



The Naming of Subdistricts in Lamongan Regency Indonesia: A Linguistic Anthropology Study

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Abstract

Place-name research has been the interest of researchers in sociolinguistics, semantics, anthropology, and linguistic anthropology for many years. Through place-names, we can find various socio-cultural meanings, historical contextualization, and moral values. Applying linguistic anthropology perspective which emphasizes the significance of language expressions and practices to reveal cultural values and interests, this paper discusses the socio-cultural meaning and historical contextualization of some districts' names in Lamongan Regency, East Java, Indonesia. For collecting primary data, interviews with community leaders were conducted to explore the oral tradition related to the names of the sub-districts: Sugio, Kembangbahu, Ngimbang, and Sukorame. We also conducted field observations in the sub-districts to identify their recent condition, especially their economic, social, and cultural life. The results of the study show that the socio-cultural meanings of the sub-districts' names in Lamongan are related to (i) economic and environmental condition; (ii) geographical condition; (iii) historical event; and, (iv) cultural event. However, the process of naming a sub-district is always accompanied by the hope that in the future the sub-district can become a place that provides goodness to its residents.

Keywords: linguistic anthropology, place-name, oral tradition, socio-cultural meaning, Lamongan.

INTRODUCTION

Name is a “meaningless marker” (Mills, 1843). Mills argues that names denote without connotation and further notes that proper names refer to objects, not their attributes. However, this claim does not apply to Lamongan society. People in this area believe that names are hope and express prayers for what they want to achieve in the future. They believe that “naming embodies and express power” (Short and Dubot 2020, 1). Lamongan Regency, located in the province of East Java, Indonesia, is renowned not only for its vibrant culture and rich history but also for its intriguing district names. Each district name holds a story, reflecting the local heritage, natural landscape, and historical events.

This article explores the origins and patterns underlying the naming conventions of Lamongan's sub-districts, shedding light on linguistic influences, traditional practices, and administrative decisions that have shaped the region's toponymy. By examining these factors, we gain a deeper appreciation for the historical and cultural layers embedded in the names that define Lamongan's local divisions.

Linguistic anthropologists have long been interested in the research of place-naming. Researchers working with indigenous languages threatened by assimilative forces have

reported the profound significance of indigenous place names for cultural transmission and moral instruction, serving as a symbolic link to their land and as a foundation for their identity (Hunn 1996, 3). The most important studies in this area include Keith Baso's work on Western Apache (1983, 1984, 1988), James Kari's and James Fall's research on Southern Yukon Athapaskan languages (1987, 1988), Dorothy Tunbridge's studies on Australian Aboriginal place names (1987, 1988), and Thomas Thornton's work (1995).

The activity of naming places has strategic functions. Hunn (1996) asserts that the place-name system has potential for ethnosemantic analysis. Cognitive anthropologists have encouraged cross-language comparison in such semantic domains as kinship relations, color categories, and biological taxonomies. A name is a sign that humans use to identify or remember things in their environment. In addition to arbitral language, the naming of human beings and objects in the world is also arbitary; there is no obligatory relationship between objects and the names given. The process of naming is based on mutual agreement within the local community and is disseminated through oral traditions. A name as a medium is highly effective for humans because the memory capacity of the human brain varies among individuals and is quite limited. Humans assign names to everything in this world,

whether living or inanimate. A name is also considered an expression of an event. On the contrary, Chauke (2015, 303) explains that naming is not an arbitrary practice. It is carefully thought out in advance. Finnegan (1970, 472) mentions that names are of great importance as they can express positive sentiments and a sense of personal aspirations for oneself or others. She further explains that names may also contribute to the literary quality of formal or informal conversation, adding depth through their meanings. Pateda (2010, 276) argues that naming is the activity of substituting objects, processes, symptoms, activities, and properties. In another sense, naming is a human activity that replaces everything necessary for communication. All naming processes are related to their respective names. For example, if someone sees a four-legged animal that likes to eat fish and is generally kept as a pet, they will quickly identify it as a cat. In this case, the individual draws on previously acquired knowledge or experience. This experience is gained through interaction or direct contact with nature and its elements, in contrast to knowledge acquired through a process of learning driven by curiosity.

For some scholars, the act of naming is an exercise of power and a political matter. Parents naming their children, conquerors naming new territories, and organizations naming themselves all involve the assertion of authority and control (Guenther 2009, 411). In many countries, place names relate to the construction of nationalism (Zelinsky 1983) and ideological struggle over administered territories (Cohen and Kliot 1992). Names allow us to communicate the development of meanings. Several scholars, including Cerulo (1997), Benford, and Show (2020), assert that names are highly meaningful, establishing parameters for how we understand everything from social issues to corporate identities. The relationship between names and objects or persons has long been the subject of philosophical and linguistic debate. Lambek (2006) argues that proper names are distinct from other nouns. Bodenhorn (2006, 140) contends that the recognition of power and the power of speech are crucial aspects of naming. Both the recognition and articulation of personal names are instituted positively. Names not only imply identity but also sociality that may potentially exist well beyond the immediate universe of the name holder. She further explains that the questioning of a name is encompassed by the connotation and denotation debate. Prihadi (2015) examined the forms of village names in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, considering aspects such as morpheme structure, syllable count, word choice, number of words, word formation processes, origins, and meanings (etymology). The number of syllables in village names can range from a single word to complex words and phrases. These names predominantly consist of more than two syllables; for example, *Ngadisuryan* is derived from *nga-di-sur-yan*, comprising four syllables. The toponyms typically consist of one to two words, with two-word names being more common than single-word names. The etymology of the village names is often linked to the palace region.

For many indigenous communities, place names are a political and cultural construction used to negotiate their identities and

interests in the context of modern state authority. The Sami community in Finland, for example, employs indigenous place names for fishing areas, which powerfully counter the Norwegian names inscribed on official sea charts (Brattland and Nilsen, 2011). For the Māori community in New Zealand, cultural identity is partially constructed and negotiated through place-referenced linguistic tactics, such as pronunciation (Kearns and Berg, 2002). Research on naming places is different from Basso's perspective (Ahaern, 2012, 13-14). Basso observed the naming practices in the Americas, particularly in the Southwest, among the Apache community. The Indigenous community uses the origins of names as historical lessons for younger generations. The study of history is applied through fairy tales in everyday life, aimed at overcoming people's confusion over the meaning of their name during changing times. In addition to observing toponymy folklore directly, Basso also conducted interviews with top Indian learners. Basso focused more on understanding the meaning of society than the content of the place's history. The Indian community maintains a position of meaning through oral tradition over generations.

Place names also may become a significant aspect for understanding historical processes and changes in some countries. Ayanovna (2015) discusses the naming of places in Turkey to illustrate historical developments through the analysis of the functions of place names in ancient Turkey. By employing comparative scientific methods, descriptive analysis, component analysis, and etymological analysis, she examines the mentality of ancient Turkey as reflected in place names, which contain important information and relate to images of historical events associated with specific locations. Pospelov and Smolitskaya (1986) identify the function of place names in reconstructing the changing geography of Moscow by pinpointing and localizing the stages of the city's growth, the development of its radial-circular layout, the absorption of adjacent villages, the distribution of handicrafts and industries, and the presence of hydrographic features and vegetation cover.

Applying a linguistic anthropology perspective that emphasizes the significance of language expressions and practices in revealing cultural values and interests (Duranti 1997), this paper investigates the socio-cultural meanings of the names of four sub-districts in Lamongan Regency. Lamongan Regency consists of 27 sub-districts distributed across three regions: the south-central area, characterized by relatively fertile lowlands; the southern and northern regions, consisting of rocky limestone mountains; and the north-central part, known as the Bonorowo area. Research on the naming of sub-districts in Lamongan Regency was conducted because each sub-district has a unique name. The uniqueness of each sub-district becomes the hallmark of the area. Some of these sub-districts were named based on the process of their establishment, while others were named according to circumstances and expectations, reflecting aspirations for the region, and some names were derived from natural elements.

METHODS

This research employed the qualitative method. Primary data related to the socio-cultural meanings of the names of sub-districts in Lamongan were collected through field research conducted between 2023 and 2024 in four sub-districts, namely Sugio, Kembangbahu, Ngimbang, and Sukorame. In-depth interviews were carried out to obtain information related to the name of the four sub-districts from oral traditions of the communities. Secondary data were collected from books or journals relevant to the analysis. The primary data analysis was conducted using a theoretical framework of linguistic anthropology, particularly focusing on the socio-cultural meanings embedded in the names of specific locations. After analyzing the socio-cultural significance of each sub-district name, we relate it to the historical conditions and the current realities of people's lives. The analysis reveals how the socio-cultural meanings of the names of the four sub-districts, which are associated with prayer and hope or linked to specific historical and contextual conditions, embody the spirit of the community members. Additionally, the perspectives of the younger generation regarding the socio-cultural meanings of the four sub-districts were analyzed to understand the dynamics and changes in these meanings in contemporary life.

RESULTS

In Lamongan, the names of the sub-districts have diverse historical backgrounds and socio-cultural meanings. In this discussion, we will first explain the socio-cultural meanings of the four sub-districts based on their etymological meanings. The names of the sub-districts used as research objects are Sugio, Kembangbahu, Ngimbang, and Sukorame.

Based on our observations, the founding of Lamongan Regency originated from the southern part of the town. This is supported by the discovery of Majapahit royal heritage sites such as the tomb of Nyi Andong Sari, the mother of *Patih Gajah Mada*, and the inscriptions from the legacy of King Airlangga. In addition, the southern part of the Lamongan region was the main trade route from Majapahit to the Tuban trading port. The route is believed to have passed through Mojokerto to the north via Kemplagi, continuing to Pamwotan (Sambeng), Wateswinangun, Lamongrej, Ngimbang, Bluluk, Modo, Babat, Pucuk, Pringgobojo, Laren, and Tuban. The northern part of Lamongan is like the central area; in addition to being near the main road from Surabaya to Tuban, it is also close to the coast (Anam 2016, 13).

DISCUSSION

Sugio

The first sub-district is Sugio, located in the central area of Lamongan. Sugio is the name of a village that has become the name of a sub-district. According to oral tradition, it was founded in 1870 by a community leader named *Mbah Legio*. Sugio is derived from the word *sugih*, meaning "rich," and receives the suffix "o" [O], which imparts a new meaning of calling or praying for wealth. Etymologically, *Sugio* signifies a prayer or hope that people living in the area will become prosperous. This meaning aligns with explanations provided

by our informants. For instance, Yoyok and Sugiono, two village staff members, explained that the name Sugio originated from a common oral expression wishing for the residents to be wealthy. This hope is closely related to the impoverished conditions of Sugio's residents.

We identify a prevalent oral tradition among the residents of Sugio Village related to this prayer. Many residents have received the story from the older generation, which recounts that individuals from outside Sugio have been quite successful and wealthy when trading in Sugio. The merchants in Sugio Market who have achieved significant success are often those from outside the village. "Sing sugih wong liyo," meaning "the rich people are from outside Sugio," is an oral narrative circulating in the community, as recounted by Isna, a chicken butcher, and Sariban, a trader. For this reason, their ancestors prayed that their descendants would one day be prosperous. It is not surprising that many residents of Sugio strive diligently in trading and pursue other sectors to achieve wealth.

In other villages within the Sugio Sub-district, this prayer reflects the poor conditions of the villagers. The area is characterized by low-lying terrain, which often leads to flooding during the rainy season and drought during the dry season. Until the 1970s, the Sugio area was known as a poor region reliant on rain-fed agriculture. Most residents possess limited land, and many work as farm laborers. Rain-fed agriculture permits the harvesting of rice only once during the rainy season. In the dry season, they plant corn, soybeans, and peanuts. After this, they must be patient, as the soil becomes too dry for further planting. Consequently, residents refer to the extreme drought condition as "teloh ketigo," which describes the deep cracks on the soil's surface (*teloh*) caused by the heat of the dry season (*ketigo*). Given these conditions, many Sugio residents live in poverty. During the dry season, they commonly consume "sego jagung" (a local term for food made from corn cooked using rice cooking techniques) and "sego gaplek" (dried cassava that is ground finely and cooked using rice cooking techniques).

In response to these poor conditions, some elderly residents who were able to predict the future stated that the people of Sugio would become prosperous if there were many giant mole crickets in the southern region. To alleviate the hardships, the government built a reservoir in Gondang Lor Village, located in the southern part of Sugio Sub-district, during the 1980s. According to Mursyid (1995, 121-122), the reservoir had been planned since the colonial era, with initial proposals dating back to 1902. By 1940, a reservoir measuring approximately 40 m² was constructed, with a capacity of about 36,000,000 m³. However, it was not until the 1980s that the dam construction project was resumed and inaugurated by President Suharto on April 4, 1987, covering an area of 6.60 km². The construction of this reservoir required substantial heavy equipment, such as backhoes and bulldozers, which were used to dig and dredge the soil, similar to the activities of mole crickets. Thus, the old man's prediction came true, as there were indeed many giant mole crickets in the southern part of Sugio. Residents were also pleased, as the existence of the Gondang reservoir positively

impacted their agricultural practices. With this modern irrigation system, land-owning farmers benefited by being able to plant rice twice a year, resulting in significant economic advantages.

However, for small land farmers and residents who did not own land, the Gondang Lor Reservoir did not provide economic benefits, and they continued to live in poverty. During the 1980s and 1990s, this poverty prompted many Sugio residents to seek better opportunities by migrating to large cities such as Surabaya, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta. In Surabaya, many found work as construction workers and masons on housing projects. The income from construction work was sufficient to meet their families' basic needs and allowed them to purchase modern goods such as televisions and motorbikes. Meanwhile, residents with the skills to prepare special foods, such as *soto* and catfish *pecel*, sought to become street vendors in Jakarta. The decision to sell *soto* and catfish *pecel* significantly improved the residents' prosperity. This success led to an increase in the number of residents who chose to move to Jakarta to sell these dishes. Since the 1990s, residents have also begun selling in cities such as Yogyakarta, Solo, Bogor, Bandung, Semarang, Pekanbaru, and others. To this day, selling *soto* and catfish *pecel* remains a popular endeavor among Sugio residents.

Thus, we argue that the desire to improve one's life and the courage to migrate, armed with culinary skills and construction expertise, embody the meaning of the word Sugio, which translates to "prayer to be rich." This interpretation is logical, as anyone seeking a change in their circumstances must possess the courage to make radical decisions when their place of origin does not guarantee economic improvement. The ancestors of the Sugio people likely recognized that this arid area could only meet the basic needs of families, making the accumulation of wealth very challenging. Consequently, they named this area with a prayer that its inhabitants would eventually become prosperous.

The courage of the residents of Sugio District to sell *soto* and catfish *pecel* in large cities has resulted in significant economic changes. The most visible of these changes is the increasing number of city-style walled houses since the late 1990s. Economically successful sellers of *soto* and catfish *pecel* have replaced their wooden houses with impressive walled structures. In Karangsambigalih Village, for example, sellers of *soto* and catfish *pecel* in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bogor, and Semarang have built their homes to reflect the latest architectural styles. These houses serve as symbols of prosperity and wealth. Some residents have also purchased properties in Jakarta and Yogyakarta to use as boarding houses. For those wishing for their children to pursue higher education, they allocate a special budget for tuition fees. This reality represents a positive development for the economic and social life of the community. To this day, the meaning of Sugio as a prayer is still recognized by the younger generation.

When we spoke with some young people from various villages in Sugio, they expressed that they view the prayer for

the people of Sugio to become rich as a source of positive energy for those living in large cities, both on Java and other islands. Although they had not previously paid much attention to this meaning, the changes in their lives have led them to believe that the prayer associated with Sugio's name serves as a motivating force for their work. Furthermore, the word "sugih," meaning rich, is a widely recognized expression in social life, making it easy for people to understand the meaning of Sugio as a prayer and hope. However, what is most important is how they can implement this meaning in their daily activities aimed at improving their lives, whether in education, work, or community engagement.

Kembangbahu

The next sub-district is *Kembangbahu*. There is no fixed historical data regarding the time of its establishment. Based on oral tradition, as recounted by Mohammad Sohik and Sujirman in interviews, Kembangbahu was established in the 1400s following the *Paregrek* war, a civil war in the Majapahit Kingdom. Kembangbahu served as a refuge for Majapahit soldiers who escaped the turmoil of the *Paregrek* war. Etymologically, the name 'Kembangbahu' is derived from the combination of two words: *kembang*, meaning 'flower,' and *bahu*, meaning 'shoulder.' Thus, 'Kembangbahu' translates to 'a flower on the shoulder.'

The meaning of "flower on the shoulder" does not refer to a flower on someone's shoulder or arm; rather, it is a symbolic expression representing 'rank' or 'position.' According to the accounts of several informants, the origin of this meaning is closely tied to historical events that occurred in Majapahit. Majapahit soldiers who managed to escape encountered an Islamic preacher named *Sheiks* Brumbun (whom the residents of Kembangbahu referred to as *Mbah Sheiks*). The soldiers had lost the symbols of their rank on their shoulders. For them, losing these rank symbols was a source of great sorrow, as these symbols were earned through struggle and devotion to the kingdom. The rank symbol also signified their social status within society; the more ranks they had on their shoulders, the higher their social and political standing. *Mbah Sheiks* provided them with protection and accepted them as disciples. He advised the students, who had lost their rank symbols, that despite this loss, they still retained their status as true warriors. They could continue to strive in other forms of life within society. In another interpretation, Kembangbahu can also be understood as a representation of rank, position, or success in life that must be pursued tenaciously. Based on this oral narrative, the naming of the Kembangbahu district can be categorized as a type of naming rooted in the history of its establishment.

The meaning of Kembangbahu for the community appears to have undergone a significant shift. Most residents of Kembangbahu are unaware of the historical background of the sub-district in which they live. Unfortunately, only a few staff members of the sub-district or village possess knowledge of and understand the historical and cultural significance of Kembangbahu. There are almost no parents today who impart knowledge about the history of their environment; stories of the past are often regarded as ancient and belonging to a

bygone era. As a result, young people today are largely unaware of the meaning embedded in the name of their place of residence. This situation reflects a cultural shift within society, specifically the process of cultural learning among community members regarding internalization and socialization (Koentjadingrat, 2008, 227). There has been a transition from historical-cultural meaning to administrative meaning. The younger generation understands Kembangbahu primarily in administrative terms; they recognize only the location of their residence without any awareness of the area's history. The community tends to prioritize immediate needs and identity related to their residential address. Those who are familiar with the oral history of Kembangbahu are generally over 80 years old, along with a few civil servants working in the government.

Ngimbang

Ngimbang Sub-district is in the southern part of Lamongan Regency. Based on archaeological artifacts, it was founded in 996 during the reign of *Empu Sindok*. The name Ngimbang is derived from the word '*himbang*,' which appears on one of the ancient royal relics in the Cane region of Sambeng Sub-district. This word can be found in the Cane inscription, '*masanggra ing himbangin ancolo*,' which translates to 'under the hillside.' The word *himbang* evolved into *Ngimbang* due to a morphemic process involving prefixes. The adjective prefix is added to the base form, transforming (N-) + *imbang* 'draw' into Ngimbang. Additionally, this change may be attributed to the difficulty the local population has in pronouncing the word. Other examples of similar transformations include the name of Dusun *Bujel* becoming *Mbujel*, *Blawi* becoming *Mblawi*, *Guman* becoming *Ngguman*, and *Gunung* becoming *Nggunung*.

Apart from these historical meanings, some residents of Ngimbang have different cultural interpretations that, upon examination, remain connected to the historical context. Siti Utami, a staff member of the sub-district education office, stated that Ngimbang derives from the expression "wangine kembang," meaning "flower fragrance." The syllable "-ngi" is taken from the word "wangine," while the syllable "(m)bang" is derived from the word "kembang." The expression "wangine kembang" carries a symbolic meaning, suggesting that the main road in this area has always been favored by many, including the king and his family, as well as traders. The area is shaded and adorned with numerous trees and flowers, creating a pleasant atmosphere for those who pass through. This interpretation also embodies a hope that the Ngimbang area, despite its remoteness, will become a bustling hub due to the many people who traverse it. Additionally, some residents, such as Mulyati, a village finance officer, interpret Ngimbang as "balancing," representing a point of equilibrium when problems arise in the area. According to her, Ngimbang's strategic location, situated between other villages, makes it a preferred site for residents to address issues. For instance, during a significant fire in Katar Hamlet that had the potential to incite conflict among residents, a meeting was convened in Ngimbang to resolve the matter.

Although it is located in a teak forest area and limestone hills, Ngimbang emerged as an important region during the kingdom era, spanning from the time of Mpu Sindok, through Daha, to Majapahit. Imam Sujadi, a local historian and teacher, stated in an interview that during the Majapahit era, Ngimbang served as a strategic location for the nobility. This is evidenced by the discovery of Majapahit relics, including the Gurit inscription, Ngimbang inscription, Lemahbang inscription, Wotan inscription, and the Nyai Andong Sari cemetery, among others, which are scattered throughout Ngimbang and its surrounding areas. Furthermore, the Ngimbang area served as a route connecting the Majapahit Palace with northern regions such as Tuban and its vicinity. Its location between hills and lowland areas made it an ideal resting place during journeys, with the cool conditions providing comfort to travelers.

Currently, Ngimbang is a relatively busy district, as it is traversed by inter-district roads connecting Malang, Jombang, Lamongan, Bojonegoro, and Tuban. Although the majority of the population works as farmers, many residents have opened shops and restaurants to accommodate travelers who have journeyed long distances and wish to rest in the area. Additionally, Ngimbang serves as the economic center of the southern region of Lamongan. The presence of a sub-district market, a sugar factory, and several warehouses indicates an economic expansion that reflects a transformation from the past. Since the 1990s, a state high school has also been established to provide educational opportunities in this area, ensuring that it does not fall behind sub-districts closer to the city of Lamongan. Equally important, the Lamongan government has constructed a hospital in this area to serve patients from Ngimbang, Sambeng, Modo, Bluluk, and Sukorame.

This reality proves that Ngimbang's in-between position is strategic for economic, social, and cultural growth in the southern Lamongan region, as it connects significant areas in East Java. It can be argued that the historical context surrounding the naming and positioning of the Ngimbang area has transformed into a present-day reality, fostering considerable hope for the advancement of the local population. This, of course, necessitates attention and appropriate policies from the Lamongan government, similar to those implemented during the royal era, which recognized this area as important and strategic.

Unfortunately, the historical and cultural significance of Ngimbang is not widely known by the population, particularly among both older and younger generations. This discontinuity in understanding arises from a lack of knowledge transfer from those who are informed to the broader community. While residents are aware that their area is currently experiencing rapid development as a center for economy, education, and health in the southern region of Lamongan, very few understand that these developments are a transformation of many significant events from the past. Furthermore, historical and cultural meanings represent a discourse that can foster civic pride in the region and its culture. When residents no longer know or understand these

meanings, Ngimbang will become merely an administrative designation for them.

Sukorame

The last sub-district to analyze is Sukorame, located in the highland area near Ngimbang, Modo, and Bluluk Sub-districts. Sukorame is slightly behind compared to other sub-districts, as evidenced by its environment and geographical location. It is the southernmost sub-district in the western corner, bordered to the west by Bojonegoro Regency and to the south by Jombang Regency, with an inter-regency boundary marked by a vast and extensive teak forest. Almost all residents of Sukorame are engaged in agriculture, which is reflected in the substantial agricultural land owned by each family. The area of Sukorame encompasses rice fields and dry fields covering approximately 2,179 hectares, along with a forest area of 1,636 hectares (Faried 1995, 235). Sukorame sub-district is situated in Sukorame Village, which was established in 1992. This sub-district was created as a result of the division of Bluluk Sub-district, primarily due to the extensive geographical coverage, which made it difficult for residents to address population issues effectively.

Etymologically, the word Sukorame consists of two parts derived from the Javanese language: Suko, meaning 'happy,' and rame, meaning 'busy.' The village was founded in 1920 by community elders named Budho and Mariem. According to Giono and Barjo, two senior residents, the name Sukorame signifies 'like' or 'happy' in terms of development, rather than happiness associated with conflict that could harm the village. Additionally, there is a spring in the area known as *sendhang*, which is surrounded by suko (soka) trees. Every evening, many activities take place at the *sendhang*, making it a bustling location. To commemorate the village, the aforementioned community leaders named this area 'Sukorame.'

In Sukorame Sub-district, *sedekah bumi*, a traditional fertility ritual expressing gratitude and prayer to God for health and well-being, is still popular. This ritual is conducted annually on Monday *Pon* at the spring of *Sendhang Gedhe* Well in Sukorame Kulon Village. If the *sedekah bumi* is performed on a day other than Monday *Pon*, many residents may experience trance. The ritual begins with a procession led by village officials and residents, who bring rice cones to *Sendhang Gedhe* Well. This procession is accompanied by gamelan music and *jathilan* dance, along with a *reog* performance. The community is also expected to participate in *tayub*; although this segment lasts only one hour, the series of events has become a tradition that needs to be preserved.

The tradition of Hinduism remains deeply ingrained in the southern part of Lamongan, while the people in the northern part of Lamongan rarely engage in such traditions. In fact, in Paciran Sub-district, the *sedekah bumi* tradition is absent. However, the *sedekah bumi* observed today differs significantly from that of the past. Husain (2017, 115) notes that the current *sedekah bumi* has lost its sacred atmosphere. Historically, *sedekah bumi* was closely associated with the worship of fertility rites and Dewi Sri, the fertility goddess in

Javanese mythology; however, it now incorporates Islamic elements. This shift is evidenced by the recitation of verses from the Al-Qur'an and accompanying prayers.

Despite these challenges, Sukorame, as envisioned by its founders, is currently evolving into an area that is becoming increasingly vibrant with economic, educational, and cultural activities. The transformation toward a modern society is evident in the daily lives of the residents. Once a remote region within the teak forest area in the western part of Lamongan, Sukorame has now developed into a sub-district that has undergone significant progress. Market, educational, and governmental activities drive the lives of Sukorame's residents. During specific occasions, such as *sedekah bumi*, folk art performances, including *jaranan*, *tayub*, *reog*, *ludruk*, and *dangdut*, can be easily found. Gradually, Sukorame is transforming into a truly lively area.

Similar to the youth in Sugio District, the young people in Sukorame also understand the cultural significance of the sub-district's name. This understanding is facilitated by the fact that the sub-district was only officially established in 1992, making its cultural meaning easy to remember. This is a positive development for the community, both economically and culturally, as it fosters a shared understanding that can contribute to the area's growth. Sukorame is expected not only to develop economically but also to thrive culturally, enabling the younger generation to receive a better education while allowing the community to continue negotiating local culture amidst modernity.

CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated how the naming of four sub-districts in Lamongan can be interpreted. The underlying power of hope in the naming process is evident. Sugio, meaning "the prayer for the rich," reflects the transformation of people who once lived in poverty into prosperous individuals, not solely due to fertile land but also because of their remarkable spirit to seek opportunities beyond their region. Many have become hard workers in major cities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Bandung, Bogor, Semarang, and others, earning wealth by selling traditional food. *Kembangbahu* is metaphorical; it suggests that achieving rank or position in society requires hard work. No rank or position can be attained without significant effort. This implies that behind every hope lies a spirit of diligence, which the local population has exemplified. Ngimbang, meaning "under the hill," has now become a crucial intersection for traffic from surrounding towns, significantly contributing to the economic growth of the area. Sukorame, which translates to "like to be happy," has fulfilled the founders' aspirations. This district is currently evolving into a vibrant area bustling with economic, educational, and cultural activities. The transformation toward modern society is evident in the daily lives of its residents. Once a remote region within the teak forest area in the western part of Lamongan, it is now developing into a district that has experienced substantial progress.

Indeed, many community members in the Kembangbahu and Ngimbang sub-districts lack knowledge and understanding of the historical and socio-cultural significance of their sub-district names. This presents a challenge for the government, educators, and community leaders to continue promoting these meanings within the community so that the community members have a common understanding and can use their positive energy to strive for a better life. Furthermore, the importance of socialization is closely linked to the necessity of understanding the historical and socio-cultural meanings behind the sub-district names, which can shed light on the dynamics of social, economic, and community life. This understanding may also facilitate the preparation of future improvement efforts based on the spirit and positive energy from these meanings across historical contexts.

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