



Folklore as a Tool for Tracing Indigenous Territories in IKN

A Case Study of the Sepaku Region

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ABSTRACT

The Sepaku region, designated as the zero point for the new Indonesian capital (IKN), is poised for significant administrative boundary shifts. Consequently, some areas face transformation, potentially eroding their identity as customary territories, once cherished by local communities. This cultural essence is enshrined within folklore, acting as a repository of customary/traditional territorial descriptions. To safeguard Sepaku's regional identity amidst the rapid development of the new capital, it becomes imperative to preserve this folklore. Employing a qualitative approach grounded in spatial anthropology, this study explores the Tanah Balik area, now encompassing Bumi Harapan Village within IKN's zero point. Folklore, particularly "Aji Tatin," identifies this area, extending from the Tunan River in Waru Village, Waru Subdistrict, North Penajem Paser Regency, to the Aji Raden River in Balikpapan City. Notably, factors like population movements, chronicled in "Paser Balik," led to the disappearance of Kampung Telok Kintang in Sepaku. Conversely, locales detailed in "Pamaluan" remain etched on contemporary topographical maps. The shrinking of the Paser Balik customary territory arises from multiple factors, including population shifts and land development for palm oil plantations and timber management. The establishment of a new capital presents a substantial threat to local identity. Therefore, preserving folklore that delineates the spatial boundaries of the *Paser Balik* customary territory is pivotal for indigenous communities to assert their territorial rights.

Keywords: *Folklore, identity, IKN, preservation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The area that will be the zero point of the new Indonesian capital is an area that is currently known as the Sepaku area. The Sepaku area typically consists of four villages namely Bukit Raya Village (Sepaku 1), Sukaraja Village (Sepaku 2), Tengin Baru Village (Sepaku 3), and Bumi Harapan Village (Sepaku 4). The zero point for the nation's capital will later be built in the village of Sepaku 4 or Bumi Harapan Village. The Sepaku area is included in the Sepaku Subdistrict. In Sepaku Subdistrict itself, there are 11 villages with an area of 1172.36 km² with the subdistrict capital in Tengin Baru Village (Sepaku 3). (Regency Government of North Penajam Paser [RGNPP], 2020). The boundary of Sepaku Subdistrict is to the north by Kutai Kertanegara Regency, to the west by Balikpapan City and Kutai Kertanegara Regency, to the south by Penajam Subdistrict, and to the east by Penajam Subdistrict (RGNPP, 2020). In the Sepaku area, 4 villages are included. In addition, it should also be noted that several rivers pass through these villages. The Sepaku and Mangkulio Rivers cross Bukit Raya Village. Sukaraja Village is crossed by the Sepaku, Semoi, and Seluang Rivers. Tengin Baru Village is crossed by the Tengin River. Bumi Harapan Village is crossed by the Trunen, Mangkulio, and Biangai Rivers. (RGNPP, 2020). Thus, there are two villages included in the Sepaku area which are crossed by the Sepaku River. This is quite important because often the boundaries of an area are marked by the presence of a river.

Territory boundaries concerning customary territories are quite important for the position of the Sepaku region which will be affected by the construction of the new state capital. Territorial shifts will occur in addition to population shifts.

This will certainly result in the displacement of indigenous territories. Therefore, research is needed that will examine the boundaries of the customary territory of the local population. The customary territory itself is customary land in the form of land, water, and/or waters along with the natural resources on it with certain boundaries that are owned, used, and preserved for generations and in a sustainable manner to meet the needs of the local community, which acquired through inheritance from their ancestors or ownership claims in the form of *ulayat* lands or customary forests (Government of Indonesia [GI], 2021).

This customary area is quite important because it contains many things related to customs, culture, and traditions that form the identity of the community. Indigenous territories that are displaced and simply disappear will result in the loss of the community's identity (Grenoble & Whaley, 1998). Conditions like this often occur in several places in Indonesia. Developments carried out often negate the identity of local communities permanently. An example is Jakarta. The identity of the Betawian people is getting lost along with the development that is being carried out (Chaer, 2012). One of the ways to trace these customary territories is through folklore.

Folklore can be interpreted as a cultural product that contains various things that elevate life and the life of the community that owns it, for example, value systems, beliefs and religion, social norms, and even the social dynamics of the community (Pudentia, 2008). Koentjaraningrat (Mustikawati, 2016) states that folklore can be interpreted as a branch of knowledge that is part of culture. In folklore, there are elements of a culture, namely language, knowledge system, social organization, life tools and technology system, livelihood system, religion system, and art. The characteristics of folklore which are part of folklore include (1) the distribution is carried out orally, that is, it is spread through speech or by an example accompanied by gestures and reminder aids; (2) exist in various versions; (3) anonymous; (4) having a formula or pattern; (5) have collective use; (6) is paralogical, that is, has its logic that is not following general logic; (7) become the common property of a certain community; (8) are generally innocent or naïve and what they are (Danandjaja, 1986).

By paying attention to the characteristics of folklore and its urgency as a repository of the collective culture of its people, the existence of folklore in the Sepaku region which will become the zero point for the construction of a new national capital requires preservation measures. Preservation can be interpreted as an effort to preserve. In general, preservation efforts are needed because of the emergence of various changes. This is important because the need to preserve culture and traditional values is the basis of nationalism. Change occurs for many reasons other than globalization and capitalism. Information technology also plays a big role. The impact of the economy, technology, ideology, and discourse on change cannot be underestimated by people in Asia, especially in third-world countries. This impact will not only change culture and society, but will also shape different identities in various spaces, both public and private, including the state, society, and individuals. (Bustani, 2010; Rajandan, 2020).

The urgency of efforts to preserve culture and traditional values in which there is folklore in the Sepaku area is getting higher when the area becomes the fulcrum for the development of a new capital city. This development will change all aspects of the community's life, including those relating to customary territories which are the main joints of the local community. Within the framework of this preservation, the collection, recording, and documentation of folklore are followed by an analysis of the folklore to obtain a complete picture of the defense of the customary territories of the people in Sepaku, specifically for the Paser Balik people. How does this folklore in the Sepaku region provide an overview of the traditional territory of the Paser Balik tribe? This is what will be discussed in this article.

2. METHOD

The research method used was qualitative. The qualitative method is a method in which the researcher is tasked with finding meaning, understanding, and understanding of a phenomenon (Yusuf, 2014). In this study, this method was used to understand the boundaries of the customary territory of the Paser Balik tribe in the Sepaku Subdistrict as a place that will become the zero point for the development of the new Indonesian capital.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are three folklores obtained from the data search process, namely "*Paser Balik*", "*Aji Tatin*", and "*Pamaluan*". Two folktales, namely "*Paser Balik*" and "*Pamaluan*", mention the word Sepaku area, but one folktale "*Aji Tatin*" does not mention the word Sepaku area, but raises the word "*Paser Balik*". As previously stated in the introductory section, customary territory is customary land in the form of land, water, and/or waters along with the natural resources on it with certain boundaries, owned, utilized, and preserved for generations and in a sustainable manner for meet the needs of society. In this context, it can be said that the customary territory in question is the customary territory owned by the Paser Balik tribe that appears in the story "*Aji Tatin*". Therefore, this story is taken as the object of analysis.

The story “*Pamaluan*” tells the story of a girl named Putri Rintik Manik who lives in a village in the Sepaku area. The princess has a shy character. He never leaves the house. The princess only occasionally shows her face in the window of her house which is called *Kuta Adat Paser* because the princess is the daughter of a tuo village. Because of that, the people then named the village *Kampung Pamaluan*, which is currently one of the village names in the Sepaku Subdistrict. From this story, the naming of the village was based on the shy princess’ condition. From the point of view of toponymy, the naming of the village can be classified as historical naming. Historical naming or historical toponymy is the naming of a place based on historical events or incidents related to the formation of that place (Robiansyah, 2017). What is designated as a historical event in the folklore “*Pamaluan*” is the shy attitude of the princess.

The story “*Pamaluan*” in the classification of folklore as presented by Danandjaja (1986) is included in the legend category. Stories that are considered to have happened but are not considered sacred because the characters involved in this story are ordinary humans, namely Putri Rintik Manik.

Another story related to the Sepaku area is the story “*Paser Balik*”. Different from the story “*Pamaluan*”, the story “*Paser Balik*” can be categorized as a myth because in this story there is a god figure who determines the fate of other characters. At the beginning of this story, it was conveyed that the naming of the *Paser Balik* area was motivated by the presence of plants in the area which have the same upper and lower leaves. With this statement, it can be said that in terms of naming places, this story can be classified as a vegetation toponymy, namely the naming of a place based on the description of plants or plants that are around the place (Robiansyah, 2017).

This story tells of two brothers, Datuk Lonjot and his younger brother Saru. They come from Telok Kintang village in Sepaku. At one point, during a trip to the fields, his younger brother, Saru, slashed his machete at a root. From the root came out the blood. It turned out that this root was the incarnation of Dewa Tondoi’s younger brother. Since then, Telok Kintang village has been hit by a disease outbreak. When the community asked the gods for guidance through the *besoyong* ceremony, a stipulation emerged from Dewa Tondoi that villagers had to move from their homes to the unseen realm. The people did not agree, but in the end, they also moved to the Besak and Bongan areas, West Kutai, Tanah Grogot, and Batu Kajang because the number of people who were still alive was getting smaller.

The third story is the story “*Aji Tatin*”. This story tells of Aji Tatin, the daughter of a sultan from the Paser Sultanate, namely Aji Geger who was the first sultan for the Paser Sultanate who was Muslim. Putri Aji Tatin married a nobleman from the Kutai Kertanegara Kingdom and was given a fief land on the border of the Paser Sultanate and the Kutai Kertanegara Kingdom which was named Tanah Balik. It is mentioned in the folklore that Aji Tatin’s territory stretched between the Tunan River to Tanah Merah (Samboja) or from the Tunan River to the Aji Raden River (border of Samboja and Balikpapan). Tunan River currently belongs to the area of Waru Village, Waru Subdistrict, North Penajem Paser Regency. Meanwhile, the Aji Raden River is currently around Balikpapan City, namely between Teritip Village and Lamaru Village. Geographically, the Perdikan area known as Tanah Balik is part of the North Penajem Paser Regency, but this area does not touch on the Sepaku area. The two rivers do not cross the Sepaku Subdistrict. The contact with the Sepaku Subdistrict is related to the Paser Balik tribe, who during the reign of the Paser Sultanate were residents of the Perdikan area. However, the distribution of the Paser Balik tribe as mentioned in the story “*Paser Balik*” allows the customary territory of the Paser Balik tribe to also cover the area in Sepaku.

The folklore “*Aji Tatin*” itself can be categorized as a legend related to the history of a region, in this case, related to the history of the Paser Sultanate. As a legend, the evidence for this story can still be traced to this day. The two river names mentioned in the legend can still be found by the people today. What is described in the story “*Aji Tatin*” can be said to be an illustration of a customary territory, namely the customary territory owned by the Paser Balik tribe.

The issue of customary territory has become quite important in the context of building a new capital city. As stated by Sakbudin (Mulyanto, 2023) the construction of a new capital city will not be different from the conversion of customary forest functions for oil palm plantations and wood processing. The Dayak Paser customary law community has the potential to lose their customary forest, which is their source of livelihood, from food, and boards, to offerings for traditional sacred rituals (Terauchi & Inoue, 2016).

Indigenous territories, as previously mentioned, are areas in which indigenous peoples receive guarantees for the continuity of their lives, including the continuity of the culture that is owned by these indigenous peoples (Sissons, 2005). Losing ancestral territories will also eliminate the people’s culture and identity, even though this identity is an important asset in matters of nationalism (Calhoun, 2007). Therefore, tracking customary territories is quite important.

Tracing the customary territories owned by the Sepaku community through folklore, as has been conveyed, was carried out through three folklores using spatial theory. The theory of space (*theorie des raums*) in social anthropology explains how culturally existing spaces have meaning and implications for individuals or society. Both individual, community, and state perspectives on certain people or groups of people will have implications for the placement of a person or group of people in certain spaces with certain cultural meanings (Zaelany, 2013).

In a folk tale, the spatial setting is the most important part. Through the meaning of this background, traces of history can be found that are owned by the folklore. As is the case with the story “*Aji Tatin*”, the existence of several rivers mentioned in the story and at present these rivers can still be found by the community indicates that the story has historical traces. In addition, the mention of the names of the rivers as territorial boundaries also indicates that the humans or a group of people who live in the area are Paser Balik people because they occupy the Tanah Balik area. As stated in the theory of space the perspective of an individual, society or the state will have implications for the placement of a group of people in a certain space. The available space is an area called Tanah Balik. In the area called Tanah Balik, some people call their tribe the Paser Balik people.

However, later in the story “*Paser Balik*” the existence of the Paser Balik tribe also appears in the Sepaku area, namely in Telok Kintang Village. The existence of the Paser Balik tribe in the area was driven out due to a disease outbreak. They then moved to the Besak and Bongan (West Kutai) areas, Tanah Grogot and Batu Kajang. This indicates that there is a movement of population within the region or geography in East Kalimantan. Population movements can be caused by various things, one of which is due to disease outbreaks and natural disasters. The Paser Balik tribe migrated due to a disease outbreak. The Paser Balik tribe may also move to other areas.

The spaces available for the Paser Balik tribe are getting narrower with the entry of various influences, both in the economic, technological, and cultural fields. The arrival of people from outside, such as Java, has made the area where the Paser Balik tribe is located narrower. In the story “*Aji Tatin*” it is stated that the customary territory of the Paser Balik tribe occupies Tanah Balik starting from the Tunan River in the Waru Subdistrict to the Aji Raden River in the Balikpapan City area. However, now the customary area is getting narrower. This happened for various reasons. In the folklore “*Paser Balik*” it has been mentioned that there was a population movement.

The customary territory of the Paser Balik tribe as described in the story “*Pamaluan*” is in Pamaluan Village which is one of the villages in North Penajem Paser District. The name of the village is still being maintained. This shows that the existence of the Paser Balik tribe is still an important part of the North Penajem Paser Regency government, especially for the Sepaku Subdistrict. Meanwhile, the name of the Telok Kintang area contained in the story “*Paser Balik*” can no longer be found in the Sepaku Subdistrict area. This may have happened because the area later became empty land. After all, the inhabitants abandoned it and eventually, its name was lost.

4. CONCLUSION

Customary territories are the most important thing in a society because in these areas people live and are supported by nature. If the customary territory is lost due to various reasons, such as natural disasters and disease outbreaks, this will not only cause the area to no longer appear on the topographical map of the earth, but it will also negate the existence of these communities and their identities.

The customary territory of the Paser Balik tribe, which originally stretched from the Tunan River to the Aji Raden River during the early days of the Paser Sultanate, gradually narrowed due to various reasons. Some of the causes are population displacement, the opening of oil palm plantations, and timber management. The spaces that previously could have been used by the Paser Balik tribe as owners of the customary territory are becoming increasingly narrow. In the Sepaku area itself, there is a village called Telok Kintang which no longer appears on the map because its inhabitants were abandoned due to a disease outbreak. Apart from that, development, and the arrival of people from various places to the area, as well as several government policies that were enforced, caused customary territories to erode and disappear. The construction of a new capital city in the Sepaku Subdistrict is currently the biggest threat to the Paser Balik customary area. The development that will be carried out will open forests in the Sepaku area, some of which are likely to be customary forest areas owned by indigenous peoples. Therefore, it is hoped that the preservation of folklore to provide evidence of the existence of the boundaries of the Paser Balik tribal customary territory to the new capital development authority is expected to help indigenous people maintain their customary territories.

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