
**JAVANESE ETHNIC LOCAL WISDOM IN FARMER COMMUNITY
FOLKLORE IN SOUTH COASTAL AREA OF KEBUMEN, CENTRAL
JAVA**

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Abstract This research aimed to describe the Javanese ethnic local wisdom in farmer community folklore of South coastal area of Kebumen. The problems studied were how the existence of folklore was in farmer community folklore of South coastal area of Kebumen and what local wisdoms were implied in their folklore. The data analyzed was oral folklore consisting of four criteria, partially oral folklore constituting farming sector rite, and non-oral folklore constituting food, drugs, and traditional house. The approach method used was an ethnographic descriptive qualitative with ethnoscientific analysis model. The data was collected using in-depth interview with selected informant. The sample of research was the farmer community of South coastal area of Kebumen Regency. The result of research showed that folklore in farmer community contained local wisdoms: 1) local cultural, 2) local spiritual, 3) local educative, 4) local symbolic, 5) local economic, 6) local practical, and local historic. In addition to containing local wisdom, folklore also served as education to the next generation as preserving the wisdom inherent to farmer environment.

Keywords: local wisdom, folklore

Introduction

Farmer community in the south coastal areas of Kebumen belongs to the one with dual livelihood, because in addition to be subsistence farmer, they also have other alternative livelihood such as fishermen, tapper and breeder

depending on the natural surrounding and season occurring there. They, as a part of Javanese society can undertake life in peripheral area in south coastal area of Kebumen, and they are enveloped by mythological life circumstance pertaining to the personification of tree guard figure,

terrible mountains guard, reliable 'heirloom' weapon power, strong myth of prosperity God Dewi Sri, Ratu Selatan (Queen of South), as

The background of such the mythological life circumstance discretionarily allowed a variety of folklores to thrive that had been existing since earlier and inherent to their life there. Specifically, anything pertaining to folklore and their perception on the existence of legendary folklore in the life of farmer community living in natural environment of south coastal area of Kebumen, among others, include oral folklore (*Pandan Kuning, Santri Gudhig, Dewi Sri, Syeh Sidakarsa*), partially oral folklore (*wiwit* rite, *jabel* rite, house construction rite, and warding off disaster), and non-oral folklore (such as traditional medicinal herbs, traditional food, traditional house shape). In broader context, the existing folklore cannot be apart from the existence of that elsewhere. The intended folklores elsewhere are figure of Ratu Kidul in Pelabuhan Ratu of Ujung Kulon, Parang Kusuma in Bantul of

well as the folklore pertaining to various place names, drugs name, and life philosophy reflected on their expression.

Yogyakarta, Pangandaran Beach in Tasikmalaya, and other similar places. As a result, despite perception difference and similarity, to some extent, the perception on the existing folklore also varied pertaining to such the difference and similarity, particularly in the term of personified figure salience and the event occurring pertaining to material and spiritual, physical and psychical, spiritual, mystic, and geographic experiences existing there. It is because in addition to the presence of geographic difference the folklore also occurs because there is certain understanding level of the material-spiritual experiencer, thereby inspiring the perception on what the existing folklore had given. The problem of statement in this research is how is the existence of folklore in farmer community and what local wisdoms are implied in their folklore.

Theoretical Study**Folklore**

Folklore, according to Danandjaya (2002:2), is a collective's culture distributed and handed down from generation to generation, among any type of collectives, traditionally in different version, either in oral form or in example accompanied with gesture or reminder.

As a part of culture, folklore has characteristics that can distinguish it from other culture varieties. The characteristics of folklore, according to Danandjaya (2002: 3) are as follows: 1) its distribution and handing down usually occurs orally, distributed from mouth to mouth (coupled with gesture and reminder) from one generation to another. 2) It is traditional, distributed in relatively constant or standard form among certain collective in sufficiently long period of time. 3) It creates different versions or variants because of orally distribution. 4) it is anonymous, the name of its author is not known. 5) it usually has a formulated and

different form. 6) It has use or function for its collective. 7) It is pre-logical, has its own logic not compatible with general logic. 8) It is shared by a collective. 9) It is generally plain and simple, even apparently crude and spontaneous.

The forms of folklore existing within the society, still according to Danandjaya (2002: 21-22), are grouped into three:

- 1) Oral folklore, the one the form of which is purely oral. The examples of this form are folk language, traditional idiom, puzzle, folk poetry, and folk prose.
- 2) Partially oral folklore, the combination of oral and non-oral folklores. This form include folk game, folk dance, custom, folk theater, and etc.
- 3) Non-oral folklore, the one the form of which is not oral despite taught orally. Such the folklore can be material such as customary house, traditional food, traditional weapon, and etc; or non material such as gesture,

folk music, sound as communication sign, and etc.

Folklore is a collective's culture distributed and handed down from generation to generation, among any type of collectives, traditionally in different version, either in oral form or in example accompanied with gesture or reminder (Danandjaya, 1992: 2). From the statement above, it can be found that folklore is shared collectively by a society (community). Folklore is handed down orally from one generation to another (mouth to mouth) in a collective community that has different story between one area and another. Because of its orally utterance and handing down from one generation to another, there are many variants from one generation to the next. Variant also occurs between one location and another when folklore is uttered outside its original area. Viewed from its supporting aspect, folklore has several functions. William R. Borton in Danandjaya (1991: 19) suggests four functions of folklore: a. as a

projection system, as reflection of a collective's idea (notion), b. as the means of ratifying regulations and cultural institutions, c. as the means of educating child, and d. the means of compelling and supervising to make the community norms always complied with by its collective members.

Local Wisdom

Local wisdom is defined as "a set" of knowledge and practices that can be used to solve the problems encountered well and correctly (Ahimsa, 2007: 17). In another definition, local wisdom can be defined as a set of knowledge of a community, either originating from previous generation or its experience related to other environment and community to cope with life challenge (Sedywati, 1994: 18). It can be seen as one way of informing the collective community, according to local culture, to treat the living environment wisely everywhere they are (Subroto, 2010: 2). In addition, local wisdom (local genius) can be understood from Quaritch Wales's

argument (in Poespowardojo, 1986: 30; Rahyono, 2009: 7-9), the concept of which is *the sum of the cultural characteristics which the vast majority of a people have in common as a result of their experience in early life* ‘

Local wisdom or frequently called local wisdom in Ibda journal by Ali Nurman (2007:27) can be understood as human being’s attempt in using his/her cognition to act and to treat something, object or event occurring in certain space. The definition above is arranged etymologically, in which wisdom is conceived as an individual’s ability in using his/her mind in acting on or treating something, object or event occurring, as the result of assessment. As a term, wisdom is frequently defined as ‘A wise outlook, plan, or course of action’. *Local* specifically refers to a limited interaction space with limited value. As an interaction space designed in such a way that within which involve relationship pattern between human being and human being or between human being and his/her physical

environment. The designed interaction pattern is called as setting. Setting is an interaction room where someone can establish face-to-face relationship within his/her environment. An established life setting will directly produce values. These values will be the basis of their relationship or their reference in acting on.

The balanced relationship between them will be able to present harmonic life requiring all to be part of environment and not damaging each other. Actually, human being and his/her environment is a perfectly systematic life description basically for human interest him/herself. Human being needs plant for his/her breathing sustainability because plant becomes a lifetime permanent oxygen producer. In the presence of plant, human being eats and drinks because it stores water perfectly in the soil and human can use the plant directly. For that reason, for the harmonic life to be created and maintained, we should treat and act on environment wisely.

Research Method

The location of research included Ayah, Pedalen, Menganti, Pasir, Sрати (Ayah Subdistrict); Karangbolong (Buayan Subdistrict), Suwuk (Puring Subdistrict), Pandan Kuning and Tehalretna (Petanahan Subdistrict), and Bocor Beaches (Ambal Subdistrict of Kebumen Regency).

The data of research included oral data in the form of oral folklore consisting of 4 stories: Pandan Kuning constituting remains of the past, Dewi Sri or sometimes called Dewi Nawang Wulan, Santri Gudhig, and Syeh Abdul *ngawal* told by the village elders as selected data; practical data constituted Javanese language event among farmer, fisherman, animal breeder, and tapper occurring in rites as partially oral folklore and non-oral folklore in the form of medicinal herbs production activity, traditional food and customary house shape. The data source of research was the selected informant knowledgeable about their Javanese language aspect, and their

cultural event. The definition of research data was mainly a finish product not raw material (Subroto, 1992: 41-42).

Technique of collecting data used was participatory observation by interviewing the selected informant while developing ethnographic record, descriptive, structural and contrast questions (Spradley, 1977). In-depth interviewing was conducted with ethnolinguistic method using ethnography method, data was analyzed using ethnoscience model (Ahimsa-Putra, 1985). It is the method that can be chosen to develop the validity of research data. The methods can be several types of triangulation technique.

The data analysis was conducted using ethnography method, with etnossa analysis (including domain, taxonomy, and componential analyses) (Spradley, 1997). The procedures were (1) translating lingual data literally and freely, (2) analyzing the Javanese language context with folklores, particularly oral and partially oral

ones, (3) analyzing the classification/category of folklore in farmer community setting, (4) analyzing their Javanese language by interpreting research object and it was interpretative in nature, (5) analyzing their mindset by observing their idea and concept, (6) analyzing their world view, and (7) analyzing their ideology.

Discussion

Referring to local wisdom encompassing a variety of knowledge, perspectives, values as well as practices of a community, derived either from previous generation or from their experience in relationship to environment and other communities to solve the problem and/or difficulty dealt with well, correctly and properly. Using Ahimsa's theory incorporated into Dananjaya's (2002) theory of folklore, all folklores, - partially oral, non-oral and oral, - can be analyzed that were found in research site.

Using emic perspective during collecting the data with informant's point of view as oral or

partially oral folklore provider was a unit of ideas of a folklore discourse combined with the author's ethic perspective through interpreting the explicit, implicit, buried folklore in every type of folklore in research site could reveal local wisdom contained in folklore. The elaboration on the local wisdom from the result of analysis was as follows:

1. Cultural Wisdom

Cultural wisdom is closely related to everything abiding within the society becoming a part of its culture manifested in the form of a) patience, b) *gotongroyong*/mutual cooperation, c) humanity, and d) moral. All of these manifestation were reflected on oral, partially oral and non-oral folklores.

Gotong royong and cooperation within the community could be reflected on all types of folklore, for example in oral folklore they can be seen from cooperation between the members of society in helping the main character chasing the avoiding antagonist one. In partially/semi-oral folklore, there

was very apparently cooperation in organizing traditional rite because no rite held individually but jointly and collectively. In non-oral folklore, the commonality was also reflected in the presence of those giving traditional medicine, when needed, without determining the price. The material of medicine should not be bought but only asked for (*ditembung*) from those having it.

Moral and value are two important part of life in establishing society; for that reason the advice regarding moral and value was reflected clearly on any form of local folklores. Basically, the advice about moral was closely related to the presence of essential term, human should understand what is good and bad, true and wrong in living within the society. Kindness, truth, and beauty values always abided in the highest value incantation and become the ultimate objective of life. In other words, such the value was universal and prevailed as the ultimate value and was subjective in nature, while the life phenomena or symptoms as if differentiating the

value from the perceived reality as inadequacy or mistake of human being's effort (Lelapary, Leunard Heppy, 2010).

2. Spiritual Wisdom

Spiritual wisdom is very thick and dominant in any forms of folklore in research location still belonging to traditional one. Spiritual wisdom, in this case, was closely related to something beyond the human being's power him/herself considered as supernatural world that not everyone can communicate with so that only those with supernatural power can communicate with it. For that reason, the term *wong tua*, *wong sing garing silite*, "elders, the ascetics" who had more power and ability, such the people were considered as capable of communicating with supernatural nature so that everyone would ask them for help relating to invisible things. In oral folklore, the spiritual wisdom can be seen through belief in Dewi Sri and Ibu Ratu's help that can help the main character when there was a crime. Similarly, it appeared in every other oral folklore.

The local people also classified their thought in capturing any thing beyond themselves as the supreme ruler with their representatives. Everything in society life still belonging to relic was colored with spiritual aspect. Thus, in non-oral folklore, although containing spiritual elements in the form of belief in *Hyang Widhi Wasa's* power in healing process because when the traditional medicinal herb needed was not found, while the sick people died, everyone believed that it is the time for him/her to come back to the Creator with term *wis apese/wis takdire/wis wektune* (it is his/her time to die). In semi-oral folklore all non-verbal expression was full of symbolic meaning as the form of spiritual form including verbal expression accompanying it. The local wisdom in healing process using herbal medicine revealed that the disease healing was based on the belief that the herbal medicine used was closely related to land, sea rulers, and the guards existing in every location.

3. Education Wisdom

Education wisdom was defined as an awareness of desire to always learn improving the self toward the better one through lifetime learning process. It appeared in the story of *santri gudhig's* trip making a long journey to look for knowledge. In non-oral folklore, the kindness value also developed as can be seen in the house construction developing to more practical and economic process although this reduced the existence of the meaningful traditional house. For that reason, there was combination house called *omah buta mangku wanita* (the giant's house laps women'), *omah lojen* (mansion), *omah karna tanding* (the house where Karna is fighting').

This education wisdom would proceed along with the communication and transportation development that later would affect the value order, norm, and culture of the local society. As long as the change still maintained natural balance and kept its preservation, like what occurring in the research site, it could be categorized into

education wisdom belonging to the present wisdom class. It could be believed that in the presence of local wisdom, every negative effects of global communication technology could be minimized because traditional local wisdom could ward off the negative effect of globalization thereby providing the new local wisdom. It could be concluded that there was a close relationship between traditional local wisdom and contemporary local one.

1. Symbolic Wisdom

As a part of Javanese community, in this research site, the people was still embraced the meaningful symbolic system like appeared in oral, semi-oral and non-oral folklore. In oral folklore, the change of bad character human was found into a crocodile because it belonged to bad character animal. In non-oral folklore, it could be found several types of symbol interpretation such as that deriving from its sound such as *kluwih* leaf (a kind of leaf's name), in order to be *luwih* (more), *banyu tawa* (fresh

water) containing the symbol of water's cold character in order to keep the rice storage place cool so that the rice could stay in the place (enduring). Local wisdom in this symbolic system was that there was a utilization of natural rich for common need in any sector; thus the plant and animal needed would be kept from extinction. This symbolization system was said as having been taught since Majapahit time because at that time, the past Mataraman Farmer compulsorily cultivated the integrated plants constituting the combination of *oyod-oyodan*, *kekayon*, *gegodhongan*, *kekembangan*, *woh-wohan*, and *gedhangan* (rhizomes, trees, leaves, flowers, fruits, and bananas). If it was done, the need for food, fuel wood, housing, medicine, and fragrance would be met from its own environment (Hidayat, 2012).

2. Economic Wisdom

Economic wisdom could be reflected on any form of folklore in research site such as traditional medicine system that was still simple and based on mutual cooperation

(*kegotongroyongan*) and commonality so that everything was apparently economic because it was assumed collectively. The term *ganti luru* (looking for alternative) was one of expressions reflecting the local economic wisdom; in addition, using medicinal herbs or traditional medicine utilizing the plants existing in environment was also the form of economic local wisdom of traditional community. Most people have returned to using medicinal herb to cure human and animal disease, because it saves money and minimizes pollution.

3. Practical Wisdom

Practical local wisdom was much found in house construction practices, traditional medicinal herb production constituting non-oral folklore that is still maintained up to now. *Bandung* house production practice is a reflection of its local community's wisdom because it contained many meanings aiming to maintain relationship (*silaturahmi*) between the members of community, ecosystem balance, social cultural and spiritual harmony the local

community has as a part of Javanese community.

The traditional medicinal herbs practice is the part of practical wisdom reflected on non-oral folklore. In medicinal herb production practice, the community still had a simple traditional system but had very significant efficacy in curing a variety of diseases because in making medicinal herb, it still used original herbal decoction without using chemicals at all as found in fabricated medicinal herb product. Another important point was the community's mindset who still upheld spiritualism as the basis of this medication. The instrument of processing medicinal herb was still so simple but it had a buried merit because the use of plastic or metal can reduce the efficacy because of the decoction's reaction to the use of inappropriate tools or places. The traditional food production practice is non-oral folklore that can also reflect its local community's wisdom because it is undertaken simply and uses the material available in nature

despite a little modification occasionally.

4. Historical wisdom

History is closely related to the past; similarly, the historical wisdom is the one appreciating the past as a respect to ancestors and forefathers. The people always appreciates their ancestors, although they had passed away. It is consistent with the Javanese philosophy *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* (carrying on as high as possible, and burying as deep as possible). This philosophy was found much in oral folklore related to village naming along the South coastal areas of Kebumen. The naming used now identical with everything ever occurred in that place was merely reminiscent of events and characters (figure) ever existed previously.

Historical wisdom also appeared in the performance of ceremonial meal to be reminiscent of parents' passing away day such as the presence of expressions *pitung ndinanan*, *patang puluh dinanan*, *satus dinanan*, *sewu dinanan* (seven days, forty days, one hundred days, a

thousand days). It is the attempt to appreciate the ancestor in which despite passing away, their presence is still appreciated and even their death day is still remembered by conducting a certain activity. In addition, the event is the means of establishing relationship, gathering to pray jointly, establishing intimacy, and sharing favor (blessing).

Closing

Conclusion

Folklore is a product of a community's thinking and imagination having certain function and form; therefore, folklore can reflect its local community's wisdom. Local wisdom can be identified from folklore including: 1) Cultural wisdom closely related to everything abiding within the society as the part of its culture manifested in a) patience, b) *gotongroyong*/mutual cooperation, c) humanity, and d) moral. All of these manifestation were reflected on oral, partially oral and non-oral folklores. 2) Spiritual wisdom is very thick and related to something beyond the

human being's power him/herself considered as having supernatural world that is closely related to existence of human being in the universe. 3) Education wisdom was defined as an awareness of desire to always learn improving the self toward the better one through lifetime learning process. It appeared in the story of characters in oral folklore appeared in any change of everything related to a variety of medicinal herbs, food, and *sesajen* (offering) existing in the research site. For that reason, every product leads to improvement without harming the standard order there; for example the presence of combination house called *omah buta mangku wanita* (the giant's house laps women', *omah lojen* (mansion), *omah karn tanding* '(the house where Karna is fighting'). 4) Symbolic wisdom was defined as the community's attempt of conveying every request and good will to God, and every other creatures called the invisible indirectly using symbols because the direct delivery was impossible to do because there was

no accompanying instrument. 5) Economic wisdom was also reflected in any form of folklore in research site such as a simple traditional medication system based on mutual cooperation (*kegotongroyongan*) and commonality so that everything was apparently economic because it was assumed collectively. 6) Practical local wisdom was much found in house construction practices, traditional medicinal herb production constituting non-oral folklore that is still maintained up to now. 7) the historical wisdom is closely related to the past because it is the one appreciating the past as a respect to ancestors and forefathers.

Recommendation

From folklore studies circulating among the farmer community, the existence of folklore could be found in research site. Many oral folklores were found that were actually very interesting to collect in a book in order to preserve the culture, the lofty value. The lesson contained in folklore is a cultural product of a traditional farmer community. When the

documentation of oral folklore had been realized, the government of Kebumen Regency should cooperate with Education Office to preserve the existing folklore in school learning from elementary to secondary levels. Regarding partially oral folklore constituting traditional rite, it needs attention from other point of view in addition to linguistic perspective wrapped in the farmer culture so that it could be studied through other disciplines.

The local area of Kebumen Regency could develop the *petilasan* (remains of the past) places that is still interesting to be visited by others from many places that can be the tourist destination, object and place, so that it can foster the villages in south coastal areas of

Kebumen. The south coastal areas are very beautiful shady beaches that have not been managed well despite intervention from the Agricultural Faculty of Gadjah Mada University in reforesting the beach with pine plants. For that reason, this beach's beauty should be developed into tourism location in order to improve the local community's economy through traditional food as non-oral folklore. Traditional food, coconut sugar product, California papaya, and other crops can foster the development of home food product into industry. The significant development of home industry sector can increase the local original income (PAD) of Kebumen Regency Government.

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