

## The Local Identity that Still Survives

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**Abstract:** Self-identity is an affirmation activity or pinned behavior identity conducted in an institution. In every human life, various events are always attached to the attribute or identity carried. Generally, people in Ambon City have known this name and identity for generations. The qualitative research approach and case studies were used to demonstrate the *Papalele* people's identity strength and persisted to this day in society, even in their communities, this identity has been hereditary.

**Keywords:** *identity, survival strategy, small traders*

### Introduction

When the word "identity" is mentioned, peoples' understanding is undoubtedly different because a lot is associated with this term such as an individual's name, place, lecturer, student, lawyer, and certain inherent habits. A new identity developed when there is an occurrence of individual human activities, such as an emphasis on a particular position in society.

Identity often discovered in human relationships, which helps confirm the person's position and an offender's role. Therefore, it is assumed to be complicated and triggered by actions. Subsequently, identity defined as a symbol or an affirmation of one's self to others, and vice versa. Additionally, people tend to carry out daily activities based on their identity.

It is an undeniable fact that all scientific fields have their respective identities. For example, in the economic area, there are designated names or trademark labeling attached to large, medium, small, and micro-companies, including petty traders. The inhabitants of Ambon City are generally referred to as the local merchants of *Papalele* due to their familiarity with the market's economic activities. This study discussed the existence of *Papalele* used as a differentiator from other traders that have survived for generations in the City.

### Literature Review

#### *Traditional Market Activities*

Petty trading is indeed an informal sector with little rules. They tend to occupy specific locations and move around to sell their goods. Generally, the informal sector involves the production and exchange of commodities, along with legal services. However, the traders do not have a business permit, violate location rules, do not pay taxes, comply with labor regulations based on contracts, and carry out work conditions that are not legally guaranteed. Also, there is no guaranteed

relationship between suppliers and consumers. Naturally, most traders do not have a business guarantee; therefore, any disaster destroys the lives of their owners (Chukuezi, 2010). These petty traders carry out

these behaviors every day for months, and it has become a culture that is difficult to separate from social relations. Alternatively, informal trade leads to 'social life' (Morales 2000, Tonda and Kepe 2016, Happy and Richard 2009). Therefore, there are reasons behind every effort conducted based on hope, existence, and the goal to improve the individual's survival level and make their families better.

The existence of the *Papalele* in the market is natural because they need specific strategies to maintain their lives, even when they are involved in the labor market in urban areas, which is improbable because of limited education and skills. In most cases, petty traders often have to deal with people's perceptions, such as a weak symbol, marginalized individuals with little or no educational qualifications, or a group of poor people. However, imaging becomes a challenge and even serves as an opportunity to spur business continuity.

However, it needs to admit that petty traders are not always successful in their business and do not have the slightest intent to grow, unlike entrepreneurs seeking investments for business development. It usually occurs assuming a group or individual lacks social cohesion, combined with adequate skills and sufficient capital (Dasgupta & Ismail (1999), and Dasgupta, Levin, & Lubchenco (2000)). They are focusing on the sales process and small profits that utilized and invested. The economic situation of the *Papalele* is similar to James Scott's report on the situation and dilemma of farmers (Piers & Harold (1987) and Scott (1977)).

Most households practice subsistence farming and have to deal with natural conditions and pressures from other parties (Bates (2014) and Scott (1977)). Farmers do not have the rational ability to consider the advantages and disadvantages of agricultural products. They optimally try to avoid the various possibilities that harm their farm products and the effect when compared to efforts that increase profits from the farm output. Scott referred to this model as the "safety first" principle. It is based on the fact that some communities consider the safety of agricultural products by utilizing all capabilities, namely regulations, technical processes, social relations, and moral considerations.

However, Samuel Popkins refuted Scott's proposal. According to Popkins, farmers are rational creatures that calculate their profits and tend to reduce losses (Jennifer and Paul 2000). Therefore, Popkins considers rural communities (farmers) as rational actors and not anti-market mechanisms. The ability to develop agricultural products is supported by technological support and pro to change. It leads to advanced farming, which in turn maintains economic existence.

Petty traders are inseparable from traditional markets. Generally, they support their families with the income generated from the trading processes conducted in the conventional markets. Therefore, the traditional market is the center for all daily activities carried out by petty traders. It becomes a meeting point where relationships built with other parties, particularly for transactions. Indeed, since the market serves as a base for trading activities, it is easier for buyers and sellers to interact and develop social relations.

The traditional market's existence is often considered a symbol for building an economic actor's social status. The improvement of social status mostly determined by the extent to which the role carried out by economic actors inspires and serves as a benchmark for other communities. This condition was also reported by Jeniffer Alexander that researched the effect of the Javanese culture on small traders in the *Kebumen* market (Jennifer and Paul 2000). *Juragan* and *Bakul* stated that local economic actors map traditional markets. *Juragan* is of Javanese and Chinese origin, which has assimilated into the local culture. It helps accumulate capital ownership to collect necessities such as vegetables, fruit, animals, and clothing/textiles for trading.

### **Identity**

Currently, no specific study has conducted on the relationship between identity and petty traders. Attention usually directed to other fields such as sociology, social anthropology, psychology, and politics. Conversely, the discourse on the identity of small traders seems relatively limited and challenging. However, it does not mean that the discussion of identity within the framework of petty trading ignored. Subsequently, identity often considered a natural occurrence. However, it is not easily practiced (Soegijono, 2015).

Identity is a concept not strictly defined; therefore, various scientific discipline provides different meanings (Abdelal et al. (2001) and Casey & Dustmann (2010)). It is important to understand identity is empirically dependent on measuring instruments. Similarly, the phenomenon used to identify a petty trader is either through clothing or specific equipment associated, which serves as symbols and individual behavior in building relationships with other parties. Davis (2009) stated that the concept of identity is not always familiar with economics.

According to Abdelal et al. (2001) and Chen & Li (2009), the concept of identity is common in social sciences. Therefore, the ability to identify petty traders makes it easier for people to recognize the actors' behaviors. However, it does not mean that some theoretical views concerning identity not discussed. The references of identity theory can be juxtaposed to capture the meaning and examine the strategies used by small traders. In essence, the identity of petty traders' clothing and equipment is a symbol and an effort to build a business image for partners and the people in general.

An understanding of identity is a general phenomenon, demonstrated through performance or construction interpreted by others. Membership of social identity occurs because of actions and behaviors causally involved in the relationship (Benwell and Stokoe 2006). Furthermore, identity characterizes people following their positions in society, and it is essential to note that both individuals and culture are also closely related to the concept of identity (Burke and Stets 2009). Ashton (Jenkins 2008) stated that it is a way of discovering oneself, the identity of others, and peoples' perspectives about self and others. Multidimensional classification or mapping of the human world involves individuals, as well as members of groups. It merely means that identity is observed in daily life and verified (Berger and Luckmann 1967).

According to Herbert Blumer, identity often discussed in the field of psychology (Blumer 1986). Blumer coined and introduced the symbolic interaction term in 1962 and then developed it

again in 1969. Blumer investigated the study conducted by George Herbert Mead (Blumer 1986), it focused on the unique human character interaction centered on the use of symbols. The symbol system, which is discussed later in this research, is used to give a detailed explanation of petty traders. Symbols used to represent objects and events in certain situations, including words used to communicate (Ritzer and Goodman 2004; Jenkins 2008).

Therefore, in every identity construction system, there is a norm hierarchy that serves as a reciprocal relationship to measure behavior or use for judgment. Without a value hierarchy, which also hidden in ones' mind, it becomes difficult to discover the collectivity to face new challenges (Schöpflin 2005). The construction system found in a study conducted in Germany. Casey and Dustmann (2010) stated that the process associated with the migration of immigrants to other countries includes their identities from their home countries. This identity is closely related to the individual's business formation - the labor market. From the perspective stated above, it is evident that identity is a subjective reality, as reported by Berger and Luckman (1967).

This research shows that individuals interact with society and the social environment. Conversely, people are also influenced by the community through actions. Therefore, traders acquainted with their social environment, shelter, and market through specific values and norms. The symbols of small traders serve as a medium of communication with the community. For example, clothing is used as a symbol, to create public awareness to fulfill the necessities of life as petty traders.

The debate on traders' real identity is dependent on the interpreted preferences and backgrounds held in the social environment. A media set or tool supports the action as symbols used to distinguish between individuals and groups. Similarly, small traders act as individuals or groups, with social identity attached to certain media such as clothing and equipment. In this context, small traders identified through a self-defense mechanism known as identity resistance and their long-term collective efforts. According to a research conducted by Manuel Castell, identity resistance is generated by actors in devalued positions/conditions and stigmatized by the logic of domination, thereby building trenches of resilience and survival based on different principles derived from, those permeating the institution of society (Castells 2011). According to Castells, resistance identity is an effort raised by the actor to create a defense boundary under pressure.

## **Research Methods**

Qualitative research with a set of methods used to draws attention to the study around an event (Crowe et al. 2011). Therefore, case studies provide honest and thorough explanations of some instances to enable the reader to have in-depth knowledge of the topic. It also used to validate the author's interpretation by reviewing several suitable objectives and data used as the foundation of the case study. Similarly, Yin (2017), defined a private case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates phenomena in real contexts, mainly when the boundaries are not explicit, and where multiple sources of evidence utilized.

*Papalele* is the subject described in the case study based on empirical reality (Seale 1999). Besides, Berger and Luckmann (1967) explained the basics of knowledge in daily life or subjective experiences. Exploratory research used to support the activities of the subject. Therefore, the case study model conducted repeatedly to ascertain the informant's behavior to ensure information validity and reliability. Besides, it also supported with both primary and secondary data from various literature and documents.

Primary data purposively obtained from 18 *papalele* informants consisting of community leaders, *Saniri*, and village government officials such as traders, academics, and historians in Ambon City (Lin, 1976). The research locations were the village of Hatalai and the Mardika Market in Ambon City.

## Discussions

This section explained the *papalele* self-identity, such as the clothes worn, equipment sold, and selling patterns carried out.

### *Kebaya as Papalele Distinctive Clothes*

In Hatalai village, girls required to use *kebaya* after completing elementary school (SD). Meanwhile, those unable to further their education to a higher level, such as junior high (SMP) and senior high schools (SMA), treated differently. Those able to continue their education wear blouses and skirts while others wear *kebaya*, which is justified by their parents. The *kebaya* clothing is a prerequisite for carrying baskets to sell products in the market. An informant expression 'mama Bae' (60 years) is as follows

“  
...beta mulai pake kabaya dari mulai Getsasi Tahun 1965 la 1968 beta sidi, pake kabaya seng pake sandal. Mo mama yang suru te, barang waktu itu, nona-nona yang seng sekolah tarus tu pake kabaya. ..katong pake kabaya tu voor pi bajual atau kalau umpama mau jadi ibu rumah tangga, pake kaeng deng kabaya, tapi yang sekolah tu pake baju deng spatu. Mama antua su seng mau beta sekolah tu, la pi bajual te...” (Ambonese language dialect)

"I started wearing *kebaya* during the Catechization in 1965; however, in 1968, I became a member of the Church Sidi. I usually wear them without sandals. My mother forced me to wear it because, at that time, girls that we're unable to further their education wore it to the market. Back then, some of our mothers did not want us to go to school; eventually, we had to sell."

*Kebaya* became the identity and characteristics of the *papalele*. The above description emphasizes its use by girls with limited access to education. On the contrary, *kebaya* is an affirmation for women that eventually became market traders, because there was no chance of getting a better job. However, it discovered that some girls who did not continue their education

to a higher level still wore clothes such as blouses and skirts. It happened to one of the informants named 'Mama Yoke' that attended the second grade in junior high school. The *kebaya* remains a *papalele* hallmark, as cited by Mama Yoke.

#### *The case*

'Mama Yoke' started using *papalele* approximately 17 years ago after her husband passed away in 1993. The child was only able to attain the second grade of junior high school due to a lack of funds. The father was only a construction worker, and Mama Yoke was the only *papalele*. Subsequently, Mama Yoke was fortunate to attend school until the second grade in junior high school, similar to some of the girls in Hatalai village.

Nevertheless, due to the social (parent) situation and the perspective of individuals that think that girls not in school need to wear *kebaya*, "Mama Yoke" is an exception. Their parents did not require them to wear the dress, because they had time to continue schooling, even after they were married. Mama Yoke decided to become a *papalele* after the death of the husband *to carter for her* family. According to 'Mama Yoke,' it feels weird wearing a shirt to the *papalele* market. *Kebaya* is a suitable dress for selling while wearing ordinary clothes for both routine and regular activities at home.

#### *Equipment for selling*

The equipment used to store goods for sale is an indispensable supporting tool for selling. Generally, simple equipment made from the local bamboo midrib, which quickly obtained around the village or from damaged kitchen utensils such as *nyiru* and *waskom* used to store fruits such as *tandeng* and *baronda*. The *atiting* is special selling equipment woven from bamboo by local craftsmen and the *dulang* from durian tree wood. The two types of equipment are tools commonly used in the past by *papalele* when selling. However, some indigenes of the community still utilize this equipment.



Figure 1: Form of Sales Equipment: *Dulang* and *Atiting* that Still Survive

Due to development, the *dulang* no longer used while some *papalele* people still use *atiting*. The *dulang* and *atiting* have become the hallmark, particularly for those from mountainous regions, because their orientation is to sell fruits. However, with the development of household appliances, small traders gradually abandoned this equipment, and it replaced with *yiru*, bamboo or plastic baskets, and *waskom*. Another problem is the lack of local materials for the craftsmen, which led to the use of modern equipment. Likewise, in *Hatalai* village, most of the craftsmen were dead, and unfortunately, the remaining one is, elderly and unable to produce such equipment. Furthermore, they did not transfer the skills they possessed to the next generation; this led to the extinction of the equipment. Therefore, the *papalele* needed to find a replacement.

### ***Baronda and Tandeng Mechanism***

The Ambonese was accustomed to the *papalele* pattern of selling fruits, kitchen necessities, and vegetables. The *papalele* usually find buyers and customers by going from house to house. Residents that do not have the chance to go to the market tend to wait for the *papalele* that passes their homes. The method of *baronda* or going around is still in existence, although several *papalele* prefer not to do that anymore. Those that still *baronda* are more concerned, among others, relations with buyers have been established for a long time, maintain the relationship, do not want to lose their customers. *Baronda* usually carried on the head, circular baskets covered with cloth. The goods are carried on the head and known as '*keku*.'

*Baronda* is the *papalele*'s choice to hawk goods by going to shops, food stalls, and people's homes and selling fruits to people they meet while hawking. *Baronda* is repeated continuously till all the best-selling merchandise is sold.



Figure 2: *Baronda* Informant with *Atiting* Overhead

*Tandeng* also called settling, is a better way of selling *papalele* compared to *baronda*. The location depends on the crowd and buyer possibility, such as in front of a supermarket, overhanging a public transport terminal, the motor park, seaport yard, market, and shops. *Papalele* that is *tandeng* not need any official permission from certain parties such as the shop owners to get to any place. With the consent and willingness of shop owners to have a rather large area in front of the shop, the *tandeng* stays there as long as it does not disrupt customer movement at the relevant shop. Furthermore, while sitting, they offer and sell fruits to people walking in and out of supermarkets. Some customers just ask for prices, some bargain with each other, while individuals purchase the items—some of them seen purchase mangoes, bananas, and other fruits.

There are also *papalele* that make use of both patterns simultaneously throughout the day. The purpose is to avoid losses. Usually, move around to sell fruit that has not sold. The *Papalele* hawks from shop to restaurant, and every other place visited to sell fruits. *Tandeng* and *baronda* carried out daily. Therefore, *papalele*, customers need to be visited, because when they are, they try to ask questions to interrupt communication.



Figure 3: Two Informants (Left and Right Tandeng Positions) in Front of One Swalan in Ambon City

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the identity of *Papalele* shown in the daily activities conducted in the market and society by petty traders. Identifiers are inherent in clothing and equipment. Thereby it is clearly distinguished between other traders. Therefore, the existence of the small traders (petty traders) shown through a set of inherent identities, also referred to as symbols. The selling of clothing and equipment used to confirm the local identity of the petty trader from other business actors, as well as efforts to build an image (image building). Recognition of their identity is not exclusive; however, it involves other parties - in this case, business partners and the community. Identity is not only demonstrated through the use of clothing and selling equipment, but it also manifested through the awareness of business collaboration. Togetherness and justice cause them to enjoy their efforts. In a competitive market situation, they always prefer to collaborate.



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