

Blessings from the Sea

Poros Photos

Photographer: Arnold Simanjuntak

From May to November each year, the people of Lamalera celebrate the lefa season - the fishing and whale (koteklema) hunting season.

Whale hunting is an integral part of Lamalera village life, its customs and traditions.

In this photo essay, Poros Photo documents the villagers' roles, duties and activities during the whale hunting season and the social and cultural significance of the koteklema.

These men have caught an orca (known locally as *seguni*) while children play on the beach.

Although the use 15 PK motorboats has become more common, the Lamalera fishermen continue to use traditional boats, hunting techniques and equipment.



Damian Dasion Levo Tukan, an Indigenous leader of Telo Lika (*tiga tungku*) sits in front of an altar (*leta*) containing items from his ancestral heritage including, ivory, boat instruments, *leo* rope, and a container of water used for blessings.

Levo Tukan comes from one of the three main tribes in Lamalera. His role as a leader is predetermined by tribal tradition.



The head harpooner or boat captain, (*lamafa*) jumps from the boat and thrusts a harpoon into the whale.



The men cut and share the sperm whale (*koteklema*) meat.

The *atamola* (boat captain) is the only person that has the authority to decide on the portion size and how these should be distributed. The whale meat is apportioned according to local community customs and work roles.



Dery, the Poros Photos videographer records the community as they process the catch.



The Poros Photos team poses with the Gregorius Kia Tapoona family at their home. Gori Kia, as he is known, is a traditional fisherman. He is also a talented, boat builder and an expert handyman.

The team is indebted to Gori Kia and his family for their support and hospitality.



The sperm whale will be cut up the next morning.

Koteklema are captured by using the traditional boat or *pledang* that has sails made from woven leaves and is paddled by the village fishermen.

