

## THE CULTURE OF BABARIT FROM A PHILANTHROPIC PERSPECTIVE (A Case Study On The Babarit Tradition In Pangandaran Regency, West Java)

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### ABSTRACT

*Babarit is a ritual commemorating the Islamic New Year and serves as an expression of gratitude to Allah SWT for the abundance of natural resources or as a form of appreciation for the completion of village roads. The uniqueness of this tradition lies in the fact that babarit encompasses two celebrations at once: the ritual commemorating the Islamic New Year (mapag taun) and the thanksgiving for agricultural produce (sedekah bumi). This ceremony is thus held both for the earth's blessings and to mark the Islamic New Year, and babarit is typically conducted in the village streets. The focus of this research is on the meanings and functions within the babarit tradition from a philanthropic perspective. There are two research questions in this study: 1) What are the philanthropic values contained in the babarit tradition in Pangandaran Regency? To answer these questions, the researcher using qualitative research methods comprising observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of this study indicate that the babarit tradition captures fundamental philanthropic values, wherein practices of generosity, sharing, contributions for organizing events, and community cooperation are deeply embedded in this tradition. Over time, the babarit tradition has been held to celebrate the harvest and to honor the Islamic New Year. This tradition is rich in meanings reflected in the various foods presented during the ritual. Babarit also encompasses three functions: religious function, social function, and cultural function.*

**Keywords:** Culture, Babarit Tradition, Philanthropy.

### INTRODUCTION

Tradition is a vital expression of culture. The culture that underpins this practice has values that are essential for its followers and significantly impacts the way they live their daily lives. In this context, the tradition of babarit plays a unique role within the cultural framework of Pangandaran Regency. According to cultural figures from Pangandaran Regency, Erik explained in Sundanese, Babarit contains meaning ngababarkeun syarat anu irit (to create more effective requirements).

The babarit tradition is one that continues to be nurtured and maintained by the community. Generally, this tradition is a means of cultural expression, social bonding, and is passed down through generations (tali paranti, kesopanan anu geus turun-tumurun) (LBSS, 2007: 496). The tradition that remains alive allows for the sharing of values that are articulated through social relationships and community cohesion. Traditionally, practices are linked with past events, creating connections between present actions and cultural heritage. While some traditions may become less prominent, the tradition of babarit utilizes the concept of "pamali," which represents shared values embedded in cultural expressions and is often associated with myths. These myths serve as essential narratives that provide context for rituals and the meanings of community activities. Myths also play a role in connecting cultural practices with spiritual elements, blending religious significance with worldly aspects (Baal, 1987: 48).

Every tradition possesses its own set of rules and distinct values, including the babarit tradition. These values serve as guiding principles for the community's way of life. The values embedded within this tradition are critical for establishing social relationships and community integration. John Dewey (as cited in Digdoyo, 2015: 137) describes values as "the object of social interest." Values in this context are not only acknowledged but are also upheld, taught, and practiced by the entire community. Furthermore, these values have a significant impact on the behavior and

decision-making processes of community members. According to Suraitmain, Munir, & Sailaimaih (2013: 39), these included moral values, social values, and spiritual values. In this regard, persistence in maintaining these values within the community fosters a deeper understanding of the tradition itself. If examined further in terms of structural aspects, each tradition contains high values that contribute to community cohesion and well-being.

The babarit tradition expresses philanthropic values. The term philanthropy, derived etymologically meaning 'love for humanity,' refers to social engagement and concern for the welfare of others. Philanthropy can be described as a spontaneous act often performed by individuals or through organized efforts that aim to assist others in need (Payton, 2008: 20). Referring to this definition, the implementation of philanthropy within the community is not merely about material gifts but about a more profound commitment to shared values and collective well-being. In Islam, for example, Allah SWT reaffirms in Surah Adz Dzariat (verse 19) that, "And in their wealth was a rightful share for the beggar and the destitute." This affirmation highlights the universal responsibility of every individual to assist those who are less fortunate, emphasizing the importance of charitable actions for those in need.

The babarit tradition can be viewed as a form of local wisdom. According to Swarsi Geriya (as cited in Digdoyo, 2015: 105), local wisdom encompasses values that include philosophical insights, ethics, customs, and complex systems characteristic of traditional practices. Local wisdom is characterized by the noble values held and nurtured by the community. According to Aigaithai (2016: 2), the journal titled "Traditional Wisdom in Land Use and Resource Management Among the Lubuk Sihir of Ugan," provides a historical perspective that defines local wisdom as a collection of principles rooted in community practice and experience. This comprises norms and standards that guide the community's way of life. Local wisdom is utilized to reinforce traditions and promote spontaneous community practices. According to Binsberger (as cited in Aigaithai, 2016: 2), local wisdom also encompasses practical strategies that enable communities to creatively address challenges and resolve conflicts. This intuitive wisdom is indicative of traditional and non-literate cultures. Such wisdom is often applied as a means of respecting cultural heritage, particularly in communities where knowledge may not be formally documented but is instead conveyed through oral traditions and local practices. The local wisdom inherent in Sundanese culture reflects values that are consistent with the babarit tradition in Pangandaran Regency. According to Danadibrata (2006: 45), babarit is *dikir bareng nu maksadna pikeun penyeakit nular nu meujeuhna keur nerekab* (collective remembrance to protect against infectious diseases).

The babarit tradition observed in Pangandaran Regency is a ritual that celebrates to prevent various misfortunes. The values inherent in the babarit tradition are deeply connected to social cohesion within the Sundanese community, promoting solidarity and collective identity. As such, the babarit tradition serves as a medium for fostering social relationships among community members.

The babarit tradition has been practiced for generations, passed down through family lines and preserved in their original form. This tradition developed and is maintained in the cultural landscape of the various villages in Pangandaran Regency. According to Endis, local cultural figures from Padaherang, Pangandaran Regency, the babarit tradition is not only a form of ritual expression that occurs annually but also contains other essential elements, such as community gatherings and acts of gratitude to Allah SWT, the babarit tradition also fosters a sense of unity among community members, emphasizing the importance of appreciating the Earth's resources and the environment within the community.

The significance of the babarit tradition is reflected in its social aspects, which emphasize collective support and cooperation among community members during rituals. Such values foster a sense of mutual aid and solidarity, which are essential for enhancing the community's social fabric. This tradition embodies spontaneous individual and communal efforts to help others, manifesting as acts of philanthropy aimed at improving the welfare of individuals and the community at large. Philanthropy is understood as the active love for humanity, bridging personal intentions to support others and addressing broader public needs (Payton, 2008). The term "philanthropy" is derived from the Greek words "philein," meaning "to love," and "anthropos," meaning "human." Technically, philanthropy refers to acts of kindness toward others driven by values of care and compassion,

intending to improve both material and non-material aspects of life. According to Prihatna (2005: 3), philanthropy embodies the spirit of giving, helping, and creating joy for those in need. In this context, philanthropy involves supporting and uplifting others, which can be seen as an expression of an individual's or group's love. This tradition showcases the communal social dynamic of philanthropy, particularly within the Babarit framework, which plays a significant role in community well-being and development. Such philanthropic practices are evident in the babarit tradition, which integrates cultural elements and fosters togetherness, compassion, and a shared commitment to support and sustain community life.

When viewed from the perspective of philanthropy, the babarit tradition holds significant social value, embodying high principles that strengthen solidarity among community members. It encompasses several values, such as:

1. **Unity:** This includes the element of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), which fosters a sense of belonging and connection among individuals. The tradition encourages collaboration and collective thought, emphasizing the importance of looking out for one another in the community.
2. **Support Across Lines:** It reinvigorates relationships across ethnic, cultural, or social boundaries, promoting inclusivity and mutual respect among diverse groups.
3. **Community Participation:** The spirit of *gotong royong* (cooperation) is manifest in everyday social interactions and community initiatives, fostering collective endeavors and shared responsibilities.
4. **Religious Elements:** The tradition includes Islamic values, such as acts of gratitude and expressions of thankfulness to Allah SWT. This aspect not only reinforces spiritual bonds but also incorporates prayers for those who have passed away, along with supplications intended to ward off misfortunes and invoke blessings for the community.

In addition, philanthropy also encompasses elements that resonate with Islamic values, particularly in addressing worldly issues such as poverty. Functionally, these values play a crucial role in the social life of the community, whether in traditional or modern contexts, forming an integral part of the overall lifestyle that guides personal and communal conduct. Islamic principles not only transcend material concerns but also nurture the spiritual aspects of life, promoting a holistic approach to living that balances the physical and spiritual dimensions (way of life). According to Soleaeman (2005: 63), these principles emphasize maintaining righteous conduct and fostering an ongoing commitment to improving social conditions, particularly addressing issues related to poverty and social welfare.

Based on the background, the author is interested in conducting research on philanthropy activities based on local wisdom in Pangandaran Regency (A case study on the tradition culture of babarit).

## **METHOD**

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing various techniques to gather detailed insights regarding the aspects of local philanthropy within the babarit tradition. The study encompasses systematic observations and assesses the philanthropic practices as they relate to community traditions. To collect data, the research uses sources from social media and relevant journals as primary data sources for this investigation. The techniques for data collection include:

1. **Interviews:** Engaging with community members and stakeholders to gather firsthand accounts of their philanthropic activities.
2. **Surveys:** Distributing questionnaires to capture the breadth of local philanthropic practices and their impacts.
3. **Observations:** Watching and documenting local philanthropy in action during babarit events.
4. **Document Analysis:** Reviewing relevant literature and records that provide context about local traditions and philanthropic efforts.

The data analysis techniques utilized in this study are based on the Interactive Model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes phases of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Furthermore, triangulation will be applied to enhance the validity of the findings, which involves using multiple data sources to corroborate the information regarding local philanthropic activities pertaining to the babarit tradition.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Babarit Tradition

The babarit is a well-known tradition practiced in various regions, particularly within the communities of West Java. This tradition marks the celebration of the Islamic New Year alongside other significant events. It has been passed down through generations, demonstrating a rich cultural heritage. The babarit tradition is typically observed during the late afternoon, precisely at 5 o'clock, on the day of Selasa or Jum'at Kliwon (Tuesday or Friday Kliwon) in the month of Sura, particularly in the Javanese Callender, in cross junction of village's road.

The babarit tradition practiced by the people of Pangandaran is a deeply rooted custom involving the veneration of ancestral spirits. This tradition, often referred to as 'masyarakat tatar galuh', reflects the Sundanese people's profound respect, reverence, and gratitude for their ancestors. These rituals are believed to bring forth blessings and protection from unseen forces. The practices and activities associated with the babarit carry significant social meanings, as they highlight respect for the community's heritage and express gratitude to God. They also strengthen social relationships and instill core values that guide the community's way of life, fostering harmony and a sense of continuity amid changing times. Babarit is a set of unwritten rules and customs that are deeply ingrained in the lives of its adherents. These traditions have evolved over time and influence the behavior of every individual within the community. Thus, babarit can be seen as a form of unwritten social contract that is essential for members to understand and follow to maintain harmony and order within the community. Beyond its role in regulating social behavior, babarit also encompasses social values, morals, and etiquette. It fosters a sense of community, unity, and peace among its adherents. With the passage of time, the practice of babarit has evolved. It is now more commonly observed during special occasions such as housewarming ceremonies. During these events, the community comes together to express gratitude and to contribute to the construction of the new home. They prepare various types of food to share and offer prayers together.



Figure 1. Community Gathering Activities during the Babarit Process

*Source: Personal Documentation*

## **Philanthropic Practices in the Babarit Tradition**

In empirical life, the babarit tradition reflects a symbolic expression rooted in the local culture, embodying profound social values and community identities. This tradition typically arises from various social motivations, including economic and cultural factors. However, while adhering to the practices of this tradition, individual motivations are not merely driven by the desire to foster social solidarity; they are also influenced by personal interests, obligations, and the need for self-affirmation in line with previously established community norms (Giddens, 1989:452). The babarit tradition is characterized by social motifs, economic, and religious. Nevertheless, this practice can also allow for individual expressions that are not always aligned with collective solidarity. It presents opportunities for individuals to address personal interests while upholding community values, thus creating a complex interplay between social responsibility and self-advancement. Moreover, through the study of this tradition, we can gain a deeper understanding of how it shapes the lives of its practitioners. This study allows us to explore its various forms and manifestations, and to identify the factors that contribute to its continuity. Additionally, by examining this tradition, we can appreciate the values that it upholds and the role it plays in shaping the mindset of individuals. Moreover, studying a tradition means studying the values that are most important to a society

Every community possesses its own traditions that play a vital role in shaping their social life. This is also true for the practices in Pangandaran, where long-standing traditions continue to thrive and evolve. These traditions serve essential functions, maintaining a rhythm of life that reflects both historical significance and contemporary relevance. The traditions celebrated in this region are very much alive and functional, adapting to environmental and social demands. They occupy a significant place within various societal contexts, including social systems, cultural values, and economic structures, allowing communities to respond effectively to their needs. Moreover, these traditions provide pathways for communities to reinforce social bonds, uphold mutual responsibilities, and share collective values, which strengthen communal cohesion. The social, cultural, and economic systems present in Pangandaran intertwine with these traditions to enhance the quality of life, ensuring that individuals remain connected to their heritage and to one another. Furthermore, local traditions empower community members to engage in cooperative efforts, thus fostering a spirit of solidarity and mutual support. As such, these practices not only preserve cultural identities but also facilitate a resilient social framework that bolsters community life through shared values and collaborative action.

Islam, as a faith that places great emphasis on compassion, has shaped the destiny of its followers since long before its formal revelation on Earth. Surah Al-Ma'un, verses 1-3, highlight a specific type of person: those who deny the importance of faith and show no compassion for the needy. The Quran asks, "Have you seen the one who denies the Day of Judgment? It is he who repels the orphan and does not encourage feeding the poor." This concept later evolved into the Islamic principle of giving charity to the poor and needy, which is often a government-mandated duty to ensure that those in need are cared for.

Philanthropy encompasses a range of actions rooted in love, compassion, and responsibility towards others. The term itself has an etymological background that signifies a deep sense of social responsibility and humanitarianism.

Babarit is a local tradition that is still practiced and passed down from generation to generation. This tradition is celebrated annually and embodies philanthropic values, making it a significant aspect of local community traditions. Almost every religious community and society has unique theories and practical techniques related to philanthropic activities. Babarit serves as a platform to foster unity, solidarity, and peace within the community,

contributing to the creation of a strong, harmonious, and peaceful society. Furthermore, Babarit promotes cooperation, mutual help, and solidarity. During these gatherings, people come together to prepare food, share gifts, and express gratitude. Everyone assembles in a communal space where prayers are offered, and a communal meal is shared. The Babarit tradition, which is held annually, is especially significant when a new village road is completed

The Babarit tradition, which is deeply ingrained in the Pangandaran community, is a tradition that carries significant values, thus making it a tradition that is well-preserved by the community. This tradition is considered quite functional in fostering solidarity and unity among community members and in instilling the principle of collective goodness. The values contained within it are closely related to concepts such as solidarity, cooperation, and mutual assistance. Studying the Babarit tradition provides a local case study of practices that embody philanthropy. According to Payton, philanthropy is an act of goodness that encompasses spontaneous and individual actions as well as organized and systematic efforts to help others, and in the broader sense, "love for all." Thus, according to Payton, philanthropy is not merely about giving money but is a more comprehensive act for the public good (Payton, 2008:20)

The Babarit tradition is a cultural value system that is deeply ingrained and preserved by the community. This philanthropic tradition is a cultural heritage of Indonesian society. It is a complex and dynamic value system that has been shaped and refined over time by the community. This tradition has been formally institutionalized in various local institutions (such as part of West Java in South regent) and thus has become a part of every individual's life. According to Koentjaraningrat (1990:77), cultural value systems are abstract concepts that guide individual and collective life, determining what is important and valuable in life. Thus, such value systems also function as a guiding framework for human behavior. A value system is a higher-order system compared to other systems such as norms, laws, ethics, morals, and etiquette. From a young age, individuals are instilled with the values of their society, and these concepts become ingrained in their thought processes and are applied to various life situations.

The importance of the Babarit tradition in the community lies in its ability to identify the impacts caused by its various dimensions. This tradition has a comprehensive impact on all aspects of human life, namely social, cultural, economic, and religious. However, it is not always easy to quantify the impacts in these specific aspects. In terms of social and cultural aspects, Babarit has a symbolic meaning as a representation of social solidarity and practical acts of philanthropy.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Babarit tradition is a local tradition of Sunda that has been passed down from generation to generation as a form of thanksgiving to the Almighty God, fostering solidarity among people to preserve the ancestral culture, create a sense of belonging, especially for those living in the Pangandaran Regency, and to pray for abundant blessings. The Sundanese people continue to uphold the Babarit tradition as a form of implementing religious devotion, cultivating local wisdom, and fostering a desire to preserve the heritage of their ancestors.

The practice of the Babarit tradition is deeply rooted in two significant events: the Islamic New Year and Earth Day, which are eagerly awaited by the community. The Babarit tradition continues to be preserved as it holds values and functions that are essential to community life. The primary purpose of this tradition is as a form of gratitude and prayer to God, and it is often timed to coincide with Muharram or Suro. Over time, the Babarit

tradition has evolved beyond merely marking the Islamic New Year and Earth Day; it has become more about expressing gratitude, especially after completing construction projects. The community views Babarit as a means to foster social connections among neighbors, families, the Sundanese people, and the broader Muslim community. Embedded within the Babarit tradition are local wisdoms that uphold the values of mutual cooperation, reflected in philanthropic practices that contribute to the development of a national culture.

From a philanthropic perspective, the Babarit tradition serves as a means to foster harmony, solidarity, and compassion among community members, as well as a form of social care. As a result, a strong, united, and peaceful community is created. Furthermore, Babarit is an activity for socializing, mutual assistance, and strengthening social ties.

Based on the analysis, the author has drawn several conclusions that need to be further explored regarding the Babarit tradition. These conclusions include:

1. The preservation of the Babarit tradition is closely linked to the religious values of Islam, making the tradition a means to express gratitude to the Almighty God and to preserve the cultural spirit of mutual cooperation in the form of local wisdom.
2. To the government officials, the Babarit tradition should be cultivated as a form of local wisdom that embodies the values of mutual cooperation, compassion, and mutual assistance as elements contained in philanthropic practices.
3. Further research on the Babarit tradition from various perspectives is still possible, and this study has revealed many potential areas that have yet to be explored. Therefore, the author recommends that further research be conducted to explore the untapped potential of the Babarit tradition so that our understanding of this tradition becomes more comprehensive.

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