

Exploring Local Folklore and Its Contribution to Cultural Tourism

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Abstract

Gorontalo city has a number of potential tourist attractions worth developing. Lahilote's footprints, well-known as a popular folklore of Gorontalo people, is one of the cultural tourism in Gorontalo city. Consequently, the local wisdom embedded in the attraction needs to be explored to promote tourism of Gorontalo. This is also to preserve the cultural heritage of the story from being extinct. This study aims at exploring the life of Gorontalo people to promote the cultural tourism. It employed folklore approach and the data collection involved field survey and interviews. The results report that the footprints were from a man named Lahilote. The legend has been passed as a cultural heritage with its socio-cultural aspects of Gorontalo people. In addition, the life of Lahilote is rich of values, such as historical, social, cultural, and educational values.

Keywords: culture, folklore, local wisdom, tourism.

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Introduction

Tourism site is important to be developed by application of local community empowerment as the tourism practitioners. In general, there are several categories of tourism potentials, natural tourism, historical tourism, marine tourism, cultural tourism, and religious tourism that can be integrated into a tourism site. There are also man-made and natural tourism sites. This following type of tourism is naturally created and preserved by the community and often has historical elements in it, such as legend. This natural tourism site is often named based on the legend behind the site.

Soekadijo (2000) mentions that tourism potential as a tourism capital could be developed into a tourist attraction where the capital could be found in situ or ex-situ. In comparison to man-made tourism, the natural tourism sites are often neglected and have not been adequately managed. This was due to the limited information related to cultural and historical elements in the location provided. Hence, this becomes an obstacle in attracting more tourists to visit the site.

There are many tourist sites in Gorontalo city named after the figures in folktale that are familiar to the people of Gorontalo. One of these places is the Lahilote site. Lahilote folktale is available almost in every area in Gorontalo, in their versions. Tuloli (1999) has found at least 20 versions of the Lahilote folklore.

In Gorontalo city itself, places and activities have been named with this legend, in addition to Lahilote foot print site in Pohe village. There is a Lahilote swimming pool, Lahilote football club, and art and culture club named Lahilote. This indicates that this folktale is not just a story, but also it has been incorporated into the lives and culture of the Gorontalo community. According to Djamaris (1993), a folktale is a type of living stories which have been passed down for generations and well-known among the society. The folktale is a living story because it has been passed down orally and in written for generations. Dananjaja (1998) and Barried (1994) propose another opinion that folk tale is part of folklore. In his other writing, Danandjaja (1998) defines folklore as the collective culture of a region which has been spread and passed down for generations, among the collectiveness of this folktale that it has various versions either orally or in gesture or another token of remembrance.

Lahilote folktale is part of the Gorontalo folktale due to its spread and told in the Indonesian language. Due to the way this story has been passed down for generations orally, this folk tale has become part of oral literature. Knowing and preserving this folktale is part of the cultural preservation. Cultural preservation is the responsibility of the people where the culture is found. Therefore, there is a need to raise awareness on preservation of this culture as part of the cultural heritage of our country.

Community's socio-cultural lives need to be investigated from the historical aspects or the legend of a site formation, including the legend of Lahilote footprint for the local people as well as tourists to know. Sociocultural lives in general influence the tourists which will finally bring them to visit the cultural site (Correia *et al.*, 2011). Cultural tourism is a tool to integrate various concepts in tourism study and to holistic, flexible, and reflective view on tourism (Canavan 2016). Correia *et al.*, (2011) describe that cultural attitude highly

influences the selection of tourism destination. Therefore, cultural tourism needs to be developed to make it sustainable. Further, Qian *et al.*, (2016) argue that one of the important factors for the sustainability of tourism is the development of local community-based tourism which in turn will create a sustainable tourism development.

Based on the description above, it is clear that there is a need to study the historical tourism potentials and the legend of the establishment of a site to rediscover the essence of that legend and to make it known to the wider audience. One of the tourism potentials here is the Legend of Lahilote footprint, which is interesting to be studied and to inform the community on the cultural elements behind this folk tale.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted by employing folklore approach. Lahilote folktale was treated as a social fact. Therefore, its social and cultural aspects applied within the community during the emergence of the folktale were going to be investigated. Data were collected through field survey, and interview and the data were descriptively analysed by orienting on something applicable within the society as a culture in Lahilote folktale as the object of the research. In this study, the legend of naming the site where the object of this research was and its existence were approached using socio-cultural aspects. This is supported by Danandjaya (1998) who states that motivation for folktale research could not be separated from the cultural existence.

The intended folklore is a study on the cultural morphology aspect and the culture itself as the means to develop knowledge. Hence, it could reveal the correlation of oral culture (folktale) developed among the society with the cultural tourism potential of an effort to develop the Lahilote Footprint site in Gorontalo city.

Results

Geographical condition of the Lahilote footprint site in Gorontalo city

Gorontalo city is stretched between $00^{\circ} 28' 17'' - 00^{\circ} 35' 56''$ NL and $122^{\circ} 59' 44'' - 123^{\circ} 05' 59''$ EL. This city has the area of 64.79 km^2 , 0,55% of the Gorontalo province area. Gorontalo city borders with the Gorontalo Regency on Bone Bolango Regency and consists of 9 districts, namely: Kota Selatan, Kota Utara, Kota Barat, Kota Timur, Kota Tengah, Dungingi, Dumbo Raya, Hulonthalangi, and Sibatana districts.

Based on the area mapping of the cultural tourism site in Gorontalo city there are 11 cultural tourism sites in Gorontalo city namely: Otanaha Fortress, Sacred Tomb of Kali Baluntha, Sacred Tomb Ju Panggola, Sacred Tomb of Nene Tabibi, Sacred Tomb of Haji Bu'Ulu, Sacred Tomb of Ta'Jailoyibuo, Sacred Tomb of Pulubunga, Sacred Tomb of Dutongo Pitu Loludu, Sacred Tomb of Ta Ilayabe, Masjid Hunto, and Lahilote Footprint. Lahilote footprint is located in N $00^{\circ} 30' 23.0''$ and E $123^{\circ} 03' 24.2''$, more or less 6 km from the centre of the city.

Lahilote footprint is located in the panoramic Pantai Lahilote or Pohe beach in Pohe village of Kota Selatan district. In this Pohe beach, tourists can easily find a stone with an enormous footprint called *Botu Liyodu Lei Lahilote* (the stone where Lahilote footprint is printed). *Botu*

means stone, *Liyodu* means footprint, so *Botu Liyodu* is a stone where the footprint is located. Legend tells that this footprint in this stone is the footprint of a male named Lahilote who was in love with a goddess named *Boyilode Hulawa*. Lahilote stole her wings and made her could not fly. Finally, Lahilote married the goddess. However, their marriage was not smooth, and the prince left Lahilote where she went back to her home in the sky. This legend is still passed down from generation to generation. Below is the map of the tourism sites in Gorontalo city.

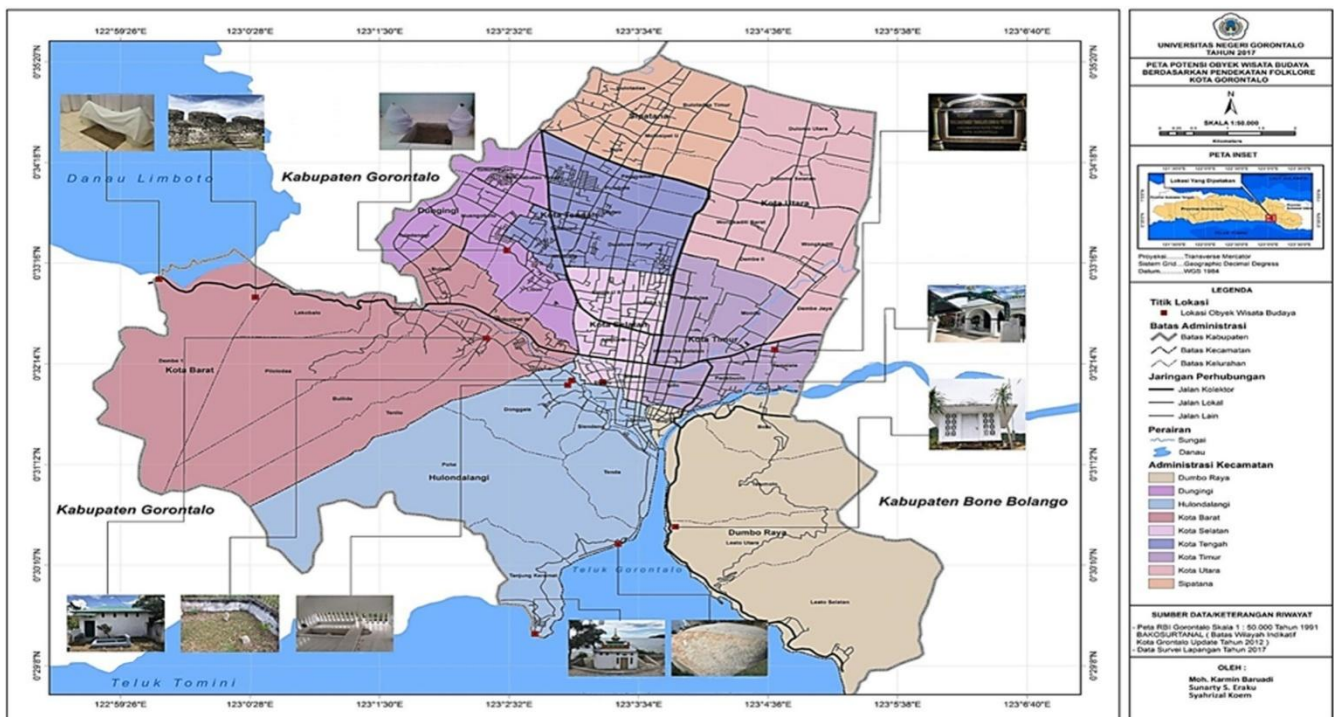


Figure 1 Tourism Sites Map in Gorontalo City

Discussion

Description of Lahilote footprint story

The legend of this footprint is full of sociocultural aspects of the past lives of the Gorontalo community. They are the social facts of the story. The story has been told in various versions. Moreover, this variation is the reflection of the differences in Gorontalo community. In other words, the versions of the story are the clue to the different thinking and behaviour pattern among the Gorontalo community. Different versions of the story also pointed out different beliefs. The Figure 2 below is the picture of Lahilote footprint site in Gorontalo city.



Figure 2. Lahilote footprint site

The focus of this study was the social facts on the difference between two groups of the community, the upper class and the lower class, the habituated culture, and the existing values.

Lahilote's odyssey

In general, the folktale version of Lahilote footprint told about the story of Lahilote as a traveller. Lahilote was described as a traveller who walked in the full moon. He walked along the river, and in one of the river bends. The bend was a beautiful pond, full of trees, big stones, clear water and was very deep. In another version of the story, he was portrayed as a hunter. He hunted to the forest, walk through mountains and valleys. He wanted to catch the 'palu-palu' fish, the fish jumped to the upstream, and he pursued the fish. In his pursuit of the fish, he finally came to a waterfall where a beautiful pond is situated below. Here, he heard voices of people teasing each other and laughing. This version of the story portrays the beauty of Gorontalo's nature. The full citation of the story is as follow:

“One night of a full moon, a young man was walking along the river banks. He then came into a deep riverbed. The riverbed was like a pond. On the side of the riverbed, grew trees, there were also big stones scattered around. The water in that riverbed was apparent and green. It was a very deep river bed. Lahilote approached the riverbed; he then heard the water being splashed. He also heard the sounds like people's laughs. Lahilote listens carefully to the sound. He then saw beautiful women under the moon light”.

Class differences in the community

In general, the version of the story told by two class of the community, the villagers and the city dwellers, the upper and lower classes. The differences in the setting of the story could be understood as the symbol of some things. The sky is the symbol of up and the earth as the symbol of down. People who live in the sky can be said as the high-class community, whereas those who live on earth can be said as the lower-class community. City and village

have different live aspects. People who live in the city in general are those of high social status and those who live in the village are generally of lower social class. The differences between city lives and rural lives were reflected in Boilode lives as a member of the sky community and Lahilote as the member of the earth community. The people in the sky do not need to work hard, whereas people in the earth have to work hard to fulfil their life needs. The description is shown in the following citation of the story:

“Boilode Hulawa thought it was so hard to live on this earth; you have to work hard on everything or else you die. Therefore, she was involved in those hard works. She remembered past life, where everything was already provided. Here, she should work to sweep garden, clean plates, etc. Moreover, all these should be done daily”.

People’s habit

In the cultural system of society, various types of staple and side dish are known. In this story, the side dish was betel and areca nut or in Gorontalo language *pomama* or *milama*. This side dish was not swallowed, rather it was chewed then spat out. The function of this side dish is to strengthen the teeth. The *pomama* was used by productive age female. However, this was no longer the case. It is now only used by an elderly female. The habit to eat this betel and areca nut is portrayed in the following story:

“When she flew, she went flying toward the sea while chewing the betel and areca nut on her mouth. She was Lahilote was fishing, and she spat the *milama* ‘the water from the betel and areca nut’, and it fell right on top of Lahilote’s head. Lahilote was stunned and said, “Oh, this looks like Boilode Hulawa’s *milama*”.

Cultural values

Values are something useful. Due to their use, their existence is appreciated. This study showed that Lahilote figure in this story has some values, such as high expectation, work hard to achieve the objectives, responsible for making a living for his family, and patience on trial times. *First*, everyone should have a dream to change or improve their lives. In all version of Lahilote folktale, the figure was described as a man who got himself a goddess wife. Lahilote’s position as the earth person or lower class where he works as Voyager, farmer, fisherman, and the hunter was manifested in his portrayal as weak human being. Regardless, he wanted to marry his goddess wife who lives in the sky, beautiful and has wings. The class differences between these two did not become an obstacle for him to wed the goddess. This means that to achieve one’s objective is everyone’s rights. Objectives can be accomplished by farmer’s son, or hunter’s son, or fisherman’s son as long as they are willing to work hard to achieve that dreams.

Second, when his wife, Boilode Hulawa went back to the sky, he fought back to get his wife. He went to the forests to ask the trees, “Hi giant tree! Do you know where my wife is?”, Alternatively, to the *malla* the rattan (*hutia mala*). His questions are not only limited to the tree and the rattan, but also other version mentioned that he asked the stone, the swing, the living room, the door, the window, the garden, the gate, etc. In the end, all versions agree that he threw the *mala* rattan into the sky. Dangers and difficulties faced by Lahilote to pursue his

wife were signs of his struggles, his hard work. This means that the love for his wife(as the symbol of future goals/dreams/objectives) encouraged him to fight and that is the proof that he has not lost his hope. All efforts necessary were made to achieve the dreams.

Third, along with his efforts to achieve his dreams, Lahilote was also portrayed as a stoic and patient man against all the trials. He had not backed down despite many trials that he had to face. His trials were mostly from his father in law when he succeeds to find his wife in the sky. He could get his wife back if he were able to overcome all the challenges given by his father-in- law. Here, his patience and endurance to face all the difficulties were pictured as the key to achieving success.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above on the legend of Lahilote footprint, it has strong relationships with the cultural strata or custom's institution, belief and the life pattern of the Gorontalo community from the past to today. This legend has provided many descriptions on the relationship between nature and human, and Gorontalo people relation with nature. The Lahilote story inspired the momama habit, mohuyula habit which has been preserved up to today. The past belief system had also influenced Gorontalo community, where it has proven that our ancestors have had ideals moral and values.

In general, it can be concluded that the Lahilote footprint story portrayed a series of struggles of the main character and the solution to his problem. Lahilote was also described as a man who never gave up, persistence, stoic, and full of dreams, but all those dreams were achieved through hard work and scarify. Lahilote story was the revealing, documentation and preservation of cultural aspect, life pattern of Gorontalo community in the past as the aspect support the cultural tourism development in Gorontalo city.

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