An Analysis of Symbolic Meanings in *Palang Pintu* Tradition of the Betawi Wedding Ceremony

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**ABSTRACT**

Palang Pintu tradition is one of the Betawi ethnic cultural heritage which is performed in the process of a wedding ceremony. Besides enacted as a performance to entertain people, Palang Pintu is loaded with cultural literacy. The purpose of the study is to find out a comprehensive description of symbolic meanings and literary appreciation learning in Palang Pintu tradition of the Betawi wedding ceremony. The performance process of Palang Pintu contains remarkable values namely reading salawat indicating that the Betawi people always obey the Islamic value. The pukul/beklai (a form of martial arts) is a symbol that a man as the head of the family and must be able to protect his household; and lantunan sike (reciting the verses of the Holy Qur’an) implies that a man is a leader in his household. Furthermore, berbalas pantun (pantun speech) in Palang Pintu tradition is one form of the literary appreciation. The method used is the descriptive analysis of literature studies, observation and interviews with experts were done as the triangulation of the data. The study found that Palang Pintu tradition has symbolic values such as leadership, religiosity that can be used as an opportunity for children’s literacy appreciation learning.

**Keywords:** Literary appreciation learning, Palang Pintu tradition, symbolic meanings

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is the largest archipelago stretching from Sabang to Merauke. More than 13.000 ethnic groups inhabit the territory of Indonesia, among the examples, are Gayo in Aceh, Batak in Sumatera, Dayak in Kalimantan, Bugis in Sulawesi, Asmat in Papua and Betawi in Jakarta and its surrounding. Each of the ethnic groups has a valuable cultural heritage such as traditional games, foods, dances, and traditional ceremonies which have become local wisdom of each region. Local wisdom is often considered to be a product from the ancient period (Rahman et al., 2019). Albantani and Madkur, (2018) argued it can be defined as the local rich-ness that comprises rules or life points of view. Meanwhile, Septy (2017) states local wisdom is used as the basis for a society to have normative and pattern to manage and organize their social cultural life system. One study of local wisdom is *Palang Pintu* tradition in the Betawi wedding ceremony. According to Anggraeni, et.al. (2019) the tradition of *Palang Pintu* loaded a portrait of Islamic values. It is illustrated by the essence of reciting the Holy Qur’an, sholawat and silat (martial art). These values come from Islamic teachings which implemented in daily life.

Betawi ethnic group is a native tribe of Jakarta. The word “Betawi” itself derives from “Batavia” which is the name of a city that was built by Jan Pieterzon Coen in 1619 after burning down the previous city, namely Jayakarta (2017). In the past, Jakarta was known as a port named Sunda Kalapa. It was a meeting place for traders from all over the region of Nusantara (previous name of Indonesia) and even abroad such as from Tiongkok, Europe and India. Biologically, the Betawi ethnic group is a mixture of immigrant tribes who come to Jakarta. According to Budiantan (2000), assimilation occurs between the native inhabitants of Jakarta and immigrant ethnic groups namely Sundanese, Javanese, Minangkabau, Bugis, and Makassarese and so do with Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, Arabs and Indian. Therefore, the Betawi ethnic group has enormous cultures, for instance, dances, games, foods and ceremonies.

Along with the time, Betawi ethnic groups are not dominant in Jakarta both their social roles and number
of inhabitants. They spread into surrounding places such as Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi, Bogor and Karawang. Then, it came out the term “Betawi Tengah (Central Betawi) and Betawi Pinggiran (Betawi Rural)”. Betawi Tengah or often called Betawi Kota (Betawi Urban) is the Betawi ethnic group who lived in the center of Jakarta. They still hold a strong Malay culture. Meanwhile, Betawi Pinggiran is the Betawi ethnic group who partially lived in Tangerang, Bogor, Karawang and Bekasi. For those who lived in Tangerang. They were influenced by Chinese culture while in Bogor, Bekasi and Karawang were influenced by Sundanese culture (Purbasari, 2010).

For the Betawi ethnic group, three things are considered very sacral in daily life, namely birth, marriage and death (Shahab, 2006). In Betawi wedding ceremonies, several stages must be carried out and they are still being preserved until now, namely Buka Palang Pintu (open the door’s latch). Nowadays, Palang Pintu tradition is just an entertainment performance in Betawi wedding ceremonies. But more than that, it implied many values, meanings, and loaded literacy learning in each stage of performances. Therefore, the purpose of the research is intended to unfold symbolic meaning in Palang Pintu performance and its relevance to literary appreciation learning.

Several studies on Palang Pintu tradition have been carried out and it discussed from different points of view. The previous research carried by Anggraeni et al. (2019), elaborate Analyzing on Palang Pintu tradition as an effort to build national civilization and religiosity based on local culture value. Furthermore, the research explored that the Palang Pintu tradition in Betawi contains Islamic value. Besides being an effort to preserve culture, Palang Pintu Betawi is also expected to be able to internalize religious and cultural values in everyday life.

Meanwhile, Siregar and Irtawidjajanti (2019) researched Palang Pintu as an entertainment in Jakarta. They state the meaning and philosophy or character of the Betawi ethnic group is reflected in the Palang Pintu. In this study is also mentioned that not only as a ritual in Betawi wedding ceremonies, the Palang Pintu also is an educational part of the cultural values of the Betawi ethnic group.

Suryani and Sagiyanto (2017) elaborate on the strategy of the Betawi Community in promoting Palang Pintu tradition. The community is not just for promoting but it can also be a change agent that can help maintain and preserve the traditions of the Palang Pintu.

This research discusses the Palang Pintu tradition; not only as an entertaining performance in the wedding ceremony but also because it contains several meaning or values in each series of Palang Pintu performance, namely reading salawat, adu pantun (pantun speech), bekla/adu silat (martial art), and reading sike (reciting the Holy Qur’an).

2. METHODS

The purpose of the study is to provide a comprehensive description of symbolic meanings in Palang Pintu tradition of Betawi wedding ceremony. It carried out by analyzing, describing and elaborating the data. The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach conducted in oral tradition. According to Sedyawati (1996) oral tradition is any discourse that is conveyed orally, based on custom which has patterned in the ethnic community. It could be ceremonial, expression and rituals. Meanwhile, the method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive-analytical method employing observation, documentation, interview and literature review. A qualitative descriptive-analytical method is to analyze, describe and summarize from any resources which collected in the field research. Descriptive-analytical method used to analyze Palang Pintu performance which implied symbolic meanings of the series events.

The subject of the research is Palang Pintu performance which held in procession of wedding ceremony of Betawi ethnic group while data were collected by observation and documentation of Palang Pintu performance. Furthermore, an interview was conducted by the researcher with experts which is Nurhalim. He is a member and a sike reader of Paguyuban Seni Betawi Modern/PSBM (Modern Betawi Art Association), Karang Timur Subdistrict, Karang Tengah District, Tangerang.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding findings and discussion of the study consists of three points, namely the history and the existence of Palang Pintu, the process of Palang Pintu performance and symbolic meanings of Palang Pintu, and Its relevance toward literary learning appreciation.

3.1. The History and the Existence of Buka Palang Pintu (open the door’s latch)

Buka Palang Pintu (open the door’s latch) is a cultural heritage of the Betawi ethnic group which is part of the wedding ceremony. Basically, there are several stages in the Betawi wedding ceremony, one of them is Palang Pintu. It is one procession must be conducted before having an Ijab Kabul (wedding vow). In the Betawi wedding ceremonies, there is series of events (Shahab, 2004) starting negesin (looking around), ngelamar (proposing), nentuin (concluding), enjotan (bringing foods), serahan (handover/gift), akad nikah (wedding vow), maulidan, kerjaan, kiras and ngunduh mantu (bridal visit).
Palang Pintu derived from two words, namely Palang (stop or lock) and Pintu (door). According to KKBI (2008), Palang refers to wood or block which installed across door or road while Pintu means holes or planks for entrance or exit. If these words are combined implied the woods that placed be in the way to prevent or block from the stranger entering. Thus, Palang Pintu is a tradition in Betawi wedding ceremony used as a condition for the groom’s candidate before the implementation of Ijab Kabul (wedding vow). The groom cannot just enter the bride’s house before competing for maen pulak, pantun and singing sike (Ningrum & Yoesoef, 2018). The condition that must be fulfilled by the groom’s candidate is a series of Palang Pintu performance. They are practice silat (martial art), singing Sike (reading Holy Qur’an), reading Shalawat and pantun speech. Nowadays, the conditions could be replaced by persons who are hired.

There is no specific record on when Palang Pintu started in the past. According to Bachtiar (2013) The Betawi legend has it that Si Pitung started the Palang Pintu. The story begins when Si Pitung to propose Aisyah as his wife. Aisyah is the daughter of Murtadho. Meanwhile, Murtadho is a Jawara (silat champion) who is nicknamed Macan Kemayoran (Kemayoran Tiger). It is said that Si Pitung is able to defeat Murtadho as a Palang Pintu if he is going to marry Aisyah. Therefore, Palang Pintu tradition still preserves in Betawi wedding ceremonies.

Palang Pintu becomes more popular until today. Besides as a tradition in the Betawi wedding, it also a performance in welcoming guests. Palang Pintu is a highly cultural heritage and has meanings in each series of the procession, one of them is pencak silat. In December 12, 2019 Unite Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is officially listed pencak silat as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity. (Sangiran, 2019). It means that Palang Pintu tradition is not only known in Indonesia as Betawi wedding ceremonies but also abroad.

3.2. The Process of Palang Pintu Performance

The performance process of Palang Pintu consists of four stages, namely reading salawat accompanied by traditional musical instruments, adu pantun (pantun speech), beklaia/adu silat (martial art), and reading sike (reciting Holy Qur’an).

3.2.1. Reading Salawat

Buka Palang Pintu (open the door’s latch) procession starts with a group of the groom’s candidate come to the bride’s residence. The group of the groom’s candidate will be accompanied by the traditional musical instruments namely rebana ketimpring and the reading of salawat. Reading salawat that is echoed namely salawat dastur. Occasionally, it was read by three persons of the groom’s candidate group. While playing a musical instrument they recite the salawat up to the house of the bride.

3.2.2. Berbalas Pantun (pantun speech)

When a group of the groom’s candidate arrives at the bride’s residence, they will be greeted by a representative of the bride. The spokesman of the groom and bride are conducting the dialogue with each other and it is inserted with rhymes (pantun speech) (Ningrum & Yoesoef, 2018).

As a part of the Malay tribes, Betawi ethnic group is familiar with poetry forms, namely rhymes (pantun) and poems (Chaer, 2012). Basically, pantun is a kind of old and traditional Malay poetry (Fang, 1993). In Malay literature and culture, the root of the word pantun which is tun refers to direction, guidance and care. Meanwhile according to Murti (2017) pantun is a representation of the rhetorical intelligence of Malay language and literature. Furthermore, it loaded values of genius local wisdom and reflects on a life full of nobility.

There is a similarity among Malay, Sundanese, Banjar and Betawi in pantun. It showed a moral message conveyed in their pantun and has patterns a-b-a-b. (Maulina, 2012). Therefore, Betawi’s pantun also has four lines with the rhymes a-b-a-b. Here is the example of Betawi’s pantun:

Ujan gerimis aig
Ikan bawal diasini
Lu nagape nangis aig
Bulan Syawal nanti dikawining

In English version:

The rain continued
Pomfret fish is salted
Why you cried
On Syawal month will be married

In Palang Pintu procession, pantun is inserted while both of the spokesmen from the groom and bride are conducting dialogues. It is occasionally used humorous pantun but educated. The essence of the pantun content is in order for the bride to give permission a group of groom enters her residence. After replying pantun is over, the next step is maen pulak or beklaia (martial arts) each other. It is represented by men which are called jawara from the groom and bride’s side of the family.

3.2.3. Maen Pulak or Beklai (martial arts)

Historically, in this stage the groom’s candidate must be able to demonstrate his ability in silat (martial arts). It is a condition for him to enter the bride’s house.
and conduct a marriage contract. At the moment both in groom and bride, maen pukul or bekmai (martial arts) is represented by someone hired.

Silat is Indonesia’s cultural heritage which is officially recognized as silat as intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO. For the Betawi ethnic group, Silat is closely custom for a long time. It is usually taught by their parents since childhood. Besides self-defense, it is also an art form in daily life. There are three things that become Betawi’s image namely ngaji (reciting the holy Qur’an), solat (pray) and silat. In Betawi culture the term of silat refers to maen pukul.

The Betawi people know several types of silat or pencak silat. The popular types of silat in Betawi namely bekasi, cingkrik and sabeni. Nawi (2016) classified at least 317 kinds of Betawi’s silat. The properties used in silat performance are golok. It is a traditional weapon of Betawi. In the past, the Betawi people used the golok as a means of self-protection. Likewise in silat, it is used by jawara.

In Palang Pintu process, silat (martial arts) who played by two jawara from the groom and bride is an important part of the marriage process. The fight is conducting each other and if the jawara of groom are able to defeat the jawara of bride then continue to the next stage namely lantunan sikeh or read the holy verses of Al Qur’an.

3.2.4. Lantunan Sike (reciting the verses of the holy Qur’an)

Lantunan sike is the final stage of Palang Pintu procession. After the bride tests the skills of the groom in silat, Then, the bride asks the groom to demonstrate his skill in reading the verses of the holy Qur’an. The word sike is derived from “sikkah”. It is one of the tones in tilawah (knowledge of reading holy Qur’an). Due to the habit of the Betawi people to abbreviate “words” or “sentences”, along with the time the word sikah becomes sike.

The result of an interview with Nurhalim, He is one of the readers of Sike at the Paguyuban Seni Betawi Modern/PSBM (Modern Betawi Art Association), Karang Timur Subdistrict, Karang Tengah District, Tangerang said that the form of Sike by chanting or giving a rhythm when reciting Al-Qur’an, the Betawi people gave another name Yalil. Sike is a condition that must be fulfilled by men, after showing silat (bekmai) and replying to rhymes (pantun).

The reading of the sike is usually represented by someone in a group of the groom who is able to chant the verse of the Holy Qur’an. If it is successful the groom is allowed to enter the bride’s house and Ijab Kabul (wedding vow) can be implemented. The reading of the sike is a sign that Palang Pintu procession is accomplished.

3.3. Symbolic Meanings of Palang Pintu and Its Relevance Toward Literary Appreciation Learning

Essentially, Palang Pintu is not a ritual and a performance only. It has cultural values for Betawi ethnic group and implies remarkable meanings of each series of the events. The values contained in the Palang Pintu tradition is used as the way of life for the Betawi people. The symbolic meanings of Palang Pintu tradition can be explained as follows:

3.3.1. Reading salawat

Salawat contains praises to Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. It usually read by Betawi ethnic group in several moments namely maulidan, khitanan, death, birth and wedding. Reading salawat in Palang Pintu procession indicated that Betawi ethnic group are religious people. They always carry out Islamic teachings in daily life. Furthermore, in family life, they are expected to obey the almighty commands.

3.3.2. Maen Pukul or Bekmai (martial arts)

Maen Pukul or Bekmai (martial arts) is an activity that relies on strength, accuracy, thoroughness and dexterity. All of them must be owned by a man. Therefore, maen pukul or bekmai in Palang Pintu tradition reflected that a man as a household must be able to protect his family in order to secure. Furthermore, the moral message of maen pukul or silat in Palang Pintu that a man is also must be able to lead, guide and take care his wife and children.

3.3.3. Lantunan Sike (reciting the verses of the holy Qur’an)

Reading Sike that recited is a symbol of a man who adheres to Islamic teachings. It also means that in family life later, a man is a family leader must have the ability to recite the Holy Qur’an. In Palang Pintu procession, reading sike is taught that the groom must be able to recite the holy Qur’an. Betawi people realize that the ideal man is able to perform silat and recite the Holy Qur’an. Thus, it can be concluded that in reading sike implied that there is a leadership value.

3.3.4. The relevances of Palang Pintu Tradition in Literary Appreciation Learning

Literary appreciation is an activity of understanding, enjoying and applying for literary work in many aspects of life. Meanwhile, literary appreciation learning is a
process of interaction between teachers and students regarding all types of literature, they could be poetry, prose, fictional stories or drama (Durachman et al., 2014). In this case, pantun (rhyme) is including literature. One of the series of the Palang Pintu performance is pantun. Thus, it is indirectly conducting literary appreciation learning especially for children.

There are many ways to implement literary appreciation learning. One of study it could be based on local wisdom. Palang Pintu tradition as the Betawi local wisdom introduce literature appreciation. Besides loaded cultural literacy, it is also entertaining. The pantun (rhyme) that is conveyed is indirectly internalized in the children. They learn by watching the Palang Pintu performance around regarding the form, meaning and function of pantun (rhymes). Palang Pintu performance can be a model to introduce literature (pantun) fo children.

4. CONCLUSION

Palang Pintu tradition is the cultural heritage in the Betawi wedding ceremonies. It is a condition of the groom to conduct a marriage contract or wedding vow. He must pass several tests in order to marry the bride. Unlike nowadays, previously Palang Pintu was a sacred custom in the Betawi wedding ceremonies. Today, it is just a complementary and entertainment show at the wedding. Besides as the tradition in the wedding ceremony, Palang Pintu is also used to welcome guests.

The performance process of Palang Pintu as follows: firstly, reading salawat. It is recited by group of the groom’s candidate to come to bride’s residence. Reading salawat accompanied by traditional musical instruments namely rebana ketimpring. Secondly, berbalas pantun (pantun speech). While the spokesman form the groom and bride are conducting dialogue, it is inserted pantun. Thirldly, maen pukul or beklai (martial arts). It is a condition that must be fulfilled by the groom. The bride tests the skills of the groom in silat. Silat is played by the representative of someone from the groom and the bride, they called jawara. The last stage is lantunan sike (reciting the verses of the holy Qur’an). It is conducted after silat performance and as an indication that the groom may enter the bride’s house and ijab kabul (wedding vow) is starting.

Palang Pintu is not a ritual only. It loaded cultural meaning and used as the way of life for the Betawi ethnic group. In each stage of Palang Pintu performance contains values and remarkable meanings namely reading salawat. It indicates the Betawi people is religiosity and carry out Islamic teachings in daily life. Maen pukul or beklai in Palang Pintu tradition reflected that a man as a household must be able to protect his family in order to secure. In addition, lantunan sike implies leadership. As a leader in his family, a man must be able to recite the holy Qur’an. Furthermore, pantun in Palang Pintu tradition is relevance in literary appreciation learning. Pantun is a literary that has become a habit of the Betawi people. Berbalas pantun (replies rhyme) in Palang Pintu performance is an activity to introduce literature to children. It can be a model of literary appreciation learning.

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