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FOLKLORE AS CULTURAL MEMORY: LOCAL WISDOM AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN PARANG VILLAGE, KARIMUNJAWA

(Cerita Rakyat sebagai Ingatan Budaya: Kearifan Tempatan dan Identiti Budaya di Kampung Parang, Karimunjawa)

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ABSTRACT

Kampung Parang, situated on Parang Island, is a component of the Karimunjawa Islands, positioned more than 200 kilometres north of Java Island. Kampung Parang, despite its geographical isolation from the island, preserves a vibrant culture imbued with folklore, which is integral to the development of local identity and collective memory. This study delves into the forms and historical accounts of folklore preserved by the residents of Kampung Parang and analyses how oral narratives are understood, practiced, and passed down from generation to generation. This study employs a qualitative ethnographic approach, incorporating direct interviews with villagers and comprehensive field observation techniques to investigate sites with cultural significance. This study applies a phenomenological framework to identify important values in folklore, including religious devotion, community solidarity, and ecological awareness. These values are not only preserved via storytelling but also reflected in the community's social practices and spirituality. The study's findings highlight the importance of folklore as a repository of local knowledge and a mechanism for cultural resilience. This study underscores the importance of documenting folklore as a cultural preservation strategy to sustain the locality and identity of Kampung Parang. Preserving cultural manifestations safeguards the meanings and values embedded within local tradition and wisdom, preventing their erosion amidst modernizations.

Keywords: *Folklore, local culture, historical narratives, Karimunjawa, Kampung Parang.*

ABSTRAK

Kampung Parang di Pulau Parang merupakan sebahagian dari Gugusan Kepulauan Karimunjawa yang terletak lebih 200 kilometer di utara Pulau Jawa. Meskipun Kampung Parang secara geografinya terpisah daripada tanah besar, ia masih mengekalkan tradisi yang kaya dengan sejarah cerita rakyat yang menjadi tumpuan dalam pembentukan identiti tempatan dan memori kolektif. Kajian ini meneroka bentuk serta huraian sejarah cerita rakyat yang dipelihara oleh penduduk Kampung Parang serta menganalisis cara naratif lisan difahami, diamalkan dan diwariskan daripada generasi kepada generasi berikutnya. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah etnografi kualitatif yang merangkumi temu bual secara langsung bersama orang kampung dan kaedah pemerhatian lapangan terperinci yang meneliti tapak-tapak yang mempunyai makna budaya. Kajian ini mengaplikasi kerangka fenomenologi untuk mengenal pasti nilai penting dalam cerita rakyat termasuk pengabdian agama, solidariti komuniti dan kesedaran ekologi. Nilai tersebut bukan sahaja dikekalkan melalui penceritaan, tetapi turut terpancar dalam amalan sosial komuniti dan kerohanian. Hasil kajian menegaskan kepentingan cerita rakyat sebagai wadah pengetahuan tempatan dan mekanisme ketahanan budaya. Kajian ini juga menekankan pentingnya pendokumentasian cerita rakyat sebagai satu strategi pemeliharaan budaya untuk mengekalkan lokaliti dan identiti Kampung Parang. Pemeliharaan ekspresi budaya dapat memastikan makna serta nilai yang terkandung di dalamnya terus kekal dalam warisan dan kearifan tempatan tidak disingkirkan dalam arus pemodenan.

Kata kunci: Cerita rakyat, budaya tempatan, naratif sejarah, Karimunjawa, Kampung Parang.

INTRODUCTION

Myths, legends, and folklores in many traditional societies function as more than inherited stories because they serve as vessels of collective memory, moral instruction, and communal identity. Traditional knowledge, values, and practices that are passed down from generation to generation within a community are called local wisdom. Local wisdom or oral tradition can be analysed to convey meaning and how it shapes religious beliefs and practices across different cultures and time periods (Susanto et al., 2023). As oral traditions are transmitted across generations, these cultural narratives enable communities to articulate their worldview, interpret their environment, and preserve inherited values. In this sense, folklore becomes a dynamic cultural mechanism that sustains continuity between the past and the present, allowing local societies to negotiate identity formation within changing social contexts (Afdholi & Murti, 2020).

In scholarly discourse, folklore encompasses traditional beliefs, customs, stories, symbols, and practices that circulate orally from one generation to another (Afdholi & Murti, 2020). This category includes myths, legends, proverbs, songs, ritual narratives, and moral tales which encode ethical norms, ecological knowledge, and social cohesion (Hudhana, 2023). Scholars such as Bakar and Franco (2022) note that folklore acts as a repository of shared memories that reinforces collective identity, while Adiyani et al. (2024) emphasise that these traditions represent intellectual and cultural resources grounded in both physical and symbolic spaces. Together, these perspectives highlight folklore as a narrative system through which communities conceptualise their origins, values, and social order.

The conceptual importance of folklore is further illuminated by cultural memory theory, as formulated by Assmann (2011), which explains that communities preserve continuity by transforming the past into meaningful stories embedded in collective consciousness. Complementing this framework, Dundes (2007) demonstrates that folklore fulfils essential social functions such as moral regulation, social education, entertainment, and community cohesion. Taken together, these theories position folklore not only as a

record of tradition but also as an active cultural process that produces shared identity, transmits values, and sustains generational continuity.

Within this theoretical ground, Indonesia represents one of the world's richest locations of folklore and oral traditions, particularly in small island communities where intergenerational transmission remains central to cultural sustainability. One such community is Parang Village, located on Parang Island within the Karimunjawa sub-district administrative area in Jepara Regency, Central Java Province. The island spans approximately 744 hectares and is situated about 11 nautical miles from the center of the Karimunjawa sub-district, requiring around two hours of travel by fishing boat. Ecologically, the island is surrounded by coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests that sustain local livelihoods, most of which are rooted in fishing and farming (Hidayah et al., 2019). Socially and geographically, Parang Village remains relatively modern but continues to face infrastructure and accessibility limitations (Amalia et al., 2018). This combination of ecological abundance and accessibility limitations provides an environment where oral traditions are still preserved by the local residents.

Despite this cultural richness, academic research on the Karimunjawa region has largely concentrated on marine ecology, coastal livelihoods, and tourism development. Consequently, folklore as cultural memory and local wisdom within small island communities remains insufficiently explored. Existing studies typically do not describe rituals or environmental practices nor examine how folklore functions as a mechanism of cultural memory, how it contributes to identity formation, or how values are embedded within narrative structures. This research gap underscores the need for a focused analysis of Parang's historical folklore through the theoretical frameworks of cultural memory and folklore function.

It also noted that critical issues exist in Parang Village where valuable local wisdom, particularly folktales and oral traditions, risks permanent disappearance due to reliance on verbal transmission alone (Suhardi, 2018). Without proper documentation methods or platforms to preserve and share these cultural assets, the next generations are rapidly losing access to this important heritage. This situation reflects a broader pattern of indigenous knowledge marginalization, where oral-based traditions vanish when their old generation pass away or cease practicing them. Systematic efforts to record and archive these traditions are urgently needed to prevent irreversible cultural loss. The preservation of local wisdom is critical to sustaining cultural sustainability and a sense of place continuity.

These folkloristic studies in Parang Village are important to unravel the meaning of locality and cultural wisdom, which is considered part of national identity. Documenting and analysing different styles of folklore helps us to understand how the people of Parang Village perceive the world and the negotiation of their identity within the changing context of social and cultural transformation (Suryani, 2018). Grounded in these considerations, this study aims to examine the forms and meanings of historical folklore in Parang Village and analyse how these narratives contribute to cultural continuity, local wisdom, and social cohesion. This study seeks to understand how residents interpret their folklore as part of collective cultural memory and how these oral traditions are transmitted across generations within the community. This research therefore investigates how historical folklore is preserved and transmitted in Parang Village and explores the ways in which the community interprets these narratives as expressions of local wisdom and cultural memory.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a focused ethnographic approach, which emphasizes short-term but intensive field engagement rather than long-term ethnography research. This design is appropriate for capturing cultural

practices and spatial-symbolic contexts of folklore sites through direct observation. To complement this, a phenomenological approach was applied to explore the lived experiences and meanings that community elders attach to their historical narratives. This approach enabled the researcher to observe cultural practices, sacred sites, and community interactions within their natural context, while the phenomenological perspective was used to understand how local residents experience, interpret, and internalize folklore as part of their cultural identity and collective memory. Data were collected through fieldwork conducted in Parang Village over a three-week period. The primary sources of data consisted of in-depth interviews with three key community informants who were selected using purposive sampling based on their extensive knowledge of local folklore. The first informant was the Carik (village secretary), who compiled local folktales and served as the main data for historical narratives. The second was the Petinggi (village chief) or the highest administrative leader in Parang Village and the third informant was the Kamituwo, an elder regarded their knowledge represents intergenerational transmission of local wisdom. These individuals were chosen because of their authoritative cultural roles and direct involvement in preserving and narrating the village's oral traditions.

Field observations were carried out at significant cultural and historical sites mentioned in the folklore. Observations focused on the spatial-symbolic meanings of these sites, community engagement with the landscapes and narrative practices connected to them. All observations were documented through field notes and photographic recordings. Data analysis followed a multi-stage thematic analysis procedure. First, interview transcripts and field notes were subjected to data reduction by identifying meaningful data related to narrative structure, cultural symbolism, and community interpretations. Second, these data were organised into emergent themes reflecting key dimensions of folklore, such as religious values, social cohesion, ecological knowledge, and historical consciousness. Third, the themes were interpreted using an analytical framework informed by Assmann's (2011) cultural memory theory, which explains how narratives function as repositories of collective identity, and Dundes (2007) stated that folklore functions as such, which elucidates the social, educational, and normative roles of folklore within communities. Through this integrated analytical lens, the study sought to generate a holistic understanding of how the people of Parang Village construct meaning around their historical folklore and how these narratives contribute to the preservation of local wisdom, cultural continuity, and community identity.

FINDINGS

IDENTIFICATION OF PARANG VILLAGE HISTORICAL FOLKLORIC NARRATIVE

Folklore that can be found in the memories of the people of Parang Village, Karimunjawa, are folktales, legends, and myths that are passed down from generation to generation. The folklore records important events, respected figures in the community, and the interaction between the community and its environment. One of them can be examined from the etymology of "Parang", which has its meaning. According to Suyadi, the Carik of Parang Village, the name Parang does not refer to the name of the weapon Parang.

"The name 'Parang' does not come from the name of the weapon but comes from the Arabic word 'farogho', which means 'empty'. The word 'farogho' when read as 'wasol' (continuous) will sound according to the original 'farogho' and becomes 'farang' when the sentence is read as 'wakof' (stop). Because basically, the word 'farogho' consists of 'pegon fa'ro alif nggoin' letters. This last letter has three dots, so it is read as 'nggo' when in 'wasol' and read as 'ng' during 'wakof'", said Suhardi (2018).

When referring to the etymology, it can be concluded that the naming of 'Parang' here is interpreted as 'empty'. This implies that there is a condition on Parang Island that causes why Parang is interpreted as 'emptiness'. When traced further from the narrative of the local community, it is said that Parang Island in ancient times was an empty, uninhabited island. The condition of Parang Island's emptiness does not indicate that this island has no trace of history at all. However, empty in the etymology of Parang is more interpreted as a sign of historical traces of temporary stopovers for traders and migrants, which makes this island often appear empty. Therefore, the meaning of 'empty' in Parang Island provides a clue to the historical traces of how important this island was as an international shipping route in ancient times.

The historical folklore of Parang Village also has a rich narrative rooted in the figure of Sheikh Subakir. This narrative is connected to the spiritual and historical story of the spread of Islam in the archipelago, as recorded in the Babad Tanah Jawa. One important aspect of this story is its connection to the Mbah Karomah Kunci tomb, which is located on Parang Island and is believed to have played a significant role in this spiritual mission. According to Suyadi, the Carik of Parang Village, this story refers to a version of the narrative of a Turkish expedition that was undertaken to overcome the awesomeness of Java Island and introduce the teachings of Islam. The appearance of the Turkish figure is also an indication that Parang

Island has long been passed by international shipping routes.

According to the version of Babad Tanah Jawa, the second expedition to spread Islam in the archipelago was carried out in 1404 AD under the leadership of Sultan Muhammad I of the Ottoman Caliphate. This expedition consisted of sixty sailing ships that departed for Java. However, in the middle of the journey, only forty ships were able to continue the journey after stopping at Banjarmasin, Kalimantan. The group was then divided into two groups with different destinations. The first group was directed to the eastern region of Java Island and stopped at Bawean Island before continuing to Gresik and Tuban. Meanwhile, the second group headed south and chose Parang Island as a transit point before landing in Jepara, Central Java.

Sheikh Subakir led the second expedition carrying nine black stones that had been subjected to some kind of ritual by the clerics. These stones were thought to possess spiritual abilities that may counteract Java Island's magnificence, which was seen to be a barrier to the propagation of Islam. When approaching Parang Island, one of the black stones was thrown from a distance towards the north of the island. The stone eventually fell at a location now known as Watu Gandul. The name is taken from the condition of the stone which, according to the story, used to hang above the ground. The fall of this black stone became a spiritual marker that directed the group to anchor at Parang Island. This black stone is also thought to be present in the Watu Gandul site, which is close to Batu Hitam Beach.

Figure 1

Location of Batu Hitam Beach that Mentioned in Folklore



The expedition ships anchored in the Key Lagoon following the falling of the black stone. After that, the entire group landed at Batu Merah Beach. The distinctive red rocks that are unique to this seashore are not found anywhere else. Rifai Kamituwo of Parang Village claims that the red hue originates from the spiritual energy found in red pomegranate stones. It is also thought that spiritual remnants of the Prophet Khidir might be found in Batu Merah Beach. As a result, Batu Merah Beach is regarded by the locals as one of their sacred and historical sites. A portion of the group led by Mbah Karomah Kunci or Mbah Keramat Kunci chose to remain on Parang Island after landing. Other groups, meanwhile, kept travelling to Java Island to install additional black stones in designated spots.

Figure 2

Watu Gandul's Location is Noted in the Local Folklore. The Rock is Called Watu Gandul, or Hanging Stone, since it Does not Completely Contact the Earth



The presence of Mbah Karomah Kunci and her disciples on Parang Island created a strong connection between the island and spiritual missions on Java. Mbah Karomah Kunci and his disciples lived in the area now known as Pekuncen. The name comes from their role as guardians of the black stone that became a spiritual medium to neutralise the awesomeness of Java Island. The identity of Mbah Karomah Kunci cannot be fully ascertained, but her role in maintaining the spiritual balance of Java Island is immortalised through traditions and folklore that have been passed down from generation to generation. The village government still maintains the tomb of Mbah Karomah Kunci on Parang Island. The site serves as a pilgrimage destination for those who are familiar with the story of Mbah Karomah.

The folklore related to Mbah Karomah Kunci not only gives Parang Island a deep spiritual meaning but also emphasises its role as a place that enhances the harmony of Java Island. The folklore related to Mbah Karomah Kunci not only gives Parang Island a deep spiritual meaning but also emphasises its role as a place that enhances the harmony of Java Island. Parang Island, as part of Karimunjawa, has a close connection to the meaning of the name "Karimunjawa", which is believed to be a gift to Java Island. The story reinforces Parang Island's position as a centre of spiritual and historical refinement, which allowed Java Island to develop safely and peacefully. The narrative connects Parang Island to a broader dimension as if to suggest that it is not only a place of transit but also an important symbol in the historical journey of the spread of Islam in the archipelago.

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE LOCAL WISDOM IN PARANG FOLKLORE

The etymology of Parang, the traditions of Watu Gandul, Batu Merah Beach, Laguna Kunci, and the main character Mbah Karomah Kunci are all part of Parang Village's historical mythology. Religion, as well as the social and ecological aspects of the local community, serve as a medium through which the community constructs and reflects its identity. This folktale's central theme is religiosity. Sheikh Subakir is depicted graphically as a spiritual leader whose responsibility was to carry out his Islamic purpose. This data comes from the results. According to Sehandi and Maju (2022), traditional societies' cultural formation frequently revolves around the importance of religion. Because of this, Parang Island's historical folklore is more than just local legends; it plays a significant role in laying Java Island's spiritual foundation. This demonstrates Parang Island's causal significance to the cultural and historical legacy of the archipelago. The folklore of the Parang Village, characterised by Sheikh Subakir as well as the grave of Mbah Karomah Kunci, retain historical values as well as religiosity, which are still revered.

Figure 3

The Tomb of Mbah Karomah Kunci and His Wife as Mentioned in the Local Folklore



Analysing the origin story of Parang's name is also quite fascinating. As previously noted, the derivation of the word Parang offers significant insights into the social dynamics and history of Parang Island. In addition to describing the island's physical state, which was formerly uninhabited, the word "empty" also refers to its function as a transitory stopover for traders and sailors on international maritime routes. This story is supported by the islanders' findings of shipwrecks, Chinese ceramics, earthenware, and trade artefacts around Parang Island. This implies that the island once served as a significant hub for the marine trade of Nusantara. According to Ramiyati et al. (2022), folklore often represents a community's relationship with its geographical area and history. In the case of Parang, this folklore is evidence of the community's awareness of their island's strategic role in shipping history. Therefore, Parang's etymological folklore reveals the social structure of a community that is closely connected to global maritime dynamics. As a result, Parang's folklore is a crucial source for comprehending the island's historical strategic position and its current impact on people's lives.

Figure 4

Samples of Historical Artefacts Found by the Locals



Due to its advantageous location on international shipping channels, Parang Island became a popular destination for sailors and traders. According to their folktales, this enhanced the community's ties to the area and demonstrated an understanding of the significance of their island's strategic location. The Parang community's considerable mobility as migrants and nomads is reflected in this etymological story, which is supported by archaeological discoveries. Through their folklore, the people of Parang Village construct a story that connects their past and present identities. Folklore also serve as a standard for assessing how aware people are of their surroundings (Nur, 2019). Therefore, this etymological explanation provides a basis for understanding how the people of Parang Village built their historical and ecological consciousness. Emptiness is not only a physical condition, but also a symbol of flexibility and openness that is the foundation of the Parang community in the face of high mobility. This mobility not only shows the community's openness to outside influences but also emphasises their resilience in maintaining traditions in the midst of change. This historical awareness is not only understood as a legacy of the past but also functions as a shaping element of the Parang community's cultural identity. The mobility that is part of their history continues to be reflected in the community's tradition of being open to newcomers while maintaining their locality values.

The interconnected sacred sites of Watu Gandul and Pantai Batu Merah in Parang Village exemplify the community's deep socio-ecological relationship with their environment. Local cosmology attributes spiritual significance to these landscapes. Pantai Batu Merah is venerated as containing the metaphysical essence of Prophet Khidir, while Watu Gandul is regarded as possessing supernatural properties. These conceptions demonstrate how indigenous communities conceptualise physical geography not merely as terrain, but as sacred embodiments of cultural belief systems. This phenomenon illustrates the traditional integration of ecological spaces with spiritual and cultural frameworks. Mulyati et al. (2024), have also reinforced this by pointing out the fact that spiritual relationships with nature usually form part of the identity of local communities.

Figure 5

The Location of Batu Merah Beach, Believed by the Locals to be a Spiritual Place. This Fact is also Mentioned in the Local Folklore.



Preserving variants of the folklore of Parang Village is important for passing down to the younger generation what links them to their cultural roots. In this instance, folklore is a vehicle of group memory, preserving the cohesion of the culture. It is also heightened by the fact that reviews of the folklore highlight Parang Village's role within a larger cultural milieu. A sense of deep connection with the civilisation of Java is brought to life in the narrative that Parang Island is the bridge to the harmony of Java. This implies that the people of Parang Village are also aware of which part they play as a local community as well as a part of the broader history of the archipelago. According to the research carried out by Januardi et al. (2024), this perspective is relevant to the results of local cultural narratives that often give communities a strong sense of pride and historical meaning.

As such, Parang Village folklore is not only a representation of the locals' values but also a way of facilitating the preservation of cultural identity. The community uses these stories to foster family connection and intimacy, maintain cohesion, and stay in sync with nature. This folklore serves well as a basis for maintaining cultural identity in the modern context of the Parang Village when faced with the social reality of the village. Social integration is an important issue that has to be practiced to make the community feel harmonious, especially given the diverse background of its members, particularly the majority who are migrants and individuals from overseas. In this regard, folklore represents a powerful tool to make it possible to create a common identity which all social layers can identify with.

FOLKLORE ANALYSIS BASED ON ASSMANN AND DUNDES

The analysis of folklore in Parang Village can be strengthened by drawing on Jan Assmann's cultural memory theory and Alan Dundes' conception of folklore as cultural evidence. Assmann explains that collective memory is not merely psychological but socially conditioned through shared symbols, narratives, and practices that construct long-term cultural identity. It distinguishes between communicative memory, which circulates informally through everyday oral exchange, and cultural memory, which is institutionalised in symbolic forms such as rituals, sacred narratives, monuments, and inherited traditions that can endure for centuries (Assmann, 2011). Cultural memory also provides a society with a stable sense of origin and identity by selecting, transmitting, and framing particular narratives. Dundes complements

this perspective by arguing that folklore functions as a cultural “mirror” that reflects the underlying values and social structures of those people who produce it (Dundes, 2007). From this view, folklore is not a relic of the past but a living archive that captures cultural meanings embedded in daily practices.

Viewed within Assmann’s framework, the narrative elements of folklore in Parang Village embody the mechanisms through which cultural memory is produced, stabilised, and transmitted. The legend of Watu Gandul is not merely a story about a stone suspended on a cliff but a symbolic site of memory that encodes ancestral presence and territorial identity. In these folklore narratives, Watu Gandul is frequently associated with the early settlement of Parang and with moral reminders about humility and respect for nature. Because villagers regularly reference the site in rituals and storytelling, it functions as a “tangible archive” that organises collective understandings of ancestry, place, and cosmological order. Likewise, the figure of Mbah Karomah Kunci operates as a cultural memory bearer whose spiritual authority is continually reaffirmed through stories of his piety, miraculous abilities, and role as the protector of Parang Village. These narratives do not simply record his biography but transform him into a long-term elder figure who anchors the community’s religious identity and moral worldview. Batu Merah performs a similar role by materialising ecological memories. This place and associated tales about past natural events function as cues that remind the community of the sanctity of coastal zones, the dangers of environmental transgression, and the dependence of human life on marine ecosystems. Because these stories are ritually retold, associated with sacred sites, and transmitted across generations, they no longer operate as short-term communicative memories but have crystallised into durable cultural memories that structure how the community interprets its past and locates itself within a larger historical and ecological continuum.

The social functions embedded in these narratives closely align with Dundes’ view of folklore as a tool for moral and social regulation. The spiritual powers attributed to Mbah Karomah Kunci reinforce ethical norms and guide expected behaviours in the community. Magic tales surrounding Batu Merah operate as informal mechanisms of social control that define appropriate conduct and articulate communal boundaries. It also can be stated as maritime mythology that teaches ecological responsibility by framing environmental stewardship within moral and cosmological logic. Oral traditions explaining the origins of Parang Island also foster solidarity by placing individuals within a shared historical imagination, reinforcing social cohesion and collective belonging. These functional elements demonstrate that folklore is actively shaping behaviour, values, and community life rather than serving as passive entertainment.

These theoretical perspectives become even clearer when viewed alongside the broader cultural practices of Parang Village, where folklore is deeply interwoven with ritual performance, customary practices, and communal celebrations. Folklore plays an important role in shaping local identity because oral traditions, performances, and inherited customs are passed down from generation to generation to maintain cultural continuity (Aji, 12 Mac 2022). These traditions involve multiple elements of society and reflect the spirit of *gotong royong* and community cohesiveness in commemorating culturally significant moments. Such communal participation reinforces social ties and nurtures a sense of belonging, ensuring that folklore remains embedded in daily life even under the pressures of globalisation.

In conclusion, the folklore of Parang Village demonstrates the dual function of cultural memory and social regulation as articulated by Assmann and Dundes. Assmann’s framework elucidates the role of particular narratives and sacred sites as enduring cultural anchors that sustain communal identity, whereas Dundes’s perspective illustrates how these narratives persist in fulfilling vital social functions, including moral guidance, ecological stewardship, and collective cohesion. Together, these perspectives reveal that folklore in Parang Village is not merely a set of inherited stories but a living system of cultural knowledge that shapes identity, strengthens social bonds, and supports the continuity of local wisdom across generations.

The contemporary relevance of folklore is also visible in emerging efforts to preserve local wisdom through cultural-based tourism. Legends, sacred sites, and unique cultural expressions have become attractions that hold strong potential for sustainable tourism development in Parang Village. The maritime and agrarian traditions of the community offer valuable opportunities to promote heritage-orientated tourism, although such initiatives must be carefully managed to avoid the commodification or distortion of cultural values (Suryawan, 2018). Ensuring the meaningful participation of local communities in tourism development helps maintain cultural authenticity and strengthens their role as custodians of inherited traditions. Educational programs and public awareness initiatives also contribute to preserving cultural memory. Encouraging younger generations to appreciate local traditions through school curricula, cultural festivals, and intergenerational storytelling can foster pride and deepen their connection to local wisdom (Rahmawati, 2020) and the social life that is manifested through local practices that have become deeply ingrained in everyday living (Yusoff, 2023). These efforts highlight that historical folklore remains one of the most important forms of cultural knowledge in Parang Village.

CONCLUSION

This research finds that the folklore of Parang Island forms comprises several stories. The story of the origin of the name Parang, the history of the voyage of Sheikh Subakir, and the landing of Mbah Karomah Kunci are among the stories on the Parang Island. Folklore related to the historical folklore of Parang Village is analysed to highlight the fact that these folktales serve as a powerful mainstay of the cultural identity of people in Parang Village. The narratives in folklore are more than just the carriers of religiosity, social structure, and ecological intactness; they are also the glue, the bond, that holds the community together in its cultural past. This folklore serves as a means to preserve the viability of cultural identity among the social kin within the community. This folklore creates a narrative that bridges their past and their current identity. This narrative then serves as a foundation for the community to face the challenges of modernisation while maintaining their cultural roots. As such, the findings of this study help record folklore as a tool to preserve the cultural locality and identity of the people of Parang Village. The written documentation of folklore ensures that subsequent generations do not forget the values preserved by it.

This research also carries important implications for stakeholders in Parang Village, calling for collaborative efforts to ensure that the community's cultural memory remains vibrant and eternal. Local leaders can use this documentation to reinforce intergenerational storytelling and embed folkloric values within communal rituals and seasonal events, thereby keeping symbolic narratives socially alive. Educators can strengthen cultural literacy by integrating local folklore into formal and informal learning, cultivating pride, ecological awareness, and historical consciousness among younger generations. For local government, the results highlight the urgency of supporting cultural preservation initiatives that safeguard sacred narratives while promoting heritage-based tourism in ways that are respectful, community-centred, and free from harmful commodification. Future research should advance these efforts through the digitisation of folklore via community-based audio archives, online repositories, and interactive storytelling platforms to broaden access and engage youth more meaningfully. Comparative studies across other villages in Karimunjawa or similar small-island communities would further illuminate how cultural memory operates in diverse ecological and social contexts. Together, these recommendations form a strategic pathway to strengthen cultural resilience and ensure the long-term sustainability of local wisdom in maritime communities.

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Data supporting this research are available in this paper.

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