants who were interviewed were fishermen, fishermen's families, traditional leaders (community leaders), and the surrounding community following the sea alms tradition. The results show that the process of the sea alms tradition begins with a procession to the river mouth to bring *umborambe* (offerings) which are put into *julen* (miniature joglo houses) containing clothing, goat heads and feet, fruits, and other objects that are considered the favorite of the ruler of the ocean (Nyi Roro Kidul) to be floated to the sea. Bruno Latour's ANT theory explains that there is a relationship between humans and non-humans that influence each other and form a network in the form of sea alms. This tradition brings together humans and non-humans to remain balanced and mutually influential.

Keywords: sea alms-1, actors-2, networks-3, translation-4

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1. INTRODUCTION

The sea alms ceremony (Nyadran laut) is one of the legacies of the Javanese people who live in the southern coastal areas of Java [1] [2] [3]. This tradition can be found in several coastal areas where the majority of people are fishermen, such as Pekalongan, Cirebon, Demak, Pati, Cilacap, Yogyakarta. This tradition is still maintained and believed because it has a ritual function in the form of a traditional ceremony. People still believe that their ancestors also play a role in maintaining the prosperity and peace of the community. The sea alms tradition is carried out regularly every year in the month of Shura or the first month of Javanese calculation [1] [4] [5]. As is the case, on the south coast precisely Rowo Village.

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The tradition of sea alms in Rowo village is still relatively new because it began to be implemented in 2001 compared to other regions. Historically, the sea alms in Rowo Village originated from the experience of community fishermen who had long migrated in Cilacap and when they returned to their village they applied this tradition. The tradition was then accepted by the community and approved by the village and district governments. This custom continues to be repeated until today, so that it becomes a custom that has legitimacy in the community because the community considers sea alms to be a sacred tradition and has economic, communication and entertainment functions for coastal communities. In addition, sea alms also play an important role in community education. Among others, to preserve the values of ancestral teachings, spirituality, work ethic, cultural and natural preservation [1] [4] [5].

Anthropologically, sea alms are the result of human creation, where humans have a system of reason and instinct or instinct system that is able to capture natural phenomena and respond adaptively so as to create "culture" as an "adaptation system" that they create in relation to maintaining the existence of relationships with the surrounding nature, human existence since the beginning of its existence, developed and able to adapt to the surrounding natural environment [6] [7] [8]. This researcher digs up information from several previous studies as comparison material, both regarding existing shortcomings or advantages. In addition, researchers also dug up information from journals and theses in order to obtain pre-existing information about theories related to the title used to obtain a scientific theoretical basis. There have been many studies on sea alms, but each region certainly has its own characteristics related to this theme. Both from the causes of collaboration, who is involved, the stages passed during collaboration, commitment, obstacles passed and the authority of each party involved. This research will not only discuss the tradition, but also the relationship between tradition, nature, humans and non-humans.

Humans and nature have a connection in the context of the formation of the sea alms tradition, as the sea is seen by the people of Rowo Village as a sacred place. The community believes that the south coast has a guardian who controls the ocean, therefore the community needs to hold a selamatan so that the fishermen are protected from danger when going to sea. The ritual process begins with throwing an object into the sea or into the river water that flows into the sea. In the southern sea area, the sea alms ceremony is also carried out by giving various offerings to the one who mbau rekso (controls) the southern sea known as Kanjeng Ratu Kidul (Nyi Roro Kidul). The belief about the existence of Kanjeng Ratu Kidul is not only owned by the fishing community, but has become the property of the general public [1] [9]. In the sea alms tradition,

humans are not seen as the main actors, but one of the entities that carry out the sea alms process. The sea is seen as a “non-human” that has the power to harm humans but can also provide a living for fishermen, which is the basis of sea alms.

This research wants to explain how the human process is influenced by non-humans, which in turn forms a network of actors that eventually manifests in the form of sea alms. Bruno Latour explains that in the material culture view, the importance of objects is recognized solely to “reflect social values”, it cancels out the appeal of power relations and real social inequality. significance [10]. Latour’s perspective does not see objects as merely having significance, but as objects whose materiality carries agency and specific characteristics relevant to the symbolic. ANT theory sees that anything that performs actions and/or changes states is considered an actor. Non-human objects do things, just as human actors do and they produce effects in silence, yet still play a role and help trace social relations. In this sense, ANT suggests overcoming the adversarial relationship between objects and humans [11]. This research has 2 problem formulations that will be discussed in the discussion. First, it will discuss the process and meaning of sea alms for the people of the south coast of Java. Second, the analysis of the actor network formed in the sea alms.

The aspect of sea alms has an ecologically valuable side, from the meaning of the entire sea alms procession, has a networked relationship with human and non-human elements. The aspect that will be studied in this research is the network relationship between the ritual of sea alms that has meaning and the networks that surround it so that it involves all aspects of an ecological and socio-cultural nature. This study uses a post-human approach, developed by Bruno Latour, which considers a social or cultural phenomenon as an actant event that overlaps with each other between non-humans, humans in assemblage. This study attempts to explain the process of sea alms in Rowo Village and how actor networks are formed in the sea alms tradition. This research is important to do because it is a new topic that has never existed in previous studies related to the sea alms tradition in Bruno Latour’s actor network theory. In the academic arena, it will be a new thing and source of reference.

2. METHODOLOGY/ MATERIALS

The research conducted used a type of qualitative research, using a phenomenological approach. Researchers in the phenomenological view seek to understand the meaning of events and their links to society in general in certain situations. In this case what is meant is, coastal communities who have a culture or tradition of sea alms

in Rowo Village, Kebumen Regency, where the village is the research location. Data collection techniques in this study, researchers used three data collection methods, namely interviews, observation, and documentation that can support and strengthen the activities or research arguments that researchers do. The selection of informants was carried out using purposive sampling technique. The informants whose data were taken for interviews were fishermen, fishermen's families, traditional leaders and the surrounding community related to the sea alms tradition. The key to the success of observation as a data collection technique is very much determined by the observer himself, because the observer sees, hears, smells, or listens to a research object and then he concludes from what is observed [12]. Researchers use documentation data collection techniques with document study methods in the form of books or diaries, voice recording devices, photos, flash drives, and data stored on the website. Through the documentation method, researchers used to explore data in the form of documents related to fishermen and sea alms.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. The Process and Meaning of Sea Alms for the South Coastal Communities of Java

This tradition can be found in several coastal areas where the majority of the people are fishermen, for example, Cilacap, Yogyakarta, Purworejo, Pangandaran and Kebumen. The research site is located in Kebumen District Mirit Rowo Village [4]. The tradition of sea alms is still maintained in Rowo Village and still believed because it has a ritual function in the form of traditional ceremonies. Based on statistical data on the livelihoods of Rowo Village, there are a variety of occupations divided into 21 types including those who have not worked, housewives, students and retirees. The highest occupation is 424 farmers, followed by 379 private employees, and 66 fishermen [13].

The religious life of coastal communities tends to be acculturative or easily accept new values from a religion that has similar levels and cultural patterns. On the other hand, the fishermen also have a belief system that the sea has magical powers that make them carry out the "sea alms" tradition. Although in its development there have been many changes in the form and substance of the celebration. The "sea alms" tradition can be found in several coastal areas of Java, in the western part of the coast of Sumatra, and Sulawesi. The sea alms tradition also varies, such as the Sea Party Tradition or Sandranan (Pekalongan), Nyadran (Cirebon), Larung Sesaji (Cilacap), Lomboan and

Kupatan (Demak) which are local traditions of Javanese coastal communities [14] [15] [16].

This tradition is indeed applied in several coastal areas, although sometimes the name of the tradition is different, but the essence of the event is the same, namely to be grateful for the results of the sea and safety in finding sea catches. Based on the definition of fishermen according to (Darsono, 2023)

“Sea alms is a form of gratitude to God for the abundance of sustenance and safety at sea, so we hold salvation at sea, but sometimes people’s point of view is different and consider it polytheism, we do not give offerings, offerings and others, only symbols.”

The tradition of sedekah laut is not original from Rowo Village, but originated from the fishermen of Rowo Village who migrated to Cilacap Regency to look for fish there, as informed by (Selamet, 2023).

“Sedekah laut is held because it is to preserve the culture, starting with the fishermen who plunged into the sea in 2001. Some of the fishermen of Rowo Village migrated to Cilacap and there were big fishermen there, the fishermen of Cilacap every shuro month on Tuesday/Friday kliwon held a sea alms gathering which was then developed here and the fishermen here accepted. This tradition is approved by the village, sub-district and district.”

The above explanation can be concluded that the origin of the sea alms tradition in Rowo Village comes from the experience of fishermen of Rowo Village community who have long migrated in Cilacap and when they returned to their village they applied this tradition. Traditions that can be accepted by the community and approved by the government from village to district level. The Sea Alms Tradition Process The sea alms event is designed a month before the event is held because it requires careful preparation, starting from funding, preparing event equipment and designing events that will be held. The funds used come from the fishermen themselves

The procession of the sea alms ceremony begins with a procession from the Rowo village head’s house as the center of the event to the TPI to throw the offerings into the sea. Previously, various offerings have been prepared, including goat heads wrapped in white cloth (mori), setaman flowers, ageman (clothes) and women’s beauty tools, seven kinds of fruit, seven kinds of bananas, and tumpeng. The completeness is placed into julen (miniature joglo / Javanese house). According to information from (Pramono, 2023).

“The selection of these offerings is based on the belief that they are the favorite objects of Queen Kidul. Local people strongly believe that Queen Kidul exists as God’s intermediary to protect the kidul sea (south sea) and its contents. The ageman or clothing is usually complete, ranging from batik ageman, konde skewers, and also

beauty tools for preening. The figure of Queen Kidul is described as graceful like a king's daughter or a palace princess in general."

The process of throwing the offerings is carried out by the fishermen's families and is carried out in the middle of the sea. The fishermen's families process the offerings from the village to the Wawar river, which is the river that provides access to the sea. After that, dozens of fishing boats will march to the sea to throw the offering [17] [18]. The following is given the Prohibition of offerings, Celebration and entertainment commentation in Figure 1 and Figure 2.



Figure 1: Prohibition of offerings.



Figure 2: Celebration and entertainment.

3.2. Analysis of Actor Networks Formed in Sea Alms

In this research, we will use the concept of ANT (actor network theory) as a framework, namely actor networks and translations. The sea alms tradition shows the interrelationship between humans and non-humans that form a network. Bruno Latour's ANT (Actor Network Theory) explains that the variety of interactions as a result of network diversity forms reality. So in the ANT analytical framework, reality is observed through network interactions composed of communities, organizations, groups, machines and so on. Based on this perspective, ANT focuses on the study of the construction and transformation of network diversity [19]. ANT also investigates the ways in which relationships on networks are organized, emerge, are deconstructed, maintained and compete with other networks [20]. According to ANT, when humans interact with other humans, these interactions are mediated through a variety of non-human artifacts, and the interactions are mediated through additional networks composed of non-human artifacts, objects and people [21] [22].

This relates to what is found in the field that the tradition of sea alms in Rowo Village occurs because of the anxiety, worry and gratitude of the fishermen who fish in the sea. The anxiety and worry in question is when the fishermen go to sea they have no certainty and no one can guarantee safety when looking for fish. As said by a family of fishermen (Marisih, 2023) "When my husband leaves me to go to sea, I feel afraid, because working as a fisherman has a high risk and there is always a sense of worry, sometimes when the waves are high, I forbid my husband to go to sea". Uncertainty is a necessity faced by humans but cannot be defined or symbolized [23]. The fishing community considers that the sea is a dangerous place that is used as a place to make a living, as said by fishermen (Pawiro, 2023).

"The waves of the south coast are always big, sometimes I hesitate when going to throw the boat into the sea, but with full confidence, even though the risk is great, I still dare to make a living. Sometimes I also only fish from land."

Every job does have its own risks, as well as fishermen who have to deal with waves in the sea and uncertain natural conditions make fishermen unable to go to sea every day. In addition to the nature of Javanese society, especially Rowo Village also still has a belief in the existence of prohibitions or things that must be done in Javanese customs to avoid danger from invisible creatures. [24], As said by (Darsono, 2023):

"On Tuesday and Friday Kliwon, fishermen here are prohibited from going to sea. Because on that day is a sacred day according to Javanese belief and can bring danger to fishermen. However, some fishermen also do not believe in this, especially

on Tuesday Kliwon, they still go on the grounds of seeking sustenance, no one forbids it because after all, sustenance is ourselves who must try to pick it up. People who forbid also do not guarantee that they will provide sustenance to us right “

Quoting from the youtube account of the story of the land of Java (2023), the people of Yogyakarta or Java in general have a belief that there is an energy vortex on the south coast, in Jogja itself there are myths and urban legends about the kingdom on the south coast, or people know Nyi Roro Kidul and so on. The beach is not only geographically located but also has spiritual, historical, metaphysical and philosophical values and even imaginary (The Story of Javanese Land, 2023) [25]

The belief of the fishing community of Rowo Village in the ruler of the south coast seas is still thick. As said (Darsono, 2023)

“The people here believe that Nyi Roro Kidul is the guardian of the southern sea, if in the north sea it is guarded by Dewi Lanjar, if in the south Nyi Roro Kidul or can also be called Kanjeng Ratu Sepuh who is garwo panembagan senopati, “

The sea affects humans “actan” formed from the fishing community with the dangers of the sea and Javanese traditional beliefs in invisible nature forming a new network, namely the holding of the sea alms tradition. It reduces the worries of both fishermen and fishermen’s families. Although it is held once a year, it affects the safety of fishermen and shows gratitude for the sea catch. Community harmony can also be seen when they prepare for the sea alms event. The community and fishermen’s families work together from forming the committee until all the events are carried out. All residents are involved both from the youth and non-fishermen.

3.3. Analysis of the Translational Process of Sea Alms

Translation according to Callon in Mustika, (2018) translation is a way to describe the movement not only of knowledge and cultural practices, but nature and artifacts. There are four processes that occur including problematization, interressement, enrollment and mobilization. This research seeks to analyze the role between humans and non-humans who influence each other.

Problematization process First, Collan, (1986) describes the process of problematization, where one or more actors define the core problem and roles for the other actors and the main actors have the answers so that they cannot be replaced in terms of problem solving. It is the ocean that is considered problematic. The ocean is not a stable space. It can be very calm, but often very hostile to human life [26].

According to [27], traditional societies assume that there are two regions in the universe, namely the inhabited region or space and the unknown region or space. The inhabited space is the world, cosmos or order, while the unknown world is chaos, inhabited by demons, alien humans. The orderly everyday world is the world that has been sanctified, while the other world can also be sanctified by humans, through a series of ceremonies. The same is true of the sea. The sea is a space that not only contains fish or other resources, but it is also a space that is also inhabited by alien beings, a space that is in a state of chaos. Therefore, the sea must be purified at all times through various ceremonies. One of the ceremonies held in Rowo Village is sea alms.

Second, Interesement This stage convinces other actors that the interests defined by the initiators are actually also in line with their own interests. The sea is no longer seen as an inanimate object, humans express their interest from the ritual activity of kirab sesaji [21]. This ritual is performed by the residents to inform the surrounding community that Rowo Village is holding a sea alms event. Kirab sesaji is carried out by parading offerings consisting of goat heads and legs and umba rampe. The procession is also accompanied by community groups and folk arts such as barongan and kuda lumping. The procession is carried out from the village head's house to the fish auction site (TPI) as the starting place of the sea alms event. The assumption that the sea is a sacred place is manifested in the rituals that have existed in the community, this then affects the way fishermen catch fish without damaging the sea, such as using poisons, electricity and explosives. People tend to use traditional methods such as fishing rods and small nets.

This fact can be said as a rational action of the community to protect the environment, especially the marine ecosystem. Fishermen believe that if they use explosives and others that can damage the environment, in the future they will get disaster, especially when they are at sea, so they make every effort not to damage the marine ecosystem when catching fish which has implications for the results obtained in sailing abundantly [28].

Third, Enrollment, after succeeding in the Interesement process, Enrollment involves more than one actor imposing their will on others, but also requiring others to follow their will. It can be understood that in the Enrollment process in sea alms, the community, especially fishermen, are involved in the sea alms process such as preparing the event committee, collecting funds for the event, preparing offerings, processions, the procession of fights and salvation (kenduran) in the form of tahlil, as said by Slamet, 2023.

“It begins with a night tirakatan, after which the julen house is kept for one night, around 5 o’clock, the julen house is brought to the village head’s house, later filled with offerings. Goats, chickens, ducks, unprocessed goats, skins, heads, feet, besides that for daytime salvation. The celebration is like kenduren, the difference is that in this TPI (fish landing place), each fisherman will bring 1 tumpeng.”

The sea alms event was attended by fishermen, village officials, religious leaders, organizers, police officers and some of the surrounding community at 08.00 WIB, starting with several remarks from the village head, religious leaders and fishermen elders. Then, the religious leaders prayed for blessings, especially for the fishermen to be able to get rizqi smoothly and easily. After that, the offerings are taken to the boat that has been prepared to be thrown to the end of the sea. Before the disposal of the offerings, the fishermen’s elders recite the Javanese prayer and continued with religious leaders also leading Arabic prayers in general. After that, the procession begins with a procession from the river mouth to the sea. After the disposal of the offerings there is a “Kuda Lumping” event for the entertainment of the community. In addition, in the afternoon after Asr prayer there is a gathering attended by fishermen and people who live in the area near the sea [28].

Fourth, the moment of mobilization. It is a process when the form of the actor network has been recognized and has a long-term existence and has a wide space for movement, so that it can finally create cooperation even in heterogeneous conditions within it [29]. Supernaturally, sea alms are recognized as a form of human manifestation to appreciate the guardian of the southern sea of the island of Java, known as the figure of Nyai Roro Kidul. In addition, it is also a form of gratitude to Allah SWT who has provided sustenance to the fishing community. The role of the Sea Alms Tradition in the socio-cultural field is very important, namely to maintain the culture of the surrounding community, with the maintenance of community culture, then in everyday life the community has complied with the socio-cultural norms that exist in the community. In relation to the religious perspective, there are several laws, some of which allow it and some of which do not allow it, all of which have their own reasons. Apart from that, many people consider that the sea alms tradition is permissible because there are positive values, namely our gratitude to God for the blessings that have been given through the sea route.

In the context of culture of histories, human behavior that forms culture has existed since humans were in the womb, where children record all the activities carried out by their parents in their daily lives. Islamic values or teachings began to be included in the sea alms ceremony activities, so that there was a strong acculturation between the original culture, larung sajen: Java, with the new culture, Islam [30]. Basically, humans

live on the verge of uncertainty, as discussed in this study, namely in coastal communities who have a tradition of sea alms. This tradition is the goal of fishermen to determine the uncertainty or worries that occur. When fishermen go to sea, they do not know whether they will get the benefit of getting a lot of fish or the distress that makes them wretched. Therefore, fishermen do various ways to avoid distress and bring profit through the sea alms tradition which is believed to be a solution to uncertainty and worry.

4. CONCLUSION

The tradition of sea alms is formed on the basis of safety concerns and gratitude of fishermen for the abundance of sustenance that has been obtained in one year. The tradition carried out every month of Ashura (Muharam) affects the catch and reduces the fear of danger when going to sea. Bruno Latour's ANT theory explains that there is a relationship between humans and non-humans that influence each other and form a network in the form of sea alms. This tradition brings together humans and non-humans to remain balanced and mutually influential. Humans as actors in the sea alms tradition are seen as actors who create, implement and maintain the sea alms tradition, while non-human actors in the form of the sea are considered a sacred place and have a ruler called Nyi Roro Kidul so that it requires humans to maintain the marine ecosystem, because if not implemented it will have a bad influence on fishermen. The sea as an actant can be understood as the main actor who influences other actors to form a network of sea alms. Humans and non-humans influence each other and form a network in the form of a traditional ritual procession. The ritual begins with a procession to the river mouth to bring umborambe (offerings) which are put into julen (miniature joglo houses) containing clothing, goat heads and feet, fruits and other objects that are considered the favorite of the ruler of the ocean (Nyi Roro Kidul).

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