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Strengthening Cultural Identity through Globalization of the Madurese Language in Syaikhona Kholil Religious Tourism, Bangkalan

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the strengthening of cultural identity through the globalization of the Madurese language in the context of Syaikhona Kholil religious tourism in Bangkalan. The background of this research is driven by the threat to local cultural identity due to the dominance of globalization, as well as the potential of religious tourism in improving the economic welfare of the community. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the method of direct observation of religious rituals, interviews with local residents and tourists, as well as a comparative study of the use of Madurese language in other tourism sites. The results of the research are expected to strengthen the position of Madurese language as an important element in maintaining cultural identity in the era of globalization and contribute to the development of sustainable tourism in Madura.

Keywords: Globalization, Madurese Language, Cultural Identity, Religious Tourism, Syaikhona Kholil

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penguatan identitas budaya melalui globalisasi bahasa Madura dalam konteks wisata religi Syaikhona Kholil di Bangkalan. Latar belakang penelitian ini didorong oleh adanya ancaman terhadap identitas budaya lokal akibat dominasi globalisasi, serta potensi wisata religi dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan ekonomi masyarakat. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan metode observasi langsung terhadap ritual keagamaan, wawancara dengan penduduk lokal, serta studi komparatif penggunaan bahasa Madura di lokasi wisata lain. Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memperkuat posisi bahasa Madura sebagai elemen penting dalam mempertahankan identitas budaya di era globalisasi dan memberikan kontribusi bagi pengembangan pariwisata berkelanjutan di Madura.

Kata kunci: globalisasi, bahasa Madura, identitas budaya, pariwisata religi, Syaikhona Kholil

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization has had a significant impact on local cultural identity, especially through the influence of global languages that replace ethnic languages in various communities (Robertson, 1992). This phenomenon occurs in many regions, including in Madura, where the Madurese language - an important symbol of the cultural identity of its people - is under threat. Globalization poses a great challenge to the survival of local languages, which are often replaced by international languages such as English or national languages such as Indonesian. Hall (1990) states that cultural identity is a dynamic and ongoing process, shaped by social interaction and external influences, including globalization. Therefore, local language preservation is not only a linguistic issue but also an important foundation to maintain the cultural identity and identity of the Madurese community in the face of changing times.

One way to preserve Madurese culture and language is through the utilization of religious tourism potential, especially in religious sites such as the Tomb of Syaikhona Kholil in Bangkalan, Madura. Syaikhona Kholil's tomb is not only a spiritual tourism destination that attracts thousands of pilgrims, but also a space where cultural values and the Madurese language can be preserved and promoted. At this site, the Madurese language is not just a means of communication, but also a means of strengthening the emotional attachment of the community to the traditions and history that have been inherited. Through the Madurese language, Madurese cultural values are authentically conveyed in daily interactions between local communities and tourists. Traditions and ceremonies such as *Tellāsān Muharrām* (celebration of the Islamic New Year), *Cocoghān Molod* (commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday), and *Hol-an* (annual commemoration or Haul Akbar Syaikhona Kholil) are not only a series of religious activities, but also a medium in which Madurese language and culture are celebrated and taught to the younger generation. Ekawati et al. (2023) note that these ceremonies not only strengthen Madurese people's spiritual attachment to their ancestors, but also become arenas of cultural interaction where Madurese plays an important role in lectures, prayers, dhikr, and daily conversations.

Moreover, Hosin (2019) points out that religious sites such as Syaikhona Kholil's tomb have experienced rapid development in terms of infrastructure and the number of visitors, but there is another important aspect that needs to be considered, namely language as a medium of communication that plays a role in preserving local cultural identity. The use of Madurese language at this site not only enriches the experience of tourists who come, but also provides meaningful education to the younger generation about the importance of language as the identity of the Madurese community. The use of Madurese in major religious events strengthens the community's attachment to its own culture, and at the same time encourages the younger generation to continue to recognize, learn and use the language in everyday life. In the midst of the dominance of Indonesian as the national language and English as the international language, these events become an important platform for the existence of Madurese in the public sphere.

METHOD

This type of research is descriptive qualitative research that requires in-depth analysis to understand the role of Madurese language in maintaining cultural identity in the midst of globalization (Miles & Huberman, 2014). The main data sources are the results of participatory observations at Syaikhona Kholil's Tomb, Bangkalan, and interviews with local people, which provide insight into the use of Madurese in daily interactions at religious tourism sites. After the data is collected, the first step is to categorize the data according to the theme of language use and community perception. The second step is to interpret the data using the theory of cultural identity and globalization, as described by Robertson (1992) and Hall (1990). The final

step is the preparation of a final report that includes analysis, interpretation, and conclusion regarding the importance of the Madurese language in strengthening local cultural identity amid the influence of global culture.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research focuses on exploring the role of Madurese language in strengthening local cultural identity in Syaikhona Kholil, Bangkalan, in the context of rapidly growing religious tourism. Based on the observations, interviews, and surveys conducted, results are obtained that show how the Madurese language is used, perceived, and affected by globalization, as well as its impact on Madurese cultural identity. The following is a more in-depth description of the research results and discussion:

1. Tellasân Muharram

One of the traditions that is still organized by the Bangkalan community is *Tellasân Muharram*. *Tellasân Muharram* is an Islamic New Year celebration celebrated by the Madurese community in various regions, including at Syaikhona Kholil, Bangkalan. This celebration is filled with joint prayers, dhikr, and social activities such as providing compensation to orphans. Based on observations around the mosque adjacent to Syaikhona Kholil's Tomb, this event was lively with the presence of local people who were enthusiastic about commemorating the turn of the Hijri year. This is reinforced by an interview with one of the cultural figures in Bangkalan who is usually called Pak Do'ing.

“In *Tellasân Muharram* event, we not only celebrate the turn of the Islamic year, but also strengthen friendship and brotherhood among residents. The Madurese language is an important part of this event because with this language we can communicate more deeply in our prayers. Using Madurese makes us feel closer to God.”



Picture 1: Tellasân Muharram Tradition in Martajesah Bangkalan Village

Muharram is one of the names of the month in the Hijri calendar. The opening month of the beginning of the lunar year is a privilege for the Muslim community. Towards the first day of Muharram, Madurese people welcome the arrival of the beginning of the year with a celebration dubbed *Tellasân Muharram*. This tradition is still very familiar among the people of Bangkalan, such as in the Martajesah Syaikhona Kholil, Bangkalan. In this celebration, in addition to visiting the tomb of Syaikhona Kholil, there are also people walking along the designated road route while chanting shalawat together. In addition, each person usually carries an *Oncor* or in English called a torch. *Oncor* in question is a traditional torch that is usually carried when traveling. *Oncor* is a bamboo stick the size of a typical torch that has two segments. On the upper side of the top part of the bamboo stores fuel. The fuel can be cooking oil or kerosene. There is a cloth over the bamboo as a wick on the *Oncor*.

“Why use *oncor*? In the old days, they didn't use lights, so in the days before the lights came in, they used that culture. *Oncor* means light for the road. What is its function? Its function is as a light on the road. Because it is considered that the times before Islam entered were the realm of darkness. But now many have switched to using lights because the times are different.”

As revealed by Mr. Do'ing that in the activity of welcoming the Hijri New Year, people will bring *oncor* which functions for lighting on the road. This was done because in the days before Islam entered civilization it was considered a realm of darkness. But along with the times, the people of Martajesah rarely use *oncor*. Many lights are simpler and more efficient, such as those often used today are lanterns with unique shapes. The use of lighting such as lanterns is still carried out today in the tradition of *Tellasân Muharram* even though there are many street lights facilitated by the local government.

2. Cocoghân Molod

Malâm Cocoghân Molod, is the culminating celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday that takes place throughout the night at Syaikhona Kholil. This event has become a very important religious symbol for the Madurese community, where people gather to pray, say hymns, and attend recitations led by local scholars. On the night of the celebration, the atmosphere at the tomb is very festive but still respectful. Observations show that in the whole series of events, Madurese is the main language used in lectures, shalawat, and prayers. Many ulama use Madurese to convey moral and religious messages. According to Mr. Do'ing as one of the Madurese culturalists in Bangkalan.

“In Madura there are 2 sessions which are actually a series. There is *cocoghan* night and a *molod* night. *Cocoghan* night is a week before the *Molodhân* event. The molod day is the 12th of Rabi'ul Awal, the birth of the Prophet is celebrated separately. While this *cocoghan* night begins (at the beginning) indicates that if there is an invitation with certain sounds it means that it has entered the month of maulid. The content of the activities is sholawat. When the ulama speak in Madurese, we all feel more connected. Madurese is part of our lives. We understood every word that was said. I feel more solemn in praying if I use our own language. It's not just about religion, but also culture. Madurese language brings us back to our identity as Madurese. If we don't use it, maybe our children will no longer recognize their language and culture.”



Picture 2: Cocoghân Molod Tradition at the Tomb of Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan

The form of the *Cocoghân Molod* tradition is in the form of a community gathering in order to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet. The *Molodhân* tradition is still carried out in various regions. In the event, the community chanted shalawat together solemnly devoted to the Prophet Muhammad. After the event is over, the invited guests will get souvenirs as stated by Mr. Do'ing below.

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“The activity is usually sholawat. When it is *molod* season, the crops, especially fruits, are abundant. It is clear that when the month of *molod* begins, the fruits begin to harvest and when entering the month of *molod*, the fruits become even more abundant. The sign of *molod* in Madura is the mango tree that has begun to bear fruit. Usually after it's over we get a blessing. Traditionally in Madura, only fruits are given. But because of the progress of the times, finally they also give blessings containing rice and cakes and this activity is usually done *eleran* and is not mandatory either. Usually only those who can afford it hold *Molodhân*.”

The quote explains the content of the activities at the *Cocoghân Molod* event in Bangkalan. After taking salutations to the Messenger of Allah, the invited guests will get a blessing. However, in ancient times the blessing in question was in the form of fruit. Because according to local people's beliefs, when starting to step on the month of the Prophet's Maulid, the crops of the relevant regions, namely fruits, are very abundant. So that the fruits are used as a treat for invited guests during the *Molodhân* celebration. The local community considers that if it has entered the mango season, it means that it will enter the month of Maulud. Over time, the blessings served in the *Molodhân* celebration are not only fruits but also contain rice and traditional cakes. Nowadays, *Molodhân* celebrations in various regions in Bangkalan Regency are carried out in rotation in each house, but this is done only for those who can afford it. In other words, this tradition is not mandatory for everyone.

3. Hol-an

Hol-an, or better known as *Haul Akbar*, is the annual commemoration of the death of Syaikhona Kholil, who is revered as a great scholar by the people of Madura. The event is held at his grave in Bangkalan and attracts thousands of visitors each year, both from Madura and from outside the island. Speeches and lectures delivered by local scholars are in Madurese, and prayers are recited in this language, strengthening the spiritual connection between pilgrims and the local cultural environment. Madurese is not only used in formal communication, but also in casual conversations between pilgrims and the local community. This was spoken by Mr. Do'ing as one of the cultural experts in Bangkalan Regency.

“In this haul event, we are more comfortable using Madurese because it is the language we use daily. When listening to prayers in Madurese, our hearts are more touched, as if it's a prayer born from our own culture,” he adds, “Many of us feel that Indonesian or foreign languages are too formal, not as warm as Madurese. This language brings us closer to the roots of tradition and spirituality.”

In the quote, it is clear that the Madurese language has more meaning than just a means of communication. It is a symbol of Madurese cultural identity that continues to be maintained through religious events such as *Haul Akbar*.

CONCLUSION

The author concludes that the Madurese language plays an important role in strengthening local cultural identity in the midst of globalization, especially in the context of religious tourism at the Tomb of Syaikhona Kholil, Bangkalan. Through the use of Madurese in various religious traditions such as *Tellasân Muharram*, *Malâm Cocoghân Molod*, and *Haul Akbar*, the language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a spiritual and cultural link that deepens the bond between the Madurese community and its cultural heritage. This study

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emphasizes that maintaining the Madurese language in rituals and daily communication in religious tourism sites can support the preservation of local culture as well as develop sustainable tourism in Madura.

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