The Dynamics of Social Values and Teaching in the Global Era:
The *Sekaten* Tradition of Surakarta Kingdom

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Abstract

This article discusses the meaning behind the *sekaten* traditional ceremony, as performed in Surakarta by Surakarta palace, the government, and the local community. This is important because the s*ekaten* ceremony is a traditional cultural event that encompasses local wisdom and moral values that guide the development of a civilized social life, yet it currently tends to be oriented toward the tourism sector, and its previous meaning is not understood by the local community. This research applies a descriptive analytical method with a qualitative approach. Data were collected from informants, namely staff at Surakarta palace, the Surakarta City Government, and Islamic religious leaders in Surakarta, as well as traders and visitors at the *sekaten*. The technique involved in-depth interviews and participatory observation of the places and events involved in the *sekaten* traditional procession. Data analysis was then carried out inductively using interactive methods. The results showed that the meaning behind the *sekaten* tradition has changed in the era of globalization from originally symbolizing the Islamic kingdom and royal power as part of Javanese culture. In the globalization era, the Surakarta palace defines *sekaten* as part of a cultural heritage that encompasses local wisdom, while the government defines it as a cultural asset and an element of the tourism industry. Finally, local people associate *sekaten* with syncretism, entertainment, and tourist destinations.

Keywords: meaning, local culture, tourism industry, syncretism

Introduction

There are currently about 5,000 to 6,000 cultures around the world. Of these, most of them belong to indigenous peoples, accounting for around 80-90% of global cultural diversity (Pröschel, 2012). This situation is reflected in Indonesia, which is an archipelago country with a rich cultural diversity. Each of its34 provinces has its own distinct cultural identity and pattern of human activity, as well asa symbolic structure that assigns importance to human behavior (Abdel-hadi, 2012). In a large culture, there are often subcultures that are marked by social groups through

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shared practices and interests (Hare & Baker, 2017). There are three key concepts regarding subculture, namely capital, style, and authenticity.

Many studies have concluded that large cultures and subcultures in various parts of the world experience change from time to time due to the globalization process, not least in Indonesia. Globalization typically refers to the process through which different societies and economies become more closely integrated (Iriani & Noruzi, 2011). At present, society cannot avoid globalization, which underlies development and brings social change through a blurring of the cultural and geographical boundaries between countries and even between continents (Riaz & Arif, 2017). Globalization is often seen differently, and pro-globalization groups see it as providing many new opportunities for people to develop and compete better, because production becomes more efficient. Anti-globalization groups, meanwhile, argue that increasingly intense global competition pressures cause certain groups of people to lose control of resources and become unable to exercise their economic power in various situations (Iriani & Noruzi, 2011). Globalization has managed to eliminate the cultural boundaries between countries (Ritzer, 2014) and encouraged investors to take advantage of opportunities to benefit financially, including through cultural channels. As a result, forms of tradition and local wisdom that were previously highly valued in culture are systemically and structurally adapted to a more profane culture directed at meeting the need for pleasure. This phenomenon occurs in parallel to commercialization, where traditional arts and culture are treated as commodities for tourism in order to serve the economic needs of the community (Conradie, 2012).

Today, the religious rituals and other traditions of Indonesia are also being exploited by business owners to make profits under the pretext of culture-based tourism (Günlü, Pırnar & Yağcı, 2009; Maccarrone-eaglen, 2009). Some religious rituals now require an entrance ticket, or they have religious attributes that require visitors to pay something. In addition, the surrounding community is also engaged in economic activities, such as catering, parking, and other paid services. The commercialization of the traditions and culture of local people by commercially repackaging them for the international community can bring in foreign spending, help drive the economy, and improve people's welfare materially, but it can also diminish local identity and values. A community's self-esteem is therefore eroded by transforming its culture into something profane and changing the profound into something trivial (Lyons, Sarah & Christian Wells, 2014).

Globalization clearly impacts culture through the increasingly vague cultural boundaries between countries and the strong influence of foreign culture on the local culture. There is also a strengthening of modern cultural forms throughout the world as the more traditional local cultures are abandoned. A society cannot avoid this exposure to foreign culture, which consequently manifests in its food, clothing, and entertainment(Shepherd, 2002). The influence of foreign cultures on traditional arts and cultures also causes young people (i.e., millennials) to be less interested in social values and traditional culture. The younger generation therefore does not understand the values contained in local wisdom, and they consider traditional culture to be old-fashioned, impractical, and a barrier to progress. This behavior can be seen in the people of Surakarta, which was historically the center of government for the Mataram Kingdom with its Islamic nuances.

Before Indonesia's independence in 1945, the Surakarta palace was the seat of government for the Mataram Kingdom. It has hosted the traditional *sekaten* ceremony every year since the 15thcentury. This tradition is a major attraction for tourists visiting Surakarta, and it remains attractive to many local and foreign researchers due to its uniqueness. The *sekaten* ceremony was originally intended as a medium for disseminating Islamic ideology. However, along with the shifting social dynamics in Surakarta, the *sekaten* experienced a shift in its orientation, function, and meaning.

Purpose of the Study

This paper seeks to examine the dynamics of the social values and teachings behind the *sekaten* social tradition from the perspectives of history, the palace, the government, and society in the globalized era. More specifically, this research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How are the social values and teaching of the *sekaten* tradition in Surakarta viewed from a historical perspective?

2. How do the Surakarta palace, the Surakarta city government, and the community interpret the *sekaten* as a social tradition?

Literature Review

The *sekaten* tradition as a social practice is an object of cultural study. It has earned an enduring interest in the form of studies of habits, spatial positions, and social practices (Mahbub & Shoily,

2016). Structural theory is one of the earliest theories in cultural studies. It views the "structure" as rules and resources that are recursively implied within social reproduction. These are characteristics of institutionalized social systems that have structural properties in the sense that relationships are established overtime and space. This "structure" can be abstractly conceptualized through two aspects: normative elements and codes of significance (Hilmi, 2012).

Through his structural theory, Gidden places people in a very significant position as an "agency" that can reproduce actions and have the ability, as well as an understanding of, the intent and purpose of these actions. Through various structuration principles, he details three major groups of structures: (1) signification structure, which involves symbolic schemata, meaning, mentioning, and discourse; (2) the structure of domination, such as the means of control over people (politics) and goods (economics); and (3) the structure of justification or legitimacy, such as the normative regulatory scheme that is embodied in the legal system (Hilmi, 2012).

In the process of cultural production and reproduction, the role of agents is highly influenced by the structure, especially the marking structure, for the symbol system, the interpretation of meaning, and the formation of discourse. Here, cultural differences in values and epistemological framework concur with cultural differences that are reflected in artifacts and public demonstrations. One dimension of cultural difference concerns the varying psychological distance between people and nature (Medin & Bang, 2014).

Cultural production and reproduction often occur as part of industrial activities. In America, the cultural heritage industry is often described as "cultural sharing," where supporters of indigenous culture are involved in the process of transforming their cultural identity into products for consumption by foreign tourists. There are two different views of the culture industry, though. On the one hand, the cultural heritage industry can be seen as a strong catalyst for reproducing local culture, but on the other hand, it can be regarded as endangering cultural aspects that are currently protected from commodification (Bunten, 2008; Strunc, 2019).

Cultural reproduction can occur through re-invention in the form of an effort that is consciously directed to construct a new identity that departs from tradition and functions as a social and political formation, one that is needed to legitimize the status and authority of a community (Moersid, 2013). Thus, cultural preservation often only arises as an issue when there are concerns about a possible "loss" from the relevant culture (Lundup, 2013). Cultural preservation also

becomes more complicated when it comes to intangible culture heritage (ICH). A total of 82 ICH conventions focus on "oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, knowledge and practice about nature and the universe, social practices, rituals and celebratory events, and traditional expertise" (Blakely, 2015).

In an effort to preserve various forms of traditional culture, it is necessary to maintain the culture in a form that has "naturally" evolved. This leads to the problem of how to exploit a culture economically without compromising its authenticity (Pröschel, 2012). On the one hand, commodification can result in a traditional culture becoming essentially extinct, but on the other hand, only a culture that accommodates commercialization in the tourism industry will be acceptable to a changing society. This phenomenon is behind the shift in the orientation and function of traditions and therefore their meanings.

In communication, a sign points to something other than itself, so the meaning is the relationship between the object or idea and a sign (Littlejohn, 1999). Indeed, meaning is a complex relationship between symbols, objects, and people. Thus, we have logical and psychological meanings: Logical meaning is the relationship between symbols and references, while psychological meaning is the relationship between symbols and people. Meaning comprises personal individual conceptions and general conceptions that are shared with others. Langers' vocabulary includes three additional terms: signification, denotation, and connotation. Signification is the meaning of a sign, a simple stimulus that announces the existence of an object. Denotation is the relationship between a sign and an object. The connotation of symbols, meanwhile, is the direct relationship between symbols and conceptions.

Methods

Research Design

This study applies a descriptive analytical research design with a qualitative descriptive strategy, which is suitable for research that generates data in the form of words, whether written or spoken by people who can be understood (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Such research is one of the basic traditions in social science, and it relates to people in their language, region, and terminology (Moleong, 2011). A descriptive strategy discusses the recording or grouping of a series of elements (James & Champion, 2012), and it is supported by the reading meaning technique using the

semiotics of Littlejohn (1999), which in turn comprises three elements: denotative meanings, connotative meanings, and meanings from the perspective of myths.

Research Participants, Sampling Procedure, and Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted at Surakarta palace in Central Java, Indonesia. The main data analyzed were qualitative data, namely information sourced from key informants in the form of actors involved in the *sekaten* tradition. The main participants therefore included staff working at Surakarta palace, while supporting informants included the Surakarta city government and Islamic religious leaders in Surakarta. The sample was purposively selected based on the selection criteria (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

Firstly, this research is a qualitative descriptive study that aims to produce data in the form of words expressed by people and observable behavior (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). *Secondly*, this research is part of a tradition in social science that is fundamentally dependent on observing people in their own society, and it relates to these people's language and terminology (Moleong, 2011). *Thirdly*, in qualitative research, a description is the basis for all scientific investigations, so information includes recording or groupings for a set of elements according to the problem being investigated (James & Champion, 2012).

Data-Collection Procedures

The data-collection procedure comprised in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and content analysis. The data-collection instruments used included interview guides, observation structures, and coding sheets. The level of truth (validity)for the information was determined through the source triangulation method, where a number of sources are used to check the validity of data (Moleong, 2011).

Data-Analysis Techniques

The data analysis was carried out inductively using interactive analysis methods, with the procedures including data reduction, data presentation, conclusion handling, and verification (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). In the interactive model, the three activities analysis involved a process of interactive cycles and interactions, where activities were not something that could be done together but rather complemented each other (Sutopo, 2002).

Results

Social Values and Teachings for the *Sekaten* Tradition: A Historical Perspective

Information about the social values and teachings of the *sekaten* tradition in Surakarta was collected from the informants, thus revealing changes in meaning forthe *sekaten* tradition from when Surakarta palace was still a center of government to the globalized era, when the palace lost much of its influence on society.

The *sekaten* is a traditional ceremony that is held every year in the Javanese calendar month of*Mulud* (or *Rabi' al-awwal* in the Islamic Calendar). The *sekaten* tradition first started in the 15th century as a means to extend Islam's influence on Java through a cultural approach. It was considered an appropriate medium to spread Islamic ideology because at that time, Javanese society was still very influenced by animism, dynamism, and polytheism, and many people were still pagans. At that time, many traditions and rituals worshipped spirits, objects, or sacred places and involved meditation, offerings, superstitions, and myths, and these were highly respected by the public. This prompted nine Islamic scholars known as the *Wali Sanga* to find a good approach to shift people's beliefs away from polytheism and toward monotheism. One of the guardians of the *Wali Sanga,* Sunan Giri, mastered the technique for making *gamelan,* which is music involving several traditional Javanese musical instruments. Sunan Giri then made a set of *gamelan* music to be played during the *sekaten* celebration. He argued that the sound of the *gamelan* would draw people's attention and encourage them to investigate it. Once the community found the source of the music, the symbols of Islam would be conveyed. This theory turned out to be correct, because every time the *gamelan* was played in the Surakarta Grand Mosque, many community members gathered, and after listening to lectures on Islam, many converted to Islam by saying two words of the *sahadah*. The word *sahadatain* later served as the origin of the name "*sekaten*."

The *sekaten* tradition was originally an Islamic religious ceremony, but it also has a Javanese character. This tradition acts as a medium for teaching Islamic religious values and a noble character to the community. This persisted until Indonesia became independent of the Dutch and Japanese colonial powers in 1945. After this, the religious awareness of the community began to develop through the establishment of formal and informal religious education institutions. The teaching of Islam was then carried out by many educational institutions, such as *madras as* and

Islamic boarding schools. The *sekaten* tradition continued, however, but its function shifted to celebrating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.

After Surakarta palace became part of the territory and government of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia in 1958, the *sekaten*, which was originally a symbol of local wisdom, experienced changes in its orientation, function, and symbolic meaning as social changes affected its supporters. In the globalization era, the religious nuances of the *sekaten* grew weaker, while the accompanying night market that starts a month before the peak of the *sekaten* ceremony became more dominant, a phenomena that continues today.

Sekaten Tradition: The Palace's Perspective

A key informant from Surakarta palace, which started the *sekaten* tradition, conveyed that when Surakarta palace was still a center of government, the *sekaten* was intended as a medium for communication between the king and his people. Surakarta palace therefore positions the *sekaten* as a form of cultural communication passing down moral values and local wisdom from one generation to the next through verbal and nonverbal symbols. For example, in the *sekaten* tradition, there is a *gunungan*-shaped mountain that symbolizes how life's purpose is to return to the Creator, the ruler of all life and the universe. This is considered important, because local wisdom is held by certain social groups and conveyed through community experiences.

At the time when Surakarta palace still had a considerable influence on the community, the *sekaten* was used politically by the palace to determine the extent of royal influence on the people, as reflected in the number of community members who participated in the event. The attendance at the ceremony was considered indicative of the kingdom's influence on society. What is more, the *sekaten* tradition was also used to assess the degree of obedience to the king, again measured according to the attendance level but also by the amount of tribute that was presented to the king. Any absence from the *sekaten* ceremony could be considered a form of defiance against the king. For Surakarta palace, the *sekaten* tradition is a symbol of the Islamic Mataram kingdom, which distinguishes itself from the previous *Mataram Hindu* kingdom.

In the globalized era, Surakarta palace sees the *sekaten* tradition as symbolic of Surakarta's identity as an Islamic kingdom. This is represented in the ceremony's time and place and the content of the message being delivered, as well as the ordering of the ceremony and the role of the king in it.

Sekaten ceremonies are held every year in the *Mulud* month, and the event' speak coincides with *Maulid*, the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, the bearer of Islamic teachings. The ceremony is mostly centered on the large square before the palace, where there is also a mosque as a place of worship for Muslims. At the climax of the event, the king leads the procession and delivers a message about the teachings of Islam or the history of the Prophet Muhammad. All the messages conveyed in the series of events relate to Islam.

In addition, Surakarta palace also interprets the *sekaten* tradition as an endeavor to preserve the cultural heritage of the palace. The *sekaten* ceremony is a tradition for the palace, one where various symbols are used exclusively in the ceremony, because they only exist in the palace and are not typical in the lives of everyday people. In the *sekaten* tradition, the king distributes alms to the people in the form of agricultural produce, and this is symbolic of the Sultan's role in ruling for the welfare of his people.

Sekaten Tradition: The Local Government's Perspective

Information from the Surakarta City Culture and Tourism Office reveals the local government's view of the *sekaten* tradition. When Surakarta palace still had political influence in the community, the local government was not very involved in policy making or the implementation of the *sekaten* tradition. At that time, the government saw the *sekaten* tradition as being under the authority of Surakarta palace. However, in the current globalized era, Surakarta City Government interprets the tradition as an annual cultural event in the Surakarta city area. The local government therefore provides guidance for the development and preservation of these traditions. The Surakarta City Government has for the last five years seen the *sekaten* tradition as a tourist attraction for Surakarta (Bappeda Kota Surakarta, 2016). For this reason, the Surakarta City Government aims to develop *sekaten* as a cultural and religious tourist attraction, as well as a destination for shopping tourism with an emphasis on the role of the lower classes ins ociety.

The Surakarta City Government has positioned the s*ekaten* as a driving force for people's economic wellbeing by encouraging the participation of small businesses, home industries, and traditional craftsmen. Traditional artisan products with philosophical value—such as a clay piggy bank (*celengan*), a whip (*pecut*) made from hemp leaves, and a spinning top made from bamboo (*gangsingan*)—are consistently encouraged to enliven each year's *sekaten*.

The sekaten is part of the culture of Surakarta palace, which includes features in the form of *gunungan*, officers' clothing, traditional toys, the language used, Islamic values, and symbols of the harmonious relations between the king and his people (*manunggaling kawula lan Gusti*), as well as cultural teachings in the form of good habits and behavioral codes. The s*ekaten* tradition as a religious tourism event relates to its role in commemorating the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, who is a role model for Muslims. The *sekaten* tradition is also coupled with public entertainment in the form of a night market that sells a variety of goods and hosts a variety of stands, including playgrounds for children, music performances, various culinary delights, communication tools, and traditional crafted goods.

The Sekaten Tradition: The Community's Perspective

Observation of the *sekaten* procession at its location revealed that some members of the community fought over food, vegetables, and fruits from the mountains because they believed that these objects would bring blessings. Fruits and vegetables taken from the mountains are replanted on farms in the hope that their fields will produce good crops and be free of infestations or diseases. The followers of the *sekaten* tradition believe it will give them the gift of youth, specifically when visitors chew *kinang* along to the sound of a *gong* on the *gamelan* played at the event. The *Gamelan Kiai Sekati*—which comprises two instruments, namely *Kiai Guntur Madu* and *Kiai Guntur Sari*—is only played during the *sekaten* celebration because it is considered to have the magical power to give blessings. From the perspective of the Muslim community, this is regarded as a form of superstition that should be avoided. Community groups with strong Islamic religious beliefs therefore interpret the *sekaten* as a blend between culture and religion, which is often referred to as syncretism.

When the people of Surakarta were still unfamiliar with Islam, the *sekaten* tradition acted as an effective medium for teaching its ideology, but nowadays there are many other sources of Islamic teaching in the community, so this element of its function is greatly reduced. The application of a cultural approach to spreading Islam through the *sekaten* tradition is also seen as inappropriate in the current context, because people are already very open to various cultures through communication and information technology in social life.

Islamic religious leaders believe that the religious values embedded in the *sekaten* tradition have been eroded by economic activities. The *sekaten* tradition is no longer a sacred, religiously valued

traditional ceremony but rather a business event serving the interests of many parties, and it is more about encouraging the community to act hedonistically.

A number of community members involved in the ceremony's activities expressed that the *sekaten* tradition currently has more economic value, with the night market starting almost a full month before the ceremony' speak. In the night market, hundreds of booths enable the community to conduct economic activities in the form of trade, the provision of parking services, the transportation of goods or people, and culinary tourism activities.

Traders in the area also argued that without the night market, people would have little interest in attending the *sekaten*, because most people do not care about listening to religious lectures and rather focus on recreation through shopping or enjoying culinary delights. Thus, the *sekaten* is seen more as being economically valuable because it provides additional incomes for the community through the related economic activities.

Thechairman of the *Rukun Tetangga* (the lowest institution in the government structure of Indonesia) stated that the *sekaten* tradition also has economic value for the body, because citizens engaged in economic activities in the *sekaten* must set aside some of their profits to give to the *Rukun Tetangga* treasury. Such economic activities include trading, providing parking services and transportation services, offering games, and providing recreational services like lighted bicycles, horse-drawn carriages, and playgrounds for children.

Discussion

The data obtained in this study indicates that there has been a shift in the social values and teaching behind the *sekaten* tradition from a historical perspective. The meaning of the *sekaten* tradition—according to Surakarta palace, the Surakarta City Government, and the local community—has changed from a cultured event to something more profane. This is a natural social process where culture promotes a certain way of life shaped by values, traditions, beliefs, and material objects. It fundamentally persists for along time in society but also adapts through routine communication and social interaction (Lull, 1998). One of the factors behind the shift is the influence of the mass media, especially broadcast television and new media forms that assign greater importance to modern pop culture than traditional local culture.

From a historical perspective, the shift in orientation and function of the *sekaten* can be seen. This causes a biased meaning for certain community groups, which can in turn trigger horizontal social

conflict and resistance in the community. Some social groups with strong Islamic beliefs view a number of practices in the *sekaten* as an undesirable form of syncretism. On the other hand, community groups that support Javanese culture argue that the *sekaten* is a ritual ceremony that must still be preserved, especially because it celebrates the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (Utami, 2011). Another reason concerns the message presented in the *sekaten* ceremony, which is packaged in a unique form, so it can provide education and entertainment for the community (Ni'mah & Soekiman, 2007).

The shift in the social values and teaching embodied in the *sekaten* tradition began when the political influence of Surakarta palace started to diminish, specifically when Surakarta became part of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia in 1958. This gave rise to the opinion that the palace had lost meaning as a symbol of the Surakarta people. This led to the emergence of various practices that would have been considered irregular in the past. The increasing level of religious awareness and education among the local community also affects its interpretation of the *sekaten* tradition. The *sekaten* tradition is now largely understood by the community as an entertainment event, and its significance as a symbol of identity no longer seems important. The *sekaten* as a form of propaganda through a cultural approach is no longer deemed appropriate, and its potential to attract people is instead exploited by businesses.

The commercialization of the *sekaten* tradition is just one phenomenon in the commercialization of Indonesian local culture, and similar processes can be seen in Thailand, India, and many African countries. This phenomenon cannot be separated from state politics, which are outlined for the field of tourism in the National Medium-Term Development Plan 2014–2019 (Bappenas, 2014). This stipulates the preservation and development of cultural assets that support tourism development, but efforts must also support a creative economy. This means that the Indonesian government views culture both as a legacy that must be preserved and as an asset to be exploited through tourism. Departing from this policy, the Surakarta City Government positioned the *sekaten* tradition as something to drive the local economy and increase revenue for local people through tourism. The government policy for the preservation of local culture is distorted, because traditional arts and local culture are being packaged and marketed for the consumption of tourists, especially foreign ones, so they cater for market tastes. This reality seems to have become an inevitable consequence of globalization. Every regional culture that contains its own local wisdom, natural beauty, and cultural aspects is often exploited in order to increase tourism activity through

the label of cultural tourism (Conradie, 2012). This situation has played a role in objectifying and reducing culture to "cultural art"—such as dance, music, costumes, crafts, and architecture (Korff & Susanne, 2014)—that can then be sold.

The practice of commercializing tradition is a consequence of national policies promoting tourism, which in turn raises divisions between the authentic and the modern (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). In addition, the process of commodifying a tradition cannot be separated from the role of the agent causing the change. Agencies involved in the commercialization process for traditional generally include the organizers themselves, tourism organizations, and the private sector. This can be seen in artistic performances where the aesthetic element is highlighted and when the arrangements, instruments, makeup, and art displays are redefined for mass consumption by a wider audience, particularly foreign tourists (Yulianto, 2013).

The shifting meaning of the *sekaten* tradition is part of the cultural tourism process in Surakarta, backed up by the belief that cultural tourism is an element for developing tourism in various regions of the world, and thishas a strong influence on policy-makers(Richards, 2005; Bui & Lee, 2015). In this situation, local culture is gradually abandoned in favor of foreign culture, and preservation involves adjusting the packaging and presentation without removing the essence, meaning, and original values of the traditional culture (Haris, 2015). Preserving local culture cannot be separated from the social-construction process, which is an area where several methods are employed by agents including the government, the markets, and civil society. These are interconnected and presented together in different patterns of formal and informal regionalisms (Söderbaum, 2013).

Conclusion and Implication

In the course of its history from the 15ᵗʰcentury until the present day, there has been a shift in the *sekaten* tradition in Surakarta in terms of its meaning and values. The s*ekaten* tradition as a symbol is open to interpretation according to recent developments. This tradition has endured for centuries and experienced dynamic meanings over time. When it was first organized, it was a representation of the Islamic palace and a symbol of royal power to endear popular obedience and represent Javanese culture.

In the current globalized era, there are shifting meanings for the event, as well as objections from certain groups toward the tradition. On one hand, the *sekaten* tradition can be considered to have

been distorted, but on the other hand, the tradition is very popular among the community. Although the influence of Surakarta palace is no longer dominant, and the Surakarta City Government implements the *sekaten* tradition, the event continues to this day.

The meaning behind the *sekaten* tradition in the current era of globalization has changed, however. Surakarta palace now interprets the event a s a form of cultural heritage that contains local wisdom that must be preserved. The local government, meanwhile, sees it as a cultural asset for the tourism industry, thus driving the local economy and generating revenue. Finally, the local community interprets *sekaten* as undesirable syncretism, as entertainment, and as a destination for religious, culinary, and shopping tourism.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study indicate that in social and cultural structures, specifically in the process of cultural production and reproduction, people are in a very strong position to act as agents who understand the purpose and objectives of everything they do. The meaning behind the *sekaten* tradition is formed from a number of symbols interpreted by the agents in accordance with their respective interests. This reinforces the principle of the structuration theory of Giddens (Ritzer, 2014; Lubis, 2016), which asserts three major structure groups: the structure of signification, the structure of domination, and the structure of justification (Hilmi, 2012).

This study also has practical implications for critically and comprehensively looking at cultural phenomena in the form of social traditions. It also has implications for narrowing the gaps in how the *sekaten* tradition is perceived by those community groups supporting cultural values and those communities supporting religious values.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has limitations because its subject is a single tradition in one location, so the obtained results are limited in terms of generalizability. Future research should therefore look at broader social traditions in terms of numerous events scattered over various regions, so any similarities and differences can be observed. In addition, this research is also limited to the use of qualitative methods, and the results take the form of describing a tradition as a substructure in social structure. Based on these limitations, the use of quantitative methods is recommended for future research to study a number of variables that may be interconnected.

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