The State and Empowerment of Indonesian Maritime Culture

The Case of Traditional Marine Resource Management

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Abstract

This paper introduces the Indonesian maritime culture. While it explains the coverage of the whole maritime culture in the introduction, in the main texts focuses on two examples of the culture on traditional marine resource management. The two examples are taken from Maluku and Papua. It explains the similarities and differences, the state of the culture and some revitalization initiatives. It notes that while the marginalization and weakening of the traditions are due to government policy and market economy, it also notes that the changing government regime and policies and NGOs support can revitalize and re-strengthen the culture.

Keywords Maritime culture, traditional marine resource management, communal marine tenure, petuuan, sasi, kiripup.

Introduction

Indonesia is a country of rich maritime culture. One of the reasons for this is the archipelagic nature of the country. Indonesia is a country with 5.8 millions m² of its territory is marine water. Our sea is three times larger than the land, which is only 1.9 millions m². These waters—located in the tropical zone which support high biodiversity—is also the location where around 17,000 islands, mostly small in size, sit. This makes Indonesia as the second longest country in the world in term of coastline (95,181 km). With these geo-spatial characteristics, it is a nature call for Indonesians, particularly coastal people to adapt their live and livelihoods to marine environment. Thus, for us to develop maritime culture is essential. Further, it is not just a maritime culture but a culture that should be adapted to tropical waters—with mega bio-diversity—, shallow and deep water of and between Idian and Pacific Oceans. Hence, it’s logical if our maritime culture is so rich.

In Indonesia, the discussions of maritime culture should, at least, talk about four categorical but interleated cultural groups associated with four types of communities; (1) the Bajau or Orang Laut (The People of the Sea) or commonly also called the Sea Nomad, (2) fishing communities, (3) sailing communities, and (4) coastal communities. In this regard, according to national sensus 2000, Indonesia...
was a home to 158,970 Bajau people (Sea Nomad). Although majority of them have given up living on the boat, most of them still live either in settlement contracted on the coastal waters— they still live on the water—or in the coastal land. They are those whom more than 70% of their live and livelihoods depend on marine ecosystem. They are the very people of maritime culture. Indonesia is also a home for 2,261,874 fishers (2016). They fish with 625,633 boats of various size (2014, see Figure 1 for some examples), majority of which (95.6%) are less than 10 gross tones. The latter means that they are small scale or traditional fishers. They are those who learn fishing knowledge and skill from their fellow fishers of older generation or their peers. So, it is legitimate to say that fishing for them is practicing culture.

On sailing culture, the archipelagic nature of the country has also forced people to use sailing as a traditional mode of transportation. This is recorded in one of our songs. When we were little, we used to sing the following song:

Nenek moyangku orang pelaut  [My ancestors were sailors]

angin bertiup layar terkembang  [the wind blew the sail expanded]

ombak berdebur di tepi pantai  [waves crashing on the shore]

pemuda b’rani bangkit sekarang  [brave youths rose now]

ke laut kita beramai-ramai  [to the sea we are abuzz]

nenek moyang ku seorang pelaut  [my ancestors were sailors]

(The song was made in Ibu Sud)

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Although most of people would think that the song records our historical fact as most of the sailing traditions, particularly associated with long overseas voyages, have gone, but some domestics’ intra and inter islands traditional sailing (pelayaran rakyat) still exists. Kompas noted that in 2016, we still had 1,384 traditional sailing boats, transporting people and goods from many islands in the country (see Figure 2 for example of a sailing boat, number and their routes).

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cities are also located on coastal areas. Although not all coastal communities have strong maritime culture, studies show that many coastal communities have developed traditional marine/coastal resource management. Studies also found that these traditions scattered from the western tip of the country, Aceh to the easternmost, the Papua (Figure 3).

A comprehensive discussion of Indonesian maritime culture, i.e. the Sea Nomads, fishing and sailing cultures as well as traditional marine resource management is beyond the scope of a single article or even a book. In fact, a comprehensive discussion on one cultural category alone might deserve many articles or books. Nonetheless, as an introductory work, this paper would like to cover a discussion on traditional marine resource management focusing on their characteristics, the state and various empowerment efforts. In this regard, I would describe two examples from Papua and Maluku.

Traditional Marine Resource Management in Indonesia: Examples from Papua and Maluku

Papua

The practice of traditional marine resource management in Papua lies in two main concepts, wilayah adat laut (communal marine territory) and kiripup. Wilayah adat laut refers to the coastal water that is subject to communal property right. In Papua, every coastal water is claimed to be owned by particular social group, generally a keret (clan). There are at least two different rights attached to communal marine territory, the hak makan (use right) and hak milik (property right). The hak makan is the right to access, make use and catch fish in communal marine area. This right is shared to all members of the community, and those others but have some associations with the community. The second right is called hak milik. This is a stronger type of right. Hak milik covers hak makan and the right to manage the waters. These include the right to exclude others from fishing and determine open-close fishing seasons. Hak milik is the exclusive rights of the owner, a particular keret.

In practice, nonetheless, the daily management of the communal marine territory is led by village government that manage village territory generally comprises of several keret (clan) territory. The fact that keret waters are managed by village government leads people to generally talk more about wilayah laut kampong (kampong marine territory), rather than keret territory (see Figure 4 as an example). Thus, the regulations pertaining to make use of the village territory (the sum of some keret’s waters) are decided through the decisions made at the village level. For example, prohibition of destructive fishing, or the arrangement of giving permission to non-village fishers are established through a village level discussion. Nonetheless, the voice of the marine owner keret is very important.

The second concept is kiripup. This concept refers to the tradition of temporary closing/opening of the communal marine area for exploitation. In time of need, coastal people in Papua usually close a particular part of their village marine territory for exploitation. The closing season can last for months or a year depending on their need for the fish. When they need a lot of fish for an important ritual or festival, they will close bigger plot of the waters for longer period. For example, for a death ritual of well-known and high ranking traditional leader (Ondoapi), where the ritual would involve a lot of people, a bigger and longer kiripup would be exercised. In the ritual of implementing kiripup, the leader of the keret who owns the marine territory will lead the ritual in the form of setting the tabom, that is the sign of the prohibition made by coconut leaves. He will also lead the ritual of uplifting the prohibition when the time comes for communal fish harvesting. The fish will, then, be used for the intended ritual/festival.
Maluku

Similar to the practice in Papua, traditional marine resource management in Maluku also lies in two main concepts. The first concept is petuanan laut (sea estate). Similar to the concept of wilayah adat laut in Papua, petuanan laut is also communally owned marine area. A slight difference is on the right holders. While in Papua the main right holder unit is keret, in Maluku it varies. It starts from a clan, but mostly ranging from settlement (sub-village), village (Ohoi) up to federation of several villages (Ratchap). In fact, in Kei Islands, Southeastern Maluku, there is a unit of petuanan laut belong to the whole of Kei islands people (an ethnic group).

On types of rights associated with a petuanan unit, the same as in Papua, people in Maluku recognize hak makan dan hak milik. The hak makan is shared among all members of the community and associated individual or social group. The hak milik, is usually the exclusive rights of a clan (fam), where the petuanan belongs to a clan, or core clans if the petuanan is under the control of settlement, village or bigger social groups.

As a sign of their familiarity, a basis of their territorial claim, as well as for management purposes, in Maluku, people usually develop elaborated traditional zonation or naming systems to their territory. The followings are two examples of this. The first one is from Kei Besar (Great Kei) island and the second is from Dullah Laut Village, Kei Kecil (Small Kei) archipelago in Southeast Maluku. Figure 5 shows that people divide marine area into eight different zones, each zone has its own name, characteristics and use. For example, Ruhan met soin is part of the inter tidal zone. This is the coastal area where people park their boat and do some gleaning. Met, still inter tidal zone but further to the sea, is the location where people anchor their boat, do some bait fishing and marine-culture activities (usually sea weed culture). As the picture depicts the zonation goes on until the farest area where people can go.

In Dullah Laut Island on Kei Kecil archipelago, people recognize their marine area via naming rather than zonation system (see Figure 6). The sea territory (Petuanan Laut) of Dullah Laut village is the waters surrounding the village’s seven Islands. People do not make zonation, instead, they put an elaborate names to many spots in their territories. This naming system, which is unique, is the source of legitimation for their territorial claim. This will be obvious during the time of conflict. They will challenge any claim by asking them to names their territory. Outsiders will have difficulties to recite this as each name is associated with

![Figure 4. The Communal Marine Areas of the Kampung Tabla Sufa, Tabla Nusu and Demokisi in Papua](source: Tabla Sufa village regulation)

![Figure 5. Traditional Sea-use and Zoning system in Kei Besar Island](source: Marlessy 2017)
particular narrative that explains the establishment of the village or any traditional domain. Wada Iyuhan (No. 3 in Figure 6), for example, a marine spot to the North of Dullah Island was given the name because that particular spot was the location where one of their ancestors from Banda (Wada) anchored for the first time in the village territory. Only prominent local villagers would know this story.

The second concept in the practice of traditional marine resource management in Maluku is Sasi. This concept refers to system of beliefs, rules and rituals pertaining to temporal prohibitions on use of a particular resource or territory (Adhuri 2013). Sasi is actually similar to kiripup, except that the time of opening and closing of sasi are determined more by the condition of particular resources (object of the prohibition) or the economic motive of the community. For the former, let me call an example of Sasi Ikan Lompa (Trissina baelama) in Haruku village on Haruku Island, Central Maluku. When schools of Trissina baelama come to the village waters and go to the river for laying their eggs, Kewang (the traditional committee in charge for surveillance and preforming the opening and closing rituals of Sasi) will declare the sasi is close (tutup sasi). Thus, the coastal waters and the river where the fish live will be prohibited for any exploitation. When Kewang observes that the fish have settled well and laid their eggs, ready to go out to the

sea, they will prepare the ritual of opening the sasi (buka sasi) and invite people to come for harvesting the fish. The Sasi opening is the festival of Ikan Lompa (Trissina baelama) harvest, everybody can join, not only villagers. Elderly people, village traditional leader and orphans who could not take part in the harvest were usually given some portion of the harvest. For the latter, we can observe Sasi bia lola (Trochus niloticus) and Tripang (sea cucumber). In several villages, people use to have Sasi Bia Lola and Tripang. This means that people decide to close (tutup sasi) some parts of their marine territory for Bia Lola or Tripang exploitation or other targeted species. Tutup Sasi ritual will be performed to start the closing season. Since then, no one can harvest the targeted species until the ritual of opening sasi is carried out as the declaration of lifting the prohibition. Unlike Sasi Lompa, for Sasi Lola or Tripang, the harvest is subject to further regulation. In Nolltoh, Central Maluku, only certain people who are allowed to harvest the Trochus. This people will be paid or shared the harvest while the whole harvest will be for village government. The money from selling the harvest will be used, by the village government, for village development programs. In Watlar, Kei Besar Island, each household representative is allowed to harvest the Trochus and other target, and they will receive certain amount of share from the harvest, other portion is for village government. The money from the selling of the harvest will also be used for village programs. The use of the share of every household representative is their own decision. Free can be represented everybody only certain people who are allowed to fish.

In the former time, before 1970s, the Bia Lola Sasi could last until three years. Since 1970an until now people harvest Bia Lola and Tripang every year, usually close to Christmas time for Christian communities. The driver of implementing the tradition of Sasi, in this regard, is the income from harvesting the marine species.

The State and Empowerment of Traditional Marine Resource Management

During the Indonesian New Order Regime (1966-1998), particularly after the passing of the Village Law No. 5/1979, Indonesian traditional world was in crisis; being marginalized and weakened. As Johannes (1978, 1981) identified in
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It was not until 1980s concerns on traditional marine resource management emerged. Interestingly it started in Maluku with concern on Sasi. Inspired by widespread environmental and social movements, NGO activists became actively involved in empowering local leaders to revive and document their tradition (see Kissya 1995; Rahail 1995). A major focus of the initiatives has been identifying the elements of resource management and the spatial distribution of such practices. These efforts were formally acknowledged when Kalpataru—the medal for special achievement in environmental conservation was awarded to village traditional leader in Central Maluku for practicing 'sustainable' traditional resource management, that is the Sasi Ikan Lompa.

Adopting international discourse on the common pool resource management, academia also involved in study on traditional marine resource management in Maluku in the same period. Lokolo (1988, 1994), Bailey and Zerner (1992) and Nikijuluw (1994) and (Pannell 1997) are some examples of such works. They all consider the practice is important for both resource sustainability and protecting the right of traditional people for managing their own resources and people.

The formal government support for the strengthening of the traditional marine resource management came after the collapsed of the Indonesian New Order Regime in 1998. The changing regime has brought decentralization and more autonomy to local governments. The formal government acknowledgement on the traditional wisdom, traditional community rights come also as part of the package. Since then, many laws and other regulations mention explicitly the obligation of government, business entity to protect and regard the practice of traditional resource management, including marine resource management. Table 1(p.30) shows some of these laws and regulations.

Reading the laws and regulations in table 1, we can see that the government empowerment of traditional marine resource management is more for the purpose of increasing the sustainability and fairness of the management as well as acknowledging the rights of traditional people. I should also note that at the practical level, some effort of empowerments are geared toward the development of secondary use of the practice as tourist attraction. There are some positive results for this but also some risk from its commodification. Economic motive might erode the social and cultural values of the practice. For example, people question the aspect of resource sustainability of Sasi Lompa in Haruku when so many people were invited to take part in the harvest.

Another revitalization efforts that worth mentioning, other than government regulation, is the work of conservation NGOs. This is also a relatively new trend, about a decade long. The difficulties and problems experienced my conservation NGOs when they apply conventional conservation approach—that is looking at people as and 'enemy' of conservation or people as 'predators' of those conserved natural resources and ecosystems—has shifted the paradigm to embrace the people/community as collaborator of /for conservation. One of their strategy of using people as their collaborators is making use of their tradition for conservation purposes. In this regard, these NGOs work with the community to strengthen their traditional marine resource management with some upgrade, that is putting in conservation concerns in the traditional practices.

One of well-known programs on this is the program developed by the Indonesian Locally Managed Marine Area (ILMMA). This NGOs have supported more than hundreds villages in Papua and Maluku to strengthen their traditional marine resource management practices. The programs include, not exclusively, the formalization of the traditional into the form of village regulation, adding permanent no take zone to the tradition of sasi and kiripup. In Tanimbar Kei, they also added access fee to outsider fishers. This fee is a new element in the tradition, but considered as very important. The access fee has made the community being able to collect enough fund to carry out more management activities. In fact, this fee has also made them possible to provide scholarship for kids to go studying in the...
Concluding Remarks

I would consider this paper as an initial step to record and share the Indonesian maritime culture. First, I argue that Indonesia has a rich maritime culture as it is, for a simple reason because we are an archipelagic country. We do not have much option rather than developing maritime culture as our means of adaptation. Second, the discussion of maritime culture in Indonesia should cover about the Bajau people (the Sea Nomad), fishing culture, sailing culture and the culture of coastal communities, particularly to their traditional marine resource management.

Further, due to space limitation, this paper only focuses on the culture of marine resource management that is practiced in Papua and Maluku. In regard, this paper tries to shows that some similarities and differences of the practices are obvious. While the basis of both practices are the concept of communal marine tenure and the tradition of closing-opening seasons, the right holder units and motives behind these practices are different. If the main right holder unit of communal tenure in Papua is keret (clan) and village community, in Maluku the rights holder unit ranging from several clans that form the core member of the community up to an ethnic group. In Papua the motive that drives the opening and closing seasons is socio-religious, while in Maluku, it is more the condition of the
resources and economy.

This paper has also noted that while during the New Order Regime the tradition tended to be marginalized and weakened, the reform era (Post-new Order) have brought empowerment. These involve research and community empowerment on the ground and discursive level and also government policy support. The later takes the form of the passing of laws and regulation that acknowledge and protect traditional marine resource management.

Finally, on the ground or in the sea, the revitalization or strengthening of the culture of marine resource management is also carried out with the support of NGOs. Interestingly, this effort is not merely a means of cultural revitalization but also for environmental conservation.

Notes
1 The term might be different from place-to-place in Papua. In Malay language it is also commonly called Sasi, the same term that is also used in Maluku. Here I use kiripup that is the term used by the Papuans who live in Demta, Jayapura.
2 In Papua, the village governance is run by a dual village institutions that work collaboratively. The first is traditional government (pemerintahan adat) led by Ondoapi. They deal with matters related to traditions. The second is pemerintahan kampong (village government), this is the institution established during the Dutch colonialisation which is adopted with continuous updates/revisions by the Indonesian government. This kampong government deals with matters related to modern state management.
3 Sasi is differentiated on the basis of a specified resource or territory as well as the belief system, ritual leaders and location (see Monk et al. 1997) and Sosella (2002) for more detailed accounts of sasi). Some examples of terms used for resource and territory sasi include those that describe: coconuts (kelapa), Trochus niloticus (lola); land (darat); and sea (laut). Terms related to belief systems, ritual leaders and location include: local village beliefs (sasi negeri); Christian rituals conducted in a church by a priest (sasi gereja); and Islamic rituals conducted in a mosque by an imam (sasi mesjid). The rituals of applying and lifting the sasi for local village beliefs are performed at sacred places in the village, led by a traditional leader.

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