

Panji and Maritime Tradition: Representation of Panji in the Tradition of Pambelah Community

Rohmat Djoko Prakosa

Dance Study at Wilwatikta Institution of Art, Surabaya

ABSTRACT

This article examines the representation of Panji, a legendary hero in Javanese culture, in the maritime tradition of the Pambelah community. The Pambelah community, who live on the north coast of Java and work as fishermen, sailors, and boat builders, have a deep connection with the cosmic sea, the boat-making process, and the sailing activities. Through literature review and participant observation methods, this research explores the oral and written narratives of Panji about these activities. The findings reveal that Panji is not only a source of inspiration for various literary and artistic expressions but also a part of the spirituality and identity of the Pambelah community. They view Panji as a role model of *kautaman* (the highest level of human dignity) and mapan *nyawiji* (the merging of oneself with nature and God). In conclusion, the research on Panji in maritime tradition reveals the historical and cultural links between the agrarian and maritime aspects of Nusantara civilization and the dynamic and pluralistic nature of Panji culture.

KEYWORDS

Panji, pambelah, maritime, spirituality, identity.

Introduction

The narrative about the story of Panji's wandering is always related to the cosmic nature of mountains, forests, rice fields, and the sea. In the narrative of a wandering journey from the center of the Panji kingdom across mountains, forests, villages, rice fields, fields, and seas [1], [2], [3]. The story of Kelana Panji is an inspiration that is imbued with people who live in various expressions of Panji can be seen in a full day life, whether as a form of literary work, performance or oral tradition [2], [4], [5]. This explanation emphasizes the existence of historical links with the full day lives of people in various cultural areas, especially in javanese society.

In the northern coastal region of the java sea, the narrative of Panji becomes an important part of people's full day lives. The explanation of the narrative on seas, ships, Pambelah, wong mbelah becomes a series of naratives that reflect the cosmic maritime traditions lived by the society of the speakers. Pambelah, wong mbelah is a term used by the community to refer to groups of people on the north coast of java who work as fishermen, ship crew, and various jobs related to the cosmic sea. For generations, the term wong mbelah, pambelah is spoken in everyday life, related to the sea activities of miyang. The sea is the main source of lives for coastal communities [6], [7]. There is a connection between the community's knowledge cluster and the marine science perspective which is now developing rapidly with sophisticated equipment. There are ongoing efforts to explore the social traditions in the sustainability of the local culture related to the narrative of Panji in various culture aspects. Kieven [8], intensively recorded the movement of communities in various regions of Nusantara in exploring Panji as a part of updating Panji culture.

Narratives about boats, seasons, and weather that are connected to the the cosmic sea are a part of the local knowledge that the community lived by. This cluster of knowledge guides the Pambelah community in living their lives as sailors, in everyday life merging themselves in taking and developing their live force from the sea as a source of livelihood.

The terms of *miyang*, *mentas*, *labuh*, *sandhar*, *tedhuh*, *angin barat*, *angin timur* are parts of landmark and signal for going to the sea to catch fish, as well as other navigation [9], [10], [11]. The Pambelah community has a body of knowledge about the sea which they have inherited in oral tradition from generation to generation, so they can determine the fish, time, and types of fish they will catch.

Pranatamangsa, the seasonal cycle is characterized by the ebb and flow of the sea water as well as the the size of waves, in some areas they call it wave one, wave two, three, up to the ninth wave in the west wind season. This is an important part of the sailing tradition, *miyang*, as well as the tradition of traditional boat making. Making traditional boats as the equipment for navigating the open seas is designed as a part of entering the cosmic sea. The shape of the boat and the equipment used are designed based on the size of the area, the weathers and seasons which are considered to be the dynamics of blessings and fishing, as well as efforts to obtain other marine products. The landmark of the entering of Panji narrative in Pambelah traditions of communities on the north coast of java can be seen again in various literary works [12], [13], as well as oral tradition that grow and develop in community life.

In the literary tradition, the story of Kelana Panji is in the form of fiction that describes the wanderings of Panji in stories, disguises, heroic, romantic stories, stories that tell human values and humane. Several researchers interpret Panji as a legendary figure who encompasses various human values in a dramatic story [3], [14]. It has a close connection with ancestral breeding traditions and the golden age of past culture, which can inspire various creative processes and innovations in local culture.

Method

The explanation of Panji in maritime tradition is preceded by a literature study which explains the study of Panji in the tradition of the northern coastal communities of Java. In-deph observations of lives of Pambelah community were carried out by integrating the researcher's participation in daily community activities. It was done to be able to hear the emic narrative without any intervention from the researcher. The researcher involved himself in the community activities to gain in-deph experience of the daily life of the research community. The researcher's involvement in the cosmic dephs of research guides the researcher to gain a deep experiences, approaching the experience of the research subjects.

Discussion: Panji in the Composition of Ships and Sea

The main link between the oral tradition of past Panji is expressed in Panji mask performances in Malang, as well as other performances. Panji Gadingan, Panji Welahan, Panji Pamecut, the names have close relationship with the components of traditional boat. The life of pambelah society, *wong mbelah* is very close to the words *welahan*, *layaran*, *gadingan*, *pamecut*, *panjaringan*. This is related to the process of making traditional boats and ships, procedures for sailing both for fishing and other purposes. Oral tradition links that can be refered to include oral stories about Sunan Kalijaga, Ratu Kalinyamat, and several heroic stories that thrive in coastal areas about the panjis who fought against colonialism. The explanation above provides reinforcement that in the maritime tradition, panjis also transform boats, merchant ships into warships, during the time of Demak kingdom, Jepara. Ratu Kalinyamat, transformed *Jung Jepara* to be the warship used in Pamalayu expedition in changing the structure of the ship, *mapanji kalangan*, *mapanji gadingan*, and *pathols* worked hard to modify the shape and

structure of the ship. In the past there was the term *Tuha Kalang* which in principle led the kalang people in a place [15].

Sunan Kalijaga, gathered all pambelaha, pathols to be important parts of maritime tradition in the ship making, mixed with *wong kalang*, carpentry experts, as a tradition this can be observed by traditional ship and boat builders on the north coast of Java including the areas of Gresik, Lamongan, Tuban, Rembang, Pati, Demak, Jepara. The northern coastal region of java has *wong kalang* community, which has long been led by Mapanji Kalangan, which later during the colonial period having the title Sunan Kalang; bupati Kalang, Wedana kalang [15], [16]. *Wong kalang* are believed to be experts in processing wood, making buildings from wood, making boats and ships. It is also written that during the time of Pakubuwono IV, wong Kalang were believed to have made the kingpin Rajamala's boat which would be used to sail to Madura across the Solo River [17].

During the yellow war (1741 - 1743) Panji Margana together with Tumenggung Widyaningrat with a fleet of ships attacked the kompeni headquarters in Jepara, Rembang, and Juana. *Kompeni* was in a panic when they faced a simultaneous attack from a fleet of panjis from Lasem. The story of Panji's patriotism in moving the sea fleet, which consists of pambelaha, pathol has become a legendary story in the northern coastal region of Java, acted out in kethoprak performances, becoming a spoken story for people who are struggling with the dynamics of the sea.

This story also inspired the regent of Rembang, Suharyono, who led the arrest of foreign ships in the water of Rembang district in 1974 - 1979. The explanation is a sign that the spirit of Panji is an important part in defending the archipelago from crime, related to *nistha* acts [18]. Heroic values and attitudes - *kaprawiran* - permeate in a full day life and are grounded.

The tradition of making traditional boats and ships can be observed along the north coast of Java, Gresik, Lamongan, Tuban, Rembang, Juana, Jepara. Boat builders inherit knowledge and skills from the wong kalang tradition, especially those who study the technology of making wooden buildings, household equipment, boats and ships. The knowledge and skills of making boats has been existed for a long time (Mbah Guru 1996) in Lasem there are some names of villages related with the place of making ships that is Pulwadak village, and also in some other areas such as in Tuban, Demak, Jepara, Tegal, Cirebon.

In the villages of Pambelaha community there are usually several people who work as traditional boat builders as well as repairing boats and ships that are damaged, so that the people of Kalang and the people of Mbelah live side by side. This provides the possibility of mixing various traditions that apply in two groups of society, in the process of miyang; layar; going out to the sea to catch fish, maintain and build boats is an important part of fulfilling life's needs, as well as developing a life force based on cosmic ocean.

Traditional boat makers in oral tradition have distinctive narratives about people who have special skills and knowledge about wood and its process in designing and making boats. There is special expertise in designing the shape of boats, ships and making them with a working group that specializes in handling "*gadingan*", placing the parts of the boats correctly so that the boat can float with perfect balance, ride well through the waves. Designing layar with rigging skills, they have in depth experience of the direction and strength of the wind used for sailing.

Wong mbelah, *wong Kalang* gain additional knowledge and skills from Sampung people, wong Sampung also have reliable knowledge and skills in producing various home appliances, farming equipment, carpentry tools, boats, ships (Mbah Guru 1996). This strengthens the traditions of Pambelaha community. In everyday life, knowing saying who makes copper utensils, *pande wesi* who makes iron utensils, *kudhi* who make pottery, *undagi* carpenters, *jlagra* who make stone utensils, *gamblak* who makes brass utensils, package craftsmen who makes jewelry from gold and silver. *Jangkar*, *culing*, carpentry tools which are used in making ships and traditional boats made of iron owned by pambelaha made of *pande wesi*.

Pambelah community in the context of sailing, making and maintaining boats, is always linked to knowledge and skills rooted in the oral narratives of *wong kalang*, *tuha kalang* which they have inherited from generation to generation. People who have excellent knowledge and skills in building ships and boats are considered *Dhaeng*, of course this term has its roots in the happiness of Bugis community. The term *Dhaeng* in Panji story is referred to as part of Sabrang clan warriors [19]. Pambelas in the area of Lasem, Juana, several places in Tuban and other northern coasts are close to Bugis cultural narratives, so they found Bajo village, the term *dhaeng*, *dampu awang*. This is a landmark that Panji narrative in maritime tradition is a part of everyday life.

Natural knowledge that guides people in navigation in general, especially those related to *miyang*, is guided by a local knowledge system based on panji. In daily activities related to fishing at sea, the principle of *keblat papat lima pancer*. The main pancer is the boat used for *miyang*, guided by the sprinkling of stars in the sky. There is a term *pathokan ombak pandom lintang*. For pambelah society, *wong mbelah* read sea water, stars in the sky, weed breeze. There is a cosmic understanding which refers to the attachment of *prau*, *welah*, *pambelah*, *layar*. Pambelah; fishermen and boats is pancer as one complete unity, *ombak*, *lintang*, *angin* which is a component of life that must be read at all times. Panji philosophical concept *mapan nyawiji*, therefore, every pambela must establish themselves in the boat as a guide, so that they can be used as a reference for determining direction.

A clear understanding of the self philosophy of pambelah in the cosmic sea can be depicted in the following chart:

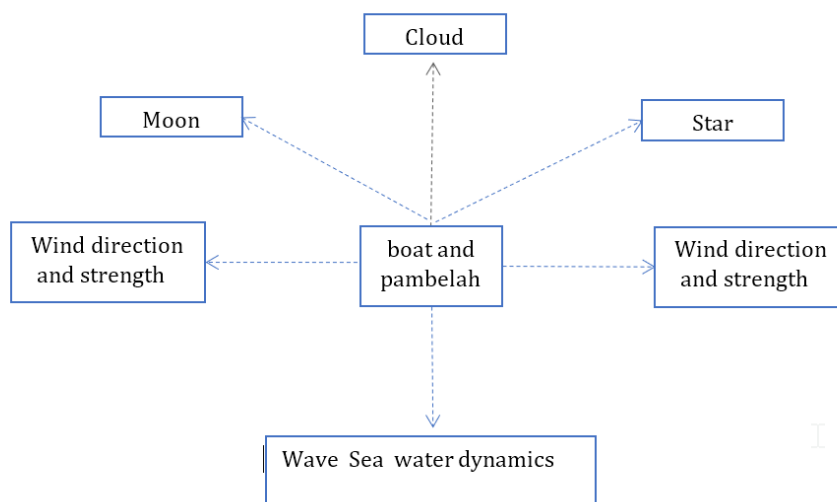


Chart 1. Philosophy Pambelah in the Cosmic Sea

Representation of *mapan nyawiji* expressed in the incantation *pambelah* when *Melahi* (rowing) the boat in the middle of the sea:

Semilah, anak putu adam miyang golek sandang pangan/ kaki dhanyang nini danyang sing mbahubreksa gisik segara aku jaluk idi/ allahku uripku mlebu uripmu, murup/. Ala ala ragaku kawataana ala-ala nyawaku kuwatna/ samilah

The meaning:

Bismilah adam miyang's grandchildren seek for sustenance, *Dhanyang* grandfather *danyang* grandmother who are responsible for taking care of the sea coast I am asking for permission,

my Allah my life entering you life, shining life. My body is ugly , give me strength, my life is bad too give me strength, *bismilah*

The mantra that is spoken and lived expresses the merging of the *pembelah* with nature and God who has life and existence. The essence of Panji in this context is more about the religion of Pambelah people in sailing across the sea. The text of the incantation describing the glory of the ancestor, Pambela's deep awareness about himself which is a part of the nature, living side by side with others and something. The principles lived by pambelas which is panji's spirituality.

Conclusion

The research on Panji in maritime tradition in the life of pambelah society gives a real description about the spirituality of Panji found by them and lived by pambelah's society.. The sea, boats, Panji in the previous narratives describing the meaning of the sea as a part of life dynamics and the life full of dramatic storyline. Separation, meeting, romance, perfecting life through attaining religious depth - gaining complete knowledge; enlightenment of life - always depicted by crossing seas, rivers, sailing, the process of sailing.

In everyday stories, the maritime traditions attached to the Panji story are absorbed and lived by *pambelah* community as a part of developing their vitality. This is expressed in the process of making and maintaining boats - *miyang* - in order to earn money.

Panji is interpreted as a part of understanding oneself as an ego that lives side by side with others and things. Panji is interpreted as the term *mapan nyawiji* as an expression that is lived by the merging of *pambelah* with the cosmic sea, God, the owner of life and existence.

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