



From Agent to Agency: Management of the Aer Mata Ebhu Tourism Destination, the Noble Burial Complex of West Madura, by the Local Community in Arosbaya, Bangkalan

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Abstract. The Aer Mata Ebhu Burial Complex is estimated to date back to the 15th century, serving as the final resting place of the Cakraningrat dynasty, their families, and retainers. This study aims to identify the process by which the local community transitions from acting as agents to becoming agents of agency in managing the AerMata Ebhu Burial Complex. The research employs an ethnographic approach and draws upon the theoretical perspective of Anthony Giddens. Interviews were conducted with three components of the local community responsible for managing AerMata Ebhu, the Bangkalan Tourism Office, and the Cultural Heritage Preservation Agency (BPK) Region XI East Java. The findings reveal that this destination ranks among the top three religious tourism sites in Bangkalan in terms of visitor numbers. The burial complex serves not only as a cultural symbol but also as a heritage site reflecting the dynamic interplay of various interests. Administratively, the site is a historical and archaeological relic under the supervision of the BPK Region XI East Java. However, its management is heavily influenced by local community interests, which are represented in the three-tiered spatial structure of the complex, comprising the first courtyard, the second courtyard, and the main courtyard. These courtyards, connected by ascending steps, reflect the hierarchical distribution of power among local community actors, illustrating the process of transitioning from agent to agency, as they sustain power dynamics through the physical structure and economic interests associated with the site.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage Site; Local Community Management; Power Dynamics

1. Introduction

Tourism in Indonesia is getting stronger after the Covid-19 pandemic. Aer Mata Ebhu religious tourism is one of the mainstay tourist destinations in Bangkalan Regency. East Java, Indonesia. The presence of this tourist destination not only provides economic benefits

for the local community, but also presents a management order by the local community that is maintained across generations. In other words, it forms a pattern of structural order and reflective relationships between structures and agents that never stop.

The Aer Mata Ebhu Tomb Complex is thought to date back to the XV century. Here are buried the Trah Cakraningrat and his family and servants. The site is located in Buduran Village, Arosbaya Sub-district, Bangkalan Regency, East Java. The area is about 8,000 m² with an altitude of 19.35 m above sea level. This site also illustrates the long history of Madura from the time of the kingdom of Madura in the western region [1].

Bangkalan Regency is known for its religious tourism, including the tourist destination Aer Mata Ebu. In contrast to other tourism, religious tourism is a type of tourism related to religious religiosity. Religious tourism is one of the oldest trips and is increasingly developing in the modern era to strengthen the religious identity and spirituality of a person or group. Religious tourism destinations are usually considered to have historical advantages, there are myths or legends, and have unique architecture. Tourists can also deepen their sense of spirituality through this tour [2].

Aer Mata Ebhu tourist destination is one of the religious tourist destinations that has the highest visit in Bangkalan Regency. Local communities have solidarity to maintain this tourist destination and take care of it with various existing resources. they also utilize it as a source of economic income [3]. The results of other studies show that the Aer Mata Ebhu tourism development strategy is still not optimal and needs improvement [4]. On the other hand, the tourism sector is recognized as having a strong influence on increasing hotel occupancy, tax revenue, labor force participation so that it has a positive effect on the GDP per capita of Bangkalan Regency [5].

The involvement of local communities is one of the drivers of successful tourism development [6]. Local communities can function as agents that utilize existing structures and resources. The relationship between structures and agents manifests in daily social practices that are able to increase self-understanding, adapt to the environment, and even change the structure itself [7]. Structures can also have the function of restraining and enabling agents' actions.

This study looks at this relationship of agent and structure inherent in the architecture of Aer Mata Ebhu. In terms of the architecture of this site, there are three courtyards, namely the first courtyard, the second courtyard, and the third courtyard. The first courtyard has a gate 1 with a white paduraksa type. There are ancient tombs along the path that are reserved for courtiers, caretakers, and the public from the past. In the second courtyard, there is gate 2 which is also paduraksa type with a kupu tarung door. This second courtyard is reserved for the graves of Adiningrat's grandchildren and their descendants. In addition, there is a pavilion to receive guests. Finally, the third courtyard is marked by gate 3. This is where the main cemetery is located with a variety of unique old Madurese ornaments. This is the tomb of Syarifah Ambami, the consort of Prince Tjakranigrat I, whose folklore is legendary as the story of Aer Mata Ebhu. The three courtyards are the key entry points in the discussions of this study on the management of Aer Mata Ebhu tourist destination by the local community.

This study aims to identify the process by which the local community transitions from acting as agents to becoming agents of agency in managing the AerMata Ebhu Burial Complex.

2 Method

This research chose a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. Ethnography is the main approach used to find the cultural characteristics of the community, both groups and individuals in the natural habitat of the community at the research locus [8]. This data helps researchers to find a cognitive map of the object of research in a cultural framework. The results of the research will produce a model that is culturally friendly, easily adapted and integrated into policy innovation in tourism management strategies. There are 12 steps in ethnographic research, namely: setting informants, interviewing, taking ethnographic notes, asking descriptive questions, analyzing ethnographic interviews, domain analysis, asking structural questions, conducting taxonomic analysis, asking contrastive questions, conducting component analysis, determining cultural themes, and making ethnographic writing [9]. This approach enables the discovery of problem resolution based on ethnographic data [8]. The data sources for this study are secondary data from existing literature and primary data by conducting interviews. Interviews were conducted with three components of the local community responsible for managing AerMata Ebhu, the Bangkalan Tourism Office, and the Cultural Heritage Preservation Agency (BPK) Region XI East Java.

3 Result and Discussion

Structuration and agency is one way of looking at the operation of the social world by considering aspects of social structure and individuals in society. The relationship between the two is not separate but gives rise to dualism between the dimensions of structuration and agency. Structuration emphasizes the nature of duality. Giddens criticizes the domain of social science that emphasizes the experience of individuals as phenomenology and the totalism of structures as functionalists, but rather social practices that are organized across time and space. Structuration emphasizes the importance of how social structures as rules and sources of existence are produced and reproduced by human actions. Human actions do not exist in a static space and are only a formation of social structures, but have a dynamic nature. Agents are actors while agency is the action of individuals where they are able to take responsibility and intervene. In this context, the structure has the power that allows individuals to make changes to the structure itself [10]. To achieve agency, agents or actors must have reflective and creative power in carrying out social actions. Agency reflects individuals who are able to manage events that show individuals are active entities..

3.1 Management Structure Pattern of Aer Mata Ebhu

The Aer Mata Ebhu tourist destination ranks among the top three religious tourist sites in Bangkalan in terms of visitor numbers. The burial complex serves not only as a cultural symbol but also as a heritage site that reflects the dynamic interaction of various interests. Administratively, the site is a historical and archaeological relic under the supervision of

BPK Region XI East Java. However, its management is strongly influenced by the interests of the local community, which are represented in the spatial structure of the three-level complex, consisting of the first courtyard, second courtyard and main courtyard.

The East Java Region XI Cultural Preservation Center conducted registration and inventory activities in 1993. The site was named a state-protected site. The maintenance and restoration functions are the main tasks of this institution. Restoration has been carried out since 1979/1980 to 1985/1986, post-restoration observation in 2004 and produced a map plan of the restoration results. Conservation activities have been carried out in 1986, 1987, and 2011 [1]. Through this function, no one is allowed to change the form and function of this site.

The authority of the East Java Region XI Cultural Preservation Center does not include the tourism domain. The Bangkalan Regency Culture and Tourism Office, through interviews, conducts routine activities to record the number of tourist visits. Meanwhile, in the management domain, the role of local communities is very dominant. Uniquely, the social structure of control over Aer Mata Ebhu is illustrated through architectural spaces consisting of three courtyards, namely the first courtyard, second courtyard, and thirteenth courtyard. The first courtyard consists of 46 steps that connect to the second courtyard. There is a large archway as a signpost to enter the Aer Mata Ebhu area. The influential local community in this area are the residents around the first courtyard area. They act as sellers with commodities from jewelry to tools, food and drinks sold directly or in the form of permanent stalls. Sacred water, believed to be the source of the Aer Mata Ebhu spring, is also sold in bottles. There are also many beggars asking for alms from visitors. They are not limited by gender, there are men and women. In terms of age, they vary from children to the elderly. The structural pattern in the first courtyard is not organized but culturally institutionalized. In addition to utilizing the building structure, the local community also maintains and cares for the first courtyard with improvised resources.

The second courtyard is the connecting space between the first courtyard and the main courtyard. There is a second *tupé paduraksa* gate with a wooden door of *kupu tarung* type. There is a cupola that houses 10 tombs of Adiningrat descendants. there is a pavilion that serves to receive guests. There is also a *puduraksa* gate on the west side leading to the spring on the west side of the hill. The courtyard is quite sloping. There are officers in charge of recording tourist visits. These officers are local community members who are organized in a group. They take turns on duty. Visitors must report to this officer. And there is an unwritten obligation to fill a charity box. Most of the officers are male and are required to guard this space for 24 hours. In this space, beggars and sacred water vendors are still found. This indicates the fluidity between groups and spaces despite the architectural barriers that separate them.

Finally, the main courtyard. The main courtyard is the main space of the cemetery complex. There is the tomb of the legendary figure Aer Mata Ebhu, Empress Syarifah Ambami, wife of Prince Tjakraningrat I. There is a cupola that houses 46 tombs. The tombs in this room look the most magnificent, adorned with carvings typical of classical Madura on each tombstone. The caretaker of the tombs is the authority in this space. She is not only a local

figure, but also a civil servant from the East Java Region XI Cultural Preservation Center. She is in charge of maintaining and caring for Aer Mata Ebhu as a state-protected site. The caretaker of Aer Mata Ebhu is a woman. She obtained this position from her father who used to be the caretaker of the tomb as well. In carrying out her duties, the caretaker is assisted by the local community who are also women. They are not in the main courtyard all the time. Mostly between morning and evening with flexible hours. The main courtyard guards usually double as beggars and sacred water sellers around this location. The women here are chosen by the caretaker. The caretaker's power is more dominant than other dimensions of local community power. This is because she is authorized by the state to carry out her duties.

The social structure pattern of the management of Aer Mata Ebhu illustrates the intersection of interests between the state and the local community. The state is present to carry out conservation functions and record tourist visits. Meanwhile, the local community has more control over the tourism management dimension of the existing spaces. Although there are barriers of power between spaces, the social practice of the existence of social agents in this area can switch between spaces without disturbing the power space of interested local community groups. This process takes place across generations with respect for existing power boundaries. These social practices are organized in time and space based on generative schemes resulting from social conditioning, which Giddens calls habits. This scheme functions to create social codes and norms that form the basis of social actions of social agents or actors. Structures guide social actions productively played by actors [11]. This process can be circular and can potentially spiral. This dynamic is referred to as structuration.

3.2 Rules and Resources in The Social Structure of Local Community Management of Aer Mata Ebhu

Social structure survives as a set of rules and resources that exist in society. It manages the procedures of action and aspects of praxis, from ideas to concrete actions by social actors. Structure in this context is maintained in continuity in social practice by social actors [11]. Thus, rules can limit social action and resources enable it. Social systems are here interpreted as modes in which generative rules and resources are generatively produced through social interaction. Meanwhile, space and time can replicate this type of relationship even in different contexts.

The rules that exist in the management of Aer Mata Ebhu by the local community are not enshrined in written rules. They produce and reproduce power culturally. But behind the regularity of establishing power. There are dynamics that can lead to negotiation processes and hidden conflicts. In its intersection with state power, the local community seems to be in the same space of interest to maintain its existence. Especially when tourism is faced with standardization of services to tourists who come. This interest contests the resource domain when Aer Mata Ebhu is positioned as a tourist destination area. On the other hand, the internal local community itself also illustrates the same conditions when fighting over

existing resources. The most obvious example of this condition is the existence of beggars in Aer Mata Ebhu and the buying and selling of sacred water by the local community.

The presence of beggars in religious tourism destinations is common. As in other destinations, there are many beggars in Aer Mata Ebhu. However, it is common knowledge that beggars at Aer Mata Ebhu have a different character. They tend to fight over tourists to ask for alms. The results of interviews with tourists, the actions of beggars seem to force to be given. Not infrequently this makes tourists feel uncomfortable.

The results of interviews with local communities show that this action cannot be separated from their social construction of the concept of sustenance. There is a cross-generational story that says that Ratu Syarifah Ambami often distributes food, money, and so on to the community by scrambling. It became the Queen's pleasure when her people fought over the food she distributed. This construction crosses time and space by reinterpreting this tradition by converting the alms of the tourists to be fought over. Therefore, the structure of the tradition transforms in the present era with the same spirit but with different resources. This tradition is difficult to change. Even when there were many complaints from tourists about the behavior of beggars at Aer Mata Ebhu, this was responded to by the Bangkalan Regency Culture and Tourism Office by curbing the beggars. However, this curbing is not done all the time. So that the phenomenon of beggars in Aer Mata Ebhu returned after there was no curbing from the government. The difference in action between the state and the local community is something that cannot be avoided. There are differences in the principles of tourism destination management between the government and the local community. In social practice, the government's principles are limited to certain times, while the principles in the local community apply all the time. As long as the social construction of the existence of tourists by the local community is still maintained through various channels that exist in the social system of the community, this habit will continue through and across the dimensions of space and time and is culturally institutionalized.

Second, sacred water commodity. Sacred water is a myth developed by the local community that has spiritual power. Sacred water is believed to be blessing water, can heal, nourish, and so on. These myths are socialized to tourists and traded as commodities. Among sacred water sellers, claims of sacred water authenticity are echoed to tourists. This mutual claim action is accompanied by cultural narratives about the origin of sacred water and its efficacy. This is a form of competition between local community social actors to compete for the benefits of tourists.

Seeing the phenomenon above shows that structures are able to provide spaces for agents to create change, make movements to survive and change. Social structures through rules and contested resources can be maintained through the production and reproduction of agents, and at the same time allow for ongoing transformation [12].

3.3 From Agent to Agency

The first courtyard describes a fluid process of structuration. The differences between interests in this space are not obvious. They compete for visitors with cultural codes. Their begging spirit is inspired by the oral tradition about Ratu Ebhu's habit of distributing food by fighting over it. This interpretation converts tourists into a contested source of

sustenance. Thus, it is not uncommon for visitors to encounter beggars who follow them along their journey in the first courtyard. Local people who utilize this space function as cultural agents who maintain the begging tradition without making significant changes.

The second courtyard illustrates the dynamic process of structuration. The actors in charge of this space compete for the interest to be in the circle of power. The nature of this group is more closed and less open than the first courtyard. This group is based on the descendants of the caretaker and elements of village power. The main courtyard illustrates the process of structuration with the intersection of the interests of the state and local communities. The figure of the caretaker is a representation of these two powers. Administratively she was responsible to BPK XI East Java, while locally she was able to gather local women to carry out activities at the Aer mata ebhu burial complex to clean and to carry out economic activities. They did so as beggars and sacred water sellers. There is a mutually beneficial relationship between the caretaker and the local community. The power of the caretaker is difficult to replace along with her state-recognized position as the guardian of the buried of the kings of West Madura.

4 Conclusion

Conclusions of this study are: The local power of The Aer Mata Ebhu Burial Complex destination is very dominant and illustrates the dynamics of local power. This condition becomes the local power to maintain and manage The Aer Mata Ebhu Burial Complex. On the other hand, the modernization of this destination management will be difficult to do if the traditional power model survives without change. The local community maintained power through the way they guarded the building and the way they conducted their economic activities. First, the main product 'sacred water' had a central position by claiming it had spiritual powers that were promoted orally. Through this tradition, claims to the original source of the water are contested amongst the sellers. Second, the tradition of begging. This tradition is very effective for earning income under the pretext of getting blessings and helping conservation efforts by local communities. However, the scramble to beg tourists needs to be considered. It needs to be regulated as an effort to better manage tourism. The role of the state was only limited to the area of building conservation and recording the number of tourist visitors. This role had not been able to educate and change policies and standardize the management of tourist destinations. Good cooperation between elements is needed to preserve the Aer Mata Ebhu tourist destination in the future

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