

Manifestation of the batang banyu concept as a community communication experience

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Abstract The existence of a unique concept of a river has significantly shaped the Banjarese community's relationship with it. This unique perspective, known as "Batang Banyu," portrays the river as a revered and integral aspect of their existence. The core objective of this research lies in comprehending the embodiment of the Batang Banyu concept within the regions of Martapura, Nagara, and Panggang in South Kalimantan. The research adopts a phenomenological approach, utilising an interpretive qualitative method to achieve this. The primary data is gathered through rigorous field observations and in-depth interviews with local inhabitants. The study's outcomes unveil that the Batang Banyu concept has evolved into a communicative experience, endowing the community with profound significance for the river. This significance finds manifestation in four fundamental aspects: first and foremost, the river serves as a livelihood for fishermen; secondly, it supports various livelihood-related endeavours; thirdly, it plays a crucial role in constructing homes; and lastly, it serves as a means of transportation. Remarkably, among the communities residing along the banks of the Nagara River and Panggang Lake, the Batang Banyu concept remains firmly entrenched. Conversely, for the people residing along the Martapura River, the Batang Banyu concept has been discarded, resulting in the unfortunate neglect and pollution of the Martapura River due to the accumulation of vast amounts of garbage.

Keywords: community communication experience, banjarese, environmental communication; local wisdom

INTRODUCTION

Coastal communities comprise those residing on the riverbanks, as evident from the social environment perspective (Bennett et al., 2020; Lau et al., 2019; Widyaningrum & Nugraheni, 2019). Naturally, these riverbank dwellers possess a profound understanding of rivers, shaping their attitudes and behaviours towards these water bodies.

The province of South Kalimantan boasts a distinctive and widespread riverside life, wherein the river significantly influences the reflection of the region's cultural aspects (Fajari, 2018). Nevertheless, the river landscape remains in a perpetual state of change.

These alterations extend beyond the river's physicality and how the riverside community interacts with and utilises the river, as observed in Sari's study concerning the Martapura River locale (Sari, Rizki Permata, 2008). The employment of river transportation along the Martapura River has experienced a decline, with the residents of Banjarmasin City increasingly shifting towards land-based transportation for work, school, and shopping. Although river transportation is still favoured for recreational purposes, it is no longer a regular activity.

Historically, the river has held a central role in the lives of South Kalimantan's inhabitants. The Nagara River (also known as the Material River) was an ancient settlement during the proto-historical and Hindu-Buddhist eras. At the same time, the Martapura River played a crucial role in developing the Banjar Kingdom (Sunarningsih, 2016). The river has been the centre of community settlement and the centre of the Banjar government since ancient times. This history reinforces the role of the river historically before any change.

The river is a vital natural resource for the Banjar community, serving their daily needs. It is a water source for bathing, washing, and cooking (Akbar & Safitri, 2016). Moreover, the river is a crucial means of transportation, connecting villages and facilitating communication among the Banjar people. Furthermore, the river also serves as a channel for trade, with river intermediaries playing a pivotal role in exchanging goods. This intricate web of uses and associations highlights the multifaceted and profound meaning that the river holds for the Banjar community.

The river's meanings extend beyond mere symbolism and encompass active involvement and significance. Ethnoecologically, the river is perceived as the foundation of life, identity, and the community's overall well-being (Abu et al., 2019; Anderson et al., 2019; Sihombing, 2019; Tarchiani et al., 2020). This cultural understanding is diligently upheld and transmitted among the riverside communities in South Kalimantan.

These riverside communities generally profoundly understand and appreciate the river, which scholars call "local wisdom" (Anderson et al., 2019; Lubis et al., 2018; Tarchiani et al., 2020). Such local wisdom is also evident in studies exploring how the architecture of houses is determined by the people residing along the Musi River (Hapsari & Hardayani, 2023; Siswanto & Kusumawaty, 2021).

The identity of rivers in South Kalimantan has become firmly established over time, making the investigation of changes in the river's meaning an intriguing topic of study. The central question arises: Has the river's significance remained unchanged, deeply embedded in the life of the Banjar people, or has it undergone transformations? One assumption posits that the river is diligently preserved and treated with care by the riverside community in accordance with their concepts and knowledge. At the same time, another suggests the possibility of

arbitrary treatment based on their understanding. This intriguing inquiry invites exploration into the dynamic relationship between the Banjar people and the river, shedding light on the evolving interplay of culture, knowledge, and environmental stewardship.

The concept of riverside communities in South Kalimantan resembles the Batang Banyu research, which interprets the river as a vital support system for those residing along its banks. Batang Banyu represents a transcendental concept passed down through generations via narratives (Fahrianoor & Sanjaya, Andika, 2021). This concept underscores the river's significance as a source of life, reinforced by the daily actions and interactions of the people with the river. In essence, these actions manifest the relationship between the riverside dwellers and the river itself.

Such communication between humans and their environment can be categorised as environmental communication, where the relationship between people and their surroundings mutually adapts and influences one another. This concept leads to certain limitations and the formation of alternative behaviours, fostering behaviour that aligns with the environment (Kadarisman et al., 2023; Walker, 2007). The transactional interdependence between humans and their environment denotes a dynamic relationship characterised by reciprocity and mutual dependence (Kadarisman et al., 2023; Walker, 2007).

Comprehending environmental communication is closely associated with achieving harmony in human-environment relations. As posited by Littlejohn & Foss (2009), Environmental Communication is a multidisciplinary field encompassing theory and field research, all centring around communication about the environment, particularly nature. Communication is deemed to wield a profound impact, especially in environmental crises instigated by human activities. Several studies exploring environmental communication utilise theory to observe the intricate connections between humans and nature (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

However, understanding the concept of environmental communication, especially when linked to culture, can be challenging. As expressed by Nofri (2013), defining the term "environment" proves to be a complex task akin to defining concepts like "culture" or "communication." Notably, the term "environment" represents "nature" viewed through the lens of a particular culture, highlighting the nuanced semantic evolution associated with it.

Environmental communication can be perceived as a means of comprehending and expressing the community's perception of the environment, rooted in shared cultural experiences transmitted across generations (Veverka et al., 2019). This form of communication is evident in the Batang Banyu concept, which emerges from the interactions and behaviours of the communities residing along the Martapura River, Nagara River, and Panggang Lake River. Each distinct concept serves as a guiding framework for collective actions, including

the treatment of the river. The existence of the Batang Banyu concept demonstrates that individuals' conscious experiences in their daily lives can significantly shape their attitudes and behaviours towards the environment, particularly in this context, towards the river.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a phenomenological approach to investigate the knowledge derived from the conscious experiences of the Banjar community residing along the Martapura River, Nagara River, and Panggang Lake (Linschoten & Giorgi, 1968; Wilshire, 1968). In the study context, the river holds immense importance, as the Banjar community's identity is closely intertwined with its proximity to these water bodies. Consequently, the community possesses a distinct conceptual understanding and meaningful relationship with the river.

The research concentrates on three specific locations: the banks of the Martapura River in Banjarmasin City, the banks of the Nagara River in Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency, and the banks of Panggang Lake in Hulu Sungai Utara.

Data collection for this study involves two approaches, as follows (Sugiyono, 2019): 1) Library Studies - This method involves gathering data and relevant theories from various sources and written materials to form the foundational framework of the research. Literature review encompasses reading books related to the research topic and consulting documents, bulletins, journals, and other sources contributing to and supporting the investigation. 2) Field Research - Field research is conducted using qualitative methods, employing two distinct techniques: Observation: Researchers conduct direct observations of the research subjects to elucidate and elaborate on the pertinent issues and indicators and to make preliminary assessments while gathering data. The form of observation employed is non-participatory, focusing on elements that align with the earlier conceptual framework. Interviews: Data collection is facilitated through in-depth interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Observation is an initial assessment in the data acquisition process, while interviews enable researchers to delve deeper into the information and gain comprehensive insights. The interviews may follow a pre-designed interview guide, but they also have the flexibility to evolve based on the conditions encountered in the field (See Table 1).

Table 1. Research Informants

No	Informant Name	Age	Occupation	Address
1.	Sarkani	50 years	Village head	Penang River Village
2.	Mulyadi	34 Years	Fisherman	Banua Anyar Banjarmasin
3.	Anah	60 Years	Salted fish business	Old Bajayau village
4.	Suryani	49 Years	Fisherman	Old Bajayau Village
5.	Mulkan	87 Years	Fisherman	Old Bajau
6.	M. Ardiansyah	60 Years	Village head	Tampang Village
7.	Sam'ani	28 years	Fisherman	Tampang Village

Source: Field Research Data (2020)

Photo documentation and photo documents were employed to provide additional support for the data collected in the field, particularly regarding the facts concerning the research locations mentioned earlier, i.e., the people residing along the banks of the Martapura River, Nagara River, and Panggang Lake in South Kalimantan.

The research focused on exploring the Batang Banyu concept within these communities. Consequently, the subjects of the study were the people living along the Martapura River in Banjarmasin City, the banks of the Nagara River in Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency, and the banks of Panggang Lake in Hulu Sungai Utara.

For data analysis, the researchers adopted an interactive model approach formulated by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). This approach involves distinct procedures: a) Data reduction serves as a selection process, emphasising the simplification, abstraction, and transformation of the data or facts gathered in the field. The transformation process continues until a comprehensive set of information is compiled, enabling the formulation of conclusions and subsequent actions. This method aids in comprehending the current situation and determining appropriate courses of action. b) Presentation of Data: Data presentation entails using words and sentences to describe the information and facts obtained in the field. Additionally, the information is presented coherently and easily understandable, enabling researchers to gain a comprehensive view of the situation and draw appropriate conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The expression of the Batang Banyu concept in the lives of the riverside inhabitants of South Kalimantan becomes apparent through their activities. As integral members of the community-dwelling along the riverbanks, the concept of the river as Batang Banyu permeates their daily experiences, particularly in their interactions with the river. This communication is rooted in the community's conscious understanding of the river, which finds expression in their actions and behaviours towards it. Subsequently, the community's profound conceptualisation is tangibly manifested in their conduct and treatment of the rivers within the three river basins.

Martapura Riverside Community

The Martapura River boasts three branches: the Alalak River, the Riam Kiwa (Left) River, and the Riam Kanan River. The Martapura River region, particularly in Sungai Pinang Lama Village, remains inhabited by many riverside dwellers. However, the landscape has transformed due to the prevalence of land routes, which has resulted in a shift in community activities to primarily terrestrial endeavours, including work. As stated by Sarkani, the head of Sungai Pinang Baru Village for over five decades:

"Not many people in Sungai Pinang Baru Village engage in activities on the Martapura River anymore. Most community activities have shifted to the land, and the river is not extensively utilised, except for the activities at the floating market in Lok Baintan, where some women venture out to sell agricultural produce. Consequently, the care for the Martapura River has diminished. It is now mainly used by people to visit the Floating Market." (Interview with Sahraji, Personal Interview, April 2020)

This explanation by Mr. Sarkani highlights how the changing habits of the riverside community have also altered their attitudes towards the Martapura River. As observed by the researchers, some individuals still use the river for fishing purposes, while transportation via the river has significantly declined due to the preference for land routes. Mulyadi, aged 45, corroborates this change, stating:

"Currently, people's reliance on the river for activities has considerably diminished, including fishing, which has also decreased. The availability of fish might be dwindling, as I go fishing daily and oversee the cages, but people now rarely catch fish. Although I still witness some boats passing by to transport galam wood, piled-up soil, and other building materials. Moreover, some still bathe and engage in daily activities in the river." (Interview with Haji Mulkan, Personal Interview, April 2020).

Furthermore, the positioning of the houses in relation to the river signifies the river's importance and role in the community. Notably, very few houses are facing the Martapura River along its banks. As stated by Sahraji, a resident of Sungai Pinang Baru:

"The positioning of residents' houses has evolved. Many houses faced the Martapura River in the past, but now they are increasingly turning away from it. The frequency of communal kitchen activities in the river has also declined, although some remain. The change in house orientation can be attributed to the dominance of land routes, with people's houses facing the road rather than the river." (Interview with Sahraji, Personal Interview, April 2020).

The data above reveals a noticeable shift in the Batang Banyu concept among the riverside inhabitants of the Martapura River. The alteration in the community's habits, prioritising land-oriented activities, has consequently transformed the river's meaning and significance. The current trend of houses facing away from the river and the decreased presence of housewives engaging in activities in the river provides visible evidence of this evolving concept.

Nagara Riverbank Community

The residents living along the Nagara River, particularly in Bajayau Lama Village, rely heavily on the river daily. To access this village, one must undertake an hour-and-a-half journey by boat from the Nagara River. Their close association with the river is evident in their diverse activities, all of which revolve around the river.

According to Mrs. Anah, a 60-year-old resident of Bajayau Lama Village:

"For a long time, we have been living along the banks of the Nagara River, and the people here heavily engage in fishing activities. Various fishing methods such as *menamprai*, *maringgi*, *malukah*, *mambanjur*, *maunjun*, and *mahampang* are employed by men. On the other hand, the women (*Babinian*) are responsible for cleaning the catch and crafting fishing tools such as fish traps. Many of these catches are even sold to other cities like Banjarmasin and Samarinda." (Interview with Haji Mulkan, Personal Interview, April 2020).

The Bajayau Lama Village residents' attachment to the river also colours their ways of processing the fish they catch. Regarding the process of making *Garih Ikan Gabus*, as explained by Mrs. Anah as follows:

"Snake fish obtained from the *maunjun* (fishing) and *mambanjur* are crunchy. Making *garih* takes quite a long time. The fish are cleaned first. Then the body is split into two. After that, they are cleaned again and soaked for a few hours in the river. Soaking in the river is meant to make the fish flesh swell. After that, it is salted and dried in the sun. This imitates the method that was done by our parents, who also learned this way." (Interview with Haji Mulkan, Personal Interview, April 2020)

Another noteworthy manifestation of their river-oriented conception is the production of fishing equipment called "*lukah*." This equipment, resembling a spire, is crafted to catch fish.

The significance of the river in their daily lives is further evident in the design of their houses, as Suryani, a 49-year-old resident, explains:

"Most of our houses here face the river. Similar to how people on land face the road, the river is the main route for us, and anyone coming here must pass through it. In fact, all heads of families here possess *katinting* boats for transportation, work, and other purposes." (Interview with Haji Mulkan, Personal Interview, April 2020)

Observations downstream along the Nagara River, particularly en route to Bajayau Village, reveal a cleaner environment free from household waste or litter.

The people living along the Nagara River strongly adhere to the Batang Banyu concept daily. The river remains at the core of their community, evident through their many activities, from work to meeting their daily needs. The cleanliness of its waters further underscores the river's paramount importance.

Lakeside Community of Panggang

Located in Tampakang Village, Paminggir District, Hulu Sungai Utara Regency, the community's way of life closely mirrors that of Bajayau Lama Village. The Batang Banyu concept significantly manifests in their daily activities, particularly in their livelihoods as fishermen. When fishing, they adhere to traditional methods, utilising woven bamboo to confine the fish in a specific area. M. Ardiansyah, the 60-year-old Village Head of Tampakang, explains:

"The people of Tampakang Village generally employ traditional fishing methods, avoiding harmful practices such as electrocution, which may harm the fish and smaller species. One common method is using woven bamboo traps, which ensures sustainability as it does not lead to the depletion of fish stocks. In addition to fishing, our residents are skilled *purun* weavers, utilising the abundant *purun* plant found in the peat swamps of Tampakang Village. Typically, the women in the village engage in *purun* weaving, creating bags and mats that are sent or sold in markets like Amuntai and other areas. Another source of livelihood for the community is swamp buffalo rearing, with the swamp buffalo area often serving as a tourist attraction for visitors." (Interview with Haji Mulkan, Personal Interview, April 2020)

From the perspective of their livelihood, the river is the foundation of their existence, closely aligned with the Batang Banyu concept. The essence of the Batang Banyu concept is embodied in their fishing practices as a means of sustenance.

Furthermore, the community's regard for the river is evident in their conscientious behaviour towards it, with a deliberate effort to refrain from carelessly disposing of garbage in its waters. As mentioned by Sam'ani:

"The river holds immense importance for us, motivating us to preserve it by refraining from indiscriminately disposing of plastic waste into its waters. Typically, residents utilise the *purun* plant for crafting purposes, while used mineral water glasses are transformed into lantern decorations. As a result, nearly every household in the village showcases handicrafts made from these used glass containers." (Interview with Haji Mulkan, Personal Interview, April 2020)

Sam'ani's explanation highlights the community's responsible and considerate attitude towards the river, where even leftover mineral water glasses find new life as decorative crafts, showcasing their commitment to its preservation.

The manifestation of the Batang Banyu concept is further evident in the architectural orientation of houses, much akin to the practice in Bajayau Lama Village. In Tampakang Village, many houses face the river, which is central to their daily activities. Haji Mulkan, 87 years old, elaborates on this traditional practice:

"As a community residing above a swamp where the river flows, our houses naturally face the river, as all our activities revolve around it. The river serves as our pathway; in essence, we always navigate through the river to reach various destinations, including our homes. The practice of facing the river when constructing our houses has persisted for generations, inherited from our ancestors. Typically, our houses are elevated to allow us to observe the water level." (Interview with Haji Mulkan, Personal Interview, April 2020)

Similar to the inhabitants of the Nagara River, those living along the banks of Panggang Lake also demonstrate a profound reverence for the river, with the Batang Banyu concept reflecting their commitment to preserving the river's sustainability. The practical actions of these communities toward their rivers can be perceived as a policy and strategic approach in ecological management aimed at maintaining a harmonious balance within the environment. This ecological balance has been honed over an extensive span of time, as evident in the works of Igbozurike (Igbozurike, 1971; Shiva, 1999; Verma, 2018).

Furthermore, exploring the manifestation of the river concept in the lives of these riverbank communities aligns with the assumptions of cultural ecology, wherein cultural components intertwine with subsistence practices and economic arrangements. This perspective entails three distinct phases of cultural ecology, encompassing the analysis of interconnections between the environment and exploitative or productive technology, examination of behaviour patterns related to specific technologies suitable for particular regions, and comprehensive understanding of the cultural patterns in question, as expounded by (Berry, 1979; Frake, 1962; Gunn, 1980)

According to this concept, the riverbank communities along the Martapura River display a shift in their orientation towards the river. The river is no longer perceived as a crucial life support system, and most activities now occur on land. Furthermore, the houses are no longer designed to face the river, signifying a departure from the traditional practice.

In the present scenario, the Martapura River primarily serves as a means of transportation for kelotok boats, transporting materials like

galam wood and sand. As a result, the river's role in the local production processes has diminished considerably.

In stark contrast, the communities living along the Nagara River and Panggang Lake banks maintain a strong attachment to the river, evident in their livelihood as fishermen. They employ traditional fishing techniques and equipment, such as lokah, tampirai, banjur, hampang, and nets, passed down through generations.

Furthermore, their responsible behaviour towards the river is evident in their refusal to dispose of garbage into its waters indiscriminately. This conscious attitude stems from their understanding of the river's significance in supporting their daily activities and routines.

The concept of the river is also manifested in their cultural patterns, exemplified by the arrangement of their houses facing the river. The river not only serves as their courtyard but also serves as a central space for daily communication. This aligns with Koentjaraningrat's (1983) notion of socialisation, wherein individuals learn cultural patterns and interactions through various social roles occupied by individuals within their community. Additionally, internalisation and enculturation play significant roles in cultural learning among community members.

The river plays a significant role in shaping specific behaviour patterns among riverside communities, particularly in terms of transportation technology they employ, such as kelotok (motorised boats) of varying sizes, which serve as essential support for their daily activities.

The concept of Batang Banyu, originating from the community's perception of the river, gives rise to four distinct categories: livelihoods, supporting equipment, positioning of houses, and means of transportation. However, variations in the manifestation of the Batang Banyu concept are observed among the communities residing along the Martapura River, Nagara River, and Panggang Lake.

In the Martapura River communities, the river no longer serves as a primary support for livelihoods and transportation or as the focal point for house positioning, as houses are increasingly oriented away from the river.

Conversely, both the Nagara River and Panggang Lake communities share common attributes, particularly in terms of livelihoods, where the majority engage in traditional fishing activities, complemented by the requisite equipment for fishing. River transportation in boats or kelotok remains a pivotal aspect of their daily lives, facilitating travel and trade along the rivers. Additionally, their houses are designed with terraces facing the river, symbolising the river's significance as their home front. In summary, the manifestation of the river concept within riverside communities can be illustrated in Figure 1.

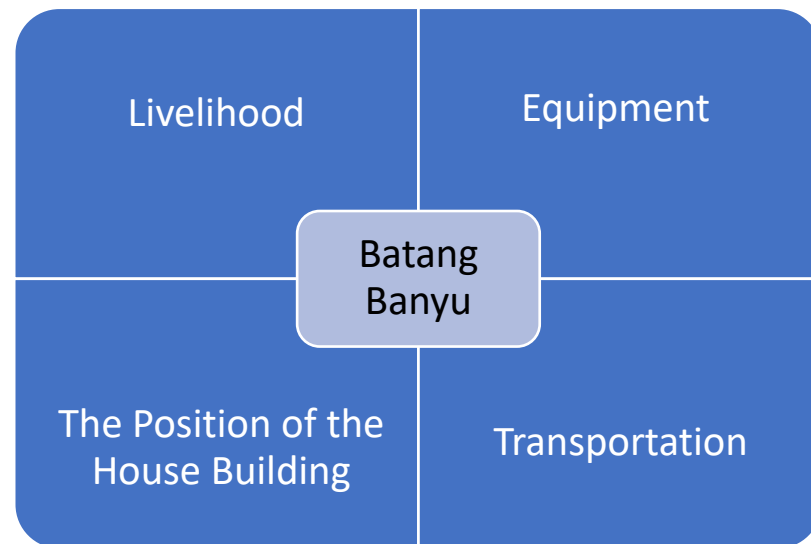


Figure 1. Manifestation of the Batang Banyu Concept
Source: Researcher Findings (2021)

CONCLUSION

The communication of riverside communities living along the Martapura River, Nagara River, and Lake Panggang River in South Kalimantan with the Batang Banyu concept is deeply woven into their daily lives, evident in four distinct aspects. Firstly, their primary livelihood revolves around freshwater fishing, with a significant portion of these communities engaging in fishing activities, particularly along the Nagara River and Panggang Lake. Secondly, their treatment of the rivers can be observed through the traditional equipment they use to support their fishing endeavours, including Lukah, Tampirai, Hampang, and nets.

The third aspect lies in the positioning of their house buildings, as the Batang Banyu concept influences the layout of their homes, with houses deliberately facing the river, turning the river into their symbolic front porch. This emphasises the river's utmost importance to the people residing on its banks. In contrast, the residents along the Martapura River have started turning their backs on the river, suggesting a reduced significance of the river in their lives, a fact that is mirrored by the river's deteriorated appearance, marred by pollution.

The fourth manifestation is evident in the type of transportation they utilise, including motorised boats, speedboats, and jukung (small boats without engines). Batang Banyu serves as the lifeblood of the communities along the rivers, particularly those living on the banks of the Nagara River and Lake Panggang. The implications of this river treatment have positive effects on river sustainability, as the rivers appear cleaner, and their resources in the form of fishery products remain preserved.

The variation in the communication of the Batang Banyu concept between the Martapura River communities and the Nagara River and Panggang Lake communities has resulted in differences in their attitudes towards the river. While the Martapura River's condition has

deteriorated, leading to a polluted appearance, the Nagara River and Panggang Lake remain cleaner and continue to cater to the communities' daily needs.

The Batang Banyu concept, rooted in the knowledge and experiences of riverside communities, and giving rise to river wisdom, warrants appreciation from various stakeholders, including the government, environmental NGOs, academics, and others with concerns for rivers. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for further research on the communication behaviour of riverside communities, especially in the context of river sustainability.

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