



Symbolic meaning of Nyadran, Javanese tradition at the Banyon village, Central Klaten District, Regency of Klaten

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Abstract. *Nyadran* is one of Javanese tradition commonly done once in a year, that is, in *Ruwah* – Javanese year. Javanese society usually has tradition to conserve various culture of their ancestors, which is, one of them is *nyadran*. They still do the tradition of *nyadran*. The aims of this research are (1) to describe the procession of *nyadran* tradition in the Banyon village, (2) to explain symbolic meaning of food offerings in *nyadran*, (3) to describe the educational value in this tradition. This research involves the activity of society; it is cultural one. The object of this research is the symbolic meaning; it uses semiotic approach which explains about symbol and sign in the language, art, or culture. The procession of *nyadran* (*besik*, in other word) is to clean the grave of the ancestors, and the following morning people pray in the mosque. After that, people get together to pray guided by a distinguish figure in the society. The symbolic meaning in the *nyadran* tradition goes as follows. *Tumpeng*, in the shape of cone or like a mountain. *Ingkung*, a whole steamed chicken. Vegetables and side dishes. Market snacks. The conclusion is that *nyadran* tradition is aimed to pray for the ancestors.

Keywords: *nyadran*, ancestors, Javanese tradition

1 Introduction

Nyadran is a tradition of Javanese society which is done once a year, that is, in *Ruwah* month – Javanese month. As mentioned by Koentjaraningrat [7] there are seven culture elements. They are religion system and its ritual, system and society organization, knowledge system, language, art, livelihood, system of technology and equipment. Nyadran tradition is one culture elements, that is religion system which usually has something to do with value, norm, tradition, and sacred thing.

Nyadran derives from Sanskrit language *sraddha* meaning ‘believe’ (Tradisi-Tradisi Adiluhung, 2015: 98). There are some activities in *nyadran* done by Javanese people; they are: praying together at night, *kenduri* - eating together -, cleaning cemetery or *besik*, and doing the pilgrimage to their ancestors.

They use some symbol when they do the nyadran. The symbol appears in the various food for offerings in nyadran. Sometimes there is symbol also in the equipment for the activity. The symbols have their own meaning.

Nyadran ritual is not only gathering food, praying, and having party, it also expresses gratitude to God and praying for the ancestors. Nyadran creates harmony, togetherness, mutual cooperation, and omits individualism character. Togetherness and mutual cooperation can be seen at Banyon village when the villagers do the nyadran. Happily they prepare the place for nyadran, make simple stage for entertainment, put some gifts, make roof, roll out the mat, and arrange chairs and tables for public figures.

Up to now Banyon people still do the nyadran tradition. Many people wait for this activity. In other villages, nyadran tradition experience some changes. But not in Banyon; entertainment and some gifts are only complementary. The last nyadran in Banyon was done at Wednesday, 30 Maret 2022 at 13.00 in the afternoon. They sang and gave some gift from rich people in the village.

Research goals (1) to describe the procession of nyadran tradition in Banyon village, Klaten (2) to explain the symbolic meaning from offerings equipment in the nyadran (3) to describe educational norms from the tradition.

Javanese tradition is one of living attitudes Javanese people; to understand people we have to know their tradition. Javanese people have many culture to maintain. One of them is nyadran.

2 Nyadran Tradition

Tradition is custom done together in a society from one generation to the next one. Tradition is people habit containing cultural element, customs, and it is done down and down for a long time. According to Herusatata (1987: 9) tradition generally is meant to show value, norm, and customs which grow in a long time up to now. People accept it and it is maintained.

According to Suyono (1985: 413) tradition is a steady rule and covers all cultural system of a culture to arrange action or deed of people in the social living. We can say that tradition is inheritance of norm from the ancestors and people do it up to now. People in the village and small town tend to do the tradition from the ancestors and they maintain it.

Tradition relates with religion ritual, art, views of life, and others. Tradition is created from action or people deed which go from ancestors to the generation after and still maintained. According to Koenjaraningrat (2004: 5) culture contains three forms. They are:

- (1) culture as something complex from ideas, norms, rules and others.
- (2) culture as something complex from patterned deed of human being in the society.
- (3) culture as objects from human handiwork.

Tradition is in the first form, that is, ideas, norms, rules, and others.

3 Research Methodology

This research use Banyon as the place to do the research. It is located at Central Klaten district, Klaten regency. This research uses qualitative method. This method is used to explore the meaning behind the fact. Sutopo (2002: 19) stated that qualitative research tends to emphasize to the meaning, focus to qualified data, with quantitative analysis. The explored object is nyadran tradition done at Banyon village, Klaten. The data of this research is qualitative, and therefor this research used descriptive qualitative method. They object of study is symbolic meaning, and use the semiotic approach. Semiotic describes symbol and sign in the language, art, or culture. Mansor Pateda (2001) explains that there are nine kinds of semiotic. They are: analytical semiotic, descriptive semiotic, cultural semiotic, narrative semiotic, faunal semiotic, natural semiotic, normative semiotic, social semiotic, and structural semiotic. In the tradition there are symbols or signs which meaning can be found in the semiotic science. Semiotic is a science that studies about symbol and sign. They appear not only in language and art, but also can be found in culture. The researcher learns how the procession of a tradition and study their usage in the context of their culture. The researcher uses semiotic approach because it can explain the symbolic meaning in the tradition of nyadran. Data analysis technique is used to analyze data gained directly. Data analysis in this research has three steps: data reduction, data analysis, and temporary conclusion.

4 Research Result

4.1 Nyadran Tradition Procession

a. **Besik (cleaning the grave)**

When the time for nyadran comes, people go to the grave with their equipment in the morning to clean the tomb of their ancestors. They usually also clean the tombs nearby together. The clean up the grass, dry twigs and leaves are collected, and then they burn the rubbish. Before noon, they leave the grave. They leave a broom near the tomb. Every Thursday before Maghrib (at about 5 pm) a relative comes to pray for the dead and clean the tomb with the broom.

b. **Praying in the Mosque**

The procession of nyadran at Banyon begins in the afternoon. People come to the mosque to have prayer for their ancestor, reading al Quran, dzikr and tahlillan (Islamic chanting). This activity is done after Isya time (at about 7.30 pm) and guided by a kyai (Islamic leader).

c. **Kondangan (Praying and Eating Together)**

The following morning, people come to the mosque again to have kondangan. Every family send a member of the family bringing Tumpeng – a cone of rice completed

with nillead the pray for the ancestors, then they eat light meal on the spot. After that, the go home with their own Tumpeng, and the family eat it together.

d. Praying Together

At about 2 pm people assemble along the main road in the village. They bring their own mat and roll it out to sit on. This activity usually is attended by the Lurah (village leader) and other village apparatus. There will be a committee that arrange this peak activity of nyadran. The specific thing in this activity is that they put all food at tenong; tenong is a container made up from webbing bamboo. At the old time, there are many food seller using this tenong; people called it tenongan.

People make small stage for entertainment and also to put various gifts of home daily need such as rice, frying oil, sugar, tea, for lucky attendant. After they pray guided by Islamic leader, people are happy together at that time; they sing, talk each other, laugh, eat, and drink. They open the tenong in front of them and have the meals. Unique, the bring their own food, and they exchange food with each other.

At the end, they close the event by shaking hand each other to show their intimacy and peace among them.

4.2 Symbolic Meaning

a. Symbolic Meaning of Tumpeng.

Tumpeng is rice in the shape of a cone like a mountain. The shape of Tumpeng is sacred; it is considered as high place, a holy one. Tumpeng stands for tumindak sing lempeng 'righteous deeds' which is blessed by Allah. Tumpeng is always accompanied with nasi golong (rice in the shape of ball) , ingkung (whole steamed chicken), various vegetables, and fruits. Tumpeng has some flavors depending on the purpose. We have white tumpeng (original), savory tumpeng, yellow tumpung, megono (vegetable) tumpeng. Tumpeng has symbolic meaning; it is sacred, it relates human being (Javanese) with God.

b. Symbolic Meaning of Inkung.

Inkung is a whole chicken steamed with various spices so it is very savory. Inkung is a symbol of totality in life. Human being should surrender to God with all body and soul. When human being pray to God with humility, and the lust should be omitted, focus on the pray. Symbolic meaning of ingkung is the wholeness of human being in praying to God, the wholeness of human being in the deeds, in speaking and attitude. The other symbolic meaning is the lust control: the whole chicken tied up reflects that the lust is tied. It suggests that we should control our lust, lust for material, power, and sex.

c. Symbolic Meaning of Vegetables and Side dish.

vegetables and side dishes always accompany tumpeng. Vegetables here can be potato, red bean, various leaves, red onion, garlic, chili, coconut milk, cabbage, cucum-

ber, and fruits. The side dishes can be some fishes, egg, and meat. Vegetables and side dishes should be original. They are directly taken from the nature with simple cooking. They are taken from underground, from above the ground, and from water. They all symbolize the prosperity and well-being of Javanese people because they live on very fertile earth and rich water.

d. Symbolic Meaning of Jajanan Pasar.

Jajanan pasar is traditional market snack; these snacks are easily obtained in the traditional market. Mostly, the raw material are from the field. Some natural colors maybe added in the food in order that they look more attractive. Their names are very specific. Those various snacks are arranged on the tenong – container from webbing bamboo that symbolize the unity and harmony among villagers. People with different culture, race, ethnic, religion are necessarily placed on the tenong in order that they will get acquainted and united; in that way, the harmony is achieved. Beside that, these jajanan pasar also symbolize prosperity. The crops and the processed products result in specific food and they can make people welfare. That's why the villagers must be grateful to God for these bounty. For that reason, the nyadran tradition is conducted to show their gratitude.

5 Conclusion

The nyadran in Banyon, Klaten, is a tradition of Javanese people which existed since Majapahit era. It experienced changes because of Islam influence. The goals of nyadran are to pray for the ancestors that God may forgive their sins, to pray for protection of the existing people, and to pray for harmony of Banyon people, and to give charity for others. From this explanation, we can conclude as follows:

1. The nyadran tradition in Banyon village is conducted every Ruwah (Javanese month) along the main road of Banyon by rolling mat out and use tenong - a webbing bamboo - to put the food.
2. Nyadran activities in Banyon is conducted to respect and pray for their ancestors; this nyadran is still done and preserved up to now.
3. The procession of nyadran in Banyon begins with cleaning the grave by Banyon villagers. The following morning they come to the mosque with complete tumpeng to pray guided by a kyai. The next activity is praying together all Banyon villager with their Lurah – village leader. After praying, they eat together and also exchange the food. It is done along the main road in Banyon.
4. At the end of nyadran procession, usually they come to the grave with family to pray for their dead one. They bring water various flowers to be sprinkled on the tombs.
5. Symbolic Meaning
 - a. Tumpeng: it is a cone-shaped rice; describes a mountain, the high and holy place. The shape of tumpeng which is like mountain is sacred. Tumpeng also stands for tumindak sing lempeng 'righteous deeds'

- b. Inkung: it is a whole steamed chicken; it is cooked with various spices and coconut milk; it is very savory. Inkung implies totality in life. Human being should surrender to God with all body and soul.
- c. Vegetables and Side dishes: they complete the tumpeng. These vegetables and side dishes are taken directly from nature, that is, from underground, above ground, and water with simple cooking. they symbolize the fertile earth of Java and enough to feed the whole people.
- d. Jajanan pasar: they are traditional market snacks.. People arrange these snacks on the tenong of webbed bamboo. They symbolize the unity and harmony of the villagers which have various characters, ethnic, religion.

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