



Animism, Dynamism, And Syncretism In Coastal Oral Literature

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Abstract. The purpose of this research is to find and describe animism, dynamism, and syncretism in *pesisiran*'s (coastal residents) oral literature. This research method uses qualitative methods. The object of the research is coastal oral literature in East Java. The data collection technique used interviews, recording, and note-taking. The data analysis technique used descriptive analysis technique. The result of this research is that coastal oral literature contains animism, dynamism, and syncretism. Animism is the belief of the community in the spirits of their ancestors even though they are dead, but still have supernatural powers so they need to be respected. Dynamism is a community belief related to the belief that a place is inhabited and controlled by spirits such as Mount Kelud controlled by Lembu Sura. Syncretism is a community belief related to the combination of beliefs with Islamic teachings. The results of this study can be used as input to the Government to make policies in the excavation, preservation, and development of coastal residents' oral literature to enrich the national cultural treasures.

Keywords: Animism, Dynamism, Syncretism, Oral Literature, *Pesisiran*.

1 Introduction

Pesisiran's (coastal residents) oral literature is very important and interesting because it contains a lot of socio-mysticism related to animism, dynamism, and syncretism. It can be used as an educational medium for the younger generation living in the digital era. The research on coastal residents' oral literature can be used as a medium for extracting, preserving, documenting, publishing, and developing coastal residents' oral literature so that it does not become extinct. Oral literature is the most ecologically and geographically widespread cultural wealth and the richest diversity in terms of form, which is passed down from generation to generation to enrich the national cultural treasures [1, 2, 3, 4]. The coastal oral literature that developed on the North Coast of Java Island was characterized by Islam, while that developed on the

South Coast of Java Island was characterized by Hinduism so it contained a lot of mysticism [5].

Javanese mysticism or *Kejawen* has grown very fertile in almost every aspect of Javanese life from various levels of society, including the nobility, royal families, the general public, and the pesantren community [6, 7]. Mysticism is considered a set of rules of practice that humans carry out to enrich their minds based on intellectual analysis and experience. Mysticism behavior basically aims to control human passions in order to better know and understand more true feelings to get peace, tranquility, and inner calm in the author's life [8]. There are several types of mysticism, namely: (1) *kejawen* mysticism, (2) *wayang* mysticism, (3) cosmological, (4) magical mysticism, (5) animism, dynamism, and syncretism mysticism [9].

Javanese people in all their life behaviors cannot be separated from mystical behavior. The Javanese system of thinking is reflected in their actions which are often called *laku* or actions that are synonymous with being *concerned*. *Laku* can also mean *prihatin* or *tirakat*. Therefore, Javanese people often perform *tapa ngrowot* (eating only fruits), *tapa ngidang* (eating only vegetables), and *mutih* (eating only rice without salt and side dishes). These practices are done to cleanse the inner self [9].

In *kejawen* mysticism, the relationship between Javanese people and their God is often symbolized in *wayang*, such as the relationship between *dalang*, *wayang*, and *kelir*. *Dalang* is a symbol of God who has absolute power and *Wayang* is a symbol of man. The life and death, good and bad fortune of humans are determined absolutely by God. Likewise, the life and death, good and bad fate of puppet characters, is also absolutely in the hands of the puppeteer [9].

Wayang in Java was originally a medium for the *Wali Sanga* to spread Islam. Through puppet shows, it can be used as a medium to gather people who are then taught the teachings of faith and Islamic teachings by the *Wali Sanga*. Their strategy in preaching to spread Islam in Java through puppet media was very successful [10]. According to Koentjaraningrat, mysticism is a movement carried out by a person or Javanese society to seek appreciation of the meaning of human spiritual life to find true happiness [11]. *Kejawen* mysticism is a form of mysticism that leads to *manungaling kawula Gusti*, which is a union between humans and their God [9].

According to Koentjaraningrat, mystical *cosmology* is a concept related to the story of the creation of nature, which is related to mythology about the creation of the world or nature (*cosmogony*) and humans (*cosmology*). Stories about the creation of nature contain elements of cosmology. Myths of the creation of nature are classified into three, namely myths with Hindu-Buddhist elements, myths with syncretism-Islamic elements, and myths with magical-mystical elements [11].

Magical mysticism is a mystical practice carried out by humans to obtain extraordinary powers beyond those possessed by other humans (ordinary humans). To achieve magical mysticism, humans are also inseparable from God or Gods. When humans have merged with God or Gods, they will gain extraordinary powers which are often called supernatural powers. People who embrace mystic magic have high knowledge related to mysticism or the occult [9].

Javanese people both living in cities and villages generally adhere to Javanese Islam which can be divided into two, namely (1) syncretism, which unites pre-Hindu, Hindu, and Islamic elements, and (2) puritan Islam, which is a devout follower of

Islam. However, in general, many Javanese adhere to mystical and syncretic Javanese Islam rather than puritanical Islam [11].

The mysticism of animism and dynamism has been widely embraced by the Javanese people since long before Islam entered Jawa according to Endraswara. they have recognized God by worshiping spirits and objects. Animism is the belief and worship of spirits. While dynamism is the belief and worship of objects that are considered supernatural and mystical [9].

The problem-solving approach of this research uses literary anthropology and socio-cultural approaches because coastal residents' oral literature develops in society, belongs to a certain society, and reflects the socio-culture of a certain society. Literary anthropology is one of the new approaches used in literary research. Literary works as texts can be studied through a literary anthropology approach because literary texts can reflect the socio-culture of the community that owns them [9].

Research related to oral literature has been conducted by Supratno and Darni (2014) examining Half-Lisan Folklore which is focused on the functions and values contained in the performing arts [4]. Supratno and Heny Subandiyah examined oral folklore as a medium of character education for students. The results of the study that oral literature contains many values and functions that can be used as a medium for student character education [12]. Raharjo (2020) examined local wisdom in oral literature. The result of the research is that oral literature contains a lot of local wisdom related to local knowledge, local values, local potential, local cultural resources, local creativity, local decision-making, and social solidarity [13].

Raharjo (2020) researched the myth of the broken promise woman. The results of the study concluded that in the mythical story of the woman who breaks her promise, the main character is generally a very beautiful woman, but always breaks her promise as a symbolic rejection of the proposal of a powerful and ugly man [13].

Subandiyah, Haris Supratno, and Dedy Rahman Prehabto (2021) examined local wisdom and multiculturalism in oral literature. The result of this research is that oral literature contains a lot of local wisdom related to local knowledge, local values, local resources, local skills, local decision-making, and social solidarity [12]. Supratno and Aris Dwi Indriyanti (2021) examined the existence of Islamic and Hindu-based coastal residents' oral literature which focuses on local wisdom related to local knowledge, local values, local resources, local skills, local decision-making, social solidarity, and oral literature sedentarization which has the potential to be developed into a creative industry [4].

2 Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach based on considerations (1) the data source and data of this research are *pesisiran's* (coastal residents) oral literature in East Java, (2) the researcher as the main research instrument conducting direct observation, interviews, recording in the field, (3) the data are in the form of cultural phenomena (4) prioritizing this research prioritizes processes and products, (5) this research prioritizes descriptive data of *pesisiran's* oral literature, and (6) this research prioritizes emic views [10, 4].

Qualitative methods are alternative research techniques that collect data using interviews, participant observation, and focus groups [14]. Qualitative research is also often called descriptive research and ethnographic research [13]. Qualitative research has characteristics including relativistic, holistic, inductive, ideographic, descriptive, grounded, and flexible [15].

The object of this research is coastal oral literature, the genre of legends, myths, and epics in East Java. Coastal oral literature is very interesting and unique and has the potential to be transformed into performing arts. The people of East Java have a multiethnicity consisting of about sepuluk ethnics, namely Mataraman ethnics, Bang Wetan Javanese, Coastal Javanese, Madurese ethnics, Tengger ethnics, Osing ethnics, Samin ethnics, Menda-longan ethnics, island ethnics, in Kangean, Chinese ethnics, and Arab ethnics [16].

The data collection technique of this research uses (a) observation, (b) interview, (c) recording, and (d) recording [17]. Observation techniques to observe the location of oral literature distribution areas. Interview techniques to collect oral literature of legend, myth, and epic genres [18]. The data analysis technique of this research uses descriptive analysis techniques and *content analysis*. Descriptive and *content analysis* techniques to describe the meaning of data related to structure and literary value [19, 17].

The data analysis procedure of this research is (1) transcribing oral literature data from oral text to written text (2) translating oral literature text from Javanese to Indonesian (3) data reduction, (4) data classification, (5) data analysis and data interpretation to find the meaning of the data, and (6) conclusion making. Testing the validity of the data was carried out as follows: (1) triangulation, (2) *peer debriefing* technique, (3) *member check technique*, (4) audit trial technique [20].

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Animism in Coastal Residents' Oral Literature

The myth of "HajatanPernikahan in Gejakan Village, Loceret Subdistrict, Nganjuk Regency" contains animism related to the community's belief in the spirits of their ancestors. The community considers that even though people are dead, they still have an influence on people's lives and have supernatural powers. The community believes that if the community makes a *nganten* (wedding) tent, it should not turn its back on the village tomb. If violated, there is a negative impact because it is considered disrespectful to the spirits of their ancestors. The description of the local wisdom value related to the local value appears in the following quote:

The people of *Gejagan* have a belief about the establishment of a wedding celebration tent whose position is not allowed to turn its back on the local village cemetery. The origin of their belief is that there was an incident when a resident held a wedding celebration by setting up a tent facing the direction of the cemetery. The tent collapsed due to rain and strong winds. This incident is believed to be a sign that the ancestors feel less respected. Therefore, to this day, celebrations must put up tents with their backs to the cemetery. The

cemetery in *Gejagan Village* is located on the south side, so residents who will hold a wedding celebration are prohibited from setting up tents opposite the position of the cemetery. If there is a resident whose main road or the place where the tent is placed is facing north or the opposite direction, then they are forced to turn back in the opposite direction (HPDG, 5-20).

This data illustrates that people in *Gejagan Village*, *Loceret Subdistrict*, *Nganjuk Regency*, still believe that the spirits of the dead must be respected. If violated, it will have a bad impact on the community.

3.2 Dynamism in oral literature

The myth of "*Dewi Kilisuci*" contains dynamism related to the beliefs of the people of *Kediri*, *Blitar*, *Tulungagung*, and surrounding areas who believe that the ruler of *Mount Kelud* is *Lembu Sura*. The myth tells of the betrayal of *Dewi Kilisuci* and *Prabu Brawijaya* to *Lembu Sura*. At the time *Prabu Brawijaya* made a competition for whoever could lift the two magic heirlooms of the *Kediri Kingdom*, *Gong Sekar Delima* and *Kiai Gandayaksa's* bow and arrow, he would be married to his daughter *Dewi Kilisuci*. In the competition, there was not a single participant who was able to lift the two magic heirlooms. When *Prabu Brawijaya* was about to close the competition by beating the gong, suddenly a young man with an ugly plow and an ox head came and asked for permission to participate in the competition. *Prabu Brawijaya* allowed the young man to take part in the competition because he thought that the young man would not be able to lift the two sacred heirlooms of the kingdom of *Kediri*, the princess who was powerful and handsome alone were not able to lift them.

Prabu Brawijaya allowed *Lembu Sura* to lift two powerful heirlooms. *Lembu Sura* was able to lift the two heirlooms one by one. *Prabu Brawijaya* finally decided that *Lembu Sura* was the winner and the one who was entitled to marry *Dewi Kili Suci*. The description of *Lembu Sura's* success in conquering the two heirlooms of the *Kediri Kingdom* can be seen in the following quotation:

All the people in the arena were shocked by *Lembu Sura*. *Lembu Sura* was able to conquer the two heirlooms that were used as challenges in the competition. Cheers of joy from the spectators filled the arena but *Dewi Kilisuci* felt different. She looked sad not accepting this result. She felt that a beautiful princess couldn't marry a half-demon. She left the arena and returned to *Kaputren* crying bitterly (MDK, 15-25).

The data shows *Lembu Sura's* success in conquering the two heirlooms of the *Kediri Kingdom*, although he ultimately failed to marry *Dewi Kilisuci* as his wife. In fact, he was betrayed by *Dewi Kilisuci* and buried alive in a well that he made himself to fulfill *Dewi Kilisuci's* request. The description appears in the following data excerpt:

However, the opposite was true. *Lembu Sura* gladly accepted *Dewi Kilisuci's* request and hurried to make the well. In the designated place, *Lembu Sura* began the construction of the well. Over time, the well that was requested was getting deeper. *Dewi Kilisuci* then thought of another plan to make *Lembu Sura*

fail. *Dewi Kilisuci* cunningly told the soldiers and residents around the well to cover the well with stones and sand around the place. The soldiers and villagers obeyed their master's orders in droves. *Lembu Sura* who just found out that he was tricked by being buried in the well then swore. He swore that there would be retribution many times over. *Lembu Sura's* voice gradually disappeared, accompanied by the earthquake which also diminished (MDK, 30-40).

The data shows *Dewi Kilisuci's* betrayal of *Lembu Sura* who had made a well at her request, but she betrayed *Lembu Sura*. Finally, *Lembu Sura* issued an oath that he would take revenge on *Dewi Kilisuci* by erupting Mount Kelud to destroy the entire area of the Kediri kingdom, which included Kediri, Blitar, Tulumgagung, and surrounding areas.

3.3 Syncretism in *pesisiran*/ coastal residents' oral literature

The myth of "*Ki Jalak Ijo*" contains syncretism about the existence of very fertile land in the Rengel Sub-district area of Tuban even though the land is barren land and far from a good irrigation system. The land when planted with rice or other crops yields very good results, even though it is not well maintained. The community believes that this is due to the *karomah* of *Ki Jalak Ijo* with the permission of Allah because the community when *Ki Jalak Ijo* spread Islam by disguising himself as a beggar asking for water, the community was kind to *Ki Jalak Ijo* and gave water to *Ki Jalak Ijo*, even though the community only had a little water. The description appears in the following data excerpt:

There are myths related to *Ki Jalak Ijo* about the existence of special places and sacred objects such as magic wells, rice fields with excessive fertility, and many others. Generally, stories related to him describe *Ki Jalak Ijo's* kindness in helping the community. One example of such a story is about a good group of people who always harvested abundant crops despite not receiving special care, the existence of special rice fields with extraordinary harvesting abilities still exist today even though they are actually located in barren areas and far from a good irrigation system (KJI, 5-20).

The data illustrates the community's belief that the *karomah* of *Ki Jalak Ijo* can provide fertile land conditions even though the land is in an area of limestone use and far from a good irrigation system, but the rice crop is very abundant, even though it is not well maintained. This is because of Allah's power and shows that if a society has good morals, and is willing to do good and help those in need, then Allah will provide abundant sustenance to people who are willing to give away some of their wealth. People who give alms do not have to wait for wealth. Even if you have a little money, some of it is donated to other people who are in dire need, God willing, you will get multiple good rewards from Allah SWT.

The myth of "*Ki Jalak Ijo*" depicts syncretism related to the community's belief about the existence of a well located in the Plumbang sub-district. The well never runs out of water despite the dry season and is located in a very arid limestone mountain area. The well water can fulfill the water needs of the surrounding community, even

during the dry season. This has been the case until now. The incident occurred because the community was good, and willing to help others in need by giving water to *Ki Jalak Ijo* who disguised himself as a beggar. The description appears in the following data excerpt:

In addition, there is a story about the village created by *Ki Jalak Ijo*, the village is called *Sumur Jalak* Village which is located in the *Plumpang* District. The short story is that in the village *Ki Jalak Ijo* once stopped and made a well by sticking his stick. The well is well-located in an area far from underground water sources in a very arid area. The well was made because the residents had been kind to *Ki Jalak Ijo* who disguised himself as a beggar and asked the residents for water, even though the residents were short of water they were still kind enough to give drinking water to the beggar, until now the well still exists and is used for the benefit of the residents (KJI, 10-25).

The data provides an overview of the community's belief in the existence of a magical well in *Plumpang* Subdistrict, Tuban Regency. Although the well is located in a very barren area, in the limestone mountains. But the water is never running out so that it can meet the needs of the surrounding community even in the dry season. The community believes that this is due to the blessing of *Ki Jalak Ijo* to the people who have been willing to help their neighbors who are in dire need.

4 Conclusion

Referring to the description above, it can be concluded that coastal oral literature contains a lot of socio-mysticism related to animism, dynamism, and syncretism. Animism is the belief of the community in the existence of the spirits of their ancestors who still need to be respected. Dynamism is the belief that every object or place has an inhabitant or ruler that needs to be guarded and respected. Syncretism is the combination of community beliefs with Islamic teachings.

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