

TRADITIONAL JAVANESE IDIOMS AS THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SOCIETY'S CHARACTER

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Submission date: 30-Aug-2019 10:44AM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1165118888

File name: document.pdf (982.54K)

Word count: 4128

Character count: 22733

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TRADITIONAL JAVANESE IDIOMS AS THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SOCIETY'S CHARACTER

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Abstract

Traditional Javanese idioms have been inseparable parts in the Javanese's life. Those idioms have been infiltrated and merged in each part of their life. They use it as the educational medium which philosophically represents their characterization and daily behaviors. This research was aimed to describe the Javanese traditional idioms as the representatives of the society's characterization. This research used descriptive qualitative design. The sources of the data were in form of Javanese traditional idioms from the elders of the society and various written references. The data collection techniques used in the research were observation, interview, and note taking technique. The data analysis technique was content-analysis technique. The results of this research show that the traditional Javanese idioms do represent the society's characterization. The characterization which are represented within those idioms are as follow: (1) the reflection of the characterization which put emphasize on unity, (2) the reflection of the characterization which are full of responsibility, (3) the reflection of the characterization which emphasize on the tolerance, and (4) the reflection of the characterization with compliance to God.

Keywords: Javanese traditional idioms, representation, characterization

Abstrak

Ungkapan tradisional Jawa menjadi bagian hidup masyarakat Jawa yang tak terpisahkan. Ungkapan tersebut sudah menyusuf dan menyatu ke dalam seluruh sendi kehidupannya. Mereka memanfaatkannya sebagai media pendidikan yang mengandung makna filosofi yang mencerminkan kepribadian dan perilaku keseharian. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan ungkapan tradisional Jawa sebagai cermin kepribadian masyarakat pemakainya. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Data penelitian berupa ungkapan tradisional Jawa yang bersumber pada para sesepuh masyarakat dan berbagai referensi tertulis. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan di dalam penelitian ini adalah teknik observasi, wawancara, simak, dan catat. Teknik analisis data menggunakan teknik analisis isi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ungkapan tradisional Jawa mencerminkan kepribadian masyarakat pemakainya. Kepribadian yang tecermin di dalam ungkapan tersebut meliputi: (1) kepribadian yang mementingkan kebersamaan, (2) kepribadian yang penuh tanggung jawab, (3) kepribadian yang mengutamakan tenggang rasa, dan (4) kepribadian yang berbalut kepasrahan.

Kata kunci: ungkapan tradisional Jawa, cermin, kepribadian

A. INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, the existence of Javanese language is getting shifted due to the oppressive complexity of human needs. According to Mulyana the existence of Javanese language in the Javanese' life is

getting shifted. The shift should be anticipated as it may lead to the language's extinction in the near future. Disseminating the notable values within the Javanese idioms is a way to preserve the application of the language by the Javanese (2013:159). It is in line with Sri Hasti Widiastuti's research

findings which stated that the moral values within the Javanese idioms can be used as the life guidance for self-control (2012:153). In this case, Franz Magnis Suseno stated that the teachings of Javanese morality ethics (*etika kejawen*) in Javanese literature take form in so called *wulang* (Endraswara, 2010:37). Thus, the moral teachings in form of good moral values in the Javanese traditional idioms are worth to preserve so the next cultural descendants can use it as model.

According to Sugono, idioms are *cetusan* (utterances), expression, statements, adage, aphorism, sayings, *amsal* (Malay's old style proverb), *bidal* (Malay's old style poem), maxim, *perbahaasan*, proverbs, *petitih* (wise sayings), allusion, simile, supposition, and imagery (2009). While according to Cervantes (in Dananjaya, 2002:28) traditional idioms are short sentences which were abstracted from long experiences of life. Based on the definition of traditional idioms, Subalidinata divides the Javanese traditional idioms into *parikan*, *pepindhan*, *paribasan*, *bebasan*, *wangsalan*, *seloka*, *cangkriman*, *sanepo*, *panyandra*, and *isbat* (1981).

Javanese traditional idioms are the assets that reflect the Javanese characterization. Those idioms, in form of *pasemon*, are generally used as the communication tools. A deep contemplation is needed to find the significance meaning within. The utterances of *pasemon* are full of meaningful symbols which are the reflection of the speakers' characterizations (Kasnadi and Sutejo, 2018).

Nowadays, the existence of Javanese traditional idioms is getting drifted by the seizure of modern culture infiltrating the vast life of society. Globalization era which channels the modernization is unstoppable, so do the vast development of science and technological which become the necessities of the society. In addition to modernization, Javanese traditional idioms which flourish in

the Javanese cultural life are facing extinction lately due to the authorities' lack of concern. The ignorance is due to the mindset of instant culture which flourishes in the modern era. In accordance with the view, Jean Couteau (in Kasnadi and Sutejo, 2018) stated that traditional cultural elements are fading from the social reality. It is then being replaced by identifier statements. Yet, for Suripan Sadi Hutomo, traditional idioms are the forgotten treasure (1991).

If the ignorance and modernization are not well managed, those Javanese traditional idioms will be endangered and lost from the society. In the future, the youth will not recognize the great values within the Javanese traditional idioms. For that reason, special concern for the existence of the Javanese traditional idioms is needed so the next generation can follow the local genius values within as their social life guidance in the future.

Javanese traditional idioms are the Javanese culture assets which have been integrated and settled in their daily life, even internalized in their daily characterization. Therefore the notable values, as part of local wisdom become the reflection of their characterization. According to Sri Wintala Achmad (2012:52) the Javanese ancestors' view of life were stated within their words of wisdom. That view of life is the advice of wisdom, truth, essence of life, or the transcendental relationship between human and God.

B. METHOD

This research used descriptive method. This method explained the research findings in form of descriptive text. The research data were in form of Javanese traditional idioms based on various references, and the elders or the prominent figures of the society about the Javanese traditional idioms. The research data were

collected through reading various references based on the observation and the interview with the elders or the prominent figures of the society. The data analysis technique was content-analysis technique. Collected data were then analyzed continually and intensely to find out the intended significance which reflected the user's characterization in correspond to the purpose of the study.

C. DISCUSSION

Traditional Javanese idioms reflect the Javanese characterizations. The characterizations include solidarity, responsibility, tolerance, and compliance. The following discussion describes those four characterizations within the traditional Javanese idioms.

1. *The reflection of the characterization which put emphasize on unity*

Javanese is a society which holds their principle of solidarity upright. The Javanese is well-known for their friendliness. They like to tell jokes and address each other in daily life. In fact, they usually do small talk in communication.

Traditional Javanese idioms contain the Javanese views of life. Their desire to live in harmony and respect for other is one of the Javanese views of life. Solidarity is a hereditary life philosophy for the Javanese. The solidarity becomes one of the characterizations of the rural Javanese society. It is in line to Koentjaraningrat's opinion that the Javanese like to do mutual cooperation to help ease others burden. This mutual cooperation becomes the characterization of the rural Javanese society (1994). They uphold the principle of harmony in their daily life. Their principles are the representation of the effort to synchronize the microcosm and macrocosm (Widyastuti, 2012:153).

To create the importance of solidarity, the Javanese is very familiar with the idioms *dudu sanak dudu kadang yen mati melu kelangan*

(the grief upon someone who is not part of the family, when he/she passes away). This idiom is the reflection of the Javanese characterization who always wants to live communally. They even feel the similar grief when someone passes away even though he/she is not part of their family. If they heard someone passed away, some of them come to the graveyard together to perform the burial without any direct command; some others go to the deceased house to show their sense of kinship. They wait and escort the late ones to the grave. They even mourn for them for days. Each night, at least in the second up to seventh days after the death, they gather in the house of the deceased. According to Kasnadi, there are lots of humanitarian values worth to preserve within the Javanese traditional idioms (2016).

They like to live communally, respect for other, cooperate, and support each other, so they can create a peaceful and secure harmony in life. They assume that living in harmony will turn them into more prosperous being. Consequently, they emphasize the importance of harmony for the sake of common prosperity in their daily life. Harmony becomes the key to complete each problem in life. They frequently works together to manage their environment, for example their do mutual works to organize the roads during each of the Independent Day commemoration. During the rainy season, they work together to make sure the drainage run well so their rice fields are well watered. In Ramadan (the month of Fasting for Moslems) they come together to the local cemetery, to clean their ancestors' grave. They do those all together, sincerely, and with no force needed. It is stated in the frequently said idioms *rukun agawe santosa* (harmony brings prosperity).

In addition to the *rukun agawe santosa* (harmony brings prosperity) principle, they help each other to finish their work. They

respect each of their neighbors. In lives which put emphasize on peace and prosper, each problem is going to be solved together. Javanese is well-known for their concept of sincerity to do all the things. They take everything for granted. It is reflected in the idioms *aja iren karo tangga* (don't be jealous to your neighbor). The Javanese try to avoid the characterization of *iri-dengki* (jealousy- envy). They are happy when their family or neighbor gets luck; in the other hand they are sad when their family or neighbors gets trouble. They live the life according to their own path and destiny according to God's provision as the creator of the whole universe (*kersane Gusti Kang Akarya Jagad*). So, the idiom *aja iren karo tangga* (don't be jealous to your neighbor) become the key of living successfully in the society. The significance of the idioms has been firmly planted in their life and crystallized in their characterization.

The representation of the Javanese characterization, which put more emphasize on solidarity is stated in the idiom *mangan ora mangan kumpul* (we'll stay together even if there is no food around). This idiom has tremendous significance. They are willing to starve as long as they are still in the same neighborhood. They have difficulties to separate themselves from their relatives even for a short period of time. This concept adds the complication for the government to make the rate of population in Indonesia even. Javanese is hardly told to move outside Java Island, as part of the government's effort for transmigratetion program. They frequently become urban, build the new household nearby and unite with their birthplace. They can live afar from their relatives for some period of time in necessary situation, but only for short. They still emphasize on the idiom *dongo dinongo* (pray for each other). Each time they bid farewell or going for a journey the idiom *dongo dinongo* (pray for each other) is always said. This idiom has the power to

unite the solidarity amongst. The principle to pray for each other is the key power related to the God Almighty's power and will. The concept of praying for each other becomes the reflection of the Javanese personality in daily life. The idiom *dongo dinongo* (pray for each other) eventually becomes inseparable part for unison.

2. The reflection of the characterization which are full of responsibility

The Javanese has the characterization of full responsibility. The most famous idiom from Indonesia's Founding Father of Education, Ki Hajar Dewantara, *ing ngarsa sung tuladha, ing madya mangun karsa, tut wuri handayani* (giving example in front, motivated in the middle, and support in the back) is an idiom which used as life guidance. The Javanese knows the idiom well. In each steps and movements, they remember and do the principle within the idioms. They understand that being a leader means one has to be able to give example and become the patronized model. The characterization and personality of a leader will be followed by the society. The follower will follow their leader's behavior. But, as the leader is within his follower, he should support his followers' program; he should not hinder or prevent the smooth flow of the common hope and ideal. Leader should be able to get along with the society to get them motivated (*mangun karsa*). When a leader is following his supporter, he should be able to follow and support the society's wills to add communal strength. Ki Hajar Dewantara's concept within the idiom becomes the reflection of the Javanese society in daily life. So, they will apply the meaning within the idiom *sepi ing pamrih rame ing gawe* (working diligently and sincerely). They do not want to get personal benefit. They work their best without expecting anything in return. The idiom *sepi ing pamrih rame ing gawe* (working diligently

and sincerely) is the representation of the responsibility as part of their own duty o they can keep the life in society successful.

The idioms *sapa ubet bakal ngliwet* (those who put efforts will be able to cook rice), *sapa obah bakal mamah* (those who move will chew), *sapa nandur bakal ngunduh* (those who sow will reap), *sapa nggawe bakal nganggo* (those who make will use), *sapa tlaten bakal panen* (those who patience will gain result) are the idioms that state the full responsibility of life itself. The Javanese has faith upon the Law of Nature plight. To gain something, we must put effort beforehand. There a price to pay before gaining fruitful result. Those principles were then reinforced with the principle ilmu *iku kelakone kanthi laku* (knowledge will never be gained without effort).

The responsible characterization is also reflected in the idiom *aja wedi kangelan* (don't be afraid of difficulties) and *aja nglungani pacoban* (don't avoid problem). Both idioms show their responsibility for any difficulties and problems in life. The Javanese consider avoiding problem as taboo. They view problem as thing that should be solved. But, in their struggle they had the principle of *alon-alon waton klakon* (slowly but sure) and *gremet-gremet waton slamet* (slow to get safer). Precaution is reflected in the Javanese characterization which always be careful in each of their action. They prefer to do a step in a time than to be rushed in without being accurate.

Those life guidance frequently told by the elderly to their descendants. Parents have the duty to advice and teach their descendants every time. In addition, parents have the duty to give "resources" for their descendants' success. To actualize the advice and resources, parents also have to pray for their descendants. The idiom *wong tuwa iku kudu isa tutur, uwur, lan sembur* (the elderly should be able to give advice, provision, and pray)

and *nyangoni manteb lan pasrah* (provide the faith and submission) are the manifestation of the Javanese responsibility.

The Javanese responsibility is also reflected in the idiom *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* (lift high and bury down). We have to be able to make our ancestor proud as their descendants. The youth should be able to follow their ancestral's struggle and they have to be able to keep their ancestor's trust as inherited of life.

3. The reflection of the characterization which emphasize on the tolerance

The Javanese has the character which emphasize on the tolerance alongside their powerful characterization of unity and responsibility. The Javanese uphold the tolerance principle toward any of the God's creatures. They realized that God does not only create human being, He also creates other creatures. God creates human together with their needs. Human have the duty to protect anything in the universe. By putting emphasize on *tepa slira* (mutual respect) , their life become harmonious both in organizing their *jagad cilik* (microcosm) and the harmony of *jagad gede* (macrocosm). The relation among the God's creatures is always be part of their life. They are intensely protecting their relationship with the nature for the sustainability of the universe.

The idiom *empan papan* (being self-reliance) become the key of success for their existence in the world. They keep both their relation with their fellow human beings and other creatures to make the universe works in balance and harmony. So, the Javanese always communicate with the complementary element of the universe. They have an intensive communication tradition with their ancestors in a ritual called *nyadran*, which related to the nature around and the ritual of "the cleansing of the village" (bersih desa). They also do *sedekah bumi*(alms for the

Mother Earth) ritual to show their gratitude toward God's blessings (Bayuadhy, 2015).

They uphold the principle within the idioms: pride lies within the tongue, admiration lies within the clothes (*ajining dhiri ana lathi, ajining raga ana busana*) and don't be arrogant (*aja dumeh*) to communicate with others. They believe that they will have a safe and harmonious social life by applying the meaningful purpose of those two idioms. Someone will gain the proper respect if he/she can apply the meaning within the idiom pride lies within the tongue, admiration lies within the clothes (*ajining dhiri ana lathi, ajining raga ana busana*). They also have the principle that human should not be arrogant. For example: a leader must not misuse his power, if he wants to live peacefully. He also must not treat the poor badly just because he has more wealth. According to Suwardi Endraswara, the Javanese has a life obligation which is *memayu hayuning bawana* (beautifying the world's beauty) (2010:43). The concept is represented in their social ethic which always upholds the manner in social life. There are three levels in the context of social ethic: *madu basa* (individual maturity), *madu rasa* (social maturity), dan *madu brata* (spiritual maturity) (Supadjar, in Endraswara, 2010:44).

4. The reflection of the characterization with compliance to God

The Javanese has high compliance toward God's power. The compliance characterization is mostly set from the traditional idioms as part of their life. They have a deep faith upon any powerful beings. Animism and dynamism are the sources of the Javanese religiosity from back then up to now. The Javanese religiosity is stated in the word *eling* (regard). The term *eling* is the faith of the Javanese (Endraswara, 2015:148). Based on Koentjaraningrat, they have been taught about the concept of *eling* (regard) since early

years and it has been the foundation of the Javanese acts in (1994). The Javanese high compliance to God is one of their sources of religiosity. It is also represented through some idioms which have been internalized in their life.

The idiom *urip mung mampir ngombe* (life is just as short as a sip of drink) is the statement that leads them to the characterization which puts aside the earthly manner. The reason is that they remember that the life in the world only takes a short period. They believe that the afterlife will be eternal. In accordance to this, they have high acceptance toward any of God's destiny in their life. They have nothing to pursue, as in the idioms *urip sadarmo nglakoni* (we should live as God's intend us to perform). Thus, the Javanese believe that eventually, it is always God who decided all in human's life. So, they have to live their life sincerely based on the Almighty's destiny.

Besides those previous idioms, the idioms *narima ing pandum* (accept only your share) become the solid foundation in living a humble life. Everything happens to a man is just unnegotiable God provision. Human lives according to His will. The Javanese avoid the objection and complaint upon anything that He gives. The idioms then supported with the high compliance in the idioms *sumarah* (rely on) and *pasrah ngalah* (total submission to God). In addition, they also uphold the idioms *wong sabar dhuwur wekasane* (those patient ones will get the fruitful outcome). The Javanese has the strong belief that patience will conquer everything. It becomes the powerful weapon to survive the life in the world. Those who are able to pass the test of life by his patience will gain unpredictable blessing or reward. Patience becomes the key for those who get problems. Patience becomes the best cure for those in troubles. High patience will eliminate their problem and troubles. The idioms *pasrah marang apa kang bakal ana*

(totally surrender to God) and *ana dina ana upa* (there is rice for each day) are their self motivation to gain more prosperous life.

To get triumph, one must believe that *Gusti ora sare* (God never sleep). Consequently, they never fell anxious or worry in their daily actions and behaviors. God the All-seeing knows everything. God always watches everything happen to His creature. Everything happens to human is always under God's surveillance. People who has total compliance to God sincerely, shows that they have understood and applied the concept of *dunung* (existence) in their life (Endraswara, 2016:33).

The life guidance which related to the idiom *Gusti ora sare* (God never sleep), become a strong belief that lead to the presence of *manunggaling kawula lan Gusti* (the unison between the Lord and His servant). This idiom indicates that he/she has the strong faith that God is so near to him/herself. Hence, the idiom *urip saka pangeran bali marang pangeran* (life is given by God and shall be returned to God) become part of their faith and compliance in daily life. Strong religiosity is able to create a sense of safe, peace, and harmony that lead to happy and prosperous life. The term religiosity has close relationship with the happiness, thus happiness is the truth representation of religiosity. The Javanese believes that religious-based-happiness become the happiness that last in life (Sudiarja, 2006:775).

D. CONCLUSION

The significant meanings within the Javanese traditional idioms represent the characterization of its users. The characterizations of the Javanese within the traditional idioms are (1) the reflection of the characterization which put emphasize on unity, (2) the reflection of the characterization which are full of responsibility, (3) the reflection of the characterization which

emphasize on the tolerance, and (4) the reflection of the characterization with compliance to God..

Those four characterizations have internalized with the Javanese mindset, behavior, and acts in each aspect of social life. In conclusion, the attached characterizations have been automatically became their guidances and foundation for each moves and acts in their life.

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