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MAPPING OF ANGEL SITES: Optimization Of Folklore In Field Of Tourism In East Java

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Abstract

Indonesia has abundant natural and cultural potential. This potential can be used as a selling point in the field of tourism, but further development of culture-based tourism is needed. Folklore is one of the cultures that exists in Indonesia. This article discusses the mapping of several fairy-based tourism sites and how the narrative of fairies in East Java can be optimally used in tourism activities. This study uses a qualitative research method with a multi-location approach. The multi-location approach is used to find more accurate data because there are more than one tourist attractions in East Java that are identical to the fairy narrative. Based on the research results, it was found that fairy narratives are not only used for promoting tourist destinations but also for preserving the surrounding nature. This is reflected in several prohibitions found in some tourist destinations. These prohibitions are conveyed by several local residents living around the tourist destinations. Indirectly, these various prohibitions aim to preserve nature.

Keywords: Angels, Folklore, Nature, Tourism

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism has become a crucial sector in driving the economy and preserving local culture in various regions, including Java. Initially, the tourism sector focused more on offering physical beauty and infrastructure, but global competition among tourist destinations has led to a significant paradigm shift (Suyasa & Anggratyas, 2025). Tourism destinations no longer merely sell natural beauty or facilities, but also the experiences and meanings they offer to tourists (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). This, in turn, leads to the concept of experiential tourism, where visitors not only see but also experience and understand the cultural values behind the destinations they visit (Cohen, 1988).

A paradigm shift amidst increasingly fierce global competition has led many tourism destinations to offer similar products. However, to survive and excel, a destination needs something unique and authentic to become a selling point. While unique features like price and infrastructure are easy to imitate, local culture and narratives possess a uniqueness that is difficult to match. Here, folklore emerges as the soul of a tourist destination. Folklore encompasses myths, legends, and fairy tales, crystallizing the values and beliefs of a local community that have been rooted for centuries (Bruner, 2005; Sariono, 2013).

Using folklore as a promotional strategy for tourism destinations is a valuable step because it can also contribute to local cultural preservation. When folklore is introduced to a wider audience, both through domestic and international tourists, it leads to increased awareness and appreciation of oral culture. This activity not only supports the local economy through increased tourism but also helps preserve cultural heritage that may be endangered (Suhadak, 2024).

The story about angels has many versions, Arisah (2015) explains that stories about angels have spread throughout Indonesia. Based on several previous studies, there are 26 fairy tales in various ethnic groups in the archipelago, such as: (1) "Malem Dewa", a folk tale from the Aceh and Gayo regions, (2) "Putri Benua", a folk tale from the Aceh and Gayo regions, (3) "Tupai Malimdewa", a folk tale from the South Aceh region, (4) "Si Boru Leang Nagurasta", a folk tale from the North Sumatra and Toba Batak regions, (5) "Mambang Linau", a folk tale from the Riau region, (6) "Sidang Belawan", a folk tale from the Lampung region, (7) "Sumur Tujuh", a folk tale from the West Java and Banten regions, (8) "Jaka Tarub", a folk tale from the Central Java region, (9) "Aryo Menak Marries a Fairy", a folk tale from the East Java and Madura regions (10) "Three Orphans", a folk tale from the Bali region, (11) "Rajapala", a folk tale from the Bali region, (12) "Silang Gading", a folk tale from the Central Kalimantan region, (13) "Telaga Bidadari", a folk tale South Kalimantan Region, (14) "Mamanua", Folk Tale of North Sulawesi, Minahasa, (15) "Mamanua and Wulansendow", Folk Tale of North Sulawesi, Manado, (16) "The First Man in the Talaud Islands", Folk Tale of North Sulawesi, Sangir Talaud, (17) "Gumansalangi", Folk Tale of North Sulawesi, Sangir Talaud, (18) "Tula-Tulano Ratono Fitu Ghulu Bidadari", Folk Tale of Southeast Sulawesi, (19) "Oheo", Story 20) "Princess Satarina", Folk Tale of Southeast Sulawesi, Walio, (21) "Kacoq Parukiq", Folk Tale of South Sulawesi, Mandar, (22) "Polo Padang", Folk Tale of South Sulawesi, Toraja, (23) "The Man Who Married the Princess from Heaven", Folk Tale of Central Sulawesi, (24) "Meraksamana and Siraiman", Folk Tale of Irian Jaya, (25) "The Youngest Princess from the Lake", Papuan Regional Folk Tale, "Wamena", (26) "Princess of Heaven", Papuan Regional Folk Tale, Ekagi. (Ahmadi, 2011; Rasyid, 2014; Atisah; 2015).

Jaka Tarub and the 7 Angels is a famous story in Java, this story tells of a young man known as Jaka Tarub, where he found a group of angels bathing in a pool (sendang) while chasing a dove. Jaka Tarub then deliberately took one of the angels' scarves which caused one of the angels to be unable to return to heaven (Purba, et al, 2022). The story of Jaka Tarub and the 7 angels itself has more or less been adapted as a supporting narrative for several tourist destinations in East Java

such as: Srambang Park, Ngawi; Jaka Tarub Park, Tuban; Jaka Tarub Spring, Ngawi; 7 Angel Waterfall, Jember; Banyu Biru, Malang.

However, the adaptation process and its success have not been critically examined in terms of how the use of folklore in tourism activities relates to water conservation. Previous studies have only described the important values contained in the Bidadari story. Therefore, this study attempts to map several tourist destinations that use narratives about angels, such as the legend of Jaka Tarub, and to understand the economic and cultural dynamics behind the development of tourism based on folklore and its usefulness in preserving nature for sustainable tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Folklore

Folklore has undergone a significant paradigm shift. Initially, folklore was considered merely a traditional cultural material passed down orally, with a focus on orality, tradition, and anonymity. Today, folklore continues to change and is recreated, adapted, and given new meanings in keeping with the dynamics of the times (Oring, 2021). Tan & Tan (2023) explain that this shift is a shift from informative to performative and emotional, thus shaping the identity of places and tourist destinations. Schachtner (2020) also explains that conveying information that contains emotional elements, whether through storytelling style, word choice, or gestures, has the power to create a psychological connection between tourists and the places they visit.

In the context of the creative economy, folklore experiences multidimensional commodification. There is a concept called experiential folklore, this concept explains the outward conveyance of elements in a folklore so that it can be adapted into a deliberate and structured experience for consumption, whether for tourism, education, or entertainment purposes (Hunter & Rachel, 2023). The function of folklore in tourism itself is as an attraction and uniqueness, which provides a distinctive character and added value to a tourist destination so that it differs from other tourist destinations. The use of folklore in the world of tourism also helps activities to preserve intangible cultural heritage, teaches moral values and local wisdom to the community, and becomes an inspiration in the development of tourist villages, cultural festivals, and so on.

Commodification of culture

The concept of commodification stems from Marx's analysis of the transformation of value. In his book, *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács (1971) developed the concept of reification (*verdinglichung*), where not only goods become commodities but also human consciousness itself. This provides us with a picture of the instrumental rationality of capitalism that has spread to all aspects of human life, transforming quality into quantity and subjective experience into measurable data.

Commodification is indeed considered a bad thing, because sometimes it changes pure cultural elements into a commodity that can be traded to tourists, but if good regulations are implemented, commodification becomes an opportunity that can be utilized by the community for economic interests. Giiespie (1996) explains that folklore is not only entertainment, but also an event to introduce traditional culture in the region, he also explains that the use of folklore in tourism activities is not only to gain profit but also a sense of pride and a search for validation of culture and art.

Several previous studies have also shown that cultural commodification does not always have negative impacts. Nurhadi et al. (2022) in their research on the Osing community in

Banyuwangi demonstrated that the process of cultural commodification can maintain collective values as long as it involves the local community and does not alter the substance of the ritual. Cultural commodification not only provides economic benefits but also fosters cultural identity and renews pride in their own culture. This sense of pride fosters a sense of preservation of both the culture and the natural setting in which the story takes place.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a multi-site study. Cresswell (2014) explains that using a qualitative approach is suitable for understanding a phenomenon in depth in a natural context. This study aims to examine how local communities utilize the story of Jaka Tarub and the 7 Angels in the context of tourism destination development. Therefore, exploration activities are conducted holistically. Data collection in this study uses data triangulation to ensure data validity with three techniques: observation, interviews, and supporting literature review.

This research employed a multi-location study, requiring precise identification of tourist destinations for data collection. Therefore, we used an internet search approach for several tourist locations in East Java associated with the narratives "Bidadari" and "Jaka Tarub and the 7 Bidadari" to narrow the search area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tourist Destination Mapping

Based on the research conducted, several tourist destinations were found spread throughout East Java. The various tourist destinations found are identical to the use of the narrative "bidadari" & "Jaka tarub & 7 Bidadari". These tourist destinations also share similar characteristics: they are always related to water. Some locations are at quite high elevations because they are related to waterfalls, which are associated with mountain slopes. Some locations are also related to pools (sendang) used as public baths.

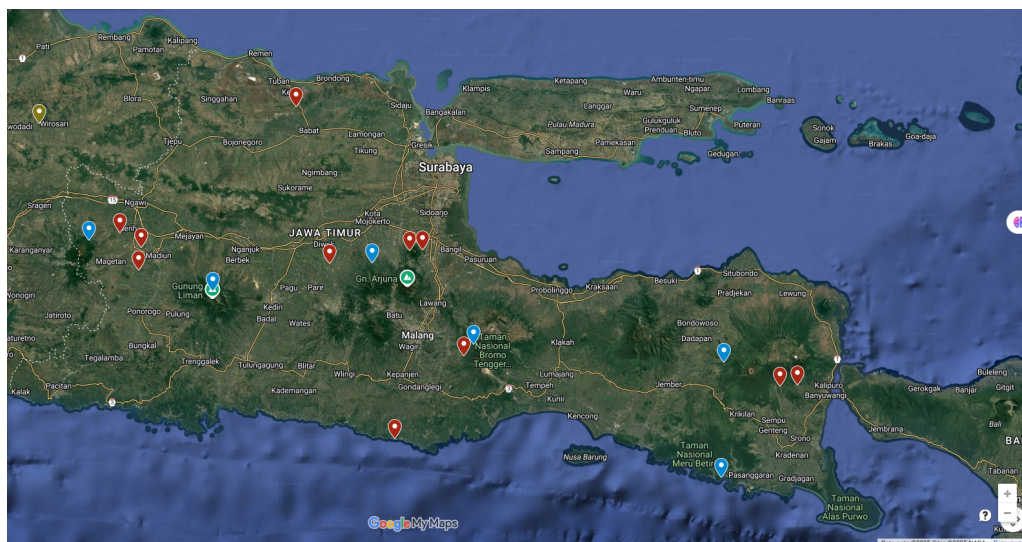


Figure 1. Map of Tourist Destination Distribution with Fairy Tale Narration

The various tourist destinations in picture 1 are divided into 2, namely: (1) bathing pools (sendang) or springs with red markers such as Sendang Jaka Tarub (Tuban), Jaka Tarub Park (Ngawi), Simbatan Temple (Madiun), Sendang Kamal (Madiun), Patirtaan Jolotundo (Mojokerto), Sumberbeji Bathing Pool and Belahan Temple (Pasuruan), Sendang Seruni and Rowo Bayu

(Banyuwangi), Banyu Biru and Sumur Pitu (Malang) and (2) waterfalls with blue markers such as Srambang Park (Ngawi), Sedudo Waterfall (Nganjuk). 7 Angel Waterfall (Mojokerto), 7 Angel Waterfall (Jember), Coban Bidadari (Malang) and Teluk Hijau Waterfall (Banyuwangi).

Various tourist destinations that have been visited have almost similar stories such as the place being a bathing place for angels, a place of meditation for Jaka Tarub and a meeting place for Jaka Tarub and 7 angels. Local residents during interviews also said the same, in fact many of them provided information that the water sources originating from the tourist destinations of Banyu Biru, Sumur Pitu, Jolotundo, Sendang Seruni have properties to rejuvenate the skin and are beneficial for health because angels in ancient times once bathed in these places. Not only that, the story of the benefits of this water is also quite heard in other areas, there are several visitors come to the location of Sumur Pitu while bringing containers to collect water from the location which they will use to take it home where they will use it for bathing, drinking or other health activities. Other locations such as Srambang Park and Jaka Tarub Park have similarities, namely that people believe that this is where Jaka Tarub and the goddess Nawang Wulan met, but for the Jaka Tarub Park destination itself, there is a difference where the manifestation of this angel is likened to having bird-like feet, not as a woman with a beautiful face.

Other locations, such as the 7 Bidadari Waterfall (Mojokerto) and Coban Bidadari (Malang), are quite remote, requiring tourists to climb and descend a mountain slope to reach them. Locals also say that the figure of a beautiful woman bathing at the waterfall is sometimes seen, but when approached, she disappears as if returning to the heavens.

Some tourist destinations also try to maintain a mystical feel within their attractions. Some have added structures like gates and even shrines to maintain their mystical value.



Figure 2. Pendopo for meditation at one of the tourist destinations

Through field observations, we can see several forms of cultural commodification that support each tourist attraction. Some attractions use narratives about angels, the meeting place of Jaka Tarub, the benefits of the water, and even a statue at Srambang Park to symbolize the location's association with the story of Jaka and the seven angels.

Form	Examples of Manifestations in the Field	Original Cultural Values	Exchange rate
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Room	Determination of Place Names	Sacred places in narrative	Entrance ticket, visual attraction
Symbolic	Making Statues	The story of the meeting of Jaka Tarub and 7 Angels	Visual appeal
Material	Water	Objects in the narrative story	Material attraction

Table 1. Commodification Form Matrix

Folklore as a water conservation effort in tourism activities

Integrating folklore into tourism marketing and promotion strategies is nothing new. This has been the case for several years, as modern travelers increasingly seek authentic and meaningful experiences. East Java, with its rich culture and abundant folklore, has great potential to attract tourists through this approach.

The story of Jaka Tarub and the Seven Angels, when read by the general public, focuses on two things: the angels and the bathing place. This is the focus for those who enjoy the story, namely the general public. Angels are creatures likened to beautiful women in several other folk tales. Jung, as quoted by Ahmadi (2011), uses the term archetype to name personal ideas that psychologically represent dreams and folk tales created by the collective unconscious. In the archetype there are concepts of archetypal figures, archetypal situations, archetypal objects, and archetypal images.

An archetypal figure is a representation of a character in a folktale. This character can be a hero, a father, a mother, a child, or other characters. The archetypal situation is related to the events that occur in the story, while the archetypal situation is what appears through the process of birth, meeting, separation, and so on. The archetypal image is a vague symbolism in the folktale, usually open to multiple interpretations.

In the story of Jaka Tarub and the Seven Angels, there is an archetypal figure, the angel. Angels themselves are figures found throughout the world, with the same story: beautiful women who come from heaven and descend to earth simply to bathe.

The incident of angels descending to earth simply to bathe can be interpreted as a beautiful presence found in pools, springs, and waterfalls, something that heaven lacks. This depicts the earth as a beautiful place, even to the point that its beauty compels angels to bathe in the water sources found on earth. This suggests that "beauty" is always associated with female angels, as men (gods) are perceived as masculine, while bathing itself is perceived as feminine.

Water, as an archetypal object, has purifying characteristics. In various traditions, water is used as a means of self-purification. Historically, water has been viewed as a source of life, with humans, from prehistoric times to other ancient civilizations, establishing settlements near springs or flowing water sources such as rivers. In Javanese society, water is also used in the process of self-purification and is also associated with angels. Irmawati (2013) explains that the siraman ceremony is performed by women because it is said that angels will descend upon them to rejoice. The bride-to-be performs the siraman ceremony to become as beautiful as an angel.

Water, as an archetypal object, is also seen as something with a dualism: it has benefits for life but on the other hand, it can be very detrimental. The benefits of water in stories related to angels are always identified with bringing health and blessings. This is clearly seen in several

tourist destinations such as the Pitu Well, where tourists not only visit to bathe and take home water. Local residents also use the water from the Pitu Well for daily consumption activities and commercial activities such as making tea, coffee, and noodles to sell to tourists.

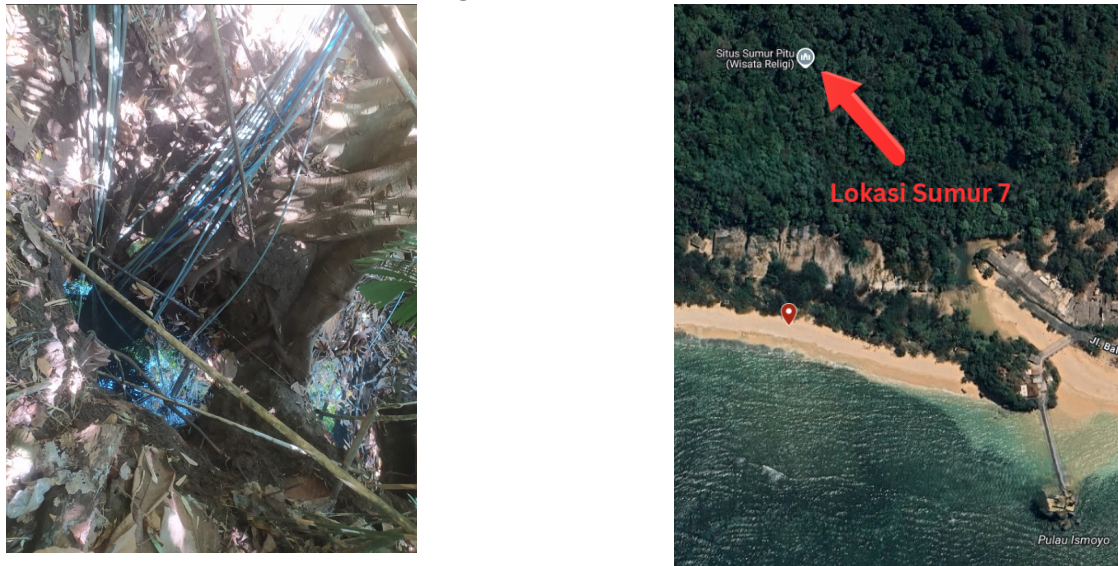


Figure 3. Pipes found in the spring water and Location of sumur pitu

Tourist destinations such as Srambang Park are also trying to do something similar, but there is a difference, in that the water features at these tourist attractions are used for bathing and swimming. Srambang Park also wants to emphasise that the place is synonymous with the narrative of Jaka Tarub and the Seven Angels, as there is a statue of Jaka Tarub and the Seven Angels, indicating that this place was once the setting for the story of Jaka Tarub and the Seven Angels. The development of Srambang Park itself was not only carried out by the village government but also received support from the city government. This shows that the city government has a positive response to the commodification of the fairy tale narrative in the tourism sector.

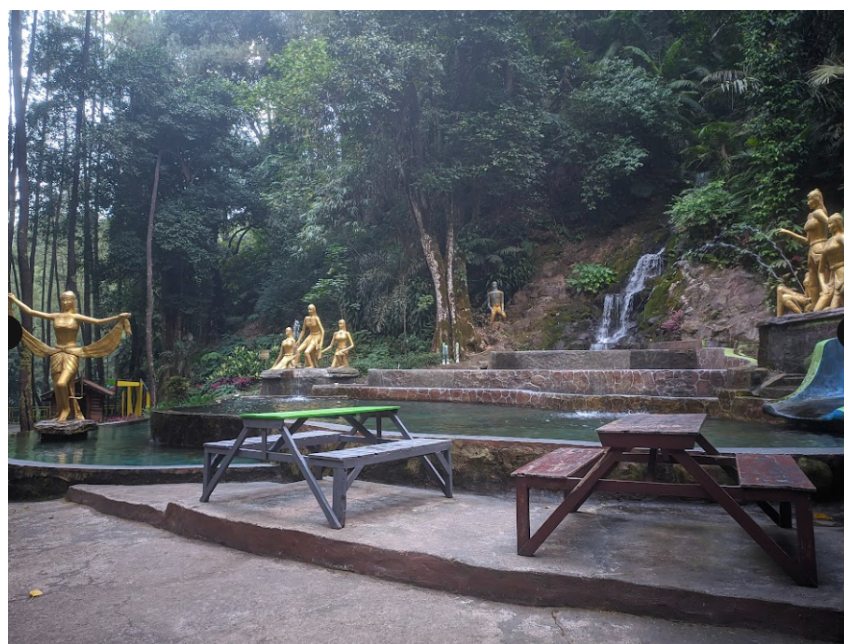


Figure 4. Statue of Jaka Tarub and 7 angels

The relationship between fairies, Mandi, and water in various folklore stories can serve as a means of water resource conservation. Several tourist destinations also feature narratives that relate contexts such as the need for wise water use to ensure its sustainability. This aligns with Nuraini's (2015) explanation, which explains that myths, prohibitions, and taboos can be utilized to preserve the environment.

CONCLUSION

Folklore about fairy tales has been successfully commodified into an economically viable tourism product and experience. Commodification is often dominated by tourism development agendas and has had dual consequences, such as revitalizing folklore while shifting its meaning from the sacred to the commercial. However, observations have also shown that this commodification process does not always have negative impacts. The commodification of fairy narratives in several tourist attractions in East Java was initially intended to attract tourists and further promote nature tourism. However, upon closer examination, the fairy narratives in these destinations also contain prohibitions and advice that restrict visitors from engaging in activities deemed detrimental to the tourist attraction.

The use of folklore narratives in water-based tourism activities can also be in line with Undang-Undang Nomor 17 Tahun 2019 about concerning Water Resources, which contains efforts to maintain the existence and sustainability of the condition, nature, and function of water resources so that they are always available in sufficient quantity and quality to meet the needs of living things, both now and in the future. This certainly suggests that folklore can not only be used to attract tourists, but the creation of folklore about angels by ancestors themselves is also an effort to maintain environmental sustainability and sustainable tourism activities.

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