

A Toponymic Approach to the Wetlands Local History in Sungai Tabuk Keramat Village

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap toponimi Laut dan Pantai Rumbia di desa Sungai Tabuk Keramat. Melalui pendekatan historis, penelitian ini menelusuri bagaimana masyarakat terdahulu berinteraksi dengan lingkungan sekitar, memahami lanskap tempat mereka tinggal, dan merefleksikan nilai-nilai budaya dalam penamaan tempat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa toponimi Laut dan Pantai Rumbia merefleksikan konstruksi sosial dan kognitif masyarakat terhadap ruang dan lingkungan mereka. Keberagaman dialek bahasa antara masyarakat Sungai Tabuk Keramat dan desa-desa tetangga mengindikasikan adanya perbedaan latar belakang budaya dan sejarah yang mempengaruhi cara mereka berinteraksi dengan lingkungan dan memberi nama tempat. Analisis toponimi di desa Sungai Tabuk Keramat berkontribusi terhadap pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai sejarah lokal, lanskap budaya, dan dinamika sosial Urang Banjar secara umum.

Kata kunci: toponimi, sejarah lokal, sungai tabuk keramat.

Abstract

This research aims to uncover the toponymy of Laut and Pantai Rumbia in Sungai Tabuk Keramat village. Using a historical approach, this study explores how early communities interacted with their environment, understood the landscapes they inhabited, and reflected cultural values in place naming. The results indicate that the toponymy of Laut and Pantai Rumbia reflects the social and cognitive construction of space and environment by the community. The diversity of language dialects between the people of Sungai Tabuk Keramat and neighboring villages indicates differences in cultural and historical backgrounds that influence how they interact with the environment and name places. The toponymic analysis in Sungai Tabuk Keramat village contributes to a deeper understanding of local history, cultural landscape, and the social dynamics of Urang Banjar in general.

Keywords: toponimy, local history, sungai tabuk keramat village.

INTRODUCTION

"History is geography in motion," so goes an English saying quoted by prominent Banjarmasin historian Idwar Saleh in his book *Banjarmasih* (Saleh, 1987). It is undeniable that an event requires a container or space to occur, and likewise, an event will leave its traces in a space. The relationship between the two is very close and mutually influential. Many events in the world demonstrate that

natural space greatly influences the dynamics of human history, and conversely, human activity also has a significant impact on the condition of the natural environment.

One distinctive natural space is the wetlands, which are widely distributed throughout the archipelago, where their existence and the history of the local community seem to be an inseparable unity. South Kalimantan itself has a

variety of wetland ecosystems, such as swamps, lakes, and rivers that have been an integral part of the lives of local people for so long. As a space where the activities of its inhabitants take place, these wetlands also certainly have a recording power that can be used as a clue to explore the local history of its people.

Local history is an important issue to document, especially because local history can contribute to the understanding of history on a broader and more comprehensive scale. In addition, local history can also strengthen the treasures of local identity and cultural values that are increasingly eroded in the development of the global information technology world today. Local history also has boundaries that are not rigid, especially when the research focus is a space with a narrow or specific administrative area such as a village.

Administratively, a village is the lowest environmental unit in the level of government structure in Indonesia. For Indonesia, which is already known for its diversity, one village area may consist of several settlement units with diverse population characteristics, landscapes, cultures and histories. The naming of these settlement units also varies in Indonesia; some call them *kampung*, *dusun*, *dukuh*, and some even call them *desa*. The unique differences of each settlement unit within

a village are interesting to study in more depth because they can be information about the span of history, natural characteristics, or even the cultural uniqueness of its inhabitants themselves.

Sungai Tabuk Keramat village in Sungai Tabuk district, located in South Kalimantan, is one example of a village with interesting name characteristics to be studied from the side of toponymic history. Two settlement units in this village, namely Pantai Rumbia and Laut, have uniqueness to be used as study material because Sungai Tabuk Keramat village itself, based on the regional map, is relatively far from the nearest beach in South Kalimantan. The uniqueness of the names of these two settlement units becomes a trigger and initial entry point to explore the local history of wetlands and reveal the long interaction between humans and their environment, which is full of dynamics in the past. Research with a toponymic approach has also been widely carried out, for example by Dhita Ainun regarding village toponymy based on geographical aspects (Dhita, 2023) and Lindsari's research on place naming from a historical and linguistic perspective (Lindsari, 2016).

Based on the description above, this study aims to reconstruct the history of wetlands in Sungai Tabuk Keramat Village with a toponymic approach to 'Pantai Rumbia' and 'Laut'. This research is expected to provide a new perspective on

the interaction between humans and the wetland environment in South Kalimantan, as well as contribute to the preservation of local wisdom related to natural resource management.

METHODS

This research is a historical study with a descriptive-qualitative approach to explore information about the historical, cultural, and environmental aspects inherent in the toponymy of Sungai Tabuk Keramat Village, particularly in the Pantai Rumbia and Laut areas. The historical method in this study is combined with a toponymic approach in order to see how geographical events and historical dynamics within a certain time span can be factors in the toponymy of an area. A historical perspective in this study is important in order to see the geomorphological conditions in the area from the past to the present. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with community leaders and local government in order to explore oral history, collective memory, and local wisdom related to the naming of 'Pantai Rumbia' and 'Laut'.

Literature review was conducted as secondary data collection in the form of past maps, administrative documents and other relevant sources related to geomorphology and toponymy in this area. In addition, field observations were also carried out to document current

geographical conditions, record community activities and identify historical traces related to toponymy. Using descriptive analysis, the collected data is used to identify patterns, meanings and interpretations related to the toponymy of Pantai Rumbia and Laut. This study seeks to elaborate various findings collected during the heuristic process, which are then verified and analyzed, and subsequently interpreted in order to provide a reconstruction of wetland history and a comprehensive understanding of toponymy in Sungai Tabuk Keramat village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Sungai Tabuk Keramat Village

Sungai Tabuk Keramat village is part of the Sungai Tabuk District, Banjar Regency, South Kalimantan, located at coordinates 114'-45' East Longitude and 3'-27' South Latitude. The village is directly bordered by Sungai Tabuk Kota village to the South, Pembantanan village to the North, Pemakuan village to the West, and Lok Buntar village to the East. The village topography is relatively flat with an average elevation of 2 meters above sea level and is categorized as lowland. The climate in this village is classified as a wet tropical type with an average rainfall of 236.52 mm, an average temperature of 26.22 °c, and humidity of 77.7% per year (BPS Kab. Banjar, 2021)

Sungai Tabuk Keramat Village is located on the banks of the Martapura River, which flows through Banjar Regency to Banjarmasin and empties into the Barito River. This river is still a means of transportation for most of the community, using *klotok* (motorized boats) and *jukung* (canoes). Access to Sungai Tabuk Keramat is not only via the river but can also be reached by land via two/four-wheeled vehicles from Banjarmasin and Martapura on a relatively good asphalt road.

The road to Sungai Tabuk Keramat is named Jalan Gerilya, which is located in the middle of public service areas such as schools, health centers, sub-district offices, and a soccer field. On the side of Jalan Gerilya, it can be seen that sandy land dominates the Sungai Tabuk Keramat area. Behind the former sub-district office and the Sungai Tabuk Police Station (west side of Jalan Gerilya) there is a soccer field called Lapangan Pasir Putih because it was built on a stretch of sand that is still visible on the surface. This field is reportedly the landing site of Etienne Poulet and became the forerunner of the airbase in Banjarmasin before moving to Landasan Ulin now (Syarifudin, 2024).

Near the Pasir Putih field, there is also a village area called Lubang. It is named so because until the 1980s the sand in the area was mined manually by local residents and then sold outside the area as building material. The mining was finally

stopped because it was considered dangerous by local residents who did not want their residential area to *rumbih* (landslide) due to continuous excavation.

On the east side of Jalan Gerilya, there is a row of schools from elementary to high school, whose yards are also dominated by sandy areas. Until the early 2000s, this school area was still overgrown with *karamunting* (*Rhodomyrtus Tomentosa*), which is commonly found in open sandy lowland areas (Sinaga, 2019: 4). This sandy topography is not only dominant along Jalan Gerilya, but also in the agricultural and residential areas of local residents, even to other villages and sub-districts around. The sandy land that appears dominant in the Sungai Tabuk Keramat area is thought to be the result of natural processes that occurred along the Martapura River for many years.

Through in-depth interviews with local community leaders, it was learned that the contour of the Sungai Tabuk Keramat Village area in the past had characteristics that were not too different from the current conditions. However, no oral traditions or documents were found that explicitly explain the chronology of the naming of Pantai Rumbia and Laut in this village. Nevertheless, several approaches can still be used to trace how these toponyms were formed.

Past Geomorphological of Sungai Tabuk Keramat

History encompasses a very long and complex period, so it is necessary to identify patterns, trends, or changes that occur within a specific timeframe. To limit the focus of historical studies, periodization is a method that can be used so that historical reconstruction can be more concentrated on certain periods. In the context of this research, the geomorphological conditions of Sungai Tabuk Keramat village are limited to the prehistoric period in order to obtain a relationship between the use of the names "Pantai Rumbia" and "Laut," which are thought to be related to the geographical environment that formed naturally in the past (A. M. Semah, 1996).

During the Quaternary period, when the Earth's temperature was not relatively stable as it is today, extreme temperature fluctuations greatly influenced glaciation, which ultimately caused global sea levels to experience regression and transgression that could reach up to 120 meters from the current sea level. This situation allowed for very massive topographic changes and played a role in the appearance of natural landscapes over time, such as changes in coastlines, the disappearance of straits separating islands, changes in river systems, and even the emergence of new land as a result of sediment deposition. In this context, it is not surprising that some

present-day settlements were actually former geographical areas with very different conditions in the past.

During that glacial era, South Kalimantan was actually a large bay or deep sea that jutted inland. The process of mud deposition carried by river currents over thousands of years then caused the strait to become shallower and become an alluvial plain. The shallowing continued to narrow eastward to the Meratus Mountains. This small bay then became the large river flows such as the Kahayan, Kapuas Murung and Barito. In the dry season when river water discharge decreases, salt water from the Java Sea enters these tributaries. The Martapura River—which is a tributary of the Barito River and flows from Banjarmasin to Banjar Regency—its fresh water also becomes salty to near Sungai Tabuk (Saleh, 1987). This provides an overview of how the South Kalimantan region in general also experienced geomorphological changes that are closely related to the rise and fall of sea levels.

Field observations and literature studies related to the geomorphology of Sungai Tabuk Keramat provide indications that this area in the past was once a pool of water as a result of global sea level changes. This condition caused Sungai Tabuk Keramat and the surrounding areas to be included in the category of swampy wetlands, which are often overgrown with rumbia (nipa) and several other types of

aquatic plants. This also explains why Sungai Tabuk Keramat has a dominant large sandy area as described in the village overview section.

Topology of Laut and Pantai Rumbia

Etymologically, the sea (*laut*) is a significant body of interconnected saltwater, covering most of the Earth's surface and traditionally considered to separate or connect various landmasses and islands. The sea has a distinctive aquatic environment that is relatively large and deep on the earth's surface, filled with a large amount of salt water. Meanwhile, a beach (*pantai*) is a geographical form consisting of sand, gravel, rocks, and other materials, which directly borders the sea. In this context, the use of the names "*Laut*" and "*Pantai Rumbia*" in Sungai Tabuk Keramat could be an indication of how the local community in the past interpreted its geographical environment.

Based on this community interpretation, the use of the names "*Laut*" and "*Pantai Rumbia*" could be a collective memory or social recollection of the Sungai Tabuk Keramat community towards the geomorphological conditions of the area in the past. This assumption is supported by the results of field observations which show that the *Laut* area has a landscape in the form of a wide, deep river with nearly vertical riverbanks, thus resembling the sea. The

editor document also points out how the relatively steep slope of the riverbank in the area now known as "*Laut*" evokes visual associations with the characteristics of a deep sea, thus the name "*Laut*" becomes a metaphorical representation. This interpretation is also supported by the fact that in the past, the Martapura River was the main transportation route connecting various regions in South Kalimantan, so shipping and maritime trade activities were very busy on this river. Until now, the *Laut* area is also called *bom* or *boom* by the local community, which is the term for a pier where large boats dock because in ancient times this place was a port where boats stopped in Sungai Tabuk. The remnants of the former port can still be seen at the location today, although it is not perfect due to abrasion (Sunarningsih, 2018).

Meanwhile, the name *Pantai Rumbia* can be interpreted as a marker of a location that was once a coast, where *rumbia* vegetation dominated the ecosystem. The presence of *rumbia* vegetation specifically indicates a unique hydrological condition, where the land periodically experiences inundation by water, whether fresh or brackish, creating an ideal environment for *rumbia* growth. In contrast to *Laut*, *Pantai Rumbia* area does not have steep riverbanks but rather a flat plain with very dense vegetation, not only *rumbia* but also other aquatic plants.

The naming of *pantai* in this place is also relevant because in this area there are often sand deposits brought by the river, especially during the dry season when the river's water discharge decreases.

The naming of *pantai* can also be linked to the Banjar community's vocabulary for river areas with relatively flat and sandy cliffs with the term "*papantaian*" which means having beach-like properties even though it is located on a river and has nothing to do with the sea. At this time, the area has become a mixed plantation and residential area, but the name *Pantai Rumbia* still remains attached to the place.

The above shows that *Laut* and *Pantai Rumbia* in the toponymy of Sungai Tabuk Keramat village are not just baseless names, but rather representations of historical traces and geomorphological conditions that once formed the area in the past.

Settlement History of Sungai Tabuk Keramat

The existence of settlements in the Sungai Tabuk Keramat area dates back to the pre-colonial period, long before formal historical records documented it. This is based on the theory that early human settlements tended to occupy riverside areas because they served as providers of essential resources for life, facilitated mobility and connectivity between regions, and supported agricultural

activities that formed the foundation of agrarian societies. In South Kalimantan specifically, major rivers such as the Barito River and the Martapura River had crucial significance, acting not only as vital arteries for transportation and trade that drove the regional economy, but also as the foundation for the formation of its communities. Idwar Saleh divides the Banjar people into three main groups based on the geographical characteristics of their settlements along the river basin: the Banjar Pahuluan who inhabit the upstream areas of the river with strong agrarian life characteristics and dependence on mountain natural resources, the Banjar Batang Banyu who live along the main river flow and develop rain-fed rice farming systems and dynamic river trade, and the Banjar Kuala who inhabit the downstream and coastal areas of the river (Saleh, 1987).

As an area located right in the Martapura River basin, it is not surprising that Sungai Tabuk Keramat was chosen as a settlement by the Banjar people in the past. The adequate river environment conditions allowed people to farm, fish, and utilize other natural resources.

An interesting thing was also found during field observations, where the Sungai Tabuk Keramat village (including *Laut* and *Pantai Rumbia*) has a very different language dialect from the dialect in the neighboring village, Sungai Tabuk Kota. A very distinctive feature is

the mention of the first-second singular person (I, you) in Sungai Tabuk Keramat using the words *unda-nyawa*, while in Sungai Tabuk Kota using the words *aku-ikam*. This shows that there are two community groups there, namely the Banjar Kuala community group who use *unda-nyawa*, and the Pahuluan community group who use *aku-ikam*. The distribution of the use of *unda-nyawa* is found in community groups who live in Martapura to some areas on the outskirts of Banjarmasin.

According to Hairiyadi, M. Hum in an interview related to this matter, this indicates that the Sungai Tabuk Keramat community group were the early settlers of this area, before migrants from the Banjar Pahuluan group settled in the surrounding area at a later time. This Banjar Pahuluan community group then made the Martapura River basin in the Sungai Tabuk Keramat village a direction indicator by referring to the visualization of the natural landscape with a mass of water that in their imagination was similar to the sea.

This is what made the Banjar people of the past generally call "laut" (sea) for the direction towards the river, and "darat" (land) for the direction opposite the river. This habit can still be found today among the Banjar people who live on the edge of the river, but specifically for the Sungai Tabuk Keramat village it then became a lexicon that

means the name of a certain settlement unit.

Collective Identity of Sungai Tabuk Communities

Toponymy, as a discipline that studies the origins, meanings, and evolution of place names, offers a unique and valuable lens for uncovering the layers of history, culture, and environmental characteristics that shape a region. In the context of Sungai Tabuk Keramat village, toponymic analysis functions not only as a mere geographical marker, but also as a window that opens insights into how past communities interacted with their surrounding environment, how they understood and categorized the landscape in which they lived, and how their cultural values and beliefs are reflected in place naming. A historical approach in examining the toponymy of *Laut* and *Pantai Rumbia* in Sungai Tabuk Keramat village is crucial, considering that these names are the product of complex and dynamic social, cultural and environmental processes over time.

The research results indicate that the toponymy of *Laut* and *Pantai Rumbia* in Sungai Tabuk Keramat village is the result of collective memory and community interpretation of the geographical conditions and natural landscape of the region. The relatively steep slope of the riverbank in the area now known as "Laut" gives rise to visual

associations with the characteristics of a deep sea, so the name "Laut" becomes a metaphorical representation to describe the depth and physical characteristics of the river in that area. Meanwhile, the existence of sand deposits on the riverbank that creates a flat plain creates formations like *papantaian* combined with the dominant vegetation of *rumbia* trees, thus giving rise to the name *Pantai Rumbia*.

The diversity of the *Urang Banjar* community, which is divided into three based on geographical area of residence and different cultures, also plays a role in the perspective of place naming in Sungai Tabuk Keramat. The arrival of the Banjar Pahuluan community group, who incidentally came from an area with hilly and mountainous geographical characteristics with minimal water masses, then assimilated with the Banjar Kuala community group as the original inhabitants who inhabited the area, thus giving rise to unique toponymy. The imagination of the Banjar Pahuluan people, who are used to land contours, then interpreted the river as "laut" (sea) and sand deposits as "pantai" (beach) and then associated them with the *rumbia* vegetation that grows a lot in that area, so the name "Pantai Rumbia" became a distinctive place marker and distinguished it from other areas along the Martapura River.

The toponymic analysis of *Laut* and *Pantai Rumbia* in Sungai Tabuk Keramat village is not only useful in reconstructing the history and cultural landscape of the past, but is also relevant for understanding the social dynamics of the Banjar community in a certain period. The significant differences in language dialects between the Sungai Tabuk Keramat community and neighboring villages such as Sungai Tabuk Kota indicate differences in origins and cultural backgrounds that influence the way they interact with the environment. The most important thing that can be captured from this dynamic is that these differences do not make them negate each other, but coexist harmoniously as a unified identity, namely *Urang Sungai Tabuk*. In a broader context, there is no longer a difference between *Urang Banjar Kuala* and *Urang Banjar Pahuluan* because both have merged into a complete unity of identity, namely as *Urang Banjar*.

CONCLUSION

From the research results and discussion, several main conclusions can be drawn regarding toponymy in Sungai Tabuk Keramat village. First, the toponyms "Laut" and "Pantai Rumbia" reflect the social and cognitive construction of the community towards their space and environment, where the physical characteristics of the river and the presence of *rumbia* vegetation are

interpreted and immortalized in specific place names. Second, the diversity of language dialects between the Sungai Tabuk Keramat community and neighboring villages indicates differences in cultural and historical backgrounds that influence the way they interact with the environment and name places. Third, the toponymic analysis in Sungai Tabuk Keramat village can contribute to a deeper understanding of the local history, cultural landscape, and social dynamics of Sungai Tabuk Keramat village in particular, and the Urang Banjar in general. Further research is certainly needed with a broader scope, more comprehensive research methods, and involving the active participation of the local community to explore more deeply the meanings and values contained in the toponymy in this region.

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