



## **The Tradition of Larung Sesaji: Social Value And Its Influence on The Lives of Blitar's Coastal Communities**

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### **Abstract**

The Larung Sesaji tradition in Blitar's coastal communities has various deep values, including mutual cooperation, togetherness, solidarity, and respect for nature. Besides functioning as a spiritual ritual, this tradition strengthens local cultural identity and creates a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. This research aims to: (1) identify the social values in the Larung Sesaji tradition, (2) analyse its influence on the social life of the community, and (3) explore the challenges in maintaining it in the midst of social change. Using a qualitative approach and a case study in Tambakrejo Village, data were obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation, then analysed using the Miles model. The results showed that the Larung Sesaji tradition fosters togetherness, solidarity, and social justice. In addition, this tradition increases ecological awareness and strengthens the collective identity of the community. However, challenges from modernisation, globalisation and social change, including the declining interest of the younger generation, have the potential to threaten the sustainability of this tradition. To ensure the sustainability of the tradition, innovations involving the younger generation are needed, such as the integration of digital technology and creative approaches in the performance of rituals. Suggestions for future research include analysing 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and the utilisation of digital technology, to strengthen the role of the Larung Sesaji tradition as part of a cultural heritage that is adaptive to the times

**Keywords:** Larung Sesaji Tradition, Social Values, Coastal Communities

### **Abstrak**

Tradisi Larung Sesaji pada masyarakat pesisir Blitar memiliki berbagai nilai yang mendalam, antara lain gotong royong, kebersamaan, solidaritas, dan penghormatan terhadap alam. Selain berfungsi sebagai ritual spiritual, tradisi ini memperkuat identitas budaya lokal dan menciptakan hubungan yang harmonis antara manusia dan alam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai sosial dalam tradisi Larung Sesaji, (2) menganalisis pengaruhnya terhadap kehidupan sosial masyarakat, dan (3) mengeksplorasi tantangan dalam mempertahankan tradisi tersebut di tengah perubahan sosial. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan studi kasus di Desa Tambakrejo, data diperoleh melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis dengan menggunakan model Miles. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi Larung Sesaji menumbuhkan kebersamaan, solidaritas, dan keadilan sosial. Selain itu, tradisi ini meningkatkan kesadaran ekologis dan memperkuat identitas kolektif masyarakat. Namun, tantangan dari modernisasi, globalisasi dan perubahan sosial, termasuk menurunnya minat generasi muda, berpotensi mengancam keberlangsungan tradisi ini. Untuk memastikan keberlanjutan tradisi ini, diperlukan inovasi yang melibatkan generasi muda, seperti integrasi teknologi digital dan

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*pendekatan kreatif dalam pelaksanaan ritual. Saran untuk penelitian selanjutnya, perlu dilakukan analisis terhadap keterampilan abad ke-21, seperti berpikir kritis, kreativitas, kolaborasi, dan pemanfaatan teknologi digital, untuk memperkuat peran tradisi Larung Sesaji sebagai bagian dari warisan budaya yang adaptif terhadap perkembangan zaman.*

Kata Kunci: Tradisi *Larung Sesaji*, Nilai-nilai Sosial, Masyarakat Pesisir

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## Introduction

Blitar, a city located on the southern coast of East Java, has various cultural riches that are closely related to the lives of its people who mostly depend on marine products. One tradition that is still maintained and is an important part of the social life of the Blitar coastal community is the tradition of *Larung Sesaji* (Mahendri, Mujiwati, & Aka, 2022). This tradition is an expression of gratitude to God Almighty for the abundant sea products and at the same time a request for safety and protection for fishermen and people who depend on the sea (Rizkina, Suprpto, Admoko, & Hidaayatullaah, 2024). The *Larung Sesaji* ceremony is not only a religious ritual, but also full of social values that bind the community in togetherness and harmonious relationships with nature.

As a traditional ceremony, *Larung Sesaji* involves all elements of the community in the preparation and implementation of the procession. Villagers work together to prepare the offerings that will be thrown into the sea, accompanied by joint prayers asking for blessings and protection (Adab, 2023). This tradition, which is carried out in mutual cooperation, contains very important social values for the coastal communities of Blitar, including togetherness, mutual assistance, and respect for nature. This process of gotong royong is not only related to the implementation of the ceremony, but also reflects the close social interaction between community members in everyday life.

Apart from being a form of gratitude, the *Larung Sesaji* tradition also has a deep ecological dimension. Blitar people consider the sea as a source of life that must be maintained with respect (Zulia & Yanuwadi, 2015). This ritual is a symbol of respect for the power of nature, especially the sea, which is often considered to have supernatural powers, such as the ruler of the sea in local mythology, the Queen of the South Sea. Thus, *Larung Sesaji* also teaches the importance of maintaining the balance of nature and ecosystems, as well as the need for people to live in harmony with the surrounding nature.

However, in the midst of increasingly modern times, the tradition of *Larung Sesaji* faces great challenges, especially in terms of preservation and sustainability. The influence of globalisation, changes in people's lifestyles, and rapid technological advances affect the way of life and mindset of Blitar's coastal communities, especially the younger generation. The existence of *Larung Sesaji* as a tradition passed down from generation to generation faces the threat of forgetting or reducing its meaning if it is not properly maintained. Therefore, it is important to explore the extent to which this tradition can still maintain its social value, as well as how it affects the social, cultural and ecological life of Blitar's coastal communities today.

The social values contained in the *Larung Sesaji* tradition are very important to understand, because in addition to functioning as a spiritual ritual, this tradition also reflects the values of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and social solidarity that are still the foundation of coastal community life. In addition, *Larung Sesaji* also has a role in strengthening local cultural identity and preserving nature. However, the changing times and the challenges of globalisation require the Blitar community to adjust the implementation of this tradition to remain relevant to modern life, without losing its essence. The objectives of this study are 1) to find out the social values contained in the *Larung Sesaji* tradition in the Blitar coastal community; 2) to find out the influence of the *Larung Sesaji* tradition on the social life of the Blitar coastal community; and 3) to find out the challenges faced in maintaining the *Larung Sesaji* tradition amid social and cultural changes in the Blitar coastal community.

The tradition of *Larung Sesaji* in Tambakrejo Village is one of the local cultural heritages that continues to be preserved by coastal communities. This tradition is carried out at the initiative of the local community and is referred to as the original tradition, as stated by Jurdi (2018). The implementation of this tradition has strong spiritual, social and cultural values, with several main objectives, namely: 1) as a form of gratitude for the favours given by God, especially sea products which are the source of livelihood for fishermen; 2) to ask for protection so that the family and community are protected from diseases, disasters, and various dangers; 3) praying for a better future, including the smoothness of earning a living at sea; 4) providing a portion of sustenance through the provision of food enjoyed by the whole community, strengthening togetherness and solidarity; and 5) preserving the noble values of ancestors, which teach the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships with God, fellow humans, and nature.

The traditional ceremony of *Larung Sesaji* in Tambakrejo Village will be held every 1 Muharram (1 Suro). The procession begins with a reading of the history of Tambakrejo Village, which tells the origin of the village and its historical relationship with Wira Atmajaya, a Mataram warrior who fled to the area and started a tradition of *tasyakuran* every 1 Suro. After that, the village head and Blitar regent gave speeches. Next, the procession began with the transport of tumpeng and offerings that had been prepared. The tumpeng and offerings are paraded from the Tambakrejo Village Office to the coast, accompanied by a lively traditional art accompaniment. Arriving at the beach, tumpeng and offerings are prayed for by religious leaders and caretakers of Tambakrejo Beach, with prayers offered to express gratitude for the sea products obtained during the year and hopes for smoothness and safety in the future. The procession continues with the beating of the gong as a sign of the start of the *Larung Sesaji* ceremony, accompanied by the handover of a shawl to the caretaker of Tambakrejo Beach.

Furthermore, the crops and cow heads that are part of the offerings are brought to the dock and then floated to the sea for 3 Km as an offering to the sea, a symbol of gratitude and a request that the sea products obtained are always abundant and the community is always protected. In recognition of the importance of this tradition, *Larung Sesaji* Tambakrejo Beach has this year been recognised by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Indonesia as an intangible cultural heritage, along with the *Reog Bulkiyo* tradition from Kemloko Village. This recognition further strengthens the value of local culture and encourages the preservation of traditions so that they can continue to be enjoyed by future generations, as well as being a cultural tourism attraction in Blitar.

Overall, *Larung Sesaji* is a tradition that encompasses various dimensions of life in the coastal communities of Blitar, such as social, cultural, economic and religious (Adab, 2023). These relevant concepts illustrate how Blitar coastal communities integrate nature, spirituality and social values in their lives, as well as the importance of maintaining balance in human relationships with nature through cultural practices and traditions.

According to Kluckhohn (2017) values are general conceptions that guide individuals or groups in determining the direction of behaviour and decision making. Kluckhohn (2017) argues that values have an important role in shaping the human cultural system and become the basis for distinguishing what is considered good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, and right or wrong in society. Values are not static, but develop dynamically through social interactions and individual experiences. Furthermore, Kluckhohn (2017) explains that values

are an expression of deep human needs, both material and spiritual. Values influence how individuals assess an action, situation or object in a particular social context. In this case, values can be considered as a conceptual framework that helps individuals and groups face life challenges and build social harmony.

According to Rokeach (1969), values are beliefs that serve as principles or standards in one's life. Values provide a strong motivation for action and a basis for evaluating one's own and others' behaviour. Values, according to Rokeach, also reflect an individual's priorities and preferences in life, thus serving as a guide in determining life goals and how to achieve them.

Social values in the *Larung Sesaji* tradition include (1) mutual cooperation, (2) trust/spirituality, and (3) social unity. The value of gotong royong is reflected in the way the Blitar community works together to organise the *Larung Sesaji* event. Serungke et al. (2023) explained that gotong royong strengthens relationships between individuals and increases solidarity in the community. Furthermore, *Larung Sesaji* has a spiritual dimension that is closely related to the community's belief in the power of nature and ancestral spirits. This reflects how the community views nature as an entity that must be respected and protected (Logita, 2024). In addition, the *Larung Sesaji* tradition functions as a social glue/social unity, bringing people together to celebrate and carry out rituals for safety and blessings.

## **Method**

This research uses a qualitative approach that aims to understand the social values in the local wisdom of *Larung Sesaji* in coastal Blitar. The qualitative approach provides space to explore various perspectives from village officials, communities, and traditional leaders in interpreting and implementing the social values contained in the local wisdom of *Larung Sesaji*. This research uses a case study type of research, which focuses on an in-depth exploration of the social values in the *Larung Sesaji* tradition and its influence on the lives of Blitar coastal communities.

This research was conducted in Tambakrejo Village, Wonotirto District, Blitar Regency. The reason for choosing the research location is based on the local wisdom of *Larung Sesaji* being an intangible cultural heritage established by the central government through the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Indonesia.

Primary data from this research includes interviews and observations with the community, village officials, and traditional leaders. In addition to primary data, researchers

will seek information from secondary data in the form of *Larung Sesaji* implementation documents and *Larung Sesaji* activity reports.

Researchers will use several data collection techniques, namely 1) interviews, conducted with the community, village officials, and traditional leaders to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of *Larung Sesaji*, the social values contained in it, and its influence on community life. 2) Observation, conducted with the community, village officials, and traditional leaders to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of *Larung Sesaji*, the social values contained in it, and its influence on community life. 3) Documentation, where researchers will collect and analyse documents related to the implementation of *Larung Sesaji* and reports on *Larung Sesaji* activities.

Data analysis in this study was carried out using the model Miles et al. (2014) with stages (1) data collection, (2) data processing, and (3) data presentation. The data reduction stage includes: (1) data collection (interview, observation, documentation); (2) data coding; (3) filtering and sorting relevant data; and (4) data categorisation based on emerging themes. The data presentation stage includes: (1) preparation of data in the form of narratives, tables, or diagrams and (2) organising thematic data and relationships between themes. The conclusion drawing and verification stage includes: (1) drawing conclusions based on patterns and themes found; (2) verification of findings through triangulation and member checking; and (3) preparation of final findings that answer research questions.

Data validity in this study was carried out by triangulation. This research uses triangulation techniques and sources. Technical triangulation was carried out by collecting data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Furthermore, source triangulation was collected from the community, village officials, and traditional leaders.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Social Values in *Larung Sesaji* Tradition in Coastal Communities of Blitar**

Residents of Tambakrejo Village, Wonotirto Subdistrict, Blitar Regency, live their daily lives in a pattern that is not much different from the general community. They consume rice, side dishes, and vegetables as staples to fulfil their physical needs. However, behind this routine, there is a tradition that is very deep and contains strong social values, namely the *Larung Sesaji* tradition. This tradition is carried out every 1 *Muharram* or 1 *Suro*, which is believed to be a form of gratitude to God for the abundance of fortune, safety, and natural products obtained, especially from the sea. For the people of Tambakrejo Village, this

tradition is not only a ritual event, but also a means to strengthen social relations and maintain the harmony of community life.

One of the social values that is very strong in the *Larung Sesaji* tradition is *gotong royong*. Every villager, without exception, is involved in the preparation and implementation of the event. The preparation process, which includes decorating the boat, preparing offerings, putting up banners, and cleaning the village environment, is done together. In every step, there is no distinction between people of higher and lower social status. All residents work together with the spirit of helping each other. This creates a strong sense of solidarity between residents, where people support each other to ensure the tradition runs smoothly. This spirit of *gotong royong* is at the core of social life in the village, where each individual feels responsible for the welfare and continuity of the tradition (Brown, 2013).

The value of togetherness is also reflected in the implementation of this tradition, especially during the *kenduri* event. Villagers gather to eat together, where the dishes that have been prepared by the event committee are shared and enjoyed by everyone without exception. In this togetherness, there is no difference between the rich and the poor, all sit together, enjoy the same food, and share in joy. This communal meal symbolises unity and harmony among the people (Pesurnay, 2018). The *Larung Sesaji* tradition makes individuals feel connected to each other, strengthens social bonds and reinforces a sense of belonging to the community.

In addition, this tradition also contains a very deep value of helping. The people of Tambakrejo Village not only help each other in the form of labour, but also materials and prayers. The fishermen, for example, provide a portion of the community's fish catch for the *kenduri* event as a form of gratitude and sharing with others. Other residents, whether they work in agriculture, trade, or other sectors, provide assistance both in the form of food donations and in the technical preparation of the event. In addition, the joint prayers offered for the safety and smooth running of life also reflect the value of spiritual help, where residents pray for each other's welfare and safety (Purwanti, Fattah, Qurrata, Sulistyono, & Saputra, 2023).

The value of social justice is also very visible in the *Larung Sesaji* tradition. All villagers, both rich and poor, are equally involved in every stage of the procession. There is no difference in terms of roles or contributions made. Everyone, regardless of economic background, plays an active role in the success of the event. This reflects the principle of social justice, where every villager is treated equally and valued for their contribution to the

common good. This tradition teaches that despite differences in everyday life, when it comes to important traditional rituals, all residents are part of a single entity that depends on and needs each other.

In addition, unity and integrity are the main values presented through *Larung Sesaji*. Although members of the Tambakrejo Village community come from various social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, this tradition is a place to unite in one goal: expressing gratitude to God and asking for blessings for the entire village. The procession, which involves many elements of the community, creates an opportunity for residents to gather and interact with each other, strengthening relationships between residents who may rarely meet due to their daily activities (Gofman, 2014). Through *Larung Sesaji*, the whole village comes together, putting aside differences and celebrating togetherness in one big ritual.

In a pluralistic society, the value of respect for diversity is very important, and this tradition teaches to appreciate differences. Residents of Tambakrejo Village who have various backgrounds of beliefs, views, and cultures still participate in this procession with tolerance and peace. Although the religion and culture of the community can be different, all residents join in an atmosphere of harmony, making *Larung Sesaji* a concrete example of respect for diversity in society. The value of deliberation is an important foundation in the implementation of this tradition. Every decision, from the time of implementation to the programme, is made through deliberation between community leaders, village officials and residents. All decisions are taken together, reflecting the value of democracy and respect for collective decisions. Riyadi (2024) explains that this deliberation ensures that every voice is heard and every interest is respected, which in turn results in decisions that are best for the whole community.

### **The Influence of *Larung Sesaji* Tradition on the Social Life of Coastal Communities in Blitar**

The *Larung Sesaji* tradition carried out by the coastal community of Tambakrejo Village contains many values that are not only related to cultural aspects, but also affect social life, both in relationships between individuals, between groups, and between humans and nature. By understanding the influence of this tradition on the social life of the people of Tambakrejo Village, we can use several relevant social theories to dig deeper, such as Functionalism Theory, Social Solidarity Theory, Local Wisdom Theory, Social Ecology Theory, and Social Structure Theory.



*Larung Sesaji* strengthens solidarity and a sense of togetherness among the community. This tradition becomes a collective ritual that brings together various groups, strengthening collective identity and a sense of belonging to the community. This is in line with Durkheim's concept that collective rituals bind individuals to their groups and create social integration (Liénard & Boyer, 2006). People feel more bonded to each other through participation in these activities, which fosters a sense of social responsibility towards fellow community members.

*Gotong royong* in *Larung Sesaji* not only functions in performing the ritual, but also as a means to build strong social relationships in daily life. This activity fosters a high sense of social solidarity among community members, who have the awareness to support each other, share tasks, and work together for the sake of collective survival. Wardani & Yuniariyah (2021) explain, mechanical solidarity (solidarity built due to the similarity of tasks and roles) can be seen clearly in this activity, where the coastal communities of Tambakrejo Village have similarities in their work as fishermen and in the aim of maintaining the sustainability of life.

*Larung Sesaji* introduces the value that humans must maintain a balanced and harmonious relationship with nature. Ecological values in this tradition teach people to respect the sea as a source of life that provides blessings. This affects the mindset of the people of Tambakrejo Village not to overexploit nature and preserve their natural resources. This tradition also introduces the concept that natural preservation is part of social survival (Agustin, 2022).

*Larung Sesaji* influences social life by maintaining ecological awareness among the community. Through this tradition, people learn that the preservation of nature, especially the sea, is very important for the sustainability of their lives. It also creates social awareness that reminds people to maintain environmental sustainability as part of their social life. This ritual fosters a sense of ecological responsibility among the community, where they not only think about their own well-being, but also the well-being of nature and future generations.

*Larung Sesaji* shows inclusivity in the social structure of Blitar society. All levels of society are involved in this ceremony, which creates a sense of social unity and equality. With no separation of roles based on social class, this tradition helps to remove social barriers and strengthen the inclusive social structure of the community. This means that all members of the community feel equally responsible for maintaining their social and cultural survival.

The *Larung Sesaji* tradition has a major influence on the social life of the Blitar coastal community, which can be analysed through various social theories. Based on Functionalism Theory, this tradition strengthens social cohesion and community integration. Through Social Solidarity Theory, this tradition strengthens the value of mutual cooperation that builds solidarity between community members. Local Wisdom Theory shows how *Larung Sesaji* maintains ecological values and a harmonious relationship with nature. Social Ecology Theory reveals the interdependence between society and nature, while Social Structure Theory emphasises the inclusiveness and participation of all levels of society in maintaining social sustainability (Hidir & Malik, 2024). Overall, the *Larung Sesaji* tradition strengthens the sustainability of the social life of the Blitar community by strengthening relationships with each other and with nature.

### **Challenges in Maintaining the *Larung Sesaji* Tradition of Blitar Coastal Communities**

The *Larung Sesaji* tradition is an important cultural heritage for Blitar's coastal communities, however, like other traditions, *Larung Sesaji* also faces various challenges in an effort to maintain it amidst changing times and social dynamics. Analysis of these challenges can be done by referring to several relevant social theories, such as Modernisation Theory, Globalisation Theory, Social Change Theory, and Local Wisdom Theory.

Modernisation Theory explains that along with technological development, industrialisation and urbanisation, communities tend to move towards a more modern way of life, which often shifts traditional values (Goorha, 2017). In Blitar's coastal communities, modernisation brings significant changes in the mindset, lifestyle and economic system of the community. The modernisation process involving urbanisation, increased access to technology, and a shift to a more industry-oriented economy or other sectors (e.g. tourism or non-traditional sectors) often reduces the younger generation's interest in preserving traditions that are considered outdated, such as *Larung Sesaji*. People who are more focused on practical and modern economic needs tend to prioritise activities that provide more immediate financial benefits, rather than engaging in traditional rituals that require time, effort and cost.

Globalisation theory explains that the process of globalisation brings a very strong global cultural influence, which often reduces the dominance of local culture (Kofman & Youngs, 2008). Globalisation relates to the rapid exchange of information, goods and ideas,

leading to the homogenisation of culture in many regions (Ritzer, 2007). In the era of globalisation, Blitar coastal communities, like other communities, face the threat of cultural homogenisation, where global culture (e.g. popular culture, social media or western lifestyles) can displace local cultures such as *Larung Sesaji*. This affects the way people view the importance of maintaining traditions, especially the younger generation who are more open to outside influences and more interested in a more 'modern' and 'global' life.

Social Change Theory refers to changes that occur in social structures, values and norms in society. Rafiq (2020) explains that this change process can be caused by various factors, such as technological advances, education, economic changes, or interactions with outside cultures. In Blitar's coastal communities, rapid social changes, such as shifting values and life priorities, can affect the sustainability of *Larung Sesaji*. For example, with increasing levels of education and understanding of modern life, many people tend to prioritise achieving material and higher social status over preserving traditions that are considered not directly beneficial in their economic lives.

Local Wisdom Theory explains that every community has knowledge, practices, and values that develop based on their experiences interacting with the environment (Wiryani & Senastri, 2022). This local wisdom serves to maintain the balance between humans and nature, as well as maintaining the sustainability of community life (Islami, 2022). One of the main challenges in maintaining the *Larung Sesaji* tradition is the reliance on the younger generation to continue this tradition. Along with modernisation, local wisdom associated with the lives of fishermen and the relationship with the sea, as reflected in *Larung Sesaji*, is increasingly being eroded by modern life practices that are less connected to nature. If the younger generation loses a sense of care for this local wisdom, then the *Larung Sesaji* tradition risks extinction.

Conflict Theory, pioneered by Karl Marx, highlights the tensions that occur when more traditional social groups face off against more modern or economically advanced groups (Esteban, Mayoral, & Ray, 2012). In the context of *Larung Sesaji*, there is a tension between traditional values and economic pressures to follow more 'profitable' ways of life. One of the major challenges in maintaining the *Larung Sesaji* tradition is the conflict between cultural conservation and economic needs. With the development of an economy based on industry, tourism, or other more 'modern' sectors, traditions such as *Larung Sesaji* can be considered no longer relevant in the context of social and economic change. Younger or more

economically profit-orientated communities may perceive these traditions as barriers to progress or social change.

The challenges faced in maintaining the *Larung Sesaji* tradition are complex and relate to changing social, economic and cultural dynamics. Based on relevant social theories, key challenges include modernisation, globalisation, changing social values, as well as the tension between tradition and economic progress. To maintain this tradition, Blitar's coastal communities need to develop adaptation strategies that involve the younger generation, modernise the ways in which the tradition is carried out without sacrificing its essence, and utilise sustainable economic potential, such as culture-based tourism. Thus, *Larung Sesaji* can remain relevant and play an important role in the social life of Blitar's coastal communities.

## Conclusion

The *Larung Sesaji* tradition in Tambakrejo Village, Wonotirto Subdistrict, Blitar District, contains strong social values, such as mutual cooperation, togetherness, helping, and social justice. Carried out every 1 Muharram or 1 Suro, this tradition is not only a religious ritual, but also strengthens social relations between residents, involving all levels of society regardless of social status. It creates solidarity, respects diversity, and encourages active participation in preserving nature. The tradition also faces the challenges of modernisation and globalisation that can shift the interest of the younger generation, but it still plays an important role in strengthening the social and cultural life of Blitar's coastal communities.

## Suggestion

Suggestions for future research include analysing 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and the utilisation of digital technology, to strengthen the role of the *Larung Sesaji* tradition as part of a cultural heritage that is adaptive to the times.

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