

TRANSLATING THE UNIQUE FOLKLORE OF GIANT *LOPIS* FEAST AND GIANT CONE *MEGONO* IN PEKALONGAN *SYAWALAN* TRADITIONS

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Abstract—Oral tradition is one of the forms of folklore which belongs to oral literature. This paper focusses on the folklore in the form of oral tradition, especially *Syawalan* traditions in Pekalongan. There are two *Syawalan* traditions that are observed; namely, the Giant *Lopis* Feast and the Giant Cone *Megono*. The concepts used to support the study are Dundes's concept of folklore and the concepts concerning food tourism and oral tradition. The methods of the research are library study, field work, and translation. The library study with its close reading focuses on the data from electronic sources and the printed data. The field work consists of participative observation and interviewing relevant informants. The result shows that the two *Syawalan* traditions observed have big potentials to promote Pekalongan tourism to domestic and foreign tourists if managed professionally. The on the spot finding also reveals that concise official records about these two *Syawalan* traditions still need much more improvement due to the limited data in the Department of Tourism and Culture of Pekalongan. Thus the application of the English translation with its product in the form of bilingual leaflets emphasizing the special forms of folklore is greatly useful to introduce the unique *Syawalan* traditions of Pekalongan to foreign tourists.

Keywords—Pekalongan *Syawalan* Traditions, Giant *Lopis*, Giant Cone *Megono*, Folklore, Food Tourism, English Translation

I. INTRODUCTION

Folklore, as “knowledge of the people” [1], is an “oral tradition” belonging to “oral literature” [2] serving as “a mirror of culture” [3]. Meanwhile, food is part of a culture that becomes an identity of a certain area [4]. The unique relationship between folklore, tradition, and food is perfectly represented by two *Syawalan* traditions in Pekalongan called *Pesta Lopis Raksasa* (Giant *Lopis* Fiesta) and *Gunungan Megono Raksasa* (Giant Cone *Megono*). These *Syawalan* traditions are usually performed on the eighth day of Eid Al-Fitr to celebrate the end of the fasting month. These *Syawalan* traditions have attracted many local and domestic tourists, however, the festive celebration in the *Syawalan* traditions often blurs the unique folklore behind them. In addition, there are no official leaflets from the Tourism Department yet. Thus,

to further develop Pekalongan tourism it is essential to have a bilingual leaflet (Indonesian-English) promoting the unique folklore behind each *Syawalan* event to attract more tourists not only local-domestic but also foreign.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Tradition

Tradition, as in *Syawalan* tradition can be in the form of process and resource [5]. The characteristics of tradition are as follows. It is usually orally passed on from one generation to the next, it needs an “agency” to keep it from being forgotten, and “a situational or local version” may emerge as time goes by [1].

As an oral tradition, folklore has many forms as lengthily listed by Dundes [6] and quoted by Sims and Stephens [7]. The folklore content may refer to a place, or to an event, or to a specific food. If the folklore is related to food, it will develop food tourism. Food, according to Anderson [8] which is quoted by Timothy [9], “is central to religion – as symbol, as subject of prayers, as marker of sharing and unsharing, and as communion”. Food tourism may take the form of “Culinary festivals and similar events venerate local cuisine” [9]. According to Hall, food tourism is “the consumption of the local ... help sustain local identities” [10].

B. Translation

Translation as the method of research supports the preservation and promotion of folklore which is a mirror of culture. Parker and Mathews view translation “as movement ... of a text over time, space, language, and culture” [11]. Nida and Taber's definition of cultural translation emphasizes the indispensable role of culture in the process of translation [12] as quoted by Salehi [13]. Another method of research used is library study with its close reading focusing on printed and electronic resources. The method of research in the form of field work concentrates on participative observation and interviewing informants. All these methods of research are

combined with two essential steps of studying folklore; namely, “objective and empirical” and “subjective and speculative” [3].

III. FINDING AND DISCUSION

The fact that there are no official leaflets or fliers for two *Syawalan* traditions in Pekalongan called Giant *Lopis* Feast and Giant Cone *Megono* triggers the idea of constructing bilingual leaflets/fliers focusing on the unique folklore of each event. The construction of bilingual leaflets/fliers involved cultural translation because the oral folklore not only must be searched from various resources but also must be condensed and translated for the sake of promoting the unique folklore to the foreign tourist.

A. The Giant *Lopis* Feast

Annually, the Giant *Lopis* Feast is held in the area of *Krapyak Kidul Gang 8*, North Pekalongan. The tradition has been performed since 1950 with KH. Abdullah Siradj, an Islamic religious leader of *Krapyak*, as its pioneer [14]. In 2018, it was conducted on Friday, 22 June, 2018. After officially opened by the Mayor of Pekalongan, the giant *Lopis* was cut and distributed to the awaiting audience. However, every year the audience tends to fight against each other to get the slices of *Lopis* because they believe that the *Lopis* give blessings to them.

Besides the local belief, the size of the *Lopis* is amazing and its symbolic meanings produce a unique folklore. Based on direct observation, the size of the giant *Lopis* is as follows. The weight is 1400 kg, the circumference is 237 cm, and the height is 195 cm. The following photo shows the phenomenal size of the giant *Lopis*:



The symbolic meanings of the giant *Lopis* indicate local wisdom. *Lopis* is made of glutinous rice. The stickiness of the glutinous rice symbolizes the firm and tight closeness of the Islamic people [14]. The whiteness of the glutinous rice symbolizes the purity of the Islamic people after one-month fasting during the *Ramadhan* month. The three-day cooking time indicates the patience and endurance of those people involved in the cooking of the giant *Lopis*.

The giant *Lopis* is wrapped with banana leaves to give specific aroma and the greenish colour. Banana plants do not die before giving a bunch of delicious fruits and several young banana plants [15]. This fact symbolizes productive and high-

spirited life that will not end before leaving another useful generation and this is what is expected from the Islamic people. The on-the-spot observation finds out that the giant *Lopis* is framed with bamboo slats to keep the upright round shape. Bamboo plants can grow lushly everywhere even in an infertile land. Thus it can be interpreted that the use of bamboo slats symbolizes the unyielding spirit expected from the Islamic people.

The act of giving the slices of the giant *Lopis* freely to the audience (city government officials, local people, domestic tourists) represents the tradition of “*silaturahmi*” (good relationship) among the Islamic people, showing the happiness after successfully fasting for a month, as well as the spirit of entertaining the coming guests, as said by the chairman of the giant *Lopis* feast. The following is the picture when the Mayor of Pekalongan symbolically cut the giant *Lopis* in the 2018 Giant *Lopis* Feast:



Based on the folklore of the Giant *Lopis* Feast, the proposed official flier should contain the condensed folklore as follows:

“The Giant *Lopis* Feast is a form of Pekalongan *Syawalan* Tradition held on the eight day of *Syawal* (seven days after the Eid Al-Fitr). This event basically reflects the tradition of “*silaturahmi*” (good relationship) among the Islamic people. It also shows the happiness after successfully fasting for a month as well as the generous spirit of entertaining the coming guests. The giant *Lopis* is made from the white glutinous rice symbolizing purity as well as a tight and firm closeness among the Islamic people. The three-day cooking time indicates the patience and endurance of those involved in the cooking. The banana leaves wrapping the giant *Lopis* come from the banana plants symbolizing the productive and high-spirited life that will not end before leaving another useful generation. The bamboo slats framing the upright round shape come from the bamboo plants symbolizing the unyielding spirit in whatever condition. Those symbolic values are expected to be inherited by the Islamic people in particular and other people in general.”

To add the promotive atmosphere, the flier should be decorated with interesting photos about the Giant *Lopis* Feast, for example:



B. The Giant Cone Megono

Annually the giant cone *Megono* is conducted in Linggo Asri village, a tourism area in Kajen district, South Pekalongan. Usually, it is held on the same day as the giant *Lopis* feast. However, in 2018 each event was held on different days. The giant cone *Megono* was held on the next day, on Saturday, 23 June 2018.

The size of the 2018 giant cone *Megono* at Linggo Asri Pekalongan is as follows. The height is 170 cm and the diameter is 80 cm. The 2018 giant cone *Megono* has two forms: a single giant cone of *megono* rice and 1000 packages of *megono* rice wrapped in banana leaves in which some are arranged cone-like. The 1000 packages of *megono* rice wrapped in banana leaves are for the audience. For that purpose, it needs 500 kg of rice and 30 kg of *megono*. The giant cone *Megono* is decorated with various Javanese side dishes such as “*ingkung*” (whole chicken boiled in spices), fried tofus, fried noodles, boiled eggs in chili sauce, fried fish, “*tempe*” (fermented soybean in blocks) cooked in traditional recipe, spicy fried chicken, etc. The following photo shows the two forms of *megono* rice:



However, the Giant Cone *Megono* Feast has an interesting history. The specific *Megono* rice emerged during the First and Second Independence Wars (or Dutch Aggression I and II around 1947-1948) led by Prince Diponegoro. The Independence guerillas usually went to the villages to rest after each attack. The poor villagers always tried very hard to provide food for these guerillas from the available ingredients. Because the villagers were so poor, they only had “*sego aking*” (dry cooked rice from leftover cooked rice) and vegetables such as “*nangka muda*” (young jackfruits) from the jackfruit trees growing in the villages. They cooked again the dry cooked rice producing a rather brownish appearance on the re-cooked rice. The young jackfruits were chopped into little pieces and then given various spices so that it became tasty and delicious.

Meanwhile, the name “*Megono*” has several interpretations. One interpretation is based on the first appearance of the tasty but pale young jackfruit dish above the brownish re-cooked rice. They say it is like “*me-go*” (cloud, here white cloud referring to the pale colour of the dish) “*ing gegono*” (in the sky, here gloomy sky referring to the brownish colour of the re-cooked rice) [16]. Another interpretation of the name “*Megono*” is from the word “*MERGO onOne mung kuwi*” [17] (because the available food is only that) referring to the makeshift food prepared by the poor villagers for the Independence guerillas. The variation in the interpretation of the name “*Megono*” indicates the creativity of the local people to give meaning to the word “*Megono*”.

Thus, symbolically the Giant Cone *Megono* Feast commemorates the heroic spirit of the Independence guerillas and the poor villagers in struggling to keep the Independence of Indonesia, even though they face limited provision in every aspect.

Based on the folklore of the Giant Cone *Megono*, the proposed official flier should contain the condensed folklore as follows:

“The Giant Cone *Megono* is a form of Pekalongan *Syawalan* Tradition held on the eight day of *Syawal* (seven days after the Eid Al-Fitr). This event historically refers to the food served by the poor villagers to the Indonesian guerillas during the First and Second Independence Wars (or Dutch Aggression I and II around 1947-1948) led by Prince Diponegoro. The food consists of rice and *megono* (a dish made from young jackfruit seasoned with various spices). Some people say that the word “*megono*” is from “*Mego ing Gegono*”. “*Mego*” is a cloud or here white cloud referring to the pale appearance of the jackfruit dish. “*Gegono*” is sky or here the gloomy sky referring to the brownish colour of the rice at that time which is from dry cooked rice recooked due to poverty. Others say that “*Megono*” is from the word “*Mergo onone mung kuwi*” (because the available food is only that) referring to the makeshift food prepared by the poor villagers for the Independence guerillas. Symbolically “*Nasi Megono*” or *Megono* rice commemorates the heroic spirit of the Independence guerillas and the poor villagers in struggling to keep the Independence of Indonesia, even though they face limited provision in every aspect.”

To add the promotive atmosphere, the flier should be decorated with interesting photos about the Giant Cone *Megono*, for example as follows.



IV. CONCLUSION

The existence of folklore in a certain event is often forgotten because it is outweighed by the festive atmosphere. However, folklore actually adds a unique value of that event that can persuade tourists to come. Thus, the folklore in a certain event should be explored, condensed, written, and promoted. The folklore behind the giant *Lopis* and the giant cone *Megono* should be preserved before it is gradually forgotten by the younger generation. The unavailability of the official flier/leaflet informing each event with its folklore recommends for the creation of promotive bilingual flier/leaflet to attract local/domestic and foreign tourists. It is hoped that the flier/leaflet containing interesting but brief information of the folklore of each event decorated with persuasive photos will persuade more tourists to come, whether local/domestic or foreign.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was financed by the DIPA of Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, 2018 fiscal year.

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