

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON THE INCOME OF MERCHANTS DURING THE MELASTI RITUAL OF THE HINDU COMMUNITY

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Abstract

Keywords:

Economy, Melasti,
Ritual,

Blitar Regency is an area that has many beaches in the south, one of which is Jolosutro Beach which is located in Ringinrejo Village, Wates District. It is approximately 45 km from the center of Blitar City to the south. The purpose of this research is to find out the Melasti ceremony as a means of self-cleansing and the environment carried out by Hindus in the district and city of Blitar. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Data collection through interviews, observations, and participation activities as well as reviewing various literature sources to obtain data related to the Melasti ceremony and its impact on the economy of the community around Jolosutro Beach. The results of the study show that the melasti ceremony is a ritual that aims to cleanse both individuals and the natural environment (*bhuwana alit* and *bhuwana agung*). Therefore, this Melasti ceremony can have a positive impact related to increasing the amount of income for business actors around the Jolosutro Beach area..

Abstrak

Kata kunci:
 Ekonomi,
 Melasti, Ritual,

Kabupaten Blitar merupakan wilayah yang memiliki banyak pantai di bagian selatan, salah satunya adalah Pantai Jolosutro yang terletak di Desa Ringinrejo, Kecamatan Wates. Berjarak kurang lebih 45 km dari pusat Kota Blitar ke arah selatan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui upacara Melasti sebagai sarana pembersihan diri serta lingkungan yang dilakukan oleh umat Hindu se-kabupaten dan kota Blitar. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi. Pengumpulan data melalui kegiatan wawancara, observasi, dan partisipasi serta mengkaji berbagai sumber literatur untuk memperoleh data terkait upacara Melasti dan dampaknya terhadap ekonomi masyarakat sekitar Pantai Jolosutro. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa upacara melasti merupakan ritual yang bertujuan sebagai pembersihan baik individu maupun lingkungan alam (*bhuwana alit* dan *bhuwana agung*). Oleh karena itu, upacara Melasti ini dapat memberikan dampak positif terkait peningkatan jumlah penghasilan bagi pelaku usaha di sekitar wilayah Pantai Jolosutro.

Introduction

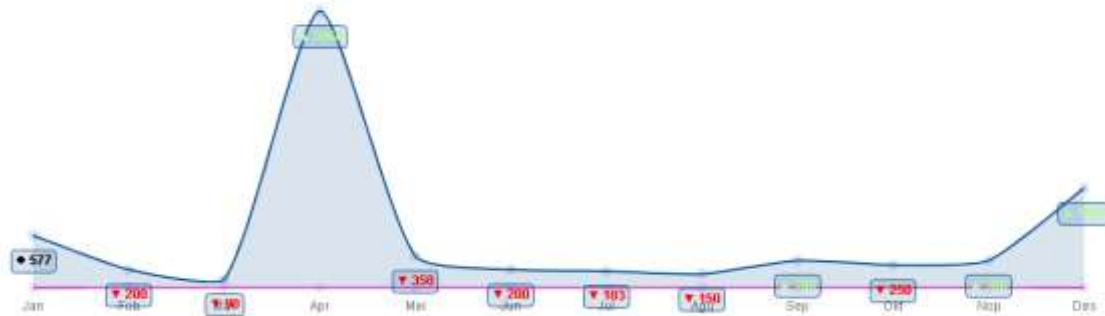
Blitar Regency is an area with many beaches in the southern part, one of which is Jolosutro Beach, located in Ringinrejo Village, Wates District. It is approximately 45 km south of the center of Blitar City. Jolosutro Beach has long been a place for the Melasti ceremony or ritual by Hindus in Blitar Regency. The Melasti ritual is part of the Nyepi Festival, aimed at purifying oneself and the universe from all forms of spiritual impurity. This purification involves visiting a sacred water source to obtain holy water, known as tirtha. Tirtha is sacred water intended to impart spiritual value to the objects or tools used in a ceremony or ritual (Agung et al., 2021). Every year, thousands of Hindus from various areas of Blitar District and its surroundings gather at Jolosutro Beach to participate in the ritual, creating an opportunity for merchants to conduct their economic activities.

Based on the Lontar Sang Hyang Aji Swamandala, it is explained that "Melastingaraniangiringprewatek dewata anganyutaken laraning jagat, papa klesa, letuhing bhuwana" means that melasti is to increase devotion to Sang Hyang Widhi or God, to wash away the suffering of the people, to eliminate papaklesa and all impurities in the universe. The Melasti ritual is a manifestation of Hindu teachings that can create social harmony (Kariarta, 2021). The Melasti or Mekiyis/Melis ceremony has the meaning of cleansing various facilities related to the performance of ceremonies at a sacred place or temple. Hindu devotees in Central Kalimantan perform a spiritual and physical purification ceremony once a year, also known as the Melasti ceremony, specifically conducted along the banks of the Kahayan River near the Sukarno Monument. The Melasti ritual must be performed at water sources such as waterfalls, reservoirs, and beaches. Melasti aims to spiritually and physically purify the greater and lesser worlds, as well as for followers of Sedharma to release all negative things, sins, or actions that disturb the purity of the mind and body over the course of a year (Gateri & Subagiasta, 2023).

The Melasti Ceremony and Jolosutro Beach have become one of the tourist attractions in Blitar Regency, as recorded by the Blitar Regency Statistics Agency in 2023. Jolosutro Beach has also been developed into an eco-tourism destination to achieve sustainable development (Sumarmi et al., 2024). According to data from the Blitar Regency Tourism Office, the number of visitors to Jolosutro Beach during the

Melasti ritual has increased compared to regular days. In 2023, domestic tourists reached 6,760 people, with the highest peak in April at 3,060 visitors.

Figure 1. Domestic Tourist Data



Source: <https://sasmita.blitarkab.go.id/destinasi-entitas/pantai-jolosutro-2>

Based on an interview with the head of the Melasti ritual committee, it is known that there are approximately 1,500 Hindus who perform the Melasti ritual. This increase in the number of tourists has a significant economic impact on traders around Jolosutro Beach. This benefits local traders, whether they sell food, drinks, souvenirs, or other services, as they experience a significant increase in income compared to normal days. Beach tourism contributes to the socio-economic well-being of the local community by providing employment and business opportunities, which can increase income (Romer & Sugiarti, 2023). Beach tourism can have a positive impact on the village economy by increasing income, attention, or exposure, as well as household economics (Nurwati, 2023). Vendors around beach tourism areas experience increased income during the Melasti ceremony conducted by Hindus in Blitar Raya Regency.

This phenomenon presents unique challenges for vendors, such as price fluctuations, supply limitations, and competition among vendors. Vendors view the Melasti ceremony as an opportunity to increase their income, and their behavior naturally seeks to maximize sales growth. The higher a person's income, the greater the effort of merchants to seek information and understanding to utilize their financial resources (Arianti, 2020). Based on the above description, it is considered urgent to conduct in-depth research related to the meaning of the Jalanidipuja ritual or Melasti ceremony and the economic impact felt by business actors or merchants around the Jolosutro Beach area.

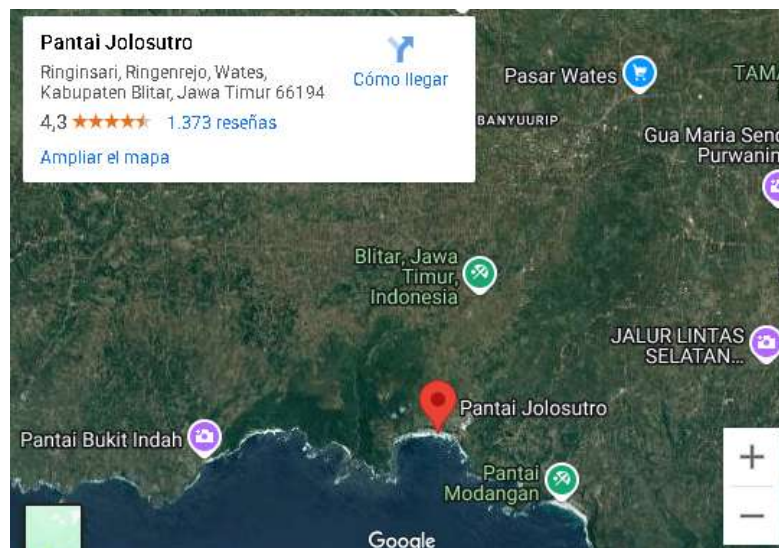
Method

This research is a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach. Qualitative methods were chosen to reveal in depth the data and information, which were then analyzed to obtain accurate and in-depth research results. The research location was in Ringinrejo Village, Wates District, Blitar Regency, East Java. The researcher employed purposive sampling in selecting informants. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews with informants, observation, and direct participation in Melasti, as well as document analysis related to the ceremony and its economic impacts. During the data analysis process, the data will be classified and systematically organized to produce narrative and argumentative findings.

Results and Discussion

1. Jolosutro Beach as a Natural and Religious Tourism Destination

Figure 1. Location of Jolosutro Beach



Source: Google Maps, 2024

Jolosutro Beach is located in the administrative area of Ringinrejo Village, Wates Subdistrict, Blitar Regency. Ringinrejo Village is the largest village in terms of area among the eight villages in Wates Subdistrict. The population of Ringinrejo Village in 2023 was 5,850 people, with 2,930 males and 2,920 females (BPS, 2024). Jolosutro Beach is already well-known to the general public, not only for its natural beauty but also for its potential as a religious tourism destination for Hindus, especially during the Nyepi holiday. During the Nyepi holiday, Jolosutro Beach is used as a site for the Melasti ceremony and can attract up to 15,000 visitors (Risfandini & Sani, 2024).

Jolosutro Beach is a regular location for performing the Melasti ceremony for Hindus, which has spiritual value. The number of Hindu visitors from various regions increases during the Melasti ceremony. They come to actively participate in the ritual, offer prayers, and strengthen the sense of brotherhood among the community there. Additionally, Jolosutro Beach has natural beauty that is a highlight for tourists. The combination of the spirituality of the Melasti ceremony and the natural beauty of the beach can create a unique and memorable experience for tourists.

2. The Meaning of the Jalanidipuja Ritual or Melasti Ceremony at Panta Jolosutro

A distinctive feature to note when observing Hindus performing their religious rituals is that during ceremonies, Hindus always incorporate elements of nature and their environment. In ceremonies, Hindus always prioritize sincere worship and prayer dedicated to God Almighty, known as *yajna*. Once a year, Hindus are required to perform a sacred ceremony to balance the universe and all its contents, known as Nyepi Day. The purpose of Nyepi Day is explained in the Sanghyang Aji Swamandalan manuscript, which states, "*anggayuntaka laraning jagad, paklesa letehing buana,*" meaning: to eliminate all human suffering, to release human poverty and evil.

The Jalanidipuja ritual is increasingly recognized by Hindus as a purification ritual at sacred sites, with an emphasis on water sources. Beaches and coastal areas are the primary locations for religious practices, especially in Hinduism (Predangga, 2021). The Jalanidipuja ceremony is described in Hindu sacred literature as "*amet sarining amertha kamandalu ring telenging segara,*" which means to gather the purity of the water of life from the ocean.

Nyepi Day is a series of ceremonies, including the Jalanidipuja or Melasti ceremony and Tawur Kesanga. Before performing the Nyepi ceremony, Hindus are required to participate in the Melasti ceremony, which has the meaning of purifying Arca, Pratima, Nyasa, or Pralingga. Melasti is usually performed three or four days before Nyepi Day, or at the latest during Tilem Kasanga before sunset (Gateri, 2021), but its implementation is adjusted to local customs according to the village and time. It is also explained that Melasti is a moment of spiritual and physical purification to avoid or be cleansed from impurities in the universe and fellow creatures.

Figure 2. The Melasti Process at Jolosutro Beach



Source : Peneliti 2024

In general, the melasti ceremony is held at a place with a water source to obtain holy water. The places commonly used include beaches, lakes, rivers, reservoirs, or waterfalls. Hindu devotees in Blitar Regency and City perform the Melasti ceremony at the beach, specifically Jolosutro Beach. The Melasti ceremony at Jolosutro Beach has been conducted annually for many years. The choice of the beach is strategic, as it is easily accessible for all Hindu devotees across Blitar.

The Melasti ceremony at Jolosutro Beach begins with the "sarati" preparing offerings or sacrifices to be presented. The day before Melasti, religious leaders perform a prayer ritual called "mendak tirta or matur piuning." The following day, during the Melasti ceremony, the ritual begins with priests chanting mantras directed at Sang Hyang Widhi to ensure the ceremony is carried out smoothly and holds meaning for all living beings. This is followed by a ceremonial event featuring sacred hymns accompanied by Javanese gamelan music, along with speeches delivered by the Regent of Blitar District. After the ceremonial event concludes, the earthen mound and "jolen" are floated out to sea at Jolosutro Beach, symbolizing gratitude for all that has been received, and also bringing the Nawa Sanga weapon to be cleansed with seawater. Following this ritual, Hindu devotees perform the Melasti prayer.

Hindu devotees are increasingly aware that the melasti ceremony can have a positive impact on both the individual and the universe. The energy generated from the melasti ceremony is felt by devotees to purify the entire universe and its contents (bhuwana agung and bhuwana alit). Hindu devotees in Blitar flock to Jolosutro Beach,

believing that the use of seawater as a source of purity or tirta, which symbolizes tirta amerta, can neutralize negative energy and eliminate impurities in the heart.

3. The Economic Impact of the Melasti Ritual on the Income of Vendors at Jolosutro Beach

It is important to note that income is an indicator for society to calculate welfare, and the results of this calculation can show the economic progress of a society. The amount of income or earnings a person receives depends on their efforts and work, the number of hours worked, and the level of income received. Financial management is also taught within the family environment through internalized economic learning processes such as saving and managing pocket money (Dharma & Amalina, 2024). A high income indicates responsible financial management, and available funds provide significant opportunities to act responsibly.

Several factors that can influence an individual's income or earnings include income from the production of goods and services, compensation received from the use of economic assets by external parties, and the sale of assets outside of merchandise. Additionally, several indicators clarify this, such as income levels, income components, income sources, and expenses. Therefore, if a business operator earns income exceeding the usual amount, they will set aside money for a reserve fund. The larger the business income, the larger the reserve fund the business operator will have (Arianti, 2020).

The findings of the research conducted have shown the significant economic impact felt by merchants around the Jolosutro coastal area. The presence of merchants participating in the Jalanidipuja or Melasti ceremonies organized by the Hindu community has led to an increase in visitors or tourists coming to Jolosutro Beach. According to the data obtained, there are approximately 1,000 Hindus who perform the Jalanidipuja ceremony. Merchants experience both direct and indirect economic impacts.

Direct impacts are economic effects that include income derived from tourist expenditures and Hindu devotees participating in the Jalanidipuja ceremony, which are directly felt by merchants. Hindu devotees and tourists who spend money on purchases of products at the Jolosutro Beach tourist site ultimately increase the income of merchants and local residents working at the Jolosutro Beach tourist site. According

to research findings, an increase in tourists can positively impact merchants' income, and this rise in tourists helps merchants in terms of their income (Mealani, 2022).

Furthermore, the indirect economic impact obtained is the benefit received from the direct impact, which results in an increase in input from a business unit. There is also a subsequent economic impact, which is the impact felt from the expenditures made by merchants working during the Jalanidipuja ceremony at Jolosutro Beach. The increase in tourist visits also has an impact on the income of the surrounding community (Elisa, 2021).

Merchants around the beach sell various types of goods, ranging from food stalls, coffee shops, clothing stores, to street vendors. Some informants stated that during the Melasti ceremony held by the Hindu community, their daily income increased dramatically, from Rp. 300,000 per day to Rp. 500,000 on that day. The arrival of Hindus and local tourists is a blessing for vendors selling around Jolosutro Beach.

Conclusion

Hindus always involve natural elements and the environment as a form of sincere worship to God. Nyepi Day is an annual sacred ceremony that signifies balancing the universe, with the aim of eliminating evil and human suffering. One of the Nyepi ceremonies begins with the melasti or jalanidipuja ceremony. This ritual involves the purification of oneself and sacred religious objects to avoid impurity. The jalanidipuja ritual or melasti ceremony is conducted at Jolosutro Beach in Blitar Regency. Ultimately, this study shows that the jalanidipuja or melasti ritual performed by Hindus has a positive impact on the local economy, particularly for merchants around Jolosutro Beach. The direct economic impact is evident from increased income due to transactions with devotees and tourists, while the indirect impact is seen in increased business inputs and merchant spending. The ceremony brings blessings, and merchants' income rises, making the melasti ceremony a moment that brings additional economic benefits.

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