SYMBOLIC MEANING OF FOOD NAMES IN OFFERINGS AT MANTENAN TEBU TRADITIONAL CEREMONY IN TASIKMADU KARANGANYAR INDONESIA

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This study aims to describe the symbolic meaning of the food names contained in the offerings at the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony.

Methodology: This study used the descriptive qualitative method. The qualitative was used because it relates to the discussion of the data obtained in the form of words or explanations and not figures. The data in this study were in the form of the names of offering foods traditional ceremonies. Mantenan Tebu in Tasikmadu, Karanganyar. The data were collected by observation, interviews with informants and document analysis.

Main Findings: Food in each offering has a meaning conveyed through symbols. This offering manifests the gratitude and request to God Almighty, as well as hope for the safety in the lives of Javanese people.

Implication/Applications of this study: The results of this study can be used for the university, teachers, students, and community. Even though traditional ceremonies always use offerings, not everyone knows the meaning. Therefore, this culture must be preserved, so students, teachers, universities and the community can learn about it and find out the meaning of foods in offerings that are delivered through symbols.

Novelty/Originality of this study: Thus, it is necessary to study the symbolic meaning of each food used as an offering in the Mantenan Tebu tradition. Thus, the study discusses the names of foods in offerings and the symbolic meanings contained in the offerings at the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony.

Keywords: Symbolic Meaning, Offering, Traditional Ceremony, Mantenan Tebu.

INTRODUCTION

Food is always used in both individual and collective rituals. Javanese slametan (communal feast) is considered not only as a distinctive and unique socio-religious ritual as practiced by Javanese Indonesians but also as a traditional medium that identifies the spiritual and social expressions of the Javanese. As a traditional medium, slametan unites and harmonizes the Javanese community collectively. Slametan is a food alms ceremony accompanied by prayers to request for safety and peace for the family who is organizing the slametan (Purwadi, 2007).

In slametan, there are usually several types of foods presented as offerings, in Javanese called sajen, which means presenting offerings in the form of food. Food names serve as a sign in the belief system, religion, and ideology in certain community groups. The existence of food culture is part of social existence and social life. Now, food offerings are served to friends or to fulfill traditional rules. Traditional foods vary according to the country's cultural richness. Geographical indications and promotions have an important role in the transfer of traditional foods to the next generation (Albayrak & Erdogan, 2010). The names of the foods in the offerings of the Mantenan Tebu (Sugarcane Marriage) ceremony are urgent to study because most people are less familiar with them. They are familiar with foods from foreign countries such as Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), burgers, steaks, pizza, nuggets, and so on. In general, the offerings of the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony are rich in cultural treasury (Kistanto, 2016; Avcioğlu & Gürçan, 2015).

The offerings are still used in every traditional ceremony. Each type of offering contains an implied meaning. Many people do not know the symbolic meaning contained in offerings used in the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony in Tasikmadu Karanganyar. Thus, there are several reasons that make the researchers interested in observing the symbols used in the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony. We want to find out the specific names of foods in offerings and the symbolic meanings contained. These values are traditions and actions transmitted (tinular saying) orally from one generation to the next.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture is everything that comes from the mind. It is all the deeds and work results inherent in every human being obtained by learning. The culture in the community will certainly experience development, which, of course, requires a learning process (Yusri & Mardianto, 2013). Indonesia has very diverse cultures that spread in various regions. One form of Indonesia culture is the traditional ceremony. In their daily lives, Javanese people are strongly influenced by beliefs, the concept of cultural values and the visible norms set in their minds. These values are traditions and actions that are transmitted (tinular saying) orally from one generation to the next (Griyanti, Sunardi, Warto, 2018).

The riches of traditions, cultures and cultural heritage are very valuable to the community because it becomes a national
identity. In addition, it can also be used as a support in economic development in Indonesia. Traditional cultures or cultural heritages have grown from various activities and creativity of indigenous peoples who settled in Indonesian territory with their distinctive features (Santyaningtyas & Mahmood, 2016). Javanese people still often carry out traditional ceremonies, often referred to as slametan. This slametan tradition is related to history, harvest season and dry season. This slametan is still being carried out by farmers in the Tasikmadu area when they start planting sugarcanes and during the sugarcane harvest season. Like other Javanese farmers, farmers in the Tasikmadu area are still influenced by beliefs in the existence of the power outside of humans called Sing mbahau rekso, ancestral spirits, Danyang, evil spirits, genies, ghosts and others (Blieer, 2003).

A traditional ceremony is one form of people’s culture. The ceremony in question is a sacred ceremony for the people who believe in the culture. It is related to customs, religions, and beliefs. Traditional ceremonies are ceremonies conducted from generation to generation applicable in a place. Traditional ceremonies contain ways of life, local wisdom values, philosophies, and beliefs. Traditional ceremonies also contain implicit meanings of symbols and are useful for the community by continuously digging and preserving them to be not extinct. Thus, the community must keep, preserve, and explore traditional ceremonies in certain areas because they are useful for life. In this case, the traditional ceremony is still held as an expression of gratitude for what people have (Wallendorf & Eric, 1991).

Traditional ceremonies have the element of offerings (Koentjaraningrat, 2002). In every tradition, offerings are always used. These offerings can be in the form of foods, objects and so on addressed to ancestral spirits. According to Munfangatani (2007), an offering is a complement in traditional ceremonies it represents an expression of gratitude from the people to God Almighty for giving them happiness and everything they need.

Symbols, in semiotics, are used as a communication tool. A symbol is a sign that can represent something. Peirce’s semiotic model examines the signs known as a trichotomy, namely icon, index, and symbol. They serve to decipher the hidden meaning behind something. Symbolism is present in all cultures. Symbols can be seen in pictures, words, arts, architecture, and common household items. A symbol is another way to communicate thoughts, meanings, and expectations of a certain cultural group. Symbolisms that represent luck, prosperity, longevity, happiness, and wealth are all important aspects of Chinese culture. According to food signs and symbols as offerings (Ali, 2015; Oladumiye, 2018; Uyovwirume, 2013).

Semiotics means learning about sounds, words, signs, logos, monograms, pictures, and their analyses. Advertisements usually contain these aspects. Peirce’s semiotics distinguishes the relationship between signs and their references into three types, namely (1) icon if it is a similarity relationship, (2) index if it is a closeness relationship, and (3) symbol, if it is a conversational relationship. Cultural symbols are ‘signs’ that represent something else and are conventionally accepted. The ability of humans to create symbols proves that humans already have a high civilization and even advanced culture because they can create simple symbols. He describes human behavior as a symbolic behavior of the human universe (Ali, 2015; Oladumiye, 2018; Uyovwirume, 2013).

The aim of this study is to describe the meanings of foods contained in offerings at the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony. We can learn the meanings of the offerings by taking a part in the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony which has so far been carried out at the Tasikmadu Sugar Factory. There are several cases showing that many do not know the meanings of offerings. There are many symbols in food offerings that cannot be understood by common people only by looking at them (Ilahi W & Siti A, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

The type of this study is descriptive qualitative. It aims to describe a reality in detail and in-depth. This study uses qualitative because it relates to the discussion in the form of data obtained in the form of words or explanations, not figures. The nature of a qualitative study is that it examines the way people make sense from their real experiences in their own minds and with their own words. A qualitative study is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from people and observable (Ismawati, 2012). The data were collected through field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation.

This type of observation in this study is active observation. Active observation is a special method where the researcher does not act passively as an observer but plays a role as an observer related to his/her research in order to obtain data (Sutopo, 2002). Observations are needed to see the real conditions in the field supported by the information received through our senses of hearing, smell, sight, and taste. An interview is a collection of data directly from the source (Widovoko, 2012). This study uses an in-depth interview technique to obtain in-depth information about the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony. The interview data were obtained by recording and note taking manually, which were then transcribed. The interview process was conducted in an unstructured way to get in-depth information. The interviews in this study were conducted with elders who led the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony, people involved in the ceremony, community leaders, and residents who witnessed the ceremony. This third technique is the study of documents or archives. Archives generally take the form of more formal records compared to documents (Sutopo, 2002). The study of documents and archives was carried out by reviewing books, journals, the results of previous studies on Javanese culture, and documents relating to the Mantenan Tebu ceremony. This method shows that the data obtained are from the informants used as the study subject. The subject of this study is the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony in Tasikmadu, Karanganyar
and the object is the communication activity carried out with the people involved in the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony in Tasikmadu, Karanganyar. The data analysis model used in this study is an interactive analysis model (Miles & Huberman, 1992). The interactive analysis model is an interaction between three components, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This study uses source triangulation because to check the data, the researcher uses various sources or informants who are directly involved in the Mantenan Tebu traditional ceremony in Tasikmadu, Karanganyar. All data obtained from various sources are then described and categorized to classify which are the same and which are different species to draw a conclusion (Cropaely, 2019; Sapsford & Victor, 2006).

RESULTS

The Mantenan Tebu ceremony contains values that are considered good for the people of Tasikmadu Karanganyar. This ceremony is welcomed by the local community. Until now, the Mantenan Tebu ceremony is still preserved. This ceremony originating from the ancestors was passed down from generation to generation delivered orally by the ancestors. Through the experience of the ancestors, wisdom values can be obtained by the ancestors as a way of life (Fatimah, Edy, &Kundharu, 2017).

One of the unique traditional ceremonies that are still preserved is the Mantenan Tebu ceremony. As in Java, a thanksgiving ritual is held every harvest season. The Mantenan Tebu ceremony is a form of gratitude for the abundant sugarcane crops. In addition, the main purpose of holding a traditional ceremony is to ask for salvation from God. This sugarcane milling feast ceremony is held at the Tasikmadu Sugar Factory in Tasikmadu District, Karanganyar Regency. Mantenan Tebu is held at the Tasikmadu Sugar Factory in Karanganyar. This ceremony has been preserved until now because it contains cultural values supported by the local community (Sergeeva et al., 2019).

The process of making sugar starting with preparing the land for planting sugarcane, planting sugarcane seeds, fertilizing, maintaining, until picking/cutting down the sugarcane which all involve the people is inseparable from the local people's beliefs that sacralize plants that provide fertility and welfare to humans. There some places considered to still have guardian spirits who should not be disturbed or must be invited to participate in these activities. Besides, the earth is considered as something sacred that needs to be respected and given offerings. The purpose of this ritual is to secure the entire rice harvest process from destruction by evil spirits (Harivadi & Tamara, 2012).

The first sugarcane with the accompanying sugarcane is picked and cut down to be used as the prime sugarcane put into the crusher machine in the sugar factory, called a temanten tebu or sugarcane bride and groom. In this milling slametan, the tebu temanten will be paired up in lumbung selayur (krepyak miller = crusher). Mantenan Tebu is a tradition of mating male and female sugarcanes, a symbol of sugarcane bride taken from the farmer's sugarcane. Temanten Tebu must fulfill the visual requirements of being healthy, straight, large, sweet and having enough yield. The sugarcane picking day is determined based on the calculation of the good days for milling, a few weeks before the sugarcane yield is deemed to be enough to be processed into sugar. The good day can be counted with the help of a psychic, elder or study from years of experience where there is a certain day, namely Friday Pon, considered to always bring safety, profit and success for the Tasikmadu Sugar Factory. Meanwhile, the best day to harvest (cut down) the sugarcane is also determined. Likewise, the locations where the can friends groom and bride must be chosen based on the instructions of the elder or psychic (direction, location, and path to take) or based on symbolic names of villages that are considered to have sugarcane plants. This tradition holds that the experience of the ancestors, wisdom values originating from the ancestors was passed through oral traditions in the village community in Javanese society over time.

According to the study conducted by Widodo & Kundharu (2012) entitled Petangan Tradition in Personal Naming Practices in Java: Ethnolinguistic Study, petangan has an important role in the Javanese naming tradition in terms of form, use, and social function in Javanese society. In Javanese petangan, days, months, and years have their own characteristics. This relates to the fate of humans developed through natural symbols (cosmology). The Javanese concept of petangan is a manifestation of Javanese way of life, knowledge, and cosmology (kejawen) as a medium to become one with the universe. It was also found the developments in the practice of personal naming, ideas, cultural tastes, and various other changes that occur in Javanese society over time.

Before starting the procession, we must not forget to do pilgrimages to the tombs of Astana Mangade, Giribungun, and Giriluyu. After that, there will be a bath ritual of the Mangunegara statue, choosing the sugarcane groom with his companion, choosing the sugarcane bride, and hajat prayer, and yasin reciting, midodareni and making up tebu temanten, the milling and reception of the tebu temanten, and the closing with the pilgrimage to the tomb of Kyai Sondokoro and puppet show. People say that the pilgrimage is carried out to get blessings, in addition to respecting ancestors and praying for the spirits of the deceased. In this case, various rituals and traditions practiced by the pilgrims in many sacred sites throughout the country show that in the past (before the Islamic period) (Afghoni, 2017; Ebadi, 2015).

The milling slametan ceremony is carried out like a human marriage to be more interesting. Because it is the event of the sugar factory, the bride and groom symbolically embody a pair of sugarcanes which is later better known as “Temanten Tebu”. The ceremony for the departure of temanten tebu starts from the office of the Assistant Head of Plant Department to Besaran. After the ritual is finished, temanten tebu are put together with their companions into the milling station. Javanese traditions are inseparable from the equipment that includes offerings (sajen). The Javanese believe that offerings are not a
devil’s food, but offerings have their own meaning conveyed through symbols that cannot always be interpreted in line with understanding and thought. They tend to be abstract because they contain aspects of performing arts (Cahyono, 2006).

Indonesia has various tribes and cultures that influence food preferences in every region (Rianti etc, 2018). Food is closely related to religious traditional ceremonies or special events. Culinary illustrates the beliefs, symbolic and spiritual meanings of the supporters of that culture (Indrahiti, Yanuar, & Alamsyah, 2018). In this respect, the offering foods used in the Mantenan Tebu tradition are as follows: Savory rice (holy rice, wuduk rice), Golong rice, Asahan rice, market snacks, jadah, rengginang, Ingkung chicken, king banana, porridge, Tumpeng Robyong, polowijo (tuber), and buffalo head.

Savory rice or often called Javanese wuduk rice. Savory rice is cooked using coconut milk and salt, so it tastes delicious. It is completed with side dishes in the form of rambak, cucumbers, soybeans, red and green chili, etc. Uborampe is intended to send prayers to the prophet Muhammad. In ancient times, the prophet Muhammad was believed to eat holy rice or wudlu rice. This savory rice (Javanese wuduk) symbolizes cleanliness and purity, being forgiven of all sins and mistakes. People often call this savory rice with Rasul rice. This was relevant to the study conducted by Hasani & Oksiana (2014).

Golong rice is a form of white rice that is rounded as big as a tennis ball whose number must be odd with side dishes including Javanese salad, chicken, crackers, etc. Golong rice is rice wrapped in banana leaves. This uborampe symbolizes the determination in holding slametan. It is usually called tekad kang gumolong dari saviji or the determination to unite. Asahan rice (sego asahan) consists of white rice complete with various side dishes such as cattle skin spicy stew, anchovy, fried mashed potatoes, yellow pickles, peanut crackers, noodles, etc. All the side dishes that are served must all be dry and added with chili sauce. Sampal cabuk is a chili sauce made from sesame pulp. Asahan rice in the Mantenan Tebu ceremony is a symbol for the smooth running of the event. This uborampe is offered to ask for the forgiveness for the spirits of the deceased and the living family for all their sins and to be accepted by His side (Achmad, 2017).

Market snacks which are one of the uborampe in the Mantenan Tebu ceremony have the essence of saratan winadi. This means that market snacks serve as alms for life safety, especially in the spiritual salvation or salvation from the interference of the unseen entities (astral beings). Market snacks consist of various kinds of fruits and foods purchased at the market (traditional food). The fruits used are usually seasonal ones. A bunch of King bananas is a must. Market snacks consist of tape, apem, sticky rice, getuk, boiled peanuts, and so on. The market snacks consisting of various kinds of foods are considered trivial items, but they have a symbolic meaning that is very close to the noble teaching that people srawung (get along) with others. Market snacks also symbolize prosperity. Because the market is a source of snacks with various kinds of goods. It is often found that there is money of satus (one hundred) rupiah inside the market snack. In this case, the Javanese do not view its value, but the word satus which means asat (dry) and atus (clean). Thus, the one hundred money is a symbol of the request of the host to God to be set free from all sins.

Jadah is made from sticky rice which is seasoned with salt and coconut milk and then cooked. After it is well-cooked like rice, it is pounded. This jadah is a symbol of paying homage to the ruler. Some are presented in the form of snacks, only jadah, but other is served with brown sugar. Rengginang is made from sticky rice which is dried then fried. It has a curved round shape with decorative stars on its sides. The curved shape has a meaning as a symbol of the universe. In addition, there is also a triangle. This triangle shape is a symbol of people who are sitting cross-legged or having a meditation holding a ritual of slametan.

Polowijo (tubers) are like yam, gembili, senthe, and cassava, which are served by boiling them first. This uborampe is the symbol of paying homage to the guardian spirit. Ingkung chicken is a whole chicken cooked by roasting/baking. This Ingkung is usually placed on the savory rice. It symbolizes an unborn baby who is still pure and does not have any sins. Ingkung chicken has a symbolic meaning as an attitude of surrender to God’s power. In addition, it is used to purify the host and guests who attend the ceremony.

There must be a bunch of Ayu bananas that have been cleaned at its edges and bottom. This banana is also referred to as manten estri or a bride. This offering has the meaning that as a woman, she must be determined in supporting men to achieve prosperity. Besides, there must also be King banana. The King banana commonly used is the ordinary king banana and the pulut king. According to the Javanese, ordinary King banana is a symbol of the prayer of request to God. The host prays for his/her family to be just, virtuous, and trusted ones. The King pulut bananas symbolize a prayer requesting that the family be kept away from danger.

Porridge is rice cooked with lots of water, so it becomes soft. There are 7 kinds of porridge, white and red, white, green, black, and red porridges. Red, white, black, yellow, and baro-baro (bran) porridges. White porridge is made from rice added with a pinch of salt. It’s called white porridge due to Its white color. According to the ancestors, white porridge is a symbol as a seed from the father (sperm or white blood). It has the meaning of respect and hope from someone addressed to his/her ancestors to get their blessing and salvation. Red porridge or jenang abang is made from rice with a little salt seasoned with brown sugar to turn red. This red porridge has the meaning of honor and a request to parents for their blessing in order to get salvation. Red porridge symbolizes the seed from the mother (red blood). The red and white porridges are like human life created from water of life. This means that they symbolize the occurrence of children due to the union of bloods from the father and the mother. Thus, everyone has an obligation to respect both of his/her parents (Giri, 2010).
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The authors confirm that the data do not contain conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES


