

Discovering Local Wisdom of Bontobahari Community in Making Pinisi Ship

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The native people of Bontobahari in Bulukumba regency, South Sulawesi, are known for their maritime skills, popular for the skills to make Pinisi ship. Bontobahari even becomes the largest ship industry centre in the country. Bontobahari is named in the local language as “Butta Panarita Lopi” or the country of ship makers.

It is believed that this expertise has been handed down through generations as is known in the Sawerigading mythology. Ship making has indeed a long history and value for the Bontobahari community.

“This is not apart from the culture and spirit of the local community. Ship is an historical artifact and representation of maritime culture that describes a community that have marine ideas, motivation, principle, and vision,” said Fitria Nugrah Madani, Philosophy student of UGM on Friday (16/6).

The Pinisi ship they make has become the symbol of Bulukumba, even Indonesia. Pinisi is a schooner that has its own distinctive shapes. The ship has made journeys to as far as Vancouver in Canada and Madagascar.

“The Pinisi is believed to be the symbol of cultural value and tradition of the coastal Konjo community who make the ship in Bontobahari,” she explained.



Fitria along with fellow students Reza Ayu Safitri, Nanda Amalia, and Andrea Nurrosa Khalis tried to explore the local wisdom of the coastal Konjo community. These students join the Student Creativity Programme for Social Humanities Research at UGM.

The research shows that there are certain tradition and rituals symbolising the ship as the “microcosmos”. The community help each other in producing the ship which adopts complex technology. There is also the belief that representation of ship making in Bontobahari is not apart from the harmony between human and the sea or nature.

“The value and culture of Konjo community have indeed made this community well known in the world. Not a few global communities want to make ships like the Pinisi ship,” she said.

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