



Journal of Marine and Island Cultures

www.sciencedirect.com



Contest for hegemony: The dynamics of inland and maritime cultures relations in the history of Java island, Indonesia

Singgih Tri Sulistiyono *, Yety Rochwulaningsih

Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia

Received 22 May 2013; accepted 10 October 2013

Available online 5 December 2013

KEYWORDS

Inland culture;
Maritime culture;
Insular region;
Maritime continent

Abstract The main purpose of this article is to analyze the dynamics of relation between inland and maritime cultures in an insular region by taking Java island, Indonesia, as an object of study. Java island is located in the midst of Indonesian archipelago which is geographically recognized as the “maritime continent” and the widest insular region in the world. During the history, Java has been one of the most important islands not only in the Indonesian archipelago but also in Southeast Asian region. It is interesting that Java has not only varied maritime cultures but also feudalistic inland culture. Moreover, during the course of history there has been a latent contesting relationship among the two different types of culture, which has been coloring the history of Indonesia at large till the present day.

© 2013 Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of Institution for Marine and Island Cultures, Mokpo National University.

Introduction

By taking Java island as the focus of the study, this article tries to construct a reality of cultural plurality developing in the Indonesian archipelago as an area which is geographically rec-

ognized as the widest insular region in the world (Lapian, 1996; Tangsubkul, 1984).¹ Many people possibly think that the culture which develops in Indonesian islands must have

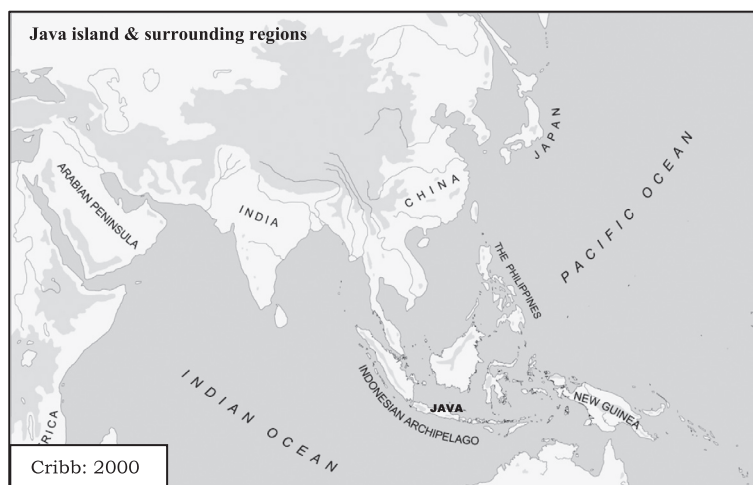
* Corresponding author. Tel.: +62 247620694; fax: +62 248313703.
E-mail address: singihtrisulistiyono@yahoo.com (S.T. Sulistiyono).
Peer review under responsibility of Mokpo National University.



Production and hosting by Elsevier

[☆] This article is part of a broader research on “Teaching model on cultural values and local wisdoms for younger people for improving the quality of special service education at remote islands” financed by Directorate General of Higher Education, Department of Education and Culture The Republic of Indonesia, 2012.

¹ See P. Tangsubkul, *The Southeast Asian archipelagic state: Concepts, evolution, and current practice* (Honolulu: East-West Environment and Policy, Research Report No. 15, 1984) pp. 2–3. Indonesia is considered as an archipelagic state or *negara kepulauan*. The term *archipelago* refers to a group of islands or *kumpulan pulau* separated by an expanse of seawater. There is a fundamental difference in meaning between *kepulauan* and *archipelago*. The term *archipelago* originates from the Italian, *archipelagos*, which dates back to the Middle Ages and was derived from *archi*, meaning most important, and *pelagus* meaning sea. This actually refers to the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, the original meaning of *archipelago* was not “a group of islands” but “a body of water containing islands”. According to Lapian, the concept of archipelagic state for Indonesia should refer to the later meaning, i.e. Indonesia as *negara laut* or *negara bahari* or “sea state”, not “island state”; see A.B. Lapian, “Laut, pasar, dan komunikasi antar-budaya”, Paper presented at National History Congress 1996 (Jakarta: 1996) p. 1.



been a maritime culture, i.e. a culture that is born and develops as a response to ocean potential. But in fact, not only maritime culture develops in this insular region but also agrarian culture that is feudalistic in character. Even the influence of feudalistic culture is still lasting until the present period of modern Indonesia. The spirit of feudalism, especially Javanese culture, is still influencing bureaucratic relations in modern Indonesia (Claire, 1972).² But there is always a certain element of Indonesian society that wants to try to revitalize maritime culture in developing modern Indonesia in the future (Cribb and Ford, 2009).³ It gives rise to a contestation both in discourse and symbol between a feudalistic system based on feudalistic agrarian culture and a more democratic system based on utilizing ocean resources (Dahuri, 2009).⁴

It is possibly an odd situation that there is an inland culture that develops in a maritime area. This phenomenon, therefore, needs to be explained not only anthropologically for shedding more light on the present condition but also historically for getting the past explained. Historical explanation is very important considering the fact that in Indonesia such contestation originates from past experiences. It is preconditioned by both internal dynamics and external influence. For this purpose, this article intends to study the ups and downs in the relation between inland and maritime cultures in Java island. First, the geographical fact of the Indonesian archipelago being dominated by maritime elements will be discussed. The next part will discuss the emergence of cultural diversity in Indonesia which also stems from the historical development. Likewise, during the course of history there has been a formation process of both inland and maritime cultures which both can be found in Java. It is very interesting that there have always been conflicting phenomena between inland and maritime cultures in this most populated island in the world.

² See for example Benedict R. O'G Anderson, "The idea of power in Javanese Culture", in: Claire Holt (ed.), *Culture and politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1972) p. 1.

³ Robert Cribb & Michele Ford, "Indonesia as an Archipelago: Managing islands, managing the seas", in: Robert Cribb & Michele Ford (eds), *Indonesia beyond the waters's edge* (Singapore: Institute of South-east Asian Studies, 2009) pp. 1–27.

⁴ Rokhmin Dahuri, "WOC and RI's sustainable ocean development", *Image Indonesia* Vol. XVI (5) (May 2009) p. 16. He is former Minister of Marine and Fisheries Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2001–2004.

Java: the nucleus of the Indonesian archipelago

Java island is situated in the middle part of the Indonesian archipelago. It stretches across the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, from South-eastern Asia to Northern Australia. Its length from east to west is greater than the distance from London to Moscow or from New York to San Francisco. This vast archipelago has a land area of approximately 1.92 million km², archipelagic waters and a 12 nautical mile territorial sea of 3.1 million km², and a 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 2.7 million km². Its coast line is about 81,000 km long which makes Indonesia the country with the longest tropical coast line in the world (Purwaka, 1989).⁵

The insular character of the Indonesian archipelago has stimulated cultural variety and, at the same time, has offered easy access to foreign influences. The fact that the Archipelago produced plentiful commodities attracted traders and conquerors; it consequently made the islands and the sea a battle field of many contesting powers. This means that the international significance of the Indonesian archipelago is based upon its location and its resources. It might be comparable with the two other great crossroads of world shipping, i.e. the Panama and the Suez Canals. In addition, the economic significance of the Indonesian archipelago is due to the fact that it has abundantly produced commodities that are so needed by the industrial countries (Broek, 1942).⁶

Internally, the insular character of the Indonesian archipelago also causes great variation stemming from climate and volcanic activities. These factors greatly influence human habitation and cultural development. The islands situated near the equator, such as Sumatra, Kalimantan and Papua, have abundant rainfall throughout the year, whereas those in the south-east of the Archipelago have less rainfall and a longer dry season. The climate in the south-eastern part is similar to that of Australia. Since Java has a favorable climate for vegetation and a fertile-volcanic soil, it is not surprising that

⁵ T.H. Purwaka, "Indonesian interisland shipping: An assessment of the relationship of government policies and quality of shipping service" (*Ph.D. Dissertation*, University of Hawaii, 1989) pp. 3–5.

⁶ See, for example, J.O.M. Broek, *Economic development of the Netherlands Indies* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1942) p. 3.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1107086>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1107086>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)