



Preservation of the Sea Alms Tradition at Teluk Penyu in Cilacap Regency: A Site Study

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Published Online: 08 June 2023</p> <p>Corresponding Author: Slamet Slamet</p>	<p>Cilacap is a coastal area on the southern coast of Java with several beaches, one of which is <i>Teluk Penyu</i> Beach, where the traditional sea alms tradition is held annually. The tradition started with the 3rd Cilacap Regent <i>Tumenggung Tjakrawerdya III</i> ordering an elder <i>Pandanarang</i> fisherman named <i>Ki Arsa Menawi</i> to throw offerings into the south sea along with other fishermen on <i>Friday Kliwon</i> in the Javanese month of <i>Sura</i> 1875. Since then, the custom of throwing offerings into the sea, with the term almsgiving ceremony, has been a tradition. The objectives of this study were: 1) to describe the history and procession of the traditional sea alms ceremony, and 2) to analyze the influence of the development of the Turtle Bay beach tourism object on the socio-economic conditions of the surrounding community. This type of research was qualitative with a phenomenological design. Key informants were traditional caretakers or stakeholders, while complementary informants were management, community representatives, and visitor representatives. Data collection techniques used were observation, documentation, and interviews. In contrast, data analysis techniques used interactive models of Miles and Huberman, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion, with the validity of the data verified using triangulation. It could be concluded that the fishing community on the coast of <i>Teluk Penyu</i> beach Cilacap Regency still maintains the tradition of sea alms as a manifestation of gratitude for the fish caught and requests prayers for the safety and abundance of fish caught the following year.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS: Tradition, sea alms, Teluk Penyu.</p>	

I. INTRODUCTION

The Humans, society, and culture are logically related. The three of them simultaneously create and eliminate each other. On the one hand, humans live in society. In both complex and straightforward societies, a number of cultural values are interconnected with one another so that a system becomes a guideline for ideal concepts in culture to provide a strong impetus for the direction of people's lives [1].

Tradition is a hereditary custom still carried out in society or is interpreted as an assessment or assumption that the existing methods are excellent and correct. Tradition in this study is a subjective part of the culture. Tradition appears in the habits of behaviour and the behaviour of the people. Habits and behaviours that appear to be traditions are hereditary, inherited from previous generations and ancestors in specific communities [2].

The sea alms ceremony is one of the legacies in the form of ceremonial activities that not everyone carries out, but only certain people are interested in. This situation is interesting because the ceremony has become the property of the people

of Java Island, especially those living in coastal areas. The sea alms ceremony for ordinary people is the disposal of an object or offering into the sea or river water that flows into the sea. In the southern sea, the sea alms ceremony is also carried out by giving various offerings to the Mbau Rekasa, or ruler of the South Sea, known as Kanjeng Ratu Kidul or Nyi Roro Kidul [3].

The sea alms ceremony on the south coast of Cilacap Regency, precisely at Teluk Penyu Beach, is held once a year in the *Javanese* month of *Sura*, which coincides with Tuesday *Kliwon* or Friday *Kliwon*. In general, the purpose of holding this ceremony is to convey gratitude for the fortune given by God Almighty and ask for safety for fishermen and their families so that in carrying out their daily tasks as fishermen, they do not get any disturbance or disaster from supernatural beings, so they get abundant fish catches [4].

The sea alms ceremony is a tradition that is firmly attached to the community around the Cilacap Regency area, packaged by fishing communities and managed by the government, in this case, the Tourism Office as the

management party [5]. Implementing this ceremony is a special attraction for the community and tourists, both local and foreign visitors, because one of the processes presents local art and the cultures and traditions of fishing communities as part of preserving national culture, especially Java. In its development, the implementation of the sea alms ceremony has changed from time to time due to the influence of the times. However, this change only occurred in terms of technical implementation, while the elements of tradition and ritual have remained the same since the beginning of this tradition. Besides that, they still maintain sacred values and touches, so traditional actors still believe that outside of humans (read: fishermen), there is a greater power, namely God Almighty, manifested as a supernatural being [6].

This sea alms procession brings back an atmosphere or event carried out by the ancestors of the predecessors, so a similar effort was carried out again. The symbols in the procession may change slightly, but the function, sacred values, and customs are maintained. The symbols of the offerings depict the attention of the descendants of the ancestors. The customary community believes that the ancestors will experience happiness because they feel remembered and cared for [7], so the fishing community along the *Teluk Penyu* coast believes that the ancestors will give rewards or gifts, prosperity, safety, and welfare for the fishermen's families to their children and grandchildren [8].

Implementing the traditional sea alms ceremony has become a tradition firmly attached to the people around the Cilacap area. The procession in this activity can be seen as local wisdom that was born as a process of adaptation by fishermen to their living environment over a long period of time [9]. Local wisdom is born from a rational scientific adaptation process that can maintain the continuity of human interaction with the environment it occupies [4]. The traditional sea alms ceremony becomes a ritual tradition that, in its implementation, is complemented by offerings containing symbols and offerings to nature, especially the sea [6]. This happens because the sea is a dependent place for earning a living and sustaining life for fishing communities. Based on the description above, the objectives of this study are: 1) to describe the history and procession of the traditional sea alms ceremony, and 2) to analyze the influence of the development of the Teluk Penyu beach tourism object on the socio-economic conditions of the surrounding community.

II. METHODOLOGY

The type of research used is qualitative with a phenomenological design because the knowledge or information obtained and presented is based on phenomena that occur in society [10]. The objectives to be achieved in this research are to carry out: 1) verification or testing, 2) explorative or exploratory, and 3) development [11]. The

data sources obtained from this research are grouped into two categories: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is in the form of the results of direct interviews with informants and survey results in the field. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from other sources, so researchers do not collect data directly from the objects and subjects studied [12]. The form of secondary data in this study is notes or documentation from management, management publications, government reports, data obtained from magazines, and other data besides interviews and field survey results. Subjects or informants in this study were also grouped into two parts: key informants and complementary or additional informants. Key informants are traditional caretakers or stakeholders, while complementary informants are management, government officials, local actors or communities, and visitor representatives. Data collection techniques used observation, documentation, and interviews, while data analysis techniques used interactive models of Miles and Huberman, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion [13], with the validity of the data through triangulation techniques.

III. DISCUSSIONS

The results of the research showed that the Cilacap people still maintain the sea alms tradition as a form of gratitude for the fortune given by God Almighty and ask for safety for the fishermen and their families so that in carrying out their daily duties as fishermen, they do not get any disturbance from supernatural beings. This sea alms tradition is carried out at *Teluk Penyu* Beach, so it is related to the procession and can be described in detail below.

A. History of Sea Alms

The sea alms ceremony is said to have started with the event of the growth of *Wijaya Kusuma*'s flower at the time of King *Aji Pramosa* from Kediri, which created a feeling of confidence for the Javanese kings in Surakarta and Yogyakarta, which having these flowers would be safe and prosperous for their people. *Kembang Wijaya Kusuma* can be interpreted vertically as belief in God the One and Only. This flower can be seen from its colour or shape or shape. *Kembang Wijaya Kusuma* consists of three colours (red, green and yellow) with 5 (five) petals and 7 (seven) crowns which have their meaning for a leader. The red colour of the crown has the meaning of the power to form new cells in the human body; the green colour *maya* has the meaning of the power to maintain the cells of the human body; The yellow colour of the leaves has the meaning of the power to replace cells in the human body. The three colours will merge to form a dazzling bluish-white colour so that this flower, after blooming, will have a dazzling bluish-white colour which is believed to have merged with the divine (read: God). The 5 (five) petals symbolize the meaning of the Pancasila-Basic Indonesian State philosophy; the 7 (seven) pieces of the crown symbolize the 7 (seven) elements in the human body,

namely the hair represents ethnicity and ethnicity; the skin represents religion or belief; blood represents class; muscles represent position; meat symbolizes social status; symbolizes intellectual abilities, mindsets, opinions or views [4].

The nature of these elements stands upright, is not weathered by heat, is not faded by rain, is not shaken by waves and storms, so that every king or royal leader does not get drowned in 3 (three) things, namely: throne, wealth and women, and must have the wise soul symbolized in the *Wijaya Kusuma* flower, so every time there is a coronation of a king, both the Susuhunan in Surakarta and the Sultanate in Yogyakarta always send 40 envoys to Nusakambangan (Cilacap Region) to pick *Wijaya Kusuma* flowers. Before carrying out the picking task, the envoys made a pilgrimage to the tombs of ancestral figures around Nusakambangan, such as the *Adipati Banjaransari's* grave in Karangucui, *Adipati Wiling's* funeral in Donan, the tomb of *Adipati Purbasari* in Dhaunlambung, the tomb of *Kyai Singalodra* in *Kebon Baru*, and the tomb of *Adipati Purbasari* in *Kebon Baru*. Panembahan Tlecer in Nusakambangan [6]. Other tombs also visited are the tomb of *Kyai Ageng Wanakusuma* in Gilirangan and *Kyai Khasan Besari* in Gumelem, Banjarnegara region [7]. In addition to pilgrimage or *nyekar*, they also perform *tahlilan* and alms for people experiencing poverty. The following night, we meditated at the Sela Mosque, a cave on Nusakambangan Island resembling a mosque. The picking of *Wijaya Kusuma's* flowers was also carried out during the reign of Susuhunan Pakubuwono XI, namely when Sunan Pakubuwono XI was just *jumenengan* (crowned as king). Even this ancestral custom is said to have been carried out long before that. According to the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, *Adipati Anom*, Sunan Amangkurat II, once sent an envoy to pick *Wijaya Kusuma's* flowers after he was crowned king of Mataram in place of his father [2]. According to a Dutch historian H.J. de Graaf [3], the *jumenengan* event occurred in Ajibarang on July 7 1677, on his way to Batavia when Trunojoyo chased him. According to information, picking *Wijayakusuma* flowers is not by hand but by magical means through meditation. Previously, the king's envoys performed a "harbor" (sea alms) ceremony in the middle of the sea close to Karang Bandung Island. Before picking, the tree was first wrapped with cinde to the top. Dressed in all white, the envoy meditated under it, and if the meditation came true, then the *Wijaya Kusuma* flower would bloom and give off a fragrant smell. Then the flower will fall into the *kendaga* that has been prepared. Then the envoys will bring the flower to the Kraton to present to the Susuhunan Sri Sultan. The handover is also carried out with a specific ceremony. It is said that the flower is made as a *rujak* and eaten by the king who is about to be crowned, and thus, the king is considered legitimate and can pass on the royal throne to his children, grandchildren, and their descendants. The myth about the *Wijaya Kusuma* flower

gave birth to a sea alms cultural ceremony which is held every Sura month (Javanese calendar) by coastal fishing communities south by throwing some of his fortunes in the form of offerings and homage to the spirits of his ancestors to the sea on the south coast. Even starting in 1983, the sea alms ceremony was appointed as an attractive tourist attraction or destination for foreign tourists.

B. Sea Alms Ceremony Procession

The Cilacap fishing community has been preparing for the traditional sea alms ceremony one year before the ceremony was held, especially regarding the preparation of funds. Fishermen generally pay monthly fees to welcome the traditional sea alms ceremony. The amount of the fisherman's fee varies depending on the catch or income of each fisherman. Preparation for the traditional sea alms ceremony is very long and complicated. This is because it requires many offerings for the ceremonial procession and many very diverse tools [1]. Equipment needed: 1) outboard boat; 2) rooting; 3) *takir*; 4) deep-fried; 5) random; 6) mate; and 7) *tampah* or *tambir*. Meanwhile, the special offerings for Kanjeng Ratu Kidul which are floated into the sea are: 1) *telon* flowers; 2) buffalo head; 3) *ingkung* chicken; 4) *sanggan* bananas; 5) *pulut* plantain; 6) side dishes; 7) edible vegetables; 8) women's beauty tools; 9) a set of clothes for women; 10) food for souvenirs; 11) market snacks; and 12) Udhuk rice or savory rice.

The sea alms ceremony before the day of implementation is preceded by a procession of *nyekar* or a pilgrimage to Bandung Karang Beach (Magethi Island), which is located in the East-Southeast of Nusakambangan Island, carried out by the traditional Cilacap fishermen leader and followed by various groups of fishermen and the community to ask God Almighty for catching fish during the abundant fish harvest season, and fishermen are given safety. Apart from the *Nyekar* ceremony, the participants also took holy or magical water around Majethi Island, which, according to legend, is where the *Wijaya Kusuma* flower grows.

The traditional sea alms ceremony activities begin with a pilgrimage to Karang Bandung. The ceremony of handing over the offerings from the Honggodento Foundation to the committee was followed by a *tirakatan* at the Regency pavilion, preceded by cutting the *tumpeng*. The *tirakatan* event is filled with reading the description of the sea alms and recitation. The ceremonial procession began with Tumenggung's report to the Duke, graduation and the Samir's hanging by the Duke to Tumenggung, followed by a procession, which was preceded by the handing over of offerings or palanquins from the Regency pavilion to Teluk Penyu Beach, then continued with the carrying of *Joli* from Teluk Penyu beach to the South sea. The event continued with each group's various kinds of traditional art performances until the evening [4].

The *nyekar* or pilgrimage procession starts one day before the sea alms event, namely on Monday *Pon* or Thursday

Wage at 07.00 WIB until the afternoon. Then in the evening, starting at 19.00, a *Tirakatan* Night event or recitation is held at the Cilacap Regency pavilion. Whereas on Friday *Kliwon* or Tuesday *Kliwon* or Friday *Kliwon* is the highlight of the event, namely the *Jolen Tunggul* Procession Ceremony, which departs from the Regency pavilion to Teluk Penyu beach, followed by a procession and *jolen-jolen* accompaniment by procession participants dressed in traditional Cilacap fishermen's past. Upon arrival at Teluk Penyu Beach, the offerings are transferred to a fishing boat decorated with various colourful ornaments to be floated out to sea on a small area called *Majethi* Island. At the ceremony, various traditional arts were also displayed, including *Jalungmas* (*Jaipong*, *Calung Banyumasan*), *Lenggeran*, *Kuda Lumping*, and all-night shadow puppet performances, both in the Regency pavilion and in the respective fishing villages. Solo organ or orchestra performances were also performed in both classical and modern musical styles [2].

C. Philosophical Meaning of the Sea Alms Ceremony

According to residents around *Teluk Penyu*, the sea alms ritual is a form of offering expression as a request for permission to the rulers of the south coast, which arises because of motives, urges, hopes, and at the same time, worries [6]. There is a feeling of helplessness or inability to obtain (maximum results) when the community does not perform the sea alms ritual. Hence, various assumptions appear suitable for the party receiving the offering through the material or offerings. Through the way, the offering is made with a ritual process in the form of utterances and actions so that the goals (hope, desire to be safe, with abundant results, avoid obstacles and calamities) can be achieved. In this case, the sea alms ceremony is considered a request and a prayer. Religious hopes and realities are manifested in the depiction of items used for sea alms ceremonies on the South coast of Cilacap, which contain meaning as an offering of thanksgiving to the presence of God Almighty through *Kanjeng Ratu Kidul* as the guardian of the South Sea, for the safety and income earned by fishermen through catching fishes in the *Segoro Kidul* region or the South Sea. The meaning or symbol of the offerings used in the sea alms ceremony has a philosophy through the offerings given [4], including: 1) *tumpang*; 2) roasted bananas; 3) porridge or *jenang* crossbar or *abang-putih* porridge/*jenang*; 4) *ameng* rice; 5) *ingkung* chicken; 6) fresh water; 7) beauty tools and women's clothing; 8) flowers or flowers; 9) market snacks; 10) drinks or *wedang*; 11) frankincense, incense, and perfume; 12) buffalo head or cow head or goat head; 13) *wulung* or black cane; and 14) forerunners or newly grown coconut trees.

The goods or materials for the offering ceremony have their meaning, the essence of which is to ask for the safety and welfare of fishermen and other communities. The meaning of marine alms in terms of the economic aspect is

inseparable from the tourism factor because sea beseech is one of the annual agendas held in the Cilacap South Coast area, precisely at Teluk Penyu, so the tour manager also tries to package this tradition to be more attractive and can be used as a promotion to attract tourists. The local community is also trying to continue to improve this activity as one of the annual tourism potentials in Cilacap in the hope that the number of tourists visiting Cilacap will increase and can increase income or the level of community welfare.

IV. CONCLUSION

Cilacap Regency area carries out the customary sea alms tradition starting from an order from the 3rd Cilacap Regent *Tumenggung Tjakrawerdaya III*, who ordered an elder *Pandanarang* fisherman named *Ki Arsa Menawi* to throw offerings into the south sea and other fishermen on Tuesday *Kliwon* or Friday *Kliwon* in the month of Sura 1875 Since then, the custom of throwing offerings into the sea or better known as the traditional sea alms ceremony has emerged, which is still a custom and tradition that is carried out routinely once a year on Tuesday *Kliwon* or Friday *Kliwon* in the month of Muharram. Until now, the fishing community on the coast of Cilacap Turtle Bay still maintains the tradition of marine alms as a form of expression of gratitude for the fish caught by fishermen and requests for prayers for the safety and abundance of fish caught the following year. Apart from that, it is also a form of gratitude for the fortune God Almighty gave and asking for safety for the fishermen and their families so that they are given safety in carrying out their daily tasks as fishermen.

In addition, the tour manager also tries to package this tradition to be more attractive and can be used as a promotion to attract local and foreign tourists. The local community also makes efforts to continue to improve this activity as one of the annual tourism potentials in Cilacap with the hope that the number of tourists visiting will increase and increase which will lead to an increase in people's welfare, even since 1983 the sea alms ceremony was appointed as an attraction and tourism destination for Cilacap Regency. which can be attractive to foreign tourists.

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