

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Karimunjawa Island is located in Java Sea which is \pm 45 sea miles from Jepara (Ariyati, Sya 'rani, & Arini, 2007, p. 28). Karimunjawa Island is surrounded by 36 small islands. On the south, there are only two small islands called Menjangan Besar and Menjangan Kecil which are known as two of the most famous and visited islands in Karimunjawa archipelago. Other most visited islands in Karimunjawa archipelago are Tanjung Gelam, Cemara Besar, Cemara Kecil, and Gosong Island.

As a region that most of its territory is waters, the local people livelihood is as fisherman. In 2003, the local people who worked as fishermen were approximately 74.9% (Dinas Perikanan dan Kelautan Jateng, 2003). Karimunjawa people's ways of life show that they practice modern lifestyle: they go to school, they have electricity, and they use electronic gadgets. However, based on the researcher's observation, although the local inhabitants in Karimunjawa live a modern life, they still maintain their old tradition to protect their island. It is Karimunjawa traditions that attract the researcher to conduct a study in Karimunjawa to find out Karimunjawa people's local wisdom on their surroundings.

People in Karimunjawa have some beliefs. These beliefs become norms for tourists who visit their island. Based on the writer's experience, tourists are not allowed

to take out objects belong to the island, such as conch, limpet, and seashells that tourists find while they are venturing around the island. If they happen to take the objects with them and bring them out of the island, the objects will mysteriously disappear and be back to the place the objects belong. The writer had two experiences related to this belief. First, it happened in 2014 when the writer took a small coconut on the beach in Pulau Tengah, an island which the writer's family used to own. Second, it happened in October 2017 when she took a seashell on the shore of Pancoran beach. The writer brought both seashell and the small coconut to the ship, but both of them disappeared.

Karimunjawa's people have folkbeliefs, but they also have a ritual that has long been their tradition. Since there is no written information about *Barikan Besar* and *Barikan Kecil* ritual, the researcher can only give short description about both *Barikan* ritual based on the informal interview conducted by the researcher with the local people. Once a year, every *Sura* (the Islamic month of Muharram), in Javanese calendar system, on Thursday and Friday, people in Karimunjawa hold a ritual called *Barikan*. *Barikan* ritual is divided into two categories. *Barikan Besar* ritual is held once-a-year and it is the biggest ritual held in Karimunjawa. The local people, mostly women, gather in the city square (*alun-alun*) to pray for safety, prosperity, and protection from disasters and diseases. They also make and bring gigantic cone-shaped yellow rice with seafood side dish to the city square, bring it to the middle of the sea near the island and toss a little bit of the rice to the water as a part of the ritual. The locals also wear traditional Javanese clothing as their costume to perform the ritual. Moreover, the women perform dances which they have been practiced for months before the ritual begins.

The second category is *Barikan Kecil* ritual which is held once a month every *Wagé*—one of the five-day week in Javanese calendar called *pasaran*. The ritual includes small cone-shaped turmeric rice, row salt, mung bean porridge, and offerings placed in every T-junction which is prayed together by the inhabitants of Karimunjawa Island. After the prayer process is over, the mung bean porridge, the rice, and the row salt are brought home, mixed together, and tossed around the house.

Karimunjawa is a well-known island in Central Java, Indonesia. Many researchers have studied Karimunjawa, but most study is more focusing on the flora and fauna on the island (on land and underwater) like fish, corals, mangrove, and birds. For example, a study of Phylogenetic Diversity of the Causative Agents of Vibriosis Associated with Groupers Fish from Karimunjawa Islands, Indonesia done by Sarjito, Ocky Karna, Sabdono, Prayitno and Hutabarat in (2009). The other one is a study of Bird Community in Burung Island, Karimunjawa National Park, Central Java done by Margareta Rahayuningsih, Ani Mardiasuti, Lilik Budi Prasetyo, and Yeni A Mulyani (2007).

In conducting this study, the researcher intends to fill in the blank left by other researchers of Karimunjawa Island and its people; in the area of people's traditions. The researcher focuses her study on Karimunjawa people's ritual. The researcher will delve into the knowledge about the local inhabitants and their rituals especially *Barikan Kecil*. Therefore, exploring Karimunjawa Island, learning the ritual and visualizing it using audio – visual materials such as video, photos, sound files and text documents is a must because it is a part of Indonesian people cultural heritage. Audio-visual materials carry a huge amount of information that need to be preserved for future use. It makes the materials of the study come to life and more interesting. It also provides meanings for

people, especially students to experience the ritual that might not be possible for them to participate in real life. Through audio – visual materials, learning process will become easier, effective, and create interest. Audio – visual material will provide people, especially students a realistic approach and experience and it will enhance the energy level of learning (Farooq, 2014).

Translating the ritual in Karimunjawa Island visually can certainly help people to know the function, the ritual procedures, the items used in the ceremony, and the clothing better, and to learn the values possessed by the island's ritual. When Karimunjawa can be accessed virtually, people all around the world will not be limited by borders of regions, time, and budgets anymore. In other words, people are able to visit Karimunjawa without any geographical, time, and financial constraints. By presenting it visually, the island can be visited by people from around the world. The local wisdom in Karimunjawa as a local heritage will be well promoted to the world. In short, the study does not only want to celebrate the diversity in Indonesia, but she also want to make a visual representation of the ritual in Karimunjawa.

1.2 Field of the Study

The field of study is folklore, focusing on ritual.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is verbal folklore, especially in ritual called *Barikan Kecil* run by Karimunjawa people. It has been over 15 years, the researcher and her family visited and stayed on the island, but she only heard once about the ritual and never witnessed the performance of *Barikan Kecil* ritual. It becomes an interest for the research to write a thesis about the ritual. The researcher will find out what is *Barikan Kecil* and

provide more information about the procedure of the ritual, the participants, other things needed to run the ritual. The researcher will also add a short documentation movie of the ritual.

1.4 Problem Formulation

The two questions below are what the writer attempts to answer in this paper,

1. What is *Barikan Kecil* ritual?
2. What are the elements involved in the ritual?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

Based on the questions the writer wants to answer, the objectives of the writer's study are formulated as:

1. To understand the meaning of acts performed in the *Barikan Kecil* ritual.
2. To provide a descriptive analysis of all elements involved in *Barikan Kecil* ritual.

1.6 Significance of the Study

It is expected that this study will inspire readers' logical thinking, help them to learn to study cultural continuity and the diversity of cultures in Indonesia, and gain new information about folk culture and traditions. The researcher expects that this study will help the readers to understand Karimunjawa people better. The researcher will also incorporate the research data and video documentation that has been made into the district office, in order to be used as a media for the visitors to be more familiar with the culture and traditions of the local inhabitants of the island, especially those interested in Indonesian culture, such as ritual. The researcher will upload the video on YouTube and

The Jakarta Post so as all people around the world can see and learn about *Barikan Kecil* ritual in Karimunjawa Island, Indonesia.

1.7 Definition of Term

1.7.1. Local Wisdom

Local wisdom is a part of the cultural local knowledge that is formed through a process of learning by way of observation, testing, practice, and its spread in people (Tamalene, Muhdhar, Suarsini, & Rochman, 2014). Local wisdom can be understood as local ideas that are thoughtful, full of wisdom, good value, embedded, and followed by the people (Sartini, 2009).

1.7.2. Folklore

According to Barbro Klein, a Swedish Ethnologist, folklore itself has four basic meanings. “First, it denotes oral narration, rituals, crafts, and other forms of vernacular expressive culture. Second, folklore, or ‘folkloristics,’ names an academic discipline devoted to the study of such phenomena. Third, in everyday usage, folklore sometimes describes colourful ‘folkloric’ phenomena linked to the music, tourist, and fashion industries. Fourth, like myth, folklore can mean falsehood” (Klein, 2001, p. 133). It involves values, traditions, ways of thinking and behaving. “Folklore is a body of traditional belief, custom, and expression, handed down largely by word of mouth and circulating chiefly outside of commercial and academic means of communication and instruction” (Sims & Stephens, 2005, p. 10).

1.7.3. Ritual

Ritual is a part of verbal folklore. It has been studied by Robert Langer, Dorothea Luddecke, Kerstin Radde, and J. Snoek. In the Journal of studies, they defined rituals as an unisolated phenomena and performed within a specific cultural context (Langer, Luddecke, Radde, & and Snoek, 2006). Ritual is a repeated and habitual actions and a particular type of tradition (Sims & Stephens, 2005).

