

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

People in Karimunjawa have already had a modern life but they have not forgotten their traditions. One of those traditions the people still celebrate is the *Barikan Besar* ritual. *Barikan Besar* is a ritual that is held once a year, that is, every *Sura* (the Islamic month of Muharram). The ritual involves prayers to God to ask for safety, prosperity, and protection from disasters and diseases. Like many other rituals, the *Barikan Besar* ritual involves offerings containing a *tumpeng* with side dishes. *Tumpeng* is cone-shaped yellow rice. In the *Barikan Besar* ritual, there are three types of *tumpeng*. They are *tumpeng raksasa* (cone-shaped yellow rice set in a giant framework of bamboo decorated with fruit, vegetable, and seafood), *tumpeng ukuran sedang* (a medium-sized cone-shaped yellow rice with side dishes), and *buceng* (small-sized cone-shaped yellow rice function as offerings only, not to be eaten). Later after the locals bring the *tumpeng* to the seaside, the tip of the *tumpeng* is cut and drifted to the sea. This part of the ritual is called *larung*. *Larung* is a symbolic occasion to wash away the ashes of the dead or any kind of offering in hope of forgiveness, protection, and blessings from God. In the *Barikan Besar* ritual, the people wear their traditional Javanese clothing,

such as *kebaya*, *blangkon*, and *jarik* to perform the ritual. Moreover, the ritual involves a dance performance which the locals have been practicing for months before it begins.

As the biggest ritual in Karimunjawa, *Barikan Besar* has not been studied properly. Information on the *Barikan Besar* ritual can only be found in the news, tourism websites, YouTube videos, and stories told by people. Hence, the ritual is worth studying further to know the details. The writer explored more about what the *Barikan Besar* ritual is, including the procedures and the offerings involved in the ritual.

A study on Karimunjawa people's rituals has been done by Ory (2018). In her research, Ory found out that the people of Karimunjawa still hold a traditional ritual called *Barikan Kecil*. This ritual is held by the locals every thirty-five (35) days or every *selapanan* in the Javanese calendar. During this ritual, the locals prepare offerings that consist of *buceng* (small cone-shaped yellow rice), mung beans, raw salt, egg, chili pepper, shrimp paste, and shallot. Then, the participants gather in Karimunjawa's main crossroad and pray together led by the religious leaders. The ritual, according to Ory (2018), aims to ask for forgiveness, prosperity, protection, and welfare from God. Furthermore, Ory writes that this ritual is based on the Javanese belief called *Kejawen*, which is still maintained by the locals and is influenced by Islam religion as shown by the Moslem prayers used in the ritual.

The writer uses the same theory employed by Ory (2018) to analyze the *Barikan Besar* ritual. The writer uses Sims and Stephens' theory to determine whether the *Barikan Besar* ritual belongs to a low or high context ritual. Low context rituals are those that are less formally designated and usually not announced or planned, while

high context rituals are more formally designated and usually announced and conducted by someone who will make sure it happens in the “right” way. There are likely to be particular dress codes participants must follow in the high context rituals (Sims & Stephens., 2005, pp. 98–99). Although using the same theory as Ory’s, this study is different in terms of the object of the study.

Based on the explanation above, this study is very important to get information about the *Barikan Besar* ritual. The writer hopes that the study can enrich the information about rituals held by the Karimunjawa people. The locals in Karimunjawa are very rich in traditions but they cannot present their knowledge and experience of their involvement in the ritual of *Barikan Besar* in written form. It is hoped that the complete writing about the *Barikan Besar* ritual can be used to further preserve Karimunjawa Island’s culture

## **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 customary folklore, especially in a ritual called *Barikan Besar* in Karimunjawa. The writer will find out what *Barikan Besar* is and provide more information about the procedures and the offerings in the ritual.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

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

1. What are the procedures in the *Barikan Besar* ritual?
2. What are the offerings in the *Barikan Besar* 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 find out the procedures of the *Barikan Besar* ritual.
2. To provide descriptive information about the offerings in the *Barikan Besar* ritual.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

It is expected that the study will help the readers to understand more about the culture in Karimunjawa, especially the *Barikan Besar* ritual and the meanings behind the offerings. The writer also expects that the information about the procedures of the *Barikan Besar* ritual and the offerings in the ritual can motivate other researchers and use it as a foundation to conduct similar research about cultures. The writer hopes that the study will help the readers to understand the diversity in Karimunjawa.

### **1.7 Definition of Term**

#### **1. Folklore**

The writer found about folklore on a website, <https://afsnet.site-ym.com>. According to Barbro Klein (2001), in the International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, 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 colorful 'folkloric' phenomena linked to the music, tourist, and fashion industries. Fourth, like a myth, folklore can mean falsehood (p. 5711). 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).

## **2. Ritual**

Ritual is a part of customary folklore. It has been studied by Robert Langer, Dorothea Luddecken, Kerstin Radde, and J. Snoek. They defined rituals as an unisolated phenomenon and performed within a specific cultural context (Langer et al., 2006, p. 2). Ritual is a repeated and habitual action and a particular type of tradition (Sims & Stephens., 2005, p. 99).