

# Environment-Wise Fishing Practice in Coastal Regions in Indonesia

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**Abstract.** This study on Indonesia culture is concerned with environment-wise values in fishing practice in Indonesian archipelago. This study is performed because passages about the values have seemed scattered here and there, and this study is intended to specifically exemplify the values in the fishing practice in coastal regions of West Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, Aceh, North Sulawesi, and Central Java. This study adopts Sims's concept of folklore, and this study applies a textual analysis. The textual analysis results in fishing traditions in each of the coastal regions; in addition, the traditions contain local wisdom about environment conservation. It is expected that this study will be beneficial for any reader interested in Indonesian culture in general, and in local wisdom in fishing society in particular.

Keywords: **folklore; fishing practice; environment-wise values; tradition; environment.**

## 1 Introduction

Fishing practice in the Indonesian archipelago can be taken as folklore. The fishing has been primarily practiced as a livelihood for Indonesians in adjacent to farming. In the archipelago, fishing has been practiced almost differently; each coastal region has its own fishing practice. The variety in the fishing practice designates fishing traditions. Thus, fishing is not only seen as a means of living, but it is also seen as a form of culture. In order to exemplify the culture, this study puts the fishing traditions in a culture study.

The truth is, we are unable to place a high intrinsic value on much of what we encounter as folklore; a good deal of it is either unimpressive when taken alone, culturally obscure, or both. But like moon rocks or half-buried meteorites, a text may be significant. The search for that significance necessarily requires theoretical insight [1].

Fishing traditions have become cultural. In each coastal region, fishing is practiced according to a tradition to which local fishermen abide; in the archipelago, there are numerous traditions. A number of the traditions are inferred from texts which explain local fishing practices. Containing information about the fishing practices, the texts are relevant to exemplify the traditions. Since traditions are included in the folklore study, the texts are considered important because of their relevance for the study.

There are five fishing traditions that this study notes to exemplify the fishing traditions. Each of the traditions denotes a distinctive fishing practice in one coastal region in the archipelago; in addition, the region is chosen to represent one province in Indonesia.

The five provinces comprise the Special District of Aceh; North Sulawesi; Central Java; West Nusa Tenggara; and Maluku. One fishing tradition has its own practice. In Special District of Aceh, the fishing tradition abides by fishing ban on one particular day; in North Sulawesi, the tradition abides by nature and society; in Central Java, the tradition abides by empowerment of fishing society; in West Nusa Tenggara, the tradition abides by fishing area borders; and in Maluku, the tradition abides by fishing sustainability.

## 2 Literature Review

Since this study is taken as a folklore study, it begins with the term "folklore" itself. This study needs to identify what folklore encompasses. With regard to the identification of folklore, the following description may sufficiently be considered to identify the term.

Folklore exists in cities, suburbs and rural villages, in families, workgroups and dormitories. Folklore is present in many kinds of informal communication, whether verbal (oral and written texts), customary (behaviors, rituals) or material (physical objects). It involves values, traditions, ways of thinking and behaving. It's about art. It's about people and the way people learn. It helps us learn who we are and how to make meaning of the world around us [2].

Referring to the identification, it is overt that this study belongs to folklore. There are six characteristics of folklore which make them relevant to this study. Like a workgroup, the fishermen inhabit the coastal regions of the archipelago. Besides that, the fishing

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practice is customary: the fishermen work out their activities habitually. Then, the fishermen abide by the traditions which they inherit from their ancestors. Later, the fishing practice which the fishermen do is not only a daily routine, but it is also an art of living a life. In addition, the fishing practice is about the way the fishermen learn from the elder and fellow fishermen. Last but not least, the fishing practice helps any reader learn how to see the world around them, including the world of the fishermen.

The five fishing practices derive from five recent studies on the traditions in the coastal regions. The recent studies are considered appropriate for this study because they contain rituals in cooperated with the fishing practice.

Yet, still other folklorists have noted further areas for fruitful exploration of popular culture, such as how these texts reflect contemporary belief traditions, ethnographies of fan culture, the rituals involved with popular cultural consumption, narratives about technology and technological industries, and the existence of multiple versions of seemingly fixed texts [3].

The recent studies were written as the texts published in a journal of cultural analysis, *Sabda*. The texts are listed in this study in no sequential order. The first text is Christinawati's study on the tradition of the fishing society in Rawa Pening, Bejalen Sub-District, Ambarawa District, Semarang Regency [4]. The second text is Faisal's study on the use of local culture toward fishing technology in the fishing society in Pidie Jaya Regency, Special Authority of Aceh Province [5]. The third study is Hetharia's study on local wisdom of Haruku coastal society, Central Maluku Regency [6]. The fourth study is Latifah's study on the fishing tradition in East Lombok and West Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara Province [7]. The last study is Ratmaya's study on the fishing tradition in Bebalang Village, Sangehe Island Regency, North Sulawesi Province [8].

### 3 Research Method

This study adopts Dundes's concept of research method in a folklore study. The concept is considered appropriate for the study of the fishing traditions in Indonesia. The concept states that

There are only two basic steps in the study of folklore in literature and culture. The first step is objective and empirical; the second is subjective and speculative. The first might be termed identification and the second interpretation. Identification essentially consists of a search for similarities; interpretation depends upon the delineation of differences. The first task in studying an item is to show how it is like previously reported items, whereas the second is to show how it differs from previously reported items—and, hopefully, why it differs [9].

Based on the concept, the research method in this study comes into three steps. Firstly, this study will identify similar characteristics in the fishing traditions

among the coastal regions. Secondly, this study will interpret different characteristics in the traditions among the regions. Lastly, this study will relate both characteristics to each other so as to become a complementary study on the traditions. The relation is expected to amplify the description of the characteristics of the fishing traditions in the coastal regions in Indonesia.

In order to complement the description of the characteristics, the study is attentive to each of the texts. The structure plays an important role in the study of the texts.

The structure is more than the plot; it includes the characters and the actions they perform, places, names, repeated words, and phrases—any basic elements that make the story recognizable [2].

The narratives about the fishing traditions will become identifiable when elements composing the texts are included. That is to say, this study will mention names, places, and repeated words and phrases connected to the traditions.

### 4 Discussion

The first fishing culture to be mentioned in this study is the fishing creed in Pidie Jaya Regency, Province of Aceh. According to the creed, there is no fishing activity on Fridays on the waters of Pidie Jaya. There are four reasons for the absence of the fishing activity: religious purpose; ecological consideration; maintenance day; and social group [5]. Faisal [5] explains that every Friday is especially for Muslim fishermen to conduct their Friday prayer. Besides that, he explains that obeying the fishing creed, the fishermen in the regency leave out one day to stay at home, so that fish in Pidie Jaya waters breed freely. Also, he [5] explains that the fishermen make use of the day off to repair their fishing nets as well as boats. Then, he explains that the fishermen act out their communal activities on the day off.

The second fishing culture to be mentioned is the fishing tradition in Sangehe Island Regency, Province of North Sulawesi. The fishing tradition in the regency is designated with *seke* or bamboo-woven fish traps. There are two reasons why *seke* are still being used: first, regulation in natural resource cultivation, including fishing activities; second, togetherness in *seke* organization [8]. First, Ratmaya [8] explains that *seke* regulates the fishing activities in the regency in order to assure equal distribution of fish catch at all times. Later, she [8] explains that *seke* pinpoints the importance of togetherness and deliverance among the society in and out of the waters.

The third fishing culture to be mentioned is the fishing custom in Semarang Regency, Province of Central Java. Villagers of Bejalen, in the regency, attempt to develop fishing based tourism in order to empower the fishing society in the village, nurturing Rawa Pening as both a tourist object and natural resource [4]. Further, she [4] resumes that the fishing

custom is intended to elevate welfare, especially for the low-income fishermen in the surrounding villages.

The fourth fishing culture is the fishing tradition in East Lombok and West Lombok, Province of West Nusa Tenggara. The tradition is designated with *awig-awig* and *sawen*. *Awig-awig* manages fishing areas by regulating the fishing lines in East Lombok; whereas *sawen* prohibits fishing in certain areas and certain months [7]. Latifah [7] says that both traditions rule the fishing practice to manage marine resources and fisheries in both regions. She also mentions that the rule partakes in empowering the fishermen while preserving the waters in the regions.

The last fishing culture is the fishing tradition in Haruku Island, Province of Maluku. The tradition is labeled as *sasi*. *Sasi* is a common law which prohibits fishermen to draw out natural resources in order to preserve its sustainability [6]. In addition, Hetharia [6] resumes that the local people of the region have implemented *sasi lompa* as their local wisdom for marine resource conservation. Last but not least, she suggests that people should be aware of nature's condition.

## 5 Conclusion

From the explanation above, there are three points to be noted. First, the fishing practice in Indonesia archipelago is inseparable from tribal creed and traditional apparatus. The practice, which has been passed on from generation to generation, has well maintained the communal values of each of the peoples. The values have become local wisdom in the coastal regions. Second, local wisdom plays a significant role in regulating fishing practices in the country. The fishing culture in the archipelago has so far been environment-friendly. Each of the fishing practices represents the local wisdom of the regions. The practices are safe for the environment because they abide by fishing regulations. Last, the fishing regulation in the coastal regions comprises fishing instruction and fishing prohibition. The instructions and prohibitions have actually one aim: to preserve the waters along with its inhabitants. In other words, they

are intended to nurture nature. In all, the fishing culture should be kept practicing.

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