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# Local wisdom values of *merti desa*: resource for learning social studies in Boja Village, Kendal

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#### **Abstract**

The Merti Desa tradition is local wisdom carried out by the people of Boja Village. Behind the implementation of the Merti Desa tradition are values and deep meanings for the community. However, in this modern era, more and more people need to learn the values contained in the Merti Desa. The purpose of this study is to examine the values of local wisdom of the Merti Desa tradition and analyze the application of the Merti Desa tradition and the obstacles that arise in the application of the Merti Desa tradition as a source of social studies learning. This study used qualitative methods. Data were collected using interviews and data analysis using interactive models. The results showed that there are values in the Merti Desa tradition, namely religious, mutual aid, and cultural values. The strategy teachers use in its application is through learning media in the form of photos and videos and direct observation in the field. The obstacles that arise are more technical in the form of limited time in delivering material, mastery of the material, and limitations of facilities and infrastructure.

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Local wisdom is one of the results of local culture that must be maintained and preserved. According to (Fajarini, 2014), local wisdom is "views of life and knowledge as well as various life strategies in the form of activities carried out by local communities in responding to various problems in meeting their needs." According to (Alus, 2014), local wisdom is ideas and local knowledge that is wise, full of wisdom, of suitable value, and virtuous, which is owned, guided, and implemented by all community members. Local wisdom can also be understood as wise ideas, full of wisdom, of suitable value, embedded, and followed by community members (Hidayati, 2018).

As part of the local wisdom environment, the community must participate in preserving it. Local wisdom characterizes an area so that it is preserved by new cultures developing rapidly. This is a challenge that local wisdom must continue to exist and synergize to integrate with new cultures or knowledge (Mungmachon, 2012). The next generation can recognize and participate in preserving local wisdom in their area as a form of instilling a love for the local culture that is inherent in the area.

Indonesia's cultural diversity is one of the assets that must be maintained. This diversity does not mean that this nation will be divided because of differences, but cultural diversity must increase the unity and integrity of the Indonesian nation. According to (Khusniati, 2014), local wisdom can be in the form of local knowledge, skills, intelligence, resources, social processes, ethics, and customs. Almost every region in Indonesia has diverse local cultures and wisdom. Local wisdom emerges in a society that has developed over a long period. Therefore, the local culture is one of the characteristics of a particular area.

The *Merti Desa* tradition has a historical value passed down from the village elders through oral tradition to the next generation. As part of traditional culture, local wisdom is a hereditary cultural heritage asset (Wibowo, 2012). The *Merti Desa* tradition is also an

intersubjective precipitate between members of the community, which is essentially an activity that is a symbol of the community's gratitude to God Almighty. More than that, the Merti Desa tradition is also a means for the community to foster friendly ties, mutual respect, and mutual respect (Pratoyo, 2013). Local wisdom develops in everyday life both through direct teaching parents to their children from ninik mamak to their grandchildren's grandchildren (Saam & Arlizon, 2012).

However, the reality is that most people only know their traditions if they know the values and meanings contained in the Merti Desa tradition. When talking about the value content of a culture or tradition, its nature is abstract, vague, and often hidden (Basyari, 2014). There needs to be accuracy and sensitivity in analyzing the value and meaning of culture and tradition. Local wisdom is essential in preserving regional culture, especially its function and meaning. Therefore, keep the people from losing their identity as citizens of Boja who have this tradition. The people of Boja should know about the origins of this tradition. Even more than that, they also have to know the meaning contained in a Merti Desa tradition. This tradition will continue to survive and even develop into a tradition known by the people of Boja and the wider community.

As part of local wisdom, communities must maintain local wisdom systems by maintaining traditions as a form of harmonizing human, natural, and environmental relations (Harashani, 2018). Efforts can be made to preserve the local wisdom of the Merti Desa tradition through an introduction to the younger generation. If it is not introduced to the younger generation, it will also become a threat to the continuity of the preservation of the Merti Desa tradition. Especially now in the era of globalization, the younger generation loves foreign cultures more than their own culture. This globalization has led to a struggle between local cultural values and global (modern) cultural values, increasing in Intensity. At the same time, it is understood that modern values not always bring goodness to do

development of local cultural values. In the beginning, you must instill your love for the traditions around you to anticipate this (Suwardani, 2015).

The planting of local wisdom values that still exist can be maintained and passed on to the younger generation so that they can benefit many people (Andari et al., 2020).. Instilling a sense of love for this tradition can be done through education in the school environment. This especially is when learning social studies at the junior high school level around Boja Village. Learning by applying local wisdom can guide environmental-based education in the community (Niswatin et al., 2020). Social studies education integrates education and culture, namely all ideas, behaviors, and human creations developed through a learning process (Ridwan, 2014). So when the teacher teaches social studies learning material, it is associated with events carried out by the surrounding community as a local tradition. As a supporter of the learning process, teachers can design learning designs that are integrated with the lives of the surrounding community (Rokhim et al., 2017).. The Merti tradition of the Boja village can also be developed as social studies learning material, especially on the development of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago.

This study examines the local wisdom values of the *Merti Desa* tradition carried out by the people of Boja Village. Besides that, this study also analyzes the application of the *Merti Desa* tradition as a social study learning resource. Another aim of this study is to identify the obstacles in applying the *Merti Desa* tradition as a social study learning resource for junior high school students.

# **METHOD**

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach with a case study research design. At the same time, this study focuses on the values of local wisdom in the Merti tradition of Boja village as a social study learning resource for junior high school students in Boja village. This study's data sources include primary

sources obtained through interviews with several informants. The selection of informants used a purposive sampling technique, in which the researcher selected samples based on specific assessments or considerations so that the data obtained could be representative. There were 17 informants in this study consisting of village heads, village officials, community leaders, teachers, students, youth leaders, and youth organizations. The informants were selected based on their competence and knowledge according to the relevant data needed in the research.

Data collection techniques were through interviews with informants and direct observation of *Merti Desa* traditions and learning in schools. Test the validity or validity of the data using source triangulation to dig up the truth of the information and data obtained from informants. Data analysis used an interactive model consisting of three activity flows: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

# **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Merti desa is a tradition that exists in Boja Village, Kendal Regency. Boja Village is one of the areas in Boja District, Kendal Regency, Central Java Province. Boja District is a subdistrict in Kendal Regency, directly adjacent to Semarang City, the capital of Central Java Province. Boja Village is the center of Boja District and is strategically located 27 kilometers from Semarang City. The area of Boja Village is vast. Almost 65% of its area is residential, and the rest is garden land and rice fields.

# The Origins of Merti Desa Tradition

The Merti desa tradition has developed in Boja Village since ancient times. Merti desa commemorates the village's birthday, which is realized by the alms of the earth. Alms of the earth are carried out as an expression of gratitude to God Almighty for the safety and abundant crops for the village community. In essence, humans must be able to live in harmony with the natural environment and protect and manage nature which is then realized through

various traditions that develop in society (Indrawardana, 2013). The community's gratitude is then manifested by holding a thanksgiving event or activity together with the village community by slaughtering animals which is now a routine event packaged as *Merti Desa*.

Merti desa is also associated with respect for a figure revered by the people of Boja Village, namely Nyi Pandansari or Nyi Dapu. The emergence of the Merti desa tradition originates from the story of Nyi Pandansari, a descendant of the Demak Sultanate following Ki Pandanaran to make hijrah. Nyi Pandansari walked westward until she finally found a place that was later named Boja Village. The migration carried out by Nyi Pandansari was aimed at preaching and spreading Islamic teachings to the areas where she visited. When Nyi Pandansari first came to Boja, she saw that Boja was an area that lacked water sources. So an irrigation canal flowed from Sendang Sebrayut to Boja Village. With the realization of this irrigation canal, Boja Village has become an area with abundant water sources, agriculture is fertile, and crops have increased. The creation of irrigation canals made Nyi Pandansari a wellknown figure throughout Boja Village because, thanks to her services in building irrigation canals, it has helped and provided many benefits to all the people of Boja Village.

# Implementation of Merti Desa Tradition

The implementation *Merti desa* tradition is divided into several series, which are held every year on the 7th of Shawwal. It began with a thanksgiving or salvation procession attended by village officials, community leaders, and the people of Boja Village. *Tasyakuran* is held at the village hall by making several tumpeng and praying together, led by religious leaders in Boja Village, which aims to express gratitude to God Almighty and to ask for safety and abundant crops for the Boja Village community.



Figure 1. Merti Desa Festival

The next series of events after the celebration was finished, namely the cultural carnival around Boja Village. This cultural carnival can attract enthusiasm from the people around Boja and outside Boja Village to witness the cultural carnival tradition. The carnival participants consisted of the cast of Nvi Pandansari and her bodyguards, followed by groups of village officials, including RT/RW, who wore traditional Javanese costumes. Then the last one is the row of arts in Boja Village. The cultural procession starts from the Boja village hall and then goes around the city center from the Boja Village Hall to the grave of Nyi Pandansari. During the cultural carnival, many people watched along the way, and there was something to look forward to, namely the fight over Gunungan of products which were also part of the procession.



Figure 2. Merti Desa Cultural Carnival

The next event after the fight over Gunungan was a joint prayer and pilgrimage to the grave of Nyi Pandansari led by religious leaders in Boja Village. This grave pilgrimage and joint prayer are usually only attended by village officials, community leaders, daughter who plays Nyi Pandansari, and only the core participants. Ordinary people and spectators usually participate, but many wait in front of the tomb area. This joint prayer began with remarks from high-ranking Boja figures and then continued with a joint prayer by reciting the tahlil. This joint prayer took place very solemnly and wisely. This applies to those in the middle of the gravesite or those on the tomb porch. After that, they sprinkled flowers on Nyi Pandansari's grave and returned to the village hall to prepare for the next event.

The series of Merti desa traditions, in addition to the main event, usually carry out several additional events. After the cultural carnival in the evening, the Syawalan Tradition will be carried out. This Syawalan tradition is synonymous with walking along Pemuda Boja street, where usually along the youth road, some exhibitions or stages can be enjoyed by people from both Boja and outside Boja. Shadow puppet performances are part of the Merti desa event, which is always performed and is the most anticipated. Every year there is always a wayang kulit performance when carrying out the Merti desa tradition, more precisely on the 3rd day of the Boja village's shawalan and merti. Apart from being part of the *Merti desa* tradition, this wayang kulit performance can also attract interest from people outside Boja to come and witness a series of Merti Desa events, including the wayang kulit performance.

# Merti Desa Local Wisdom Values

The Merti desa tradition carried out by the people of Boja Village certainly has profound values for the community. Values, especially social values, are essential for maintaining harmony and increasing community tolerance (Wijaya et al., 2018). The values inherent in character unite and crystallize in someone with good character. This crystallized value can be

addressed and implemented in the form of everyday behaviour, leading to the process and results of good deeds (Maharromiyati & Suyahmo, 2016). Analysis using phenomenological theory is intended to reveal the values contained in the *Merti desa* tradition of Boja village. The experience gained from direct community involvement in this tradition can be used as a basis for giving meaning and interpreting the *Merti desa* phenomenon they experience. The interpretation process results in the meaning of the values in the *Merti desa* tradition.

These values include religious values. In implementing the Merti Desa tradition, several activities contain religious values. Moreover, the figure of Nyi Pandansari is a figure who spreads Islam in Boja and its surroundings. So in commemorating the figure of Nyi Pandansari or Merti Desa, there are processions that refer to religious values, namely in tasyakuran, then visiting the grave and praying together. Tasyakuran carried out during the Merti Desa tradition, is one of the core activities that must be carried out during the Merti Desa. Because when viewed from the essence of the Merti Desa tradition, it expresses gratitude for the blessings God Almighty bestows. This gratitude is manifested through the Merti Desa thanksgiving. The tasyakuran activity was carried out with great wisdom and was led by religious leaders in Boja Village, who continued cutting the tumpeng and eating together. This shows that the tasyakuran tradition contains deep religious values and is very important because praying together will make Boja more fertile, safe, and peaceful and the people more prosperous and prosperous.

Community togetherness and cooperation look compact and harmonious when carrying out the *Merti Desa* tradition. This shows that there are also social values in the *Merti Desa* tradition. This social value can be seen when making the *Gunungan* which is paraded during the *Merti Desa* cultural carnival. The community's enthusiasm was very high. Not only those directly involved in the *Merti Desa* committee but the surrounding community also

had high enthusiasm for carrying out the Merti Desa tradition. Especially traders who sell in the market voluntarily give some of their wares to donate in making Gunungan. Most of the goods provided were agricultural produce from the people of Boja Village, which were sold in the market. So by making Gunungan from crops and carrying out the *Merti Desa*, it is hoped that the crops from the community can be more abundant and the people more prosperous. After collecting all the materials used to build the Gunungan, the cooperation value can be seen again when the committee and several members of the community work on making the Gunungan and volunteer to help so that the Gunungan is completed immediately.



Figure 3. Gunungan of Earth Products

Another value contained in the Merti Desa is а cultural value. implementation of Merti Desa, cultural values can be seen during cultural carnival events because many arts are displayed. The various arts that participate in the cultural carnival, there are arts originating from Boja Village. For example, the lumping horse that is usually displayed is the lumping horse from Gentan Kidul Hamlet. Then the tambourine art came from the hamlets of Pilang and Klesem. At the same time, the art of Angklung music comes from the youth of Gedangan Hamlet, who usually also often plays in entertainment events. Moreover, besides that, there is still much artistic potential

owned by the people of Boja Village. This shows that in the *Merti Desa* tradition, cultural values must be preserved because it is one of the potentials that can be developed for Boja Village.

The cultural value of the Merti Desa tradition can also be seen when the entertainment program is shown at night during the Syawalan tradition in Boja Village. The entertainment performance, which is also part of the series and is always carried out in the Merti tradition, is the shadow performance held on the third night of the Merti Desa and Syawalan traditions. The shadow puppet performance highlights the Merti Desa tradition and Syawalan because many people forward to the shadow puppet entertainment during the Merti Desa tradition. Moreover, those who were invited to the shadow puppet show were well-known puppeteers, so it could attract the interest of Boja residents and people outside Boja who also witnessed the shadow puppet show.



Figure 4. Wayang Kulit Performance

The three values contained in the local wisdom of the *Merti Desa* tradition, namely religious values, cooperation values and cultural values, are the most dominant central values in the *Merti Desa* tradition. However, other values also arise when carrying out the *Merti Desa* tradition, including economic values. This can be seen when implementing the *Merti Desa* tradition, which is continued at night with the *Syawalan* Tradition, will invite the community's enthusiasm to flock to watch and enjoy the various performances and entertainment so that there is the potential economic value that the

community can develop. The community uses this to open up business opportunities by selling culinary and other merchandise. With this significant event, the turnover generated is enormous, so it can increase the income of people who take advantage of the event to sell.

# Merti Desa as a Learning Resource

The preservation of the Merti desa tradition for the Boja Village community is the responsibility of all components within the Boja Village community. Teachers are one of the components that participate in preserving local traditions in formal education. Through social science learning, the teacher instils the values of local wisdom of the Merti Desa tradition in the teaching and learning process. Because the process of transmitting sociocultural values can be carried out through learning activities in the classroom and outside the classroom through extracurricular activities (Shodiq & Madjid, 2021), the reality that occurs in the field is that teachers have utilized local wisdom sources as the development of learning materials.

Applying the *Merti Desa* tradition as a source of teachers' learning has different strategies. Mastery and use of technology for teachers can significantly shift learning patterns (Masrukhi, 2019). The teacher considers the availability of school facilities and infrastructure in implementing this local wisdom as a collaborative learning resource in the classroom. Then the teacher must also pay attention to the characteristics of each student. Apart from that, no less important is that the teacher must also have the ability to master the material and pay attention to the relevance of phenomena or events that occur in society with the learning material in the curriculum.

Most teacher informants said this material could be a distraction or additional material when discussing relevant themes in social studies learning. Of course, this must also be balanced with the teacher's skills in delivering learning material. So that learning is varied and exciting. Some teachers make this *Merti Desa* tradition an initial stimulus when learning. So children will be inquisitive about their village's

origins and history. Because events or the implementation of the *Merti Desa* tradition are only carried out once a year, teachers can innovate by making learning videos or pictures that are packaged in an attractive way to be used as learning media in the classroom.

In applying the Merti Desa tradition as a learning resource, the teacher must have created so that students are interested in the material the teacher will deliver. For the relevance of the material to the Merti Desa tradition, what the teacher must do at the beginning of learning is determine a strategy for incorporating the Merti Desa tradition into a unified material unit that is and aligned with the essential intact competencies in the existing curriculum. The Merti Desa tradition can be linked to the history and cultural development sub-topic, and some teachers link it to geography-economics. Class VII contains material about Indonesia's cultural diversity, which can be linked to the Merti Desa tradition because it is part of one of the cultural diversity that belongs to the Indonesian nation. In addition, if it is related to geographyeconomy, namely in the Merti Desa tradition, there are agricultural products that indicate that an area has high potential and a strategic geographical location. Moreover, when viewed from the historical aspect, it is clear that the origins of the Merti Desa tradition are related to the character Nyi Pandansari who became a figure who cleared residential land and spread Islam in Boja Village.

The dynamics that occur to students when implementing learning by applying the *Merti Desa* tradition as a source of learning include a positive impact on learning interest and motivation. Besides that, it can also increase students' understanding of the material presented by the teacher. Students feel happy, and their curiosity is high when social studies learning is associated with traditions in their area. This does not only happen to students who live in Boja, but students who come from outside the Boja area also feel enthusiastic about learning based on the local wisdom of the *Merti Desa* tradition.

# Obstacles to the Application of the *Merti Desa* Tradition as a Learning Resource

The obstacles that arise in applying the Merti Desa tradition as a source of learning are related to the limitations of students in accessing the Merti Desa tradition independently, especially for students who come from outside Boja Village. On average, students from outside the Boja area need to learn the implementation of the Merti Desa tradition in Boja Village. So the teacher must be more in-depth in providing basic knowledge about the tradition. It can be through showing pictures or videos that are broadcast during the teaching and learning process. In addition, students only rely on teacher explanations without independently enriching information about the Merti Desa tradition as a learning resource. So what happens is that students will need more knowledge because they only refer to the teacher's explanation without increasing knowledge through readings or other available sources.

The obstacles faced by some schools are, of course, different. One of the private schools in Boja Village faces technical obstacles. Because the system at the school is a boarding school, it has a policy that students are prohibited from leaving the school environment. With these rules, it becomes an obstacle for teachers to provide flexibility to students to access the social phenomena around them. Even though the students at the school were very heterogeneous and did not only come from Boja Village, some came from outside the region or even the Boja District. So automatically, students from outside Boja will only be able to observe the *Merti Desa* tradition indirectly.

# **CONCLUSION**

Local wisdom values in the *Merti Desa* tradition carried out by the people of Boja Village include religious, cooperation, and cultural values that can be seen when implementing the *Merti Desa* tradition. To preserve and instil the values of local wisdom, the *Merti Desa* tradition of Boja village, especially for the younger generation, can be implemented

through social science learning as a learning resource. Teachers can develop the presentation of the Merti Desa tradition as a learning resource through creative and innovative learning strategies. The constraints faced by the teacher are more technical, including the limited time that the teacher has when linking the Merti Desa tradition with social studies learning material so that the knowledge that students understand is not optimal. In addition, mastery of the material the teacher owns is a very influential factor. The availability of supporting facilities infrastructure is also an obstacle for several schools in implementing the Merti Desa tradition as a social study learning resource.

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