

Conference Paper

# The Oral Tradition of Petik Laut Banyuwangi Revitalization of Tradition and Local-Global Political Space

N. Anoegrajekti<sup>1</sup>, S. Macaryus<sup>2</sup>, M.S. Kusumah<sup>3</sup>, L. Izzah<sup>4</sup>, and S.G. Attas<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Indonesian Literature, Faculty of Humanities, University of Jember, Jember, East Java, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Department of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa University, Yogyakarta, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Science, University of Jember, Jember, East Java, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Department of Historical Science, Faculty of Humanities, University of Jember, Jember, East Java, Indonesia

<sup>5</sup>Department of Indonesian Literature, Faculty of Languages and Art, State University of Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author:

N. Anoegrajekti  
novi.anoegrajekti@gmail.com

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## Abstract

This article aims to explain the oral tradition of sea rites in Banyuwangi as an effort to conserve and revitalize the tradition in local-global politics. The study of critical hybridity—a concept in which every cultural process contains cross-territory interaction and mixture—can explain how local-foreign interacts. In the varied cross-culture expressions, seizures of local, national, and global interests take part and interact with each other dynamically to be articulated in education and culture. The cross-territory cultural identity is reflected through modification of art and construction. The results showed that the tradition of sea rites forms a mixture of Osing, Madurese, and Islamic cultures. These rites are an expression of the gratitude of fishermen for the right to marine resources as the source of their lives. The placement of this cultural event in the Calendar of Banyuwangi Festival is an effort to introduce the local culture of Banyuwangi to the international community.

**Keywords:** hybridity, local-global, oral tradition, revitalization

## 1. Introduction

Geographically, Banyuwangi is located on the southeast edge of Java Island. The cornered position gives Banyuwangi Regency quite a long beach, at approximately 175.8 km<sup>2</sup>,<sup>5</sup> stretching from Sanggaran District to Kalipuro. Several beach points in Banyuwangi are developed into tourist destinations in addition to the economic activity centers of fish auctions, harbors, and cruise centers. Ketapang Harbor is one of

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the exit and entrance gates for passengers and trade. Besides beaches, Banyuwangi also has other natural assets (mountains, rivers, forests, plantations, and mines). Another superior asset is its arts and culture.

The name Banyuwangi originates from *banyu*, which means “water,” and *wangi*, which means “fragrant,” and is rooted in the legend of Sri Tanjung Sidopekso. The story was first introduced to the global public through the Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival in 2016 with “The Legend of Sri Tanjung Sidopekso” theme. Previously, Banyuwangi was known as Blambangan, one of the Duchies under the Majapahit kingdom.

Through a plantation that was opened and developed by the Dutch from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to before the beginning of Indonesian Independence, Banyuwangi has become the migration destination for laborers in the plantation and other agriculture sectors. The migration was from the west side of East Java (Ponorogo, Madiun, Bojonegoro), Central Java, Yogyakarta, Madura, Bugis-Makassar, and Mandar. It occurred when Osing people tended to settle in fertile agricultural areas since agriculture was their livelihood.<sup>6</sup> Migrants from Madura, Bugis, Makassar, and Mandar tended to settle on beaches since they worked as fishermen. They were concentrated on beaches at Muncar, Grajangan, Pancer, and Bulusan.

The presence of migrants coming from various areas and ethnicities allowed Osing people to live together with all of the consequences that entailed. The establishment of The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) required the interaction of people between territories, ethnics, and races. Therefore, Osing people had to meet, interact, transact, negotiate, and maybe compete with newcomers.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Ritual and its Endorsers’ Religiosity

Banyuwangi were created by a quite extensive sociopolitical process, full of tension and conflicts between residents and rulers in Banyuwangi on one side, and between residents and rulers of western Java (*wong kulonan*) in Bali on the other. Banyuwangi was the center of the Blambangan kingdom’s political power, which was initially part of Majapahit kingdom, as written in various *Babad* (Chronicles): *Babad Wilis*, *Babad Sembar*, *Babad Tawang Alun*, *Babad Mas Sepuh*, *Babad Bayu*, and *Babad Notodiningratan* [1-5].

The receding Majapahit at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century became the momentum for Blambangan to secede from any authority. However, the later coming kingdoms such

as Demak, Pasuruan, Mataram, and Bali kept seeing Blambangan as a target to monopolize. Mataram even cooperated with VOC to conquer Blambangan in 1767 and the next assault (1771–1772) faced hard resistance from Blambangan that was led by Mas Rempeg or Pangeran Jagapati, known as the war of *Puputan Bayu*.

The Dutch then sent laborers from Cirebon, Banyumas, and Kebumen to work in the plantations they opened. This was then followed by migration from Jawa Kulon for various works, especially in the plentiful plantation and agricultural sectors from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> cor beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century [2, 3]. Further migration came from Madura, Bali, Bugis, and Mandar so that from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Banyuwangi had been settled by Osing people and various types of newcomers. While at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Banyuwangi was populated by 100,000 souls, more than half of them were considered migrants [6].

An identity urgency for Osing people was seen in their reluctance to identify themselves as Javanese, the use of the Osing language, nicknames, the *warung bathokan* social order, and terms such as *wong Banyuwangi asli*, *wong Banyuwangen*, and *wong Blambangan* that are still present today. They even established and developed rites and arts. Although their rites and arts show Javanese and Balinese influence, experts categorize them as a specific representation of the insights and attitude of egalitarian Osing people as well as an indication of a marginality spirit [7].

Rites that Osing people still enliven are *Kebo-keboan*, *Seblang*, and *Petik Laut*. Rites are stereotypes of organized behavior that includes moves, words, and objects that are used in certain places and are designed to influence natural entities or intended powers. Local people believe that after the ritual, life becomes peaceful and spared from negative spirits, and the harvest is good. If they do not perform the ritual, disharmony occurs and the ecological balance will be distracted, such as harvest failure and *pagebluk* (the occurrence of epidemy) [8].

This writing deeply elaborates the ritual of *Petik Laut* as a cultural event. People see and interpret their life around it and present it in a ritual. As a sacred cycle, the *Petik Laut* ritual has a set of cultural symbols as the embodiment of feelings, emotions, and hopes; and those elements often become people's views of life. Sociologically, *Petik Laut* is said to symbolize the control of rights to marine resource management [9]. Muncar fishermen are responsible for preserving, keeping, and developing these marine potentials as their livelihood. This cultural expression becomes one of the ways of maintaining harmony between fishermen and the sea as their livelihood.

All of these developed into cultural identity and tended to be related to hybridity and diaspora. Identity not as an essence, but as some identification attributes that

suggest how we position ourselves and are positioned in the society [10, 11]. Cultural and historical aspects are inevitable. Hall viewed identity as a production that never finishes, is always in process, and is developed in representation. Identity is not static, but is continually constructed in space and time, as well as being complex and heterogeneous. In other words, "...identity is situational and changeable" [12].

### 3. Methods

As one of the cultural activities, until now *Petik Laut* has still been enlivened by its endorsers. The dynamics of the local-global relation is studied ethnographically by focusing on the subject's knowledge system and how that knowledge is organized in determining activity. The ethnographic method is also used to find out how people organize culture in their minds and use it in their life. This approach is holistic-integrative, with qualitative analysis in order to obtain the natives' point of view. The primary and secondary data are collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and a track on written documents.

Ethnographic analysis is about rechecking field notes to find out cultural symbols (usually stated in native language) and to find out the connection between symbols. Ethnographic analysis assumes that an informant has understood a series of cultural categories, learned their relations, and is aware of what connects them all [13]. Furthermore, the interpretation method is used to dig deeper into various naturalized domains and the characteristics activities of the subject [14]. The critical aspect of ethnography applied in this study is emphasized in the comprehensive processing and analysis of ethnographic field findings. All of that is directed to achieve the research objective, which is to explain the oral tradition of sea rites in Banyuwangi as an effort to conserve and revitalize the tradition in local-global politics.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. Muncar Petik Laut: Fishermen's expression of gratitude

Muncar beach is located approximately 35 km from Banyuwangi city center. Entering the beach feels like being on Madura Island. The house ornaments, boats, outfits, and language reflect Madurese ethnicity. Most Muncar fishermen come from Madurese ethnicity, which can be seen when they perform the *Petik Laut* ritual. The Madurese

setting is reflected in the ethnic outfits, accessories, colors, and boat ornaments following the boat parade, such as the black *sakera* (Customary clothing of Madurese community.) outer red and white striped t-shirt, the dark red batik *udeng* (headband), and the sickle.

Muncar *Petik Laut* is held in the mid-month of Muharram or Sura in the Javanese calendar. At that time, fishermen do not go to sea since the full moon causes a high tide. Local legend says that this ritual started when Sayid Yusuf came to Muncar along with Islam dissemination in Blambangan. *Petik Laut* is an expression of gratitude to God for the fish they catch.<sup>8</sup> Then, they beg and hope for easiness, safety, and abundant fish in the next catch. All of these hopes are expressed with thanksgiving, making offerings for the sea, boat procession, and entertainment.

The religious attitude as a recognition of human limitations and dependence on God is also shown in the fishermen's daily life on the sea. A fisherman had just disembarked and was carrying only one mackerel weighing 5 kg. He said that this time he was unlucky.

"Yeah, I am just unlucky today. I know when time comes He will give me abundantly, just like what happened before. I am okay with this little catch now."

*"Ya, ini belum beruntung saja, Mas. Pada waktunya nanti pasti juga akan diberi oleh-Nya secara berlimpah, seperti pada waktu-waktu sebelumnya. Tidak apa sekarang mendapat sedikit."*

This statement shows that humans have limitations, in that they can only hope and make efforts. They also believe in God's mercy that someday He will give abundant catch. The resigned attitude allows those people to work persistently as fishermen. For Muncar fishermen, *Petik Laut* is a significant event and it is compulsory for them to hold the ritual. That cultural event also shows their identity. The series of *Petik Laut* rituals are as follows.

#### 4.1.1. Making of offerings, tirakatan, and semaan

Offerings are loaded in a small boat, which is a beautiful miniature of a real boat. The offerings boat, known as a *gitek*, (Small boat containing offerings.) is loaded with various crops, fruits, food, and *tumpeng*, (Pyramidal rice with a variety of side dishes and vegetables.) which are all cooked in the elderly fisherman's house. In the evening, *tirakatan* and collective prayers are held in the same house. In addition, the Quranic

recitation or *semaan* is held in several praying houses and ordinary houses. It is held to ask for blessings for a safe and secure *Petik Laut* ritual, and so that they have an abundant fish catch.

#### 4.1.2. Land procession (*ider bumi*) and sea procession

The land procession or *ider bumi* is a walkaround the village while carrying prepared offerings. Offerings are put on a wagon and carried around the village by two *gandrung* (Traditional dance of Using.) dancers accompanied by *gandrung* music. In the procession, the locals wear black clothes with a sickle and dance while holding up their sickle. The procession finishes at the starting point of the sea procession.

In the fish auction location, offerings are welcomed by *gandrung* dancers and carried to the boat that takes them to the sea procession. One part of this ritual is the embedding of a golden fishing rod in a goat's head's tongue to be floated in the sea. The embedding is executed by the District Head (*Kepala Daerah*) attending the ceremony.

The procession starts with prayers delivered by an elderly Muncar fisherman. The prayers start with recognition of God of The Most Loving and Most Merciful to all humankind and all the living creatures He creates. Then they express hope that the male and female parents will bring abundant fish. In this ritual, the aforementioned male and female parents refer to the sea that provides fish for the fishermen's livelihood, as expressed in the following prayer.

<i>Bismillahirramanirrahim</i>	"in the name of Allah The Most Loving and Most Merciful"
<i>Ya Rahmanu</i>	"oh male parents"
<i>Ya Rahimu</i>	"oh female parents"
<i>Waliukik peneriabin</i>	"come here oh fish"
<i>Peneriabin waliukik</i>	"oh fish come here"

After that, the boat moves to cross the sea towards a beach with calm water near Sembulungan called Plawangan. The elderly fisherman then drops the offerings in the sea. After they drown, the fishermen swim down to catch the offerings and flush their

boat with the water running from those wet offerings. They believe that this water will cleanse their boats and prevent them from suffering many catastrophes.

After the offerings procession in Plawangan, the boats then move towards Sembulungan to perform the same offering procession. Sayid Yusuf's grave is in Sembulungan, as he was the first person to live in and open up the area. After that, the *gandrung* dance entertainment follows until sunset and the event ends with thanksgiving and collective prayers. The fishermen enjoy the *gandrung* dance accompanied by Osing music. Since 2016, *Petik Laut* has been included in the Banyuwangi Festival Calendar (BFC). It positions Banyuwangi's cultural event in the global spectacle and significantly increases visitors compared to the previous arrangements. In the entertainment event, Madurese, Mandar, and Osing fishermen enjoy the traditional art of the Osing of Banyuwangi.

## 5. Conclusion

The description above suggests that the *Petik Laut* ritual showcases the characteristics of a mixture of Using, Madurese, and Islamic ethnicity as an expression of gratitude for the fish catch and safety they earned previously. It contains expectations that next time they will obtain abundant catch and be safe. As a cultural expression, *Petik Laut* also expresses fishermen's rights to manage marine resources as their livelihood. The inclusion of this cultural event can significantly increase the number of visitors. It is also an effort to introduce the Banyuwangi culture, particularly the maritime culture, to the international society.

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