

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Jebara is a coastal city in northern Java with a large number of fishermen. The fishermen and the people who live around the coast have a tradition called the *Lomban* tradition, a tradition of doing sea offerings. “The fishermen will celebrate the *Lomban* ritual after Eid in Shawwal”. “*Lomban* itself comes from the Javanese language "Lumban; Lumba or "lelumban" the word "Le" means "Lelangen" which means pleasure or fun” (Istiqomah, 2013, p. 2). *Lomban* is a celebration of fishermen in the Jebara regency in the form of sea offerings and in this special occasion, all the offerings are submerged in the middle of the sea. One of the sea offerings activities or *Lomban* is carried out in Bandungharjo village, Jebara. Bandungharjo is indeed known as the village of fishermen since most people in this area make a living as fishermen.

Currently, the *Lomban* ritual has been celebrated and carried out with many variations depending on the region. *Lomban* ritual was not only carried out in Jebara but also in Rembang, Demak, Tayu (Alamsyah, 2013). For example, the *Lomban* ritual in Tayu is celebrated by carrying out the ceremony of releasing the offerings that are placed in the *Ancak*, then at six o'clock in the morning the offerings will be submerged in the Tayu river in front of the fish auction house (Istiqomah, 2013, p. 4).

Whereas in Ujungbatu village, Jepara the *Lomban* ritual celebrations are carried out with parties, such as the *Teluk* war which begins with all people throw *Lepet* and *Ketupat* accompanied by Javanese music, *gamelan* and ends with the release of the buffalo head from the fish auction house (*TPI*) to the sea led by religious leaders of the Ujungbatu village (Husnah, et.al 2019). “The celebration of the *Lomban* rituals which has been carried out since hundreds of years ago has experienced a development with the addition of some cultural activities such as *Wayang Kulit* and *Ketoprak*”(Abdurrohman, 2015).

Rituals are not only used as entertainment for the people, but they are also attended by local people who should participate and understand the symbolic meanings of the offerings in the ritual, according to the researcher. Similarly, Abdurrohman says that “the sea offerings ritual is important for the community. People should not only participate but also understand the meaning of the traditional ceremony. They should know what offerings to prepare as well as the offerings’ symbolic meanings in the ritual”(Abdurrohman, 2015, p. 28). Based on those opinions of other authors, the researcher can understand the logical thinking of the Bandungharjo society in choosing offerings based on beliefs and symbols attached to them. According to Geertz, “humans, both individuals and groups, make knowledge system as a guide in acting and behave (as cited in Angelina & Wardani, 2014, 295).

Studies on *Lomban* have already been done by Alamsyah (2013) and Sri Indrahti (2018). Alamsyah studies how the *Lomban* procession runs from beginning to end. He mentioned who participates in the *Lomban* ritual, and what activities are carried

out by fishermen and the community in Jepara. Not only that, Alamsyah also recounts when and how the *Lomban* ritual originated and started to be carried out by the community and the fishermen, and when it became the property of the whole community, not just coastal residents. Furthermore, Sri Indrahti (2018) studies the food served in the *Lomban* ritual and brings up the importance of food that must be served by the community. She also mentions that the culinary activities of the *Lomban* festival during the post-New Order period are more varied and well documented (Indrahti, 2018). So, this part is the previous studies on *Lomban* ritual.

In this research, the researcher intends to give more detailed information about the *Lomban* ritual and then put more emphasis on the symbolic meanings contained in offerings prepared in this ritual. The reasons and objectives in the selection of offerings will certainly be described in my research. The researcher's study is different from the research conducted by Alamsyah (2013) and Indrahti (2018), which only explain the procedure of following the ritual in the other region in Jepara and also the culinary presented during the ritual, without explaining the symbolic meanings of each item.

There are several things that make the researcher interested in discussing rituals. First, the researcher has studied folklore, which focuses on rituals in the courses taken, so that the researcher wants to dig deeper and go directly to the field with the aim of knowing how the rituals are actually performed. Second, while on vacation at Jepara beach, the researcher saw many people gathered on the *Benteng Portugis* Beach by boat and were celebrating the *Lomban* ritual by carrying offerings. The

researcher wants to know what those people were doing in the ritual. Third, the researcher was introduced to a fisherman in Jepara by her aunt. When she visited the fisherman's house, the fisherman said that there would be a *Lomban* ritual in his village after Eid. Finally, the researcher decided to go and participate in the *Lomban* ritual celebration with his family as well as conduct research for his research study. The biggest motivation of the researcher in writing this study is the limited knowledge of the people in Bandungharjo, Jepara regarding the symbolic meanings contained in each offering prepared. As a native and part of the *Lomban* ritual that is carried out in their village, those people must understand the symbolic meanings.

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 folklore (verbal folklore, material folklore and customary folklore), especially in a ritual called *Lomban* by Bandungharjo fishermen. The researcher tries to find out what *Lomban* ritual is and provide more information about the procedure of the ritual, the participants, the time, and the things that need to be prepared to do the ritual. Then, the researcher mentions all the offerings including food, fruit and various other items used in the *Lomban* ritual.

1.4 Problems Formulation

The problems formulation in this study are :

1. What is *Lomban* ritual ?
2. What are the symbolic meanings involved in the *Lomban* 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 what *Lomban* ritual is including the elements that build the ritual such as participants, procedures and activities of *Lomban* ritual in Jepara.
2. To provide a descriptive analysis of the offerings and the symbolic meanings in *Lomban* ritual.

1.6 Significance of the Study

It is expected that this study will provide knowledge and understanding especially about folklore and help them to know about rituals in coastal areas, especially in *Lomban* ritual. They can get new information about folk culture and traditions of fishermen in Bandungharjo, Jepara. Then, the readers know and understand what *Lomban* ritual is and the symbolic meanings of offerings involved in the ritual. In other words, people have come to understand that rituals and offerings are inseparable things. The researcher will upload a video containing a series of events and photos that have been documented, so that everyone can see and learn about *Lomban* ritual in the fishermen village, Bandungharjo, Jepara, Indonesia.

1.7 Definition of Term

1.7.1 Ritual

“Ritual is performances that are repeated and patterned and frequently include ceremonial symbols and actions” (Sims & Stephens, 2005). They defined most rituals as “stylized, highly contextualized, deeply symbolic activities that enable groups to acknowledge, exemplify or act out certain traditional traditional ideas, values, and beliefs based on family and community celebrations, sacred and secular ceremonies, and a variety of other structured performances include rituals” (Sims & Stephens, 2005, p. 99).

1.7.2 Folklore

According to Sims and Martin, “folklore is present in many kinds of informal communication, whether verbal (oral and written texts), customary (behavior and rituals), or material (physical objects). It exists in the physical world and in virtual settings online. It involves values, traditions, and ways of thinking and behaving” (Sims & Stephens, 2005, p. 2). Folklore is an organic phenomenon in the sense that it is an integral part of culture. Folklore is the learning of the people, the wisdom of the people, the people’s knowledge, or more fully, the lore, erudition, knowledge or teaching of a folk. “This is the view of folklore as the lore shared by the whole group communally applies, in practice and theory, to different degrees of public procession. In this study folklore is the real “common property” of the community” (Ben-Amos, 1971, p. 6).