

“Badu” Tradition as Local Conservation and Food Sharing System for the Poor

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to describe the badu tradition as an effort to preserve local natural resources reasonably and become a system of equitable distribution of natural resources for the poor. This research uses ethnographic methods by identifying the structure of indigenous peoples that allows the application of the badu tradition from generation to generation. The results show two important things. First, the badu tradition is a traditional ecological knowledge of Watodiri, which contains rules and prohibitions in maintaining the balance of the marine ecosystem locally. This tradition is supported by the belief that the sea has a spirit that needs to be maintained so that the sea can provide a life for the community. Second, the badu tradition shows the altruism of the Watodiri people through sharing the catch of those in need, such as widows and orphans. Badu is a food sharing system for the poor. Widows and orphans get a place and share in the celebration of the badu tradition. Widows and orphans have a special place in the social structure of Watodiri, so that; their lives are the responsibility of all Watodiri people.

Keywords

altruism; conservation; locality; social justice; traditional institutions

INTRODUCTION

Global concern is mounting about declines in marine biodiversity and the potential repercussions for human well-being (Ban and Frid, 2019). One of the landscapes that are of global concern is the sea. The main problem of the sea is the level of excessive exploitation of humans, which causes a degradation in the number of fish in the sea. Overexploitation has led to crucial conflicts over the struggle for land and natural resources (Homer-Dixon, 1994). Thus particular protection areas such as MPAs (Marine Protected Areas) are not allowed to be violated or used as a place of exploitation, such as to maintain marine ecosystems (Nathan James Bennett and Philip Dearden, 2013). The discourse on MPAs is the most discussed conservation discourse nowadays. However, there is still

much debate when conservation areas also implemented for local communities whose lives depend on nature (Ban and Frid, 2017).

In the local realm, indigenous peoples whose lives depend on nature have practiced natural resource management in a socially just manner (Martin, et. All, 2016). Local people in natural processing always pay attention to the principle of balance by practicing nature conservation. *Badu* tradition is an example of a local culture-based marine management system to protect the ecosystem at sea and justice for all Watodiri people. Through local ecological knowledge, traditional communities such as Watodiri make various rules about how to process

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marine natural resources to be used fairly for the entire community.

The purpose of the *badu* tradition lies not only in efforts to maintain the balance of natural resources. This tradition has a social meaning when it provides space to share food for people who do not have enough capital to sustain their lives. *Badu* tradition is the practice of the altruistic attitudes of the local Watodiri people. *Badu* tradition provides space for the creation of a system of sharing food for those in need, namely widows and orphans. Watodiri people refer to widows and orphans as *kide knuke and tmuung blolon*. The conserved area called *badu* is an area devoted to widows and orphans. Widows and orphans are deemed not to have adequate boats and fishing gear so they can use fish with simple tools. People who own a boat can only take catches outside the *badu* area determined by adat. The attitude of altruism through sharing food with Watodiri is the core and focus of this article.

Badu is local knowledge of the Watodiri community. Local knowledge systems are rooted in local or regional culture and ecology, the respective social contexts, and their economies (Antweiler, 1998). Local knowledge or often referred to as local wisdom is an entity that significantly determines human dignity and value in its community (Geertz, 2007). The Local knowledge / local wisdom grows and lives in society through repetitive processes, the internalization, and interpretation of teachings, values, and culture that aim to maintain the balance of life of particular communities. The orientation of local knowledge never focuses on getting something, but for the balance of life for all beings. Local knowledge is also holistic (Antweiler: 1998). Local knowledge summarizes the entire system of life of local communities. Local community is defined as a community that has its own culture, production system, resource management, a health system, a knowledge and learning system, a justice system, self-government, and an economic system run by each family and the community (Boonpanya, 2006).

Research on local knowledge or local wisdom increasingly carried out in Indonesia. Many types of research have been done

on local knowledge by focusing on studies and discussions of nature conservation in order to maintain a balanced relationship between humans and nature (Berkes, 1999; Sumarmi, 2015). This study looks more at how local communities with their ecological knowledge try to manage nature properly and fairly.

The Lamalera community, for example, is considered to have local knowledge about how to maintain marine ecosystems. Especially the whales they hunt traditionally are not extinct. They did it by giving the whale hunting period for six months, and in other months the sea is considered sacred, and there should be no whale hunting activities (Nolin, 2010). The people of Lamalera also always use traditional tools to catch whales (Barnes, 1989). There are also other traditions practiced by most fishing communities in Eastern Indonesia. *Sasi* is a tradition of the local people of eastern Indonesia in maintaining the balance of natural resources, especially at sea. Not only in Maluku, but *sasi* tradition is also carried out by local communities in Misool, Papua. Sea *Sasi* is a form of traditional ecological knowledge about the behavior of the sea and its animals they have acquired over generations from living in a particular marine environment (Prasetyo, Carr, Filep, 2019).

Badu tradition not only explains how to build a harmonious and balanced life between humans and nature. *Badu* tradition even explains the ethics of local communities where they live in an attitude of altruism and sharing. *Badu* tradition creates the practice of sharing between people who have excess capital with the poor, namely widows and orphans (*kide knuke and tmuung blolon*). The practice of living sharing food is not something new in the study of local communities, but also a concern for academics in looking at conservation discourse. Academics argue that conservation discourses include concerns about social justice (Martin, et al, 2016).

This study uses two theoretical frameworks in analyzing the tradition of *badu*. First, the *badu* tradition is discussed within the framework of traditional ecological

knowledge theory. In this framework, the *badu* tradition is seen as the fruit of a local ecological knowledge carried on from generation to generation. Traditional ecological knowledge defines as a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and had down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment (Barkes 1993, Gadgil et al. 1993, Berkes et al. 1995). Traditional ecological knowledge (also called traditional aboriginal knowledge) can be defined as practical applied indigenous knowledge of the natural world. This is more than a collection of primitive survival tactics. It is a system of awareness that offers both moral guidelines and practical advice (Bruchac, 2019). Traditional ecological knowledge emerged from environmental understanding shaped over time by incremental learning (including trial and error and experimentation), and they crosscut the scientific disciplines of biology, botany, geography, cosmology (Berkes, 2012). Traditional ecological knowledge contains rules and ethics in order to maintain the overall life of local people and nature that support them.

Traditional ecological knowledge that is owned by local people has been going on for generations. Thus, traditional ecological knowledge is accrued through trial and error (Drew, 2005). Experience in living with nature makes local people know the best way to manage and protect nature. Local people argue that humans and nature are one. Because many indigenous people holistically view their environments, they may be aware of the linkages between various ecological processes, multiple species, and abiotic factors that influence species biology (Nabhan 2000; Vogt et al. 2002).

Second, the *badu* tradition can be read in terms of the altruistic attitude of the local community, which is demonstrated in the practice of sharing food. The word "altruism": is a part of a larger lexicon of human goodness. The study of altruism has deep roots in humanity, theology, and social science (Matis, et al, 2009). Evolutionary

theories suggest that altruism is motivated by a pre-wired, biological thrust to ensure the genetic survival and reproduction of successes of genetically similar others (Darlington, 1978). Altruism can be defined as someone who does something for the other and the other's sake, rather than as a means of self-promotion or inner well being (Post, 2002: p. 53). Altruism is also an attitude (1) is directed toward helping another, (2) involves a high risk or sacrifice to the actor, (3) is accompanied by no external reward, and (4) is voluntary (Oliner 2002, p. 123).

In addition to pure altruism, there is also what is referred to as reciprocal altruism. The essence of reciprocal altruism explains that someone will share for others by hoping that one day the person can reciprocate what he has given (Nolin, 2010). This situation is more likely to occur when resources are unpredictable. Moreover, asynchronously acquired, which explains why ethnographically meat is more commonly share than other foods (Smith, 1988).

METHODS

This study uses ethnographic methods. The ethnographic method examines behavior that takes place within social situations, including behavior that is shaped and constrained by these situations, and people's understanding and interpretation of the experiences (Wilson and Chaddha, 2009). Ethnographic methods are the choice of researchers in getting data more deeply and thoroughly. Ethnographic methods not only provide space for researchers to ask questions but also provide more space for the resource person to tell in more depth everything he knows about a phenomenon or reality

Anthropologists use the term ethnography in two senses. In the first sense, ethnography is a written account of the socio-cultural dynamics of an animated human particular population. In the second sense, doing ethnography (or ethnographic research) in long-term fieldwork and generating insights into socio-cultural relationships and the "native's point of view" (Adam, 2012). Ethnographic research departs from the "value" aspect of the researcher related

to the object under study. The consequence is to determine research informants intentionally (purposive).

This research was conducted in Watodiri village, sub-district, Ileape, Lembata Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province (NTT). This village is unique because the local people adopt the *badu* tradition as a local conservation system for marine natural resources and the practice of sharing food by providing food (fish) for widows and orphans (*kide knuke and tmuung blolon*). Data were collected by observing the *badu* tradition and in-depth interviews with the adat leader (*belen raya*) and several stakeholders in Watodiri village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are two main findings of this research that will be discussed in the framework of traditional ecological knowledge as an effort of the Watodiri people in maintaining the balance of nature and the attitude of altruism through the fair distribution of natural resources (food). The first finding, the strong local custom structure of Watodiri, became the main pillar of the *badu* tradition, which remained well implemented. Second, *badu* is carried out with a variety of rites and strict customary rules. These rules are always well obeyed, including the attitude of protecting natural resources at sea and the attitude of altruism to share with widows and orphans.

Badu Traditional Structure

A strong traditional structure supports *badu* tradition. This traditional structure that allows the *badu* tradition to be carried out by following all the rules and prohibitions. The top structure of *badu* is called *Belen Raya*. *Belen Raya* is the nickname for the tribe that is considered as the king and must lead the village. *Belen Raya* has the right to open and close the *badu* tradition. The tribe, which is considered as *Belen Raya* is the Do Making tribe. In the traditional governance structure, the Do-Making tribe is the head of all village activities. This tribe is also trusted to lead and decide everything related to the

public life of the people of Watodiri. Even though the village government has been formed, this adat structure continues to carry out its role, specifically in all the traditional activities of the Watodiri people.

The second structure is the coast guard. Watodiri's coast guard is the *Matarau* tribe. the *Matarau* tribe will guard the beach against all forms of capture, which are prohibited by the *badu* tradition. If a violation occurs, this tribe will communicate with the customary head or *Belen Raya* in determining the punishment commensurate with the violation that occurred. In carrying out the *badu* tradition, the *Matarau* tribe has the right first to release the net and catch fish. In the third place, there is a small group called *Ata molan* (traditional shaman). *Ata molan* are those who must lead a village rite. *Ata molan* will recite poems or traditional sentences in the entire series of *badu* rites. *Ata molan* also has the right to perform rituals in the *badu* tradition, which is the tradition of giving food to the sea authorities and asking the sea blessings of the fishermen during the sea season.

On the fourth level, there are widows and orphans (*kide knuke tmuung blolon*). Widows and orphans get a particular part in the structure of the *badu* tradition. Widows and orphans are considered inadequate to support themselves so that it takes responsibility from all villagers to support their lives. In the last place is the entire village of Watodiri. This society is always loyal to carry out the *badu* tradition is a sacred tradition because this tradition is full of moral values.

The Practice of Badu Tradition

In simple terms, *badu* is a conservation tradition of marine habitats on the coast of Watodiri. The boundaries of the *Badu* tradition area have been determined traditionally, which is to the east bordering the area called *Mado Meting* and in the west bordering with *Wato Kobu*. The distance between the eastern and western boundaries is approximately 900 m, while the distance from the shoreline to the middle of the sea is 200 m.

The *Badu* tradition aims to make room for the development of fish and maintain a

balanced marine ecosystem. Fish will be given six months to be breed before being caught by the local community of Watodiri. As long as the *badu* conservation area is closed, the fishermen can only catch fish outside the protected area. *Badu* area can only be used to catch fish by widows and orphans. These customary rules are always maintained to ensure a fairer distribution of natural resources.

The sacredness of this tradition appears in community practices. The community always begins and closes with traditional rituals. This ceremony or ritual is called *amet* and is carried out on the coast of Watodiri (*kwakas*). The purpose of this ritual is to ask for a bless and safety when they are on the sea. After that, the customary leader (*Do Making*) will summon all sea dwellers to take part that has been prepared. The ceremony is led by a ritual leader (*molan*). The leader of the ritual (*molan*) will offer traditional poetry (*amet*) to the ancestors and guardians of the sea. The ritual before opening the *badu* tradition is mandatory because local people believe that the sea has a spirit that must be guarded and respected. The efforts to protect and respect the sea are prohibited from various forms of excessive exploitation from humans. Local people believe that by looking after it well, the sea will provide all the needs of the community. This symbiotic mutualism relationship is similar to the trust of people living in the mountains by protecting the forest from over-exploitation so that the forest can provide all the necessities of people's lives (Tiwari, et al. 2017).

After performing the rite of opening, the *gong* (traditional music instrument) will be sounded and an announcement will be made as a sign of the opening of the *badu* tradition. The right to release the first net is the *Matarau* tribe as coast guard (*name watan*). Directly after that, other people can take part in the opening of the *badu* by participating in taking the same big fish. Every fisherman is obliged to give one of his fish to landlords and also to widows and orphans. This becomes a mandatory requirement. There are customary consequences that will

be borne if the obligation is not carried out.

Since 2010 the celebration of the *badu* tradition is open to everyone, not only to Watodiri people. People from another village may participate in the tradition, including taking part in the fishing tradition in the *badu* area. However, everyone who will go down to the sea still pays attention and follows the rules of customary rules. Everyone must follow the *badu* ritual before the start of the *badu* opening ceremony. The essential customary rule is that every time someone catches the fish, he must give a share to the widows and orphans.

A day after, the sea area should not be used for fishing activities for fishers who have rowing boats or motorized boats. The *badu* conservation area, which is the area on the coast of Watodiri village, is only intended for widows and orphans who don't have a boat so they can get fish only by fishing or fishing in the coastal areas. Widows or orphans usually use simple tools in an effort to get fish on the coast.

The indigenous leader explained that the *badu* tradition always tries to prepare enough and fair sea produce for all local communities. Poor widows and orphans usually don't have modern boats or fishing gear. They can only look for fish on the coast in the *badu* conservation area. For this reason, by not giving room for boat owners to activities in areas that have been banned (*badu*), widows and orphans can get fish to connect their lives.

If a violation occurs or if someone catches fish in a restricted area (*badu* area), that person will get customary sanctions. The traditional sanction imposed was to give the village a goat for 3 million rupiahs. The money will be used to run the village government, especially in carrying out all the rites related to community life. The ruling chieftain never managed the money given. The chieftain will choose someone who is deemed fit to manage the collected money.

If the person does not want to pay the fine that has been charged, the ultimate sanction is to drive out or expel the person from Watodiri village. Usually, people who violate will immediately pay customary fines

because they believe in the existence of customary relationships and the reality of their lives. Compliance with local communities towards customary fines is still widely practiced by local communities in the Lembata area. In Lamalera, for example, the occurrence of the calamity in the sea is always associated with sins or mistakes that may not be paid or previously reconciled (Barnes, 1989).

“Badu” Tradition as Local Conservation and Food Sharing System for the Poor

There are two discussion themes related to the practice of the Watodiri *badu* tradition. First, the Badu tradition is traditional ecological knowledge, which explains the efforts of local communities in the area of managing and maintaining natural resources. Second, the Badu tradition is a marine management system with an attitude of altruism and aspects of justice for the people of Watodiri, especially the widows and orphans. *Badu* tradition, at the same time, describes the lives of local people who live communally and have a sense of responsibility between one another.

Badu tradition is a piece of traditional ecological knowledge. Traditional ecological knowledge can be defined as a network of knowledge, beliefs, and traditions intended to serve, communicate, and contextualize indigenous relationship with culture and landscape over time (Berkes, 2012). Traditional ecological knowledge explains the close relationship between people who inhabit certain areas and nature. This mutual relationship makes the local community very responsible in managing the nature they inhabit. They believe that by managing nature well, nature will provide all the necessities of their lives.

Badu tradition provides rules on how to manage natural resources in the sea responsibly. *Badu* tradition regulates the time and method of traditional fishing. The time given for marine biota to develop is six months. After six months, the Badu area will be opened to the public during the Badu ritual. But the opening of the Badu area is

only one day apart, and the next day it will be closed again for the next six months. In addition to fishing time, methods, and tools for catching fish have also been determined according to custom. Widows and orphans are only permitted to catch fish using traditional tools such as spears (*leo*) and small nets. Catching fish using poison is strictly forbidden because it will disturb the balance of the ecosystem in the sea. The *Matarau* tribal chief said that some people who had been assigned to control how to arrest the Watodiri people. Any violations of food will immediately be reported to the chief. The people of Yokari did the same thing, West Papua, in carrying out natural resource management systems based on local wisdom for the sake of local economic growth (Blesia and Ratang, 2016: 275).

Second, the *badu* tradition is a practice of altruism and the sharing of the natural resources of the Watodiri people. Altruism can be defined as someone who does something for the other and the other's sake, rather than as a means of self-promotion or internal well being (Post, 2002: p. 53). Altruism is also understood as an action given to others who are voluntary and driven by kindness without expecting anything in return (Taylor, 2009, Myers, 2012, Nashori, 2008). Habit for sharing food or catch is what is stated in the rules of the *badu* tradition. The traditional leader of the *Matarau* tribe said that the practice of dividing fish for widows and orphans became mandatory because they had the right to acquired fish. He said that the success of the fishermen in catching fish was the fruit of the prayers of widows and orphans.

The attitude of altruism and the principle of justice in sharing natural resources can be seen from the three living practices of Watodiri people in carrying out the *badu* tradition. First, those who can catch fish in the *badu* conservation area are widows and orphans. This is very reasonable because widows and orphans do not have modern fishing gear, including not having a boat to go to sea. Thus, the Badu tradition provides a special space for widows and orphans to get produce from the sea. Second, when the

badu tradition is performed, the first fish caught will be given to widows and orphans. The community believes that the fish they catch in the Badu area are fish belonging to widows and orphans. Third, every fisherman who has just returned from the sea must share one or two fish from his catch to the widows and orphans. This habit is often found until now.

In the social structure of Watodiri, people, widows, and orphans have an extraordinary place. In some customary events, widows and orphans always get a particular portion. The custom leader of the *Do Making* tribe said that long ago, widows and orphans were the responsibility of the custom leader and the community. Getting rid of widows and orphans in a custom event is a fatal mistake and has a devastating effect on the whole village. This community believes that by giving a special place for widows and orphans, the whole village's life will be maintained by the owner of heaven and earth (*Lera wulan tanah ekan*).

Widows and orphans are also believed to have a special closeness with God (*Lera wulan tanah ekan*) so that their prayers are helping for fishers in getting more fish. With this belief, every fisher who usually returns from the sea will give one or two fish to the widows and orphans. The community strongly believes that the habit of giving fish to widows and orphans is an expression of gratitude for the prayers of widows and orphans and, at the same time, asking for prayers for success at sea the next day. This belief arises from the general belief of the Lembata people that what they do on land will have an impact at sea. This belief is almost the same as that of the people of Lamalera, Lembata, who believe in a good relationship between life on land and sea (Barnes, 1989).

Badu tradition can also be read within the framework of local people's social security efforts. Social security can be a river to social phenomena in several levels which consist of values, ideals, ideologies, and goals of wisdom; at the institutional level it assists those who need; and at the practical level it is real action conducted by groups or individuals (Amin, 2019). People who live in

a subsistence economy do not want to take the risk of making innovation in the work and management system of natural resources. The customary leader or *Belen Raya* said that by carrying out the *badu* tradition, the community felt fair and did not fight over one another's natural resources, especially natural resources from the sea. The people of Watodiri also said that the *badu* tradition provides a sense of fairness because if not, the fish will be finished taken by fishermen who have more modern fishing gear. By sharing, it is hoped that there will be no Watodiri people living in need.

CONCLUSION

The use of local knowledge in sustainable development is believed to be an important approach in developing resilience and maintaining harmonious relationships between individuals, communities, and the environment (Berkes, 2012). The Badu tradition is one example of traditional indigenous knowledge in managing natural resources locally. The *badu* tradition is proof that the local community still maintains traditions related to nature preservation efforts to maintain the balance of human life and nature. The *badu* tradition that has been preserved until now has provided a clear example of how local communities still maintain traditional marine management systems amid the onslaught of modern fishing methods and often damage marine ecosystems.

Not only focus on nature conservation efforts, but the *badu* tradition also provides a new aspect in local conservation efforts, namely the attitude of altruism and the principle of justice in sharing natural resources. Widows and orphans feel altruism and a sense of justice. Widows feel that their fish needs are met by the fishermen's gift and catch in the *badu* conservation area. Besides, they also feel fair in getting fish from the sea because the *badu* area is not disturbed by fishermen who have more modern response equipment. Until now, this tradition is still well done, including the habit of sharing catches with widows and orphans. At this point, it must be recognized that the

badu tradition is driving the attitude of altruism and the sense of justice of the Watodiri people. *Badu* is proof that the local values of altruism and justice can still survive amid the globalization and economic capitalization that is very individualistic.

Although this tradition is still being carried out well, the current of globalization has given rise to considerable challenges for the continuation of the *badu* tradition. *Badu* in tourism discourse has a new meaning to the implementation of the tradition. For local people, the most important thing is how to preserve the fair value of the *badu* tradition. Its avoidance of the discourse of the commodification of tradition in the interest of the economy. This became the anxiety of the adat leaders (*Belen Raya*) when the researchers conducted field studies. Local people do not refuse changes and development, such as some of the discourse developed by academics about local communities (Kitahara, 1996). They still hope that the government will continue to provide space for people to continue to perform *badu* tradition without any efforts to weaken local traditions with various development discourses, especially tourism discourse. Besides, it must be recognized that local conservation systems are now increasingly threatened by new conservation discourses. Local conservation discourse is marginalized and considered an old-fashioned solution that cannot provide significant results (Ban and Frid, 2017).

From the two arguments above, researchers expect further research on the *badu* tradition with a focus on two main themes. First, the *badu* tradition must be strengthened locally and not only built-in one aspect of the local tourism discourse. *Badu* tradition is more than just a tourist aspect because it displays the theological, cosmological, and moral aspects of the Watodiri people. Besides, further research must seek to strengthen new traditions in the realm of law, namely by fighting for the rules of *badu* not only to become customary rules but can be increased to village regulations or regency regulations that are more binding for anyone.

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