

The Function of the *Basuh Lantai* Tradition for the Daik Village Community

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ABSTRACT

Culture is the characteristic identity of any group or community, which is upheld within its boundaries. Culture as a product of human thought records community traditions in various ceremonies such as births, funerals, agricultural rituals and musical performances. One of the ingrained traditions is the Washing the Floor custom in Daik Village, Lingga Regency, Riau Islands Province, which is carried out before giving birth. This qualitative research conducted in Daik Village immersed researchers in the local community, aiming to understand the social significance and evolution of the Basuh Floor tradition. By demonstrating solidarity and actively participating with the locals, the researcher aims to gather accurate information for this study. The results reveal the tradition's connection to animist beliefs and its role in protecting against mystical forces. Despite modernization, the decline of these traditions reflects changing attitudes towards childbirth practices and health care. This study underscores the importance of preserving cultural heritage amidst societal change. Despite its decline, the Basuh Floor tradition remains an integral part of the cultural identity of Daik Lingga Village and the Riau Islands as a whole. It serves as a symbol of cultural continuity and resilience, reminding the community of their heritage and providing a sense of belonging and identity. Additionally, it underscores the importance of understanding and preserving cultural practices, not only for their symbolic value but also for their role in maintaining social cohesion and collective memory.

KEYWORDS

*Basuh Lantai
Daik Village
Function
Preserving
Cultural*

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INTRODUCTION

Culture serves as the identity of a group or community, steadfastly upheld within that group. According to Sugono et al. (2008:214), culture, as a product of human thought, becomes a habit that is difficult to change. Traditions are the customs passed down from ancestors, still preserved within society. In the words of Irwan et al. (2013:87), traditions in society often manifest as birth ceremonies, funeral rites, agricultural rituals, traditional musical instruments, and games, among others. One such culturally ingrained tradition is observed in wedding ceremonies. Before, during, and after weddings, communities hold ceremonies or celebrations (traditions) passed down through generations, involving festivities, rituals, dances accompanied by traditional music.

The Riau Islands consist of cities and regencies that boast diverse cultures. Lingga Regency, for instance, has cultural practices such as Mandi Syafar, Berkhatam Al-Quran Lingga, Sunat Mudim, Bersih Tembuni Lingga, and others, which are abundant in the Riau Islands Province. Among these, Lingga Regency stands out for its rich tradition and cultural heritage. These traditions and cultures enrich the natural beauty, reflecting the lives of the people in the region. One deeply rooted tradition in their lives is the Basuh Lantai tradition in Daik Village, Lingga Regency, Riau Islands Province.

The Basuh Lantai customary ceremony, as its name suggests, consists of two Malay words,

Basuh and Lantai. Basuh means cleaning or washing, while Lantai refers to the floor or house foundation. In essence, the Basuh Lantai ceremony signifies cleansing the house floor, specifically where the mother gave birth to her baby. Typically conducted by those who assisted in the childbirth, commonly referred to as Tok Bidan or Mak Dukun, this ceremony takes place when the baby turns 44 days old. The Basuh Lantai ceremony is a traditional ritual in the life cycle of Malay communities in the Riau Islands Province, closely associated with childbirth. It is performed generation after generation to ensure not only physical cleanliness but also protection from the mystical forces they believe in.

The Basuh Lantai tradition serves to cleanse the house of evil spirits or supernatural beings after childbirth, a belief held by the people of Daik Village. Initially practiced only in Lingga Regency, Riau Islands Province, when a newborn arrived, this tradition was considered essential due to the belief that evil spirits always accompany childbirth. Therefore, the Basuh Lantai tradition was carried out after childbirth, specifically when the baby reached 44 days old. In the past, women were strongly encouraged to give birth at home due to the lack of adequate hospitals, believing that with every newborn, there would be accompanying evil spirits. Hence, this tradition was established by the elders. Nowadays, the implementation of this tradition has changed due to technological advancements and the availability of adequate healthcare services. Consequently, the Basuh Lantai tradition, which was once a distinctive feature of Daik Village in Lingga Regency, Riau Islands Province, is rarely seen by the local community.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach employing descriptive analytical methods. Taylor (as cited in Moleong, 2007:4) defines qualitative research as a research procedure that generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observable behaviors. This descriptive nature of qualitative approach holds the view that all aspects of sign systems should not be trivialized; everything is important and interconnected. Bungin (2010:40) asserts that qualitative approach involves the existence of a phenomenon within a specific social life or social environment.

Conducted in Daik Village, Lingga Regency, Riau Islands Province, this research endeavors to immerse the researcher into the social situation by fostering a sense of camaraderie with the local community. By demonstrating solidarity and actively participating with the locals, the researcher aims to gather accurate information for this study. Informants in this research include members of the Lingga Regency community in general and those specifically from the Lingga Subdistrict, Lingga Regency, Riau Islands Province, who are associated with the research object. These informants include Syamsul Asral (46 years old), Lazuardy (54 years old), and Cu Hamidah (80 years old).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tradition of *Basuh Lantai* has been present in Indonesia since the arrival of Islam in the 8th century. It is a postnatal activity performed on the 44th day after a baby is born, or when the baby reaches a certain age. The majority of people in the Daik-Lingga region are of Malay Riau descent and adhere to Islam. Despite their long-standing adherence to Islam and its prohibition, many of these people still believe in mystical practices rooted in animism (interview with Lazuardy, April 10, 2023).

Despite adopting Islam since ancient times, and despite it being forbidden by Islamic teachings, a significant portion of the population still believes in animistic practices such as the existence of "bunian" (mystical beings resembling humans who dwell in empty and secluded places), jin, "mambang" or "jerambang" (mystical beings dwelling in aquatic areas like seas, rivers, and lakes, and known for consuming fish caught by locals), "jembalang" (mystical beings believed to reside in the ground and often disturb humans), and "dewa" (commonly referred to as deities).

Based on their belief in these mystical beings, the people of Daik-Lingga believe that the floors of their homes are inhabited by such beings. If the floor comes into contact with the blood of a woman in labor, it must be immediately cleaned by washing, oiling, powdering, and combing. Failure to clean the blood from the floor is believed to result in disturbances by the mystical beings inhabiting the floor, not only affecting the birth attendants (referred to as "Mak Bidan" or "Mak Dukun") but also potentially causing distress to the mother and her baby during childbirth. The calamities or misfortunes believed to result from this neglect include the baby falling ill or incessant crying.

The traditional ceremony of *Basuh Lantai* is performed when the baby reaches the age of 44 days. Until the baby reaches this age, the mother and the baby are not allowed to leave the house. However, if the mother needs to leave the house, certain conditions must be met. The mother must carry an iron tool called *Kacip* used for splitting betel leaves or betel nuts, or a knife with a sharp end containing shallots. Meanwhile, inside the house, the baby must have a nail, a knife, or any iron object placed nearby.

These measures are taken to protect both the mother and the baby from disturbances by mystical beings. During this time, the baby is also not allowed to touch the ground. Typically, the ceremony is held on Fridays, as the Malay community of Daik-Lingga believes that Fridays are blessed or favored by Allah. The ceremony is usually conducted in the morning, as men are required to perform Friday prayers during the day, followed by the customary *kenduri* ceremony, known as *Selamatan*, by some Indonesians.

During the ceremony, relatives and neighbors from nearby houses gather. The ceremony is led by a woman who assisted in the childbirth, commonly known as *Mak Dukun* or *Mak Bidan*, along with her husband, known as *Bapak Jantan* (interview with Cu Midah, April 11, 2023). The subsequent traditional ceremony after *Basuh Lantai* is the *Kenduri*, led by a local religious leader and conducted in the couple's guesthouse.

Basuh Lantai Implementation Process

The execution process of the *Basuh Lantai* ritual, as suggested by Susetyo (2010:9), involves a sequence of offerings, which can be observed in the opening section, followed by the main offering, with an analysis of its differences from the opening section. The final section, which is still part of the entire performance, can also be observed, requiring specific elements for each part. The traditional *Basuh Lantai* ceremony in Daik Lingga, Riau Islands, follows a sequence starting from the initial preparations before the execution, then the core execution, and finally, after the execution, the communal feast.

Before the *Basuh Lantai* ceremony, one of the processes involves when the mother's pregnancy reaches 7 months. The husband of the expectant mother performs a ritual known as *Menepah*, bringing glutinous rice or known as *pulut* along with chicken eggs to the traditional midwife, known as *Mak Dukun* or *Mak Bidan*. The purpose of this ritual is to request and inform the midwife to assist in the future childbirth.



Figure 1. Servings in the implementation of the Menepah Ritual (Doc. Panca Dwi Kora, 2023)

Following the Menepah ritual, the husband and his pregnant wife visit the midwife's house every Friday, carrying a bottle of water and 3 lemons for the midwife to bless, which will be used for bathing for three consecutive days. Once the baby reaches 44 days old and all the necessary equipment for the ceremony is prepared, the *Basuh Lantai* ceremony can proceed. All the equipment is then brought to the room where the mother gave birth.

Meanwhile, the husband, along with the midwife, sits on the floor, initiating the ceremony. The husband recites the Quran, specifically Surah Al-Fatihah, with the midwife to commence the *Basuh Lantai* ceremony. After the recitation, the midwife places a basin of water in front of the husband and arranges some of the ceremony's equipment, including 2 split lemons, 4 portions of glutinous rice, a bowl of tamarind, 4 rice cakes, and a bowl of oil or scented powder.

Then, the midwife prays while washing her hands with the water in the basin. After the prayer, she anoints herself with oil and proceeds with the core of the ceremony: pouring water over the floor where the mother gave birth and scrubbing it clean. Once the floor is clean, the midwife recites a mantra while applying tamarind, lemons, rice cakes, and glutinous rice to the floor. The floor is then rinsed again with water from the basin to remove any remnants of the applied items. Afterward, the midwife applies a mirror and a comb to the floor while the husband circulates around her.



Figure 2. Handing over the jar when carrying out the core procession (Doc. Panca Dwi Kora, 2023)

The next ritual involves bathing the baby, where the midwife blows on the baby's ears and body three times and then pours water mixed with lemon juice over the baby three times as well. After bathing, the midwife hands the baby to its mother, blowing on its ears and body three more times. Once done, the baby is handed to the grandmother to be dried with a towel, powdered, and dressed. Meanwhile, the mother sits on the floor, ready to be bathed by the midwife with water mixed with lemon juice three times.



Figure 3. Mak Dukun cleans the floor where the baby was born (Doc. Panca Dwi Kora, 2023)

After bathing, the mother returns to the bed, carrying her baby, who has been dressed by the grandmother. The midwife then takes a bowl of rice while holding a prepared chicken. The rice is poured onto one of the mother's palms while the midwife prepares the chicken for the next ritual. Protecting the baby with one hand and holding the rice with the other, the midwife directs the chicken towards the baby. If the chicken pecks at the rice in the mother's hand, it is considered a good sign for the baby; otherwise, if it pecks at the mother's hand holding the baby, it is seen as a bad omen.

The subsequent ritual involves a game called "lompat benang tunggal" or "Tiung" which is a white thread located outside the previous ritual room. Before jumping, the mother is adorned with a thread by the midwife while standing and holding her baby. Then, the midwife, along with the husband, standing on either side of the mother, throws rice, paddy, and coins towards the mother's feet seven times. After tossing the rice, paddy, and coins, the midwife and husband ask the mother, still holding her baby, to jump over the white thread three times.

The next ritual is the procession of coconut husks accompanied by three lit candles circling around the mother and her baby by the midwife and husband. This circling is done from right to left and vice versa, each performed three times. Then, the midwife anoints the mother and her baby with oil and cuts the white thread with the candle's flame while applying the candle's residue to their eyebrows. Finally, the mother and baby's hair tips are cut using scissors and a comb provided earlier. The ceremony concludes with pouring a bowl of rice towards the baby's body and shaking the coconut husk towards the baby's left and right ears.

Once the daytime ceremony is over, it is followed by Friday prayers, then resumed with a communal feast. The feast is led by a local religious figure known as "Lebai" or "Tok Lebai" and attended by close relatives, neighbors, and guests. The feast concludes with a benediction led by the "Lebai" and ends with refreshments provided by the host family. After the feast, the family delivers a complete meal along with various side dishes, cloth, the previously prepared chicken, and some money to the midwife and husband as an expression of gratitude.

Symbolic Function

The practice of *Basuh Lantai* tradition holds symbolic significance for those who conduct it, providing a symbol for the community in Daik Lingga Village, Riau Islands. This tradition encompasses a variety of decorative elements, primarily aimed at enhancing its aesthetic value, thus garnering greater appreciation both spiritually and materially. The decorative motifs within this tradition carry symbolic meanings in line with the intentions and beliefs of the supporting community, thereby elevating the social status of its participants. Consequently, the adorned elements within the practice of *Basuh Lantai* cannot be divorced from the socio-cultural background of the community that originated it.

Symbolic functions are commonly found in ceremonial or religious artifacts, imbued with aesthetic value, and this is true for almost every ceremonial object in Daik Lingga, reflecting the rich cultural heritage. The *Basuh Lantai* tradition in Daik Lingga Village, Riau Islands, serves as a symbol of social status, indicating that only the Daik community or mothers who have given birth to children beyond 44 days old partake in it. As a symbol of social status, this tradition also serves as a guide for family life, instructing on the importance of cleanliness, especially concerning postnatal blood, as depicted in the various decorative elements of the *Basuh Lantai* paraphernalia.



Figure 4. People hold a feast (Doc. Panca Dwi Kora, 2023)

Postpartum *Basuh Lantai*, after the baby reaches 44 days old, is also regarded as a symbol of self-identity and heritage, passed down through generations. As custodians of this cultural heritage, it is incumbent upon us to preserve and safeguard these traditions against the onslaught of modernity. As the saying goes, "the more cultured an individual or society is, the deeper their collective awareness of their traditions' origins," highlighting the risk of cultural erosion in the face of foreign influences, which could lead to the loss of national identity.

To discuss the symbolic function, Efi's theory (2006: 17) divides art functions into three, one of which is the symbolic function. The Tradition of *Basuh Lantai* in its execution holds symbolic significance for those who organize it, thus providing a symbol for a community performing it in Daik Lingga, Riau Islands. In the Tradition of *Basuh Lantai*, there are numerous decorative patterns during its execution, typically to enhance its aesthetic value, thus increasing appreciation for the execution of the Tradition of *Basuh Lantai*, both spiritually and materially. Furthermore, the decorative patterns in the Tradition of *Basuh Lantai* carry symbolic value or specific meanings in line with the intentions and ideas of its supporting community. With the existence of the symbolic function (2002: 77-78) posits that the function of a socio-cultural system resembles that of an organism, where communities can improve their social status during the execution of the Tradition of *Basuh Lantai*, which cannot be separated from the socio-cultural background of the community that created it.

The Aesthetic Function

Kaplan and Manners' theory (2002: 77-78) posits that the function of a socio-cultural system resembles that of an organism, where its parts are not interrelated but contribute equitably to sustenance, stability, and the preservation of life. It suggests that all systems within the tradition of *Basuh Lantai* embody cultural patterns of existing phenomena. These phenomena, at the very least, retain their sacral and aesthetic functions (expressions of beauty). Beauty is described both as an abstract quality and as an observable beauty of form and color (Dharsono, 2007: 1-2). The beauty of the Tradition of *Basuh Lantai* is evident in its unique and distinct execution, differing from other regions in the Riau Islands.

This uniqueness positions Daik Lingga as a potential repository of cultural and traditional wealth, maintaining local cultures accepted across generations. One such cultural aspect with aesthetic values is the execution of the Tradition of *Basuh Lantai*. For instance, if the family hosting

the kenduri (feast) is from an economically disadvantaged background, they receive assistance from relatives or neighbors in preparing for the event, whether in the form of money or raw materials such as sugar, coconut, rice, and so on. The typical dishes served during the kenduri include a plate of ketupat (rice cakes), usually 25 in number, a plate of chicken curry, a plate of peanut sauce, a plate of serundeng (spiced grated coconut), and a plate of coconut sambal.

Utilitarian Function

Radcliffe Brown (1986: 89) suggests that functions are based on an analogy between social and organic life, contributing to the social life of the entire social system. The utilitarian function of the Tradition of *Basuh Lantai* is not limited to its original purpose, which was to be performed 44 days after a baby's birth, but has evolved to include cultural performance events (Peursen, 1976: 85). Functions always indicate influence on something else; what is called functional does not stand alone but is wrapped in a specific relationship that gives meaning. Presently, many artists or young people document the Tradition of *Basuh Lantai* through illustrations on social media to showcase its true function.

Moreover, many residents of Daik Lingga prefer hospitals over home births. Raharjo's theory (1986:15) further delves into this, suggesting that in addition to fulfilling physical needs, humans also have spiritual needs. Art fulfills its function by providing expression and satisfaction in what is seen and heard, aligning with human nature in seeking perfection. Thus, the Tradition of *Basuh Lantai* serves as a bridge between the usefulness of an object used by humans to achieve practical, concrete, physical goals and the functions and goals to achieve spiritual values. This is depicted when communities are able to illustrate it on social media.

Social Function

Radcliffe Brown (1986: 89) bases the concept of function on an analogy between social and organic life, which contributes to the social life of the entire social system. In the context of the *Basuh Lantai* tradition, it involves the local community in its execution, fostering a sense of camaraderie among neighbors, relatives, and village leaders. This aligns with Peursen's theory (1976: 85), which suggests that functions always exert influence on something else, indicating that functional aspects are not isolated but are wrapped within specific relationships that give meaning and significance.

Raharjo (1986: 15) delves further into this, stating that in addition to fulfilling physical needs, humans also have spiritual needs. Art fulfills this function by allowing expression and satisfaction in what is seen and heard, in line with human nature's pursuit of perfection. In modern sociological theory, the function is defined as a set of activities aimed at meeting the needs of the system. Furthermore, Malinowski (in Ihromi, 1980: 59) suggests that the orientation of functionalism theory assumes that all elements of culture are beneficial to the community where they exist. The function of a cultural element lies in its ability to meet various needs arising from the basic needs and secondary needs of the community members.

Based on research findings, the *Basuh Lantai* tradition in Daik Village, Lingga District, Riau Islands Province, has not progressed since 2012. This is related to Malinowski's theory (in Ihromi, 1980:59), which posits that all cultural elements are beneficial to the community where they exist. The function of a cultural element lies in its ability to meet various needs arising from the basic and secondary needs of the community members. Although some local communities are no longer willing to perform the tradition, obtaining the necessary tools and materials for its execution has also become difficult. Additionally, if further research is conducted on this tradition, it would only serve as a historical account of the tradition found in Daik Village, Lingga District, becoming a unique tradition of the Riau Islands Province. It is indeed regrettable that this unique tradition is disappearing, reflecting the modern era's developments where even mothers are reluctant to take the risk of giving birth at home, preferring hospitals over traditional midwives.

CONCLUSION

The tradition of Basuh Floor holds deep cultural and social significance, particularly in the context of postpartum rituals in Daik Lingga Village, Riau Islands. Despite its decline since 2012 and the reluctance of some locals to uphold it due to various reasons such as modernization and the preference for hospital births, its detailed procession reflects a rich tapestry of beliefs and practices.

The Basuh Floor tradition is not merely a ritual but a complex series of symbolic actions aimed at cleansing both the physical space and the individuals involved. Divided into three main stages, the tradition begins with a preparatory ritual called Menepah, where offerings are made to a Mak Dukun or Mak Bidan, symbolizing respect and signaling the intention to perform the Basuh Floor ritual. The subsequent stages involve the actual cleansing of the floor where the mother gave birth, accompanied by prayers, symbolic gestures, and rituals involving the newborn.

Each step of the Wash the Floor tradition is infused with symbolism and meaning, from the washing of the floor with special ingredients to the ritualistic acts performed on the mother and child. These rituals not only serve practical purposes like cleanliness but also carry deep cultural and spiritual significance, reflecting the community's beliefs about childbirth, motherhood, and the role of supernatural forces in their lives.

Despite its decline, the Basuh Floor tradition remains an integral part of the cultural identity of Daik Lingga Village and the Riau Islands as a whole. It serves as a symbol of cultural continuity and resilience, reminding the community of their heritage and providing a sense of belonging and identity. Additionally, it underscores the importance of understanding and preserving cultural practices, not only for their symbolic value but also for their role in maintaining social cohesion and collective memory.

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