

Exploring the Cultural Space of the Lamalera Fishing Community in Lembata Island, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the sea as a cultural space within the context of the Lamalera fishing community on Lembata Island. There exists a complex relationship between humans and the marine environment, encompassing cultural, economic, social, political, and spiritual aspects. The study reveals the maritime cultural heritage and cultural practices that have evolved around the sea, including myths, customs, fishing traditions, maritime trade, and the utilization of marine resources. Additionally, the research identifies the role of the sea in shaping the cultural identity of the Lamalera community, including livelihoods, beliefs, and unique cultural practices. This field study employs an interdisciplinary approach encompassing history, anthropology, sociology, and culture. Viewing the sea as a cultural space, the study unveils three cultural domains: mental facts, social facts, and artifacts. The results indicate that the Lamalera fishing community is a maritime society, where the entire cultural and spiritual identity is shaped by the sea as a cultural space.

KEYWORDS

cultural space; fishing community; local wisdom; Lembata Island

INTRODUCTION

The academic exploration of the sea as a cultural space encompasses a broad spectrum of disciplines, including history, anthropology, sociology, and culture. Notable studies in this field have been conducted by scholars such as Paine (2014), Strang (2014), Radovanovic (2015), Corsi (2017), Parlangei (2019), and Yordan (2020).

In his book titled "The Sea and Civilization: A Maritime History of the World," Lincoln Paine delves into the history of the sea and its influence on human culture, encompassing art, music, and local traditions related to the sea. Veronica Strang (2014), in her work "The Ocean as a Cultural Landscape," illustrates the role of the sea in human culture and how it has shaped cultural identity and history globally.

Bojana Radovanovic (2015), in the article "The Sea as Cultural Space: The Example of the Mediterranean," discusses the role of the sea in Mediterranean culture, including art, music, myths, and oral traditions associated with the sea. Pietro Corsi (2017), in his book "The Sea in History: The Modern World," describes the historical functions and roles of the sea in human life, including its impact on art, music, myths, and local traditions.

Furthermore, Oronzo Parlangei (2019), in the book "Oceanic Culture History: The Adventure of Human Relationship with the Sea," explores the history of human interaction with the sea, examining its role in art, music, and local traditions worldwide. Yordan Lyutskanov (2020), in the article "Black Sea as Literary and Cultural Space: State of the Art and Prospects," discusses the concept of "literary space" developed by scholars within the interdisciplinary context of cultural geography and literary studies.

The overview above highlights that the sea as a cultural space refers to how people use the sea as a source of cultural inspiration and expression. This involves various practices such as art, music, myths, legends, religion, and local traditions related to the sea and everything associated with it, including marine life, fishing, navigation, and maritime history. The sea is also frequently depicted in visual arts, such as paintings and photography, and in popular culture, such as films and music. Moreover, people often celebrate sea-related festivals and events globally. Overall, the sea as a cultural space is a crucial aspect of human cultural heritage and continues to be a source of inspiration for communities residing in coastal and non-coastal regions worldwide. This study serves as a case study of the Lamalera community on Lembata Island, revealing their profound connection with the sea.

Masyarakat Lamalera is one of the ethnic groups in the Wulandoni District, Lembata Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province (NTT) (Tube, 2017: 1). Their way of life, which depends on the sea (*ola nua*), strengthens their identity as a maritime community. The Lamalera community refuses to use the term "whaling" but instead refers to it as *hode knato*, meaning 'receiving gifts' from the sea through the tradition of *tuba feda*, a ritual to stab whales (*koteklema*). This tradition is an ancestral heritage that has been passed down for more than 500 years (Barnes, 1996), since their ancestors inhabited the area. In their expression, "*Ammak genna olae, ola kae kode kai*" which translates to "Our ancestors passed down this work, and we will also pass it down."

The Lamalera fishing village is divided into two villages, namely Lamalera A and Lamalera B. This division of the two fishing villages was carried out by the government in response to the increasing population of Lamalera residents. However, an interesting phenomenon occurred as a result of this division. The interesting aspect is the movement of people between Lamalera A, located further up the coast, and Lamalera B, situated on the seaside.

Alex Beding (Bataona, 2015: 114) describes this phenomenon as follows: people from Lamalera B, the seaside village, who want to go to Lamalera A, must pass through a steep cliff area called *Gripe*. There is only one path consisting of stones where people can place their feet to climb or descend, and it must be done carefully due to the adjacent cliff. For locals accustomed to the difficulty, it is different for newcomers. Only in 1998 was the staircase dismantled and replaced with a new "*Gripe*," now a road that can be traversed by two or four-wheeled vehicles. Lamalera used to have a leader (*kakang* or head of *hamente/gemeentehoofd* in Dutch). Since 1950, Lamalera, which has expanded extensively, was split into two villages: Lamalera A (upper), locally known as *Tetilefo*, and Lamalera B (lower), called *Lalifatan*, one situated higher and the other lower on the seaside. These two villages are separated by a hill they call *Fung*, an area covered with large stones, but also housing several residential buildings.

The 16th-century notes of Portuguese explorers mention the existence of a community in Lembata engaged in traditional whale hunting (Mustika, 2006). For coastal communities like Lamalera, fishing and other marine activities are essential daily endeavors for sustenance and survival. The age-old tradition of *Tuba Feda* or traditional fishing reflects how the ancestral heritage's mandate is faithfully upheld by Lamalera fishermen. The majority of the Lamalera community adheres to the Catholic faith.

The sea plays a crucial role in the lives of Lamalera's fishermen on Lembata Island. For this fishing community, the sea serves as a source of livelihood, transportation, and trade. Therefore, their culture has evolved with a wealth of knowledge and experiences related to the sea. They have also developed unique oral traditions, rituals, arts, and music inspired by the sea. The issues to be discussed in this research are related to the sea as a cultural

space for the Lamalera and Lamakera communities, revealing their interaction with the sea in the aspects of mentifact, sociofact, and artifact.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The manifestation of culture as an idea is an ideal form that is abstract in nature. This means that the ideal form of culture cannot be touched or felt because it resides within the human mind. The manifestation of culture as an idea includes values, norms, regulations, beliefs, ideas, ideologies, philosophies, and concepts embedded in the human mind. Ideas in a culture are always interconnected, forming a cultural system.

The *mentifact* aspect encompasses the knowledge and skills of the Lamalera community in capturing fish and managing marine resources. They possess extraordinary skills in dolphin fishing using the traditional technique known as "*tuba feda*." They also have knowledge of the marine ecosystem and ways to maintain the health of the marine environment.

The cultural heritage of maritime values is closely related to the mentality and way of life of the fishing community that depends on the sea for their livelihood. Fisherfolk have special skills and knowledge about fishing and managing marine resources, as well as traditions and rituals related to fishing activities. The mentality and way of life of the fishing community are also greatly influenced by the marine environment and climate, as well as their close relationship with nature and the local community.

The manifestation of culture as an activity is a concrete action that can be seen, observed, and documented. Culture as an activity is seen through patterned actions performed by the community. These patterns show how a culture's society behaves according to their customs. Thus, the manifestation of culture as an activity is also often referred to as the social system in a cultured society. The cultural social system indicates how humans in a culture interact with each other, behave in daily life, and engage in other human activities. Examples include traditional ceremonies, traditional dances, and customs.

The sociofact aspect involves traditions and rituals associated with the activities of fishermen. Before commencing fishery, fishermen perform specific rituals to seek divine protection. They adhere to traditions concerning the selection of fish that can be caught and those that are prohibited. Additionally, they observe taboos before heading to the sea, have traditions for distributing catch, and rituals for selling their catch.

Toponymy, or the assigning of geographic names, represents a sociofact aspect characterizing the culture of the Lamalera community. Toponymy is a branch of onomastics that studies or investigates the names of places. Other terms frequently used for toponymy include "geographical names" or "place names" or "topographical names." Lauder asserts that the naming of places holds high value in relation to national identity. Naming regions can preserve the identity of an area, although historical evidence may sometimes erode over time. The preservation of identity is also related to public recognition of a place at the national level. According to Lauder, toponymy is also a crucial element in international coordination and communication. One function of toponymy is to assist in establishing administrative boundaries to reduce the potential for conflict.

The elements that constitute toponymy involve assigning signs or names to a place influenced by specific conditions or characteristics as a response from individuals or community groups. Several factors lead to the naming of a place.

In general, these names are caused by several formative factors, as follows. (1) Natural adaptation. Typically, places are named in connection with the vegetation or plants abundant in that area. Over time, this association becomes the name of the place.

Communities link names to a place with the distinctive natural features of a region. (2) Legend or mythology. The name of a place is linked to a legend or myth believed by the local inhabitants to have occurred at that location. A legend is passed down through generations and is known by the community, resulting in the naming of a place according to the legend's name, such as the stories of Banyuwangi and Tangkuban Perahu. (3) Historical events. The name of a place is derived from a historical event that actually took place. The community considers the historical event significant, serving as a reference point and associating it with that event. (4) Folklore that develops and is passed down through generations.

These four formative elements of toponymy clearly show that maritime toponymy can emerge as an accumulation of these elements. Therefore, maritime toponymy represents the toponymy that embodies the spirit of maritime culture with the richness of nautical vocabulary, arising from the adaptation of nature, mythology and legend, historical events, and folklore.

The manifestation of culture as an artifact, or work, is the most concrete among the three manifestations of culture. This is because artifacts are physical forms of human culture that can be seen, touched, and documented. The manifestation of culture as an artifact encompasses all physical objects produced by human activities and is often referred to as physical culture. Examples of the manifestation of culture as an artifact include inscriptions, ancient manuscripts, temples, sculptures, regional musical instruments, ornaments and decorations, traditional weapons, as well as other historical relics.

Artefacts are objects created by humans that can be used to demonstrate the culture of a society. Artefacts related to maritime cultural heritage include traditional vessels such as boats, sampans, barges, etc., used for navigating the seas and rivers; fishing tools: nets, ropes, and fishing rods used for catching fish; navigation tools: compasses, sextants, and other navigation instruments used to determine the position of a ship and wind direction; handicrafts: fishery crafts, crafts made from tree branches, etc., used for decoration or sold as souvenirs; transportation tools: vehicles such as trucks, trains, or ships used to transport goods from one place to another. Additionally, documents such as maps, travel journals, etc., record the history of maritime travel and cultural development. In the realm of visual arts, manifestations include paintings, sculptures depicting maritime life and culture. Archaeological artefacts, such as items found at archaeological sites, can be utilized to study past maritime cultures. Overall, the research framework on the sea as a cultural space can be illustrated as follows (Figure 1).

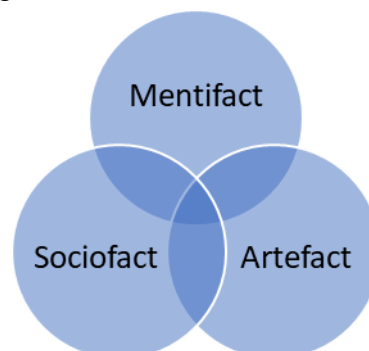


Figure 1. Manifestation of Culture

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a focus on the eastern region of Indonesia, particularly Lamalera, Lembata Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Sujarweni (2018)

defines qualitative research as a procedure to generate descriptive data in the form of speech, writing, and behavior from observed informants.

Several aspects related to the methodology applied in this research include (1) research design; (2) research location and objects; (3) types and sources of data; (4) data collection techniques; and (5) data analysis techniques.

This research is fundamentally a field study involving direct data collection through observation, interviews, and participation in the daily lives of the community related to the sea. Field researchers aim to observe fishing activities, accompany fishermen on their journeys, and interact with the fishing community to understand cultural practices related to the sea.

The research design employs document study, interviews, and observation of qualitative data. Descriptively, data is obtained through interviews and observations related to sources of information about whale hunting traditions conducted by the Lamalera and Lamakera communities in East Nusa Tenggara. Document studies are used as secondary data to complement primary data obtained in the field.

The research location is the Lamalera community in East Nusa Tenggara. All aspects of this whale hunting tradition need to be explored. The exploration results will be the basis for analysis in this research. The research location is purposively chosen based on the fact that traditional whale hunting traditions in Indonesia are found in Lamalera.

The research object is the local wisdom/tradition of whale hunting in the Lamalera community and related stakeholders, including the fishing community, as well as local and central governments authorized to regulate whale hunting.

Referring to the two types of data in this research, namely primary and secondary data, the data collection techniques are categorized into three methods: (a) document study, (b) interviews, and (c) observation. Before collecting data, the research team will obtain ethical clearance as an integral part of the social humanities research process required by BRIN.

Understanding the sea as a cultural space requires an interdisciplinary approach to obtain comprehensive understanding. The interdisciplinary approach involves various disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, marine science, ecology, and cultural studies to understand the complexity of the relationship between humans and the sea. To compile a systematic report, the results of this research will be categorized into three aspects of human social life: mentifact, sociofact, and artifact.

The data collection method uses the Archive and Documentation Analysis method, which involves exploring historical archives, government documents, research journals, travel notes, ethnographic literature, and other sources related to the sea and maritime culture. Document analysis helps in understanding historical changes, cultural customs, and societal views on the sea.

Data collection techniques are carried out using the Interview and Participatory Observation method. This method involves direct interaction with individuals or groups with knowledge and experience in culture and maritime life. Through interviews, researchers can obtain in-depth information about beliefs, values, cultural practices, and the influence of the sea on society.

The data analysis method uses Content Analysis, analyzing text, images, videos, and other audiovisual materials related to the sea and maritime culture. Researchers can analyze cultural representations, narratives, symbols, and meanings associated with the sea in literature, art, mass media, and documentaries.

The data analysis used in this research is qualitative descriptive analysis. Most qualitative research data is unstructured. Qualitative data will be interpreted as a result of

mutual understanding between the researcher and the research subject. Data analysis will begin at the early stages of the research. Data analysis is conducted through several stages, namely classifying data based on time, place, name, and discussion topics as needed for data analysis. The next step is to validate the data by examining the similarity of data and information from different sources. The final step is to analyze the data based on the formulation and objectives of the research, which culminates in efforts to preserve cultural heritage for sustainable development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mentifact Aspect

In the cognitive realm of the Lamalera people, whales are perceived as 'mountain buffaloes,' considered ancestors of the Lamalera community. Within the series of ceremonies preceding whale hunting, it is evident that the mystical 'mountain buffalo' is invoked and invited to descend into the sea, transforming into a whale. The Lamalera people staunchly reject the notion that they hunt and capture whales. According to them, whales—which are their own ancestors—come to their homeland and willingly offer themselves as a tribute for their descendants. The capture of whales as a welcoming gesture to the presence of ancestors involves almost every aspect of the cultural and spiritual life of the Lamalera people. Therefore, the patterns and models of whale hunting can be identified and described as follows.

The Lamalera village, inhabited by the Lamaholot ethnic group, is situated between rocky hills and cliffs. Administratively, this region falls under the jurisdiction of Lembata Island Regency. Geographically, it faces the Sawu Sea. Lamalera is renowned for its tradition of whale hunting, referred to in Lamalera's language as *koteklema*. The tradition of whale hunting by the community in Lamalera Village, Wulandoni District, Lembata Regency, has been ongoing since the 16th century, or since the ancestors of the Lamalera tribe settled in the area. Portuguese records mention the existence of a community in Lembata engaged in traditional whale hunting.

Whale hunting is carried out by adult male residents of Lamalera who are considered to possess the necessary skills (typically, one member representing each family). Before embarking on the hunt, they all offer prayers to God for success in the whale hunting endeavor. Whale hunting takes place during the whale-catching season known as *leva nuang*. The *leva nuang* season usually occurs from May to October. The *leva nuang* season commences with various traditional and religious ceremonies. Three days before the fishermen officially set out to sea, the *Tobo Neme Fatte* ceremony is conducted, usually held on April 29th.

This ceremony is attended by the residents of both villages (Teti Levo and Lali Levo or Lamalera A and Lamalera B), along with the landlord (*levo alep*), customary leaders, community leaders, tribal heads, and boat owners to discuss matters related to *Ola Nue* (earning a living from the sea). The venue for the ceremony is in front of the Chapel of St. Peter and Paul. They exchange offerings of betel nut and betel leaves. The meeting is led by a knowledgeable person called *Ata Mole*. They evaluate the *leva* activities over the past year, mutually forgive each other for mistakes and oversights committed, and determine two boats that will go out to sea after the opening mass of the *Leva* season on the beach on May 1st (Batafor, 2017).

After the traditional ceremony, the next day, on May 1st, a Catholic mass ceremony called "*Misa Leva*" is held at the Chapel of St. Peter. The worship ceremony begins with a procession from the Bataona tribe square while boarding boats towards St. Peter's chapel on the beach. This ceremony symbolizes self-purification and mutual forgiveness of the

entire Lamalera community, especially the fishermen, before entering the holy mass (Boli, 2018). Every year on May 1st, the opening mass ceremony of the leva nuang season is held, followed by a thanksgiving mass celebration on October 31st (Alaini, 2018). After the Catholic mass ceremony led by a priest, the sea and all the boats on the shore are officially blessed, marking the commencement of the descent to the sea.

On the following day, the boat designated as tenna fulla will initiate the descent to the sea, followed by the entire fleet the next day. All the fish caught during this official period are counted as the catch for one year of the fishing season (leva season).

The hunting is carried out using boats made of wood called "peledang." The person responsible for harpooning whales is called lamafa. A lamafa stands at the end of the boat to harpoon the whale. The lamafa will jump and thrust the harpoon called "tempuling" into the whale. A lamafa, the harpooner leading a group of sailors or rowers, is ready to give the command to launch the peledang, a specially made boat for whale hunting.



Figure 2. Lamafa Harpooning a Whale

In a "peledang" (Lamalera's traditional boat) used for whale hunting, Lamafa occupies the front position as the captain and the holder of the traditional weapon "tempuling" used to harpoon whales. In the boat, he stands in a place called "hamma lollo" and sits on the "kerakki" (Alaini, 2018). A Lamafa certainly possesses great courage and bravery because he risks his life every time he harpoons a whale. In reality, quite a number of lamafas have lost their lives in the deep sea during this whale hunting mission. Lamafa is assisted by his assistant called "Breung Alep," the boat rowers called "Matros" (usually 10 oars) each occupied by individuals referred to by the name "Meng." At the back (stern), the helmsman called "Lama Uri" sits (Taum, 2023: 202).

The fishermen wait for someone to shout "Baleo! Baleo!" This call is a sign that a whale has surfaced, usually occurring between the months of capture, namely May and October. The hunting process can take hours. When the whale is spotted, the matros will row towards the targeted whale. Lamafa immediately thrusts the "tempuling" into the heart of the whale, three to four times until the whale becomes exhausted from blood loss. The first thrust can be very dangerous for the entire crew, as the whale will charge, writhe in pain, and destroy everything nearby.

Sperm whales (*physeter macrocephalus*) are the only ones allowed to be captured by the people of Lamalera. Blue whales (*balaenoptera musculus*) often pass by them as the largest marine mammals, but this type of whale is never hunted. Apart from intending to preserve these large marine animals, tradition states that Lamalera and Lembata in general were once saved by blue whales in ancient times. Another taboo for them, besides killing blue whales, is killing pregnant female sperm whales, whale calves, and whales in the mating season. Sensitivity to these conditions can only be inherited by the clans in Lamalera.

Traditionally, the whale meat obtained is consumed by the village community and does

not exceed the overall social living needs. Sometimes, the number of whales caught fluctuates according to the availability and needs of the community.

If the fishermen encounter problems at sea, they can perform "*hadek blettu*," which involves raising a bamboo pole with a *blettu* on top. *Blettu* is a traditional hat made of lontar leaves that fishermen commonly bring to the sea to avoid the scorching heat. *Blettu* also serves as a signal that they need help because they are in danger. If fishermen from other boats see the hat on top of the bamboo pole, they immediately approach to provide assistance. Another expression commonly used is "*hadek klala*" (Alaini, 2018).

The whale meat obtained from this hunting will be distributed to the entire population according to the size of the contribution of their family members in the whale hunting process. In addition to the meat, the community also utilizes whale oil as massage oil, medicinal material, and fuel for lamps or lanterns.

Navigation is a series of methods, tools, and techniques used to determine the position and direct the movement of an object on the Earth's surface, at sea, in the air, or in space. The purpose of navigation systems is to assist someone or an object in determining their current location, planning routes, and reaching their destination effectively and accurately. Navigation systems encompass various aspects, including distance measurement, direction measurement, and time calculations.

The Lamalera community is familiar with traditional navigation systems in their maritime activities. They have a habit of reading natural signs, which can be interpreted as determining direction, attitude, and even the fate of fishing in the sea. These signs include the sounds of birds, wind direction, and ocean currents.

A type of bird called '*kollo leva*' serves as the first sign for fishermen at sea. The *kollo leva* bird usually makes sounds at night, signalling to the fishermen that they will be sailing the next day. Fishermen are very familiar with the sound of this bird. They understand and can interpret its 'message,' whether the maritime activity the next day will be successful or not. Often, fishermen decide not to go to sea if the sound of the *kollo leva* bird suggests that they will fail.

Wind direction is the second indicator that is crucial for Lamalera fishermen. Wind direction can also be read as a sign of luck or misfortune that fishermen will experience at sea. According to the beliefs of Lamalera fishermen, if the wind blows strongly from the west, they will decide not to go to sea. This wind is called "*farra blekku*." In such conditions, fishermen are confident that fish will not appear on the sea surface.

The third important indicator is ocean currents. Ocean currents are believed to directly affect the catch of fishermen. Ocean currents are called *Furs* and *Enna Ole*. If the underwater current is very strong (called *Furs*), they believe that fish will surface, resulting in a bountiful catch. Conversely, if the surface current is stronger (called *Enna Ole*), fish will go to the ocean floor, and they will return home empty-handed.

Sociofact Aspect of Maritime Cultural Values: From Ie Gerek to Leva

The tradition of hunting whales in Lamalera involves a series of ritual ceremonies that are followed strictly and systematically. The ceremonies begin with the Ie Gerek ritual (calling the whale), guiding it imaginarily towards the sea, Catholic church ritual ceremonies, and initiating the fishing season. The ritual process involving all members of the Lamaler fishing village is explained as follows.

The tradition of traditional ceremonies leading up to Leva Nuang is quite elaborate. Three days before the religious mass ceremony, a meeting is held involving the village chief, community leaders, landowners, boat owners, and the Village Government to discuss preparations and issues related to fishing in the upcoming season (*ola nuang*) and

preparations for the official opening of the fishing season (*leva nuang*).

The leva season begins with a series of traditional rituals that must be performed. The Lamalera community believes that all efforts to earn a living, to find food, must be done with a pure heart. *The Tobu Neme Fatte* ceremony is then held. *Tobu Neme Fatte* means sitting together on the beach. This ceremony is a ritual for resolving tribal and landowner issues before whaling. Its purpose is to create a harmonious condition and build an atmosphere of peace. If there are wrong words, attitudes, and actions, including differences of opinion on anything, whether at sea or on land, they must be resolved. All issues must be resolved according to customs before the start of the ancestral mass and the leva mass. The parties involved are the landowners of the Wujon tribe and the Tufaona tribe, and *Lika Telo* (the three pillars) which include the Bataona, Blikololong, and Lewotukan tribes. During the *Tobu Nama Fatte* event, the leva activities carried out in the previous year are collectively evaluated, and several rules are agreed upon as guidelines for the upcoming leva season. At this moment, transparently, all community members forgive each other.

In this activity, the landowner, namely the Wujon Tribe, has higher authority. They have a very important position and responsibility as intermediaries or messengers to their ancestors who have passed away and reside in a place called Batar on Mount Labalekan. Batar is located on a hill about 1.5 km from the Lamalera village. Batar is believed to be the dwelling place of the ancestors of the Lango Wujon tribe, the landowners in Lamalera. This is where the traditional ritual of whaling begins. Offerings are given at this place, including burning tobacco, pouring tuak (traditional alcoholic beverage), scattering ground corn, and breaking chicken eggs. Traditional verses are recited from this place while striking a gong.

A visit to Batar is usually conducted on April 29. Three envoys from the landowners of the Bataona, Blikololong, and Lewotukan tribes, along with other participants, climb Mount Labalekan while carrying tuak, betel nut, tobacco, a chicken egg, and a rooster, dressed in mismatched clothes. They will meet the spirits of their ancestors Bele Raja Rimu and Bele Jawa Lembang Ina, believed to reside in Igo Lewu. This place is a steep cliff with a large hole. Inside the hole, two ancestral spirits who have transformed into two large snakes reside (Boli, 2018). They knock on the stone near the hole where the snakes hide while placing betel nut, tobacco, and tuak near the hole as an offering to the ancestral spirits. Shortly afterward, between the two snake tails inside, the snake will come out, lick all the offerings, then raise its head, open its mouth wide to be fed a chicken egg by the head of the delegation. While feeding the chicken egg to the snake, the head of the delegation recites a mantra requesting the ancestors to "follow us, so that we can together bring these vegetables to the beach to feed them, who mourn day and night because of hunger and thirst!"

The second ritual is carried out at a location called *Rang Gawak*. At this place, an offering is given, which is a rooster hung at the end of two bamboo sticks intentionally pierced into the head of the rooster. After being pierced with a sharp object while reciting a mantra requesting the rooster to give a sign, "If your feet point towards the sea, it means fish will be obtained. People will taste it and take it home to the village, to feed the widows and orphans!"

After the rooster dies, it is taken and roasted on the spot. They then eat together while drinking tuak in a hurry. From the *Rang Gawak* location, the journey continues to the third location called *Itok Kawe Lango*. At this location, the group pulls out *alang-alang* grass, which is then inserted into a hole in a rock shaped like a buffalo's snout.

After that, the group moves on to the fourth location called Pau Gora. Similar activities are carried out at this location as in the previous place. The group continues to the fifth

location called Enaj Snoa. Along the way to this place, the group must sound the gong to summon the spirits to accompany their journey. The ceremony performed at this location involves placing offerings such as betel nut, *tuak*, and rolled tobacco. The leader of the group climbs a large rock while reciting a mantra inviting ancestors to come down to the beach "bringing vegetables for widows and orphans."

After that, the group continues to the sixth location, *Watu Koteklema* (a rock shaped like a whale). The group leader jumps onto the large rock while waving branches with alang-alang leaves, reciting an invitation mantra, "Come, let's all go and take them all to the sea so they become fish!"

The group then continues their journey to the seventh location, Bani Lollo. They descend a narrow path through a narrow alley to the location of *Batan Bala Mai* (Naming Bataona). The group is welcomed by elders, offered betel nut, rolled tobacco, and *tuak*. After that, the group leader will convey a message, "Mother, father, brothers, sisters, widows, and orphans. Go to the beach and wait for us at Tobi Bao Nama Fatta. After we return from the sea, let's continue our conversation there."

After delivering this message, the group hurriedly headed to the beach, plunging into the seawater to cleanse their bodies. All the people waiting for them on the beach were divided into two groups. The western group was occupied by the people who owned boats from Bui Pukka to Muko Tena, while the eastern part was occupied by people from Sia Apu to Jawa Tena.

At that moment, all Lamalera residents were present on the beach and sat in front of the Chapel of St. Peter, which is located on the beach. This place is called Ika Kota Uli because in the olden days, it was used as a place to store whale bones. The Tobo Neme Fatte ceremony was continued by an adat leader who invited the entire Lamalera community to reflect, examine themselves sincerely and willingly, and express sins, mistakes, and shortcomings among all Lamalera residents and also the landlords and shareholders (*umma alap*). If sincerely and willingly each of them has conveyed all complaints and deficiencies, then symbolically they will express regret and forgive each other in the form of chewing betel nut together as a sign of peace.

After confessing mistakes and apologizing, and asking for blessings from the Lango Fujjo tribe, landlords, and some elders, they immediately rose to the seaside and uttered the following prayer. "O God in the high place, O spirits of the ancestors! Let the fish in the sea go astray. Send them here. So that we can catch them. For the widows and orphans. Who lament day and night because there is no food!"

Upon reaching the beach, four people plunged into the sea as a ritual to call the fish. Meanwhile, two spear holders waited on the beach. The ceremony ended when the four people came out of the sea and gathered in front of the Chapel of St. Peter and Paul on the beach. After the evaluation discussion ended, the activity continued with drinking *tuak* and eating corn *titi* together involving the entire Lamalera community. They determined one or two boats located at the eastern and western ends as the first boats to go to the sea.

The next ritual is the Catholic religious ritual, namely the Arwah Mass. A form of homage and acknowledgment to the spirits of ancestors. The Arwah Mass is performed one day before the Leva Mass. The Arwah Mass is held by visiting graves and burning candles on graves. Specifically for ancestors who died at sea, the Arwah Mass is held in the evening on the beach. At that time, each member of the family and tribe prayed for their ancestors who died at sea. This Mass is the culmination of the opening event for the whale hunting season in Lamalera. After the Leva Mass is completed, the pastor blesses all the *peledang* owned by the residents. To mark the opening of the fish market, *peledang praso sapang* is symbolically released.

Next, on the following day, precisely on May 1, a Catholic worship ceremony (mass) is held at the Chapel of St. Peter, right on the beach. The ceremony or ritual begins with a procession from namma Bataona (the big house of the Bataona tribe) while carrying each boat towards the Chapel of St. Peter on the beach. Before this Mass ceremony begins, the hapus nu, pe lima ceremony takes place. The essence of this ritual is self-purification and mutual forgiveness before entering sacred worship.

Another prohibition is that whales appearing on the day of the Arwah Mass and during the Leva Mass cannot be caught. For the people of Lamalera, the appearance of whales at those times is a good sign. The whale hunting season begins.

Artefact Aspect of Maritime Cultural Values

Examples of cultural manifestations as artifacts include inscriptions, ancient manuscripts, temples, statues, regional musical instruments, ornaments and decorations, traditional weapons, as well as other historical artifacts. Traditional ships such as boats, boat docking areas, sampans, barges, etc., used for navigating the seas and rivers; fishing tools: nets, ropes, and fishing rods used for catching fish; navigation tools: compasses, sextants, and other navigation tools used to determine the ship's position and wind direction; handicrafts: fish-related crafts, crafts from tree branches, etc., used for decoration or sold as souvenirs; transportation tools.

Pledang is the traditional boat of the Lamalera community. Pledang is a large boat equipped with a sail made of woven palm leaves. It is about 10 meters long, approximately 2 meters wide, and 1-1.5 meters high. Pledang is equipped with *cadik*, wooden beams on the right and left sides as balance. This *cadik* is intended to help protect the boat's crew when the stabbed whale goes on a rampage and tries to attack.

Pledang is usually made in October, at the end of the whale hunting season (May-October). The boat-making period is completed by March, and it can be operated at least by April, so that in May, at the beginning of *leva nuang*, the fishing season, the new boat can already be launched.

The making of the *pledang* begins with the ritual called *pau laba ketilo*, an event at the traditional house, *atamola*. All tribes are invited to participate in worship, prayer, and rituals to honor ancestors and offer sacrifices to the specific tools that will be used so that the *pledang*-making process can proceed smoothly and successfully.



Figure 3. Pledang Lamalera in the Sawu Ocean

Peledang is specifically crafted from Sonokeling wood (*Pterocarpus indica*), which is still abundantly available in Lembata. According to Martinus Huku, a prominent figure

from the Lelaona Tribe and an atamola (traditional boat maker), crafting a single boat requires approximately 20 Sonokeling trees, each priced at IDR 300,000 to IDR 400,000. The current estimated price for one Lamalera boat ranges from IDR 50 million to IDR 100 million.

The size of Lamalera's peledang planks is not arbitrary. Similarly, the connections between planks must adhere to the customary rules passed down by ancestors. Any violation or technical error in assembly is believed to disrupt the harmony between the boat's bow and stern. Such disturbances can affect the boat's agility and speed. Construction errors may also lead to cracks or openings in the plank joints, allowing seawater to easily enter the boat.

There should be no iron components, such as nails or bolts, in the boat's structure. Any violation is believed to provoke whale attacks, causing the boat to shatter. If a boat is damaged in a whale attack, it is considered a mistake in the boat's construction. Each *peledang* typically accommodates 4-6 *matros* (boatmen), led by a Lamafa or a harpooner.

The culmination of peledang construction is marked by the *pau soru naka* ritual, the tools are returned to their places, and a ritual of gratitude is performed for the tools believed to have served well in completing the boat.

GA Herridge, a researcher of traditional boats ("Lashed-lug boat of the eastern archipelagoes," 1982), categorizes Lamalera boats as remnants of the pegged and lashed method known from the early cultures of the Indo-European Bronze Age. Lamalera, with all its rich traditions, holds its own charm. This tradition is among the most unique in the world. Peledang has proven to be a traditional boat capable of navigating the vast oceans. Naje is a special place designed for the protection and storage of *Pledang* (traditional boats). In Lamalera, naje is situated on the beach. Naje is a traditional structure built by the Lamalera community. Its function goes beyond being a storage space; it serves to safeguard the boats from damage and adverse weather conditions.

Damaged and weathered boats find their place in naje. These boats are never discarded or sold as old or scrap items. The boats are highly sacred. The ancestral messages passed down through generations are strictly adhered to by the local community. Boats, especially *peledang* (*tena lamafaij*) used specifically for whale hunting (*koteklema*), cannot be sold under any circumstances. Lamalera boats cannot be brought in from outside the region or taken out of the area.



Figure 4. Naje: Boat House

In Lamalera, Naje is placed in a beach location. Around 30 boat houses with woven lontar leaf roofs, supported by neatly arranged round wooden pillars. Without walls, the boat houses or peledang, also called naje, become places for various activities. Here,

residents weave various crafts from lontar leaves, make ropes for fishing gear, and create small boats used for catching small fish. Naje is also a resting place during the daytime when the sun is scorching. The breeze from the Sawu Sea often makes it difficult to keep one's eyes open. Whale hunting or lefa does not happen throughout the year. There is a resting season or lefa bogel. During this time, fishermen search for small fish.

Nature has shaped Lamalera into a resilient fishing community: men hunt and catch whales, while women sell them from village to village, a practice called fulapanetan. The sea's yield is also taken by women to the mountainous regions. They exchange it for corn, rice, or yams. In the past, women had to walk tens of kilometers. Now, the exchange is easier due to the presence of vehicles. At night, the Lamalera Beach is the roar of the Sawu Sea waves that never cease. Lamalera's youth gathers under the bright moon on the black sandy beach. Amidst the waves, the melody of the lamafa's return is heard. '*Sora taran bala tala lefo rai tai/Tuba bera rai nai ribu lefo gole/Kide ina-fai tuba bera rai nai*', which means a buffalo with ivory horns/Let's move towards the village over there/The whole community longs for your presence/Let's hurry there. The chant accompanies a 15-meter-long whale. It will feed not only Lamalera residents but also those from Lembata.

Barter in Lamalera is done through panetan. In the division of labor, penetang is the main job performed by women. This activity takes place between the coastal Lamalera community and the mountainous surrounding community. The interaction process between several villages, namely coastal villages and mountain villages whose lives are supported by two relatively different environments, has established a complementary economic system. The traded commodities are the sea products from the coast and the agricultural products from the mountainous area. The barter system meets the basic needs of both communities. The mountain community's protein needs are fulfilled by dried fish pieces brought by Lamalera women, while the coastal community's carbohydrate needs are met by the mountain's harvest. Penetang is done by exchanging dried fish pieces for corn, rice, tubers, beans, and vegetables. The barter activity takes place from early morning, usually around 03:00 or 04:00 in the dawn, with women walking to surrounding villages. The exchange is done from house to house. Usually, after they arrive in the neighboring village, they wait for daylight before going to houses to offer their fish.

Unlike penetang, which is done directly to neighboring villages by walking from house to house, barter exchange through barter markets is facilitated by the sub-district government. Two barter markets are held each week. The first barter market is held every Saturday in Wulandoni, and the second barter market is held every Wednesday in Posiwatu village. The Wulandoni barter market is larger and more active than the Posiwatu barter market. At this time, all possible tradable commodities meet. There are fish, salt, and lime owned by fishermen, staple foods from the mountain community's gardens, vegetables, *tuak* (traditional drink), betel nuts, areca nuts, bananas, and many others.

The history of the Wulandoni barter market was initially to facilitate the exchange of goods between the Lamalera coastal village and the neighboring village community. However, over time, this market has become a means for almost all villages in the Wulandoni district to transact goods and engage in buying and selling. Currently, the Wulandoni barter market is managed by the Wulandoni sub-district government. Based on data obtained by researchers in 2014, chaos occurred in the Wulandoni district due to land disputes. This resulted in the traditional market in Wulandoni being moved to Lamalera A village until now. From the research analysis, the researchers can conclude that the Lamalera community has performed mathematical calculations in their barter life. From penetang and this barter, it turns out that there is a mathematical calculation used by the community in their calculations.

For the 3,000 Lamalera residents, whales are a blessing sent to preserve the village's life and cultural heritage, which has been guarded through traditions and customs for generations. Additionally, the community's additional livelihoods include weaving ikat fabric and crafting remnants of whale bones into distinctive souvenirs. Whale bone remnants crafted into unique souvenirs include carvings, sculptures, bracelets, necklaces, or rings. Some parts of the whale's body are burned and made into oil as a village lighting tool or as a memento for travelers. If arriving at the village entrance, guests will be welcomed by an arch made of whale bones. Entering the village gate and walking along the village roads, guests will see various artifacts on the left and right sides of the road. Some of them adorn the residents' houses.

CONCLUSION

Significant Role of the Sea: The sea plays a crucial role as a cultural space for the Lamalera and Lamakera communities. The high level of interaction of these two fishing communities with the sea significantly shapes their civilization. The sea is not only a source of livelihood and cultural identity but also a place to preserve traditions, establish spiritual connections, and maintain environmental sustainability. It serves as the primary location for the whale hunting tradition in both villages. **Cultural Identity and Heritage:** Traditional boats are not merely tools for livelihood but integral to the cultural identity and ancestral heritage of the Lamalera and Lamakera communities. The tradition of whale hunting has been passed down through generations and is conducted in a traditional manner, representing a rich cultural legacy.

The Lamalera people possess a wealth of knowledge about maritime navigation and fishing. They rely on traditional knowledge passed down from generation to generation to determine ship positions, wind directions, as well as the migration patterns and behaviors of whales. This knowledge is a crucial part of their daily lives, strengthening their connection with the sea.

Before embarking on whale hunting, the communities perform prayers and rituals seeking success and safety. The sea is viewed as a blessed source of life, honored through specific ceremonies. The communities demonstrate a high awareness of the importance of conserving nature and the marine ecosystem. They have rules and taboos in whale hunting, such as prohibiting the capture of blue whales and pregnant or mating female whales, reflecting their responsibility for sustaining marine resources and balancing the ecosystem.

The sea serves as a tourist attraction for both villages. The presence of whales, sharks, dolphins, and manta rays attracts tourists interested in the uniqueness and beauty of the underwater world. The development of marine tourism can provide additional economic benefits to the local communities while ensuring environmental protection and sustainability. Lamakera has become a marine tourism destination due to the presence of rare marine animals, including whales, sharks, dolphins, and manta rays.

In summary, the relationship between these communities and the sea is multifaceted, encompassing livelihood, culture, spirituality, and environmental consciousness. The conservation of traditions and the responsible utilization of marine resources are crucial aspects of their way of life, highlighting the intricate connection between the people of Lamalera and Lamakera and their maritime environment.

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