

The Interpretation of the Omed-Omedan Tradition by the Community in Banjar Kaja, Traditional Village of Sesetan, Denpasar, Bali

Ni Putu Ayu Gita Yunitasari* Sanggar Kanto Anif Fatma Chawa
Department of Social Science, Faculty of Social Science and Political Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya,
Indonesia
Jl. MT. Haryono 163, Malang 65145, Indonesia

Abstract

This research aims to describe the interpretation of the cultural tradition of *omed-omedan* by the community in Banjar Kaja. In order to understand the meaning of the tradition of *omed-omedan*, the symbolic interactionism theory approach was used. This research used qualitative research with the phenomenology approach. The data collecting technique used was through observation, interview, and documentation. The data analysis technique used was a modification of phenomenology analysis technique from Kaam. The tradition of *omed-omedan* or *med-medan* derived from the word *omed* which means to pull, so *omed-omedan* means pulling each other. There are always pros and cons of a tradition in a community. There is an image or impression that seems to accuse the *omed-omedan* tradition as a chance to kissing in public. Actually, the technique of *omed-omedan* is where the man embraces the woman, and their cheeks are touching to each other which give the impression as if they are kissing. The interpretation by informants related to the tradition of *omed-omedan* is the meaning of solidarity as a social creature, human cannot live without others and should help each other, the meaning of religion is as an expression of gratitude for the life given by the creator, the meaning of harmony or hospitality is to maintain balance and the integrity of the Banjar Kaja community.

Keywords: interpretation, *omed-omedan* tradition, community

1. Introduction

Hindu society in Bali has long had unique, beautiful, and rich culture as well as full of mystery. It is said to be a mystery because many Balinese cultural products cannot be separated from religious magical beliefs. Culture is often interpreted as the same as humanity. Human creates culture because of the development of the ability (power) of the *idep* (mind). Human must be able to develop *bayu*, *sabda*, *idep* which is guided by the value of virtue (*guna*) as a culture. In every existing culture, there are elements of aesthetics value of "beauty" (Sudharma, 2013).

Speaking of beauty, Bali is also renowned for its diverse custom. The unique traditions of Bali are spread in various regions. In Pangeringsingan Tenganan, for example, there is a Perang Pandan tradition. The cultural uniqueness of Tenganan is also seen from the settling pattern of the community in a village enclave with an ancient Balinese (Bali Kuna) cultural system. Trunyan Village in Bangli Municipality has a unique culture, which can be seen from their corpse burial tradition, without burying them as the common method, on the shores of beautiful Lake Batur. The main Ngaben activity in Puri Ubud is also a fascinating tradition. It can be seen from the tourists come flooding, making Ubud able to maintain its image as a cultural tourism village. The unique cultural traditions in Bali are not only present in ancient Balinese village, but also in modern urban villages. There is a unique tradition in Banjar Kaja, Sesetan Village, Denpasar which is located in the center of Denpasar city which is preserved and potentially used as a tourist attraction, called *omed-omedan* (Mahardika, 2016).

There are always pros and cons of a tradition in a community, and so does with this *omed-omedan* tradition which was seen with contempt in 1984 by the community. The Banjar Kaja community, Sesetan, strongly rejects the image or impression that seems to accuse the *med-medan* tradition as an opportunity to kissing in public. As a religious people, especially Hindu religion, it is impossible for them to kiss in public. Things like that are now allowed to happen and such idea has never existed. (Sudharma, 2013).

With the changing times, the kissing scene cannot be avoided by the *omed-omedan* actors. This behavior is what causes the assumption of some watching people from the mass media as an overwhelming passion of the younger generation. Therefore, to avoid the news consumption that blames *omed-omedan* cultural traditions as the mass kissing tradition, so that there is a lack of understanding of the *omed-omedan* actors in interpreting the essence of the real *omed-omedan*, to avoid a mistake in conducting the cultural traditions, this research is made. Therefore, this research is expected to answer and correct the public perception of *omed-omedan* tradition so that people can understand the true nature of *omed-omedan* and no more misunderstanding in the society.

Given some of the above explanations about the history of the emergence of *omed-omedan* tradition to the meaning of the tradition, the researcher is interested to examine deeply about the tradition of *omed-omedan*

especially on the interpretation of each individual, whether the *omed-omedan* tradition has undergone a change of meaning from the game of pulling into a kissing attraction performed by young people in Banjar Kaja. Whether the tradition of ancestors from the past until today has experienced a decline in meaning, value or norm. By comparing the previous meaning with the current meaning, the researcher wants to examine deeply about “The Interpretation of *Omed-omedan* Tradition by the Community in Banjar Kaja, Traditional Village of Sesetan, Denpasar, Bali”.

2. Literature Review: Theory of Symbolic Interactionism

In the study of interpretation of *omed-omedan* tradition by Banjar Kaja community, symbolic interactionism theory framework is needed to see how the subjective interpretation of each individual related to the *omed-omedan* tradition. Therefore, one’s individual thoughts to another are different depending on the mind of each individual understanding and interpreting the culture.

The theory of symbolic interactionism in Weber's view (Anugrahani, 2014) conforms to Mead's notion that a social action is a distant act based on the subjective interpretation given by individual by considering the behavior of others. It emphasizes on the symbols and interactions, which are a reference framework for understanding how humans along with other humans create a symbolic world and how later they shape human behavior.

Three points are essential for symbolic interactionism: (1) a focus on the interaction between actors and the world, (2) a view of actors and the world as a dynamic process rather than static structures, and (3) given a great meaning to the ability of actors to interpret the social world. The main references to the symbolic interaction theory are: Mind, Self, and Society. The spread and development of Mead's theory also occur through the interpretation and further elaboration by his students, especially Herbert Blumer. In fact, it was Blumer who coined the term “symbolic interaction” and popularized it among the academic community (Ritzer, 2012).

Mead (Kuswarno, 2009) explains that the human ability to be able to respond to symbols between them is an interaction that brings the explanation of symbolic interactionism to the concept of self. Mead explains that a person can take action for himself as well as to others socially. He can praise himself, blame himself or push himself, he shares himself with himself, punish himself by himself and so on. In other words, one can make oneself the object of his/her own actions. The self is formed in the same way as the object, through the “definition” made with others.

Fish-er, 1986 (Heryadi & Hana, 2013) explains that as a theory, symbolic interactionism tries to see the social reality created by humans. Humans have the ability to interact symbolically. Human in themselves has the essence of culture, interconnectedness, society, and ideas. Each form of social interaction begins and ends with the consideration of the human self. This perspective assumes that each individual within them has the essence of culture, interacts in the middle of society, and produces the meaning of “ideas” which is collectively agreed upon. Eventually, it can be said that every form of social interaction performed by each individual, will consider the individual side, this is one of the characteristics of the interactional perspective of symbolic interactionism (Siregar, 2011).

Blumer (Kuswarno, 2009) reveals three premises that underlie the idea of symbolic interactionism:

1. Humans act on something based on the meanings exist on the thing for them.
2. The meaning comes from “one’s social interaction with others”.
3. The meanings are enhanced when the process of social interaction occurs.

Thus, symbolic interactions assume that humans can understand things by learning from experience, one’s perception is always translated in symbols. A meaning is learned through interaction among people, and that meaning arises because of the exchange of symbols in social groups. On the other hand, symbolic interactions see that all social structures and institutions are created by interaction among people. In addition, the behavior of a person is not absolutely determined by the events of the past alone but also done deliberately (Kuswarno, 2009).

Therefore, the view of the symbolic interaction model assumes that cultural behavior is basically trying to enforce the rules, laws, and norms that apply to the community. Thus, not the other way around, where their interactions are framed by the strict rules, but rather through symbolic interactions which then will emerge rules that are collectively agreed upon. In a sense, cultural meaning will depend on the interaction process of the actors. Meanings usually appear in complex interaction units, and sometimes appear in small interactions between individuals (Jailani, 2012).

Using the theory of symbolic interactionism is very important as a supporting theory in research. It is expected that the theory can understand the social realities and hidden meanings behind the values and symbols of *omed-omedan* tradition carried out by adolescents in Banjar Kaja. The individual interpretations of the Banjar Kaja community are traditional elders, parents, and adolescents, with the definition of self-thinking.

3. Research Method

The research study on the interpretation of *omed-omedan* tradition by the community in Banjar Kaja uses a

qualitative research approach. A qualitative approach is used based on the consideration that the activities of the actors involved directly to the field of research by observing the behavior of people of Banjar Kaja more closely with the subject of research and understand the condition of the field more deeply. In understanding the meaning, symbols and actions hidden by symbolic interactionism require qualitative methods. Characteristics and natural condition of the subject under study (Kuswarno, 2009).

Qualitative research using the approach of phenomenology is derived from the study of philosophy. This study aims to understand the meaning of events, symptoms that arise, and or interaction for individuals in certain conditions and situations in daily life in a particular society (Fatchan, 2013). Identifying and describing the social phenomena occurring in the field as they are. In the view of Scheler (Fatchan, 2013), the phenomenology approach states that to obtain the essence (existence) of a real human action, it must be through the process of ethical reduction or filtering, in the form of religious values and norms, as the basis of ownership of the essence. Thus, the phenomenology in Scheler's view, that every human action's symptoms must be associated with the reduction of ethical filtering, values, and various religious norms that surround it. The meaning of phenomenology is the reality, visible. A visible phenomenon is a reflection of an independent reality. Because it has meaning that requires further interpretation, phenomenology breaks through the phenomenon to be able to know the deepest meaning (essence) of the phenomenon (Mamlu'ah, 2016)

This research is conducted in Banjar Kaja, Sesetan Village, South Denpasar. The technique of determining the informant uses the purposive technique where the sample in the field is chosen as an informant by determining the people who are considered competent and able to provide the relevant related information in this research. The data collection is done through observation, interview, photo documentation, and library materials. Data analysis technique used is the modification of phenomenology analysis technique from Van Kaam.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. The History of *Omed – Omedan* Tradition

The cultural tradition of *omed-omedan* located in Banjar Kaja is one of six Banjars located in Sesetan, South Denpasar. The Banjar is located in the northernmost of the village of Sesetan. This is where the unique tradition passed down from generation to generation known as *omed-omedan* is occurred, which is an interesting activity between a group of women and men in a ritual and social activity that is held after the nyepi or ngembak geni day.

The tradition of *omed-omedan* or *med-medan* derived from the word *omed* which means to pull. So, the words *omed-omedan* and *med-medan* are assumed to come from the word *maomed-omedan* or from the word *mamaid-maidan* which means pulling at each other. Therefore, the *omed-omedan* tradition is an activity of pulling at each other involving young men and women of Banjar Kaja Sesetan. The tradition of *omed-omedan* in Banjar Kaja Sesetan has been passed down from generation to generation. The heir is only verbally because there are no historical sources related to this tradition.

Chronologically, since the beginning *omed-omedan*, according to I Gusti Ngurah Oka Putra, as a descendant of Puri Oka Banjar kaja, the beginning of *omed-omedan* was occur sometime around the 17th century. At that time his ancestor named Anak Agung Made Raka, suffered a severe illness before the feast of nyepi, then become, unable to get up and walk. It was a royal transition era at that time. He is still respected by his abi - abi here because he is the king's descendants, not from the kingdom here, but the descendants of the king while their Puri are actually in the city of Denpasar. When he was severely ill, he said that he should not be visited and should not hold any crowd here. Disappointed with the order, during the feast of Nyepi they agreed with the young and old, men and women to hold a crowd finally heard by the kompyang.

He was intended to come out and scolded the abi-abi outside not to be noisy. But at that moment he staggered out with the help of his family, and then something weird happened. As soon as he came out, he felt healthy and did not feel any pain, while he wanted to be angry before. He was also surprised that the abi - abi were then called. And he said that go on, "let's do it." Packed in *omed-omedan* at the time and they also felt good about the lord. It was continued with pairs in every Nyepi. Then, it was continued at the time during the invasion of the Japanese and Dutch era. At that time, the government of Japan and Dutch banned it, but the people ignored the order by still carrying out *omed-omedan* secretly in the forest. Throughout the year it is done until to the next generation.

In the development of *omed-omedan* feast, it undergoes a change of day, which is usually conducted exactly at nyepi, but changed to the next day that is during the ngembak geni. In 1979, the governor of Prof. DR. Ida Bagus Mantra curbed the catur brata penyepian which is the four ban or taboos that must be conducted by the Hindus when carrying out Nyepi. There four restrictions are Amati Geni or do not light a fire, Amati Lelungan or do not carry out activities, Amati Lelungan or do not traveling, and Amati Karya or do not work. Customary and community figures had confused since usually *omed-omedan* was held during Nyepi but with the governor's regulation, they *cannot* carry out *omed-omedan* in Nyepi. After holding a meeting with some traditional leaders, finally the implementation of *omed-omedan* moved on the day of ngembak geni that is one day after Nyepi. Then

omed-omedan continues every year to date.

Then in 1984, there were pros and cons of the *omed-omedan* tradition. At that time, I Gusti Ngurah Oka Putra as the successor of the descendants of the puri heard about the whispers of people that said: “let’s watch people kissing”. Because he was feeling uncomfortable hearing those whispers and feeling embarrassed since the participants from STT (Seka Truna-Truni) or the young people were students, then he made a big announcement in front of the *omed-omedan* arena saying that “*omed-omedan* will not be held”. Since people that wanted to watch the *omed-omedan* were already, then it was performed in front of the Bale Banjar (community gathering place), which was on the street so that all can enjoy the *omed-omedan* and there was a road closure in place. At that time the audience had come to the location of *omed-omedan*. So many people were wondering about Mr. Gusti Oka why *omed-omedan* was not held. People did not go home directly home; they remained silent in the arena of *omed – omedan* because they were still not convinced that the *omed-omedan* was not held. At 10.00 WITA, more and more people arrived until 04.00 pm so that location was full of the crowd who are very enthusiastic to watch *omed-omedan*.

But then suddenly 2 pigs came from the west and clashing until bleeding. This made people cheering as if they were watching *omed-omedan*. Some of the people were *kerauhan* (possessed by the spirit) of the ancestors in Banjar Kaja that told them to keep carrying out *omed-omedan* otherwise Banjar Kaja will become *neteh* (dirty). With this direction, the traditional leaders conducted *mepinunas* (pleading guidance from the ancestors) to ask for salvation. Until today the Banjar Kaja people do not dare not to carry out *omed-omedan*.

4.2. The technique of *Omed – Omedan*

The technique of *omed-omedan* tradition is by dividing each group into two groups consists of groups of men and groups of women. Because the current participants of *omed-omedan* are increasing which make it cannot be counted, then the *omed-omedan* is based on the awareness of each young people of Banjar Kaja. It is estimated that participants who participated are about 150 people. Before the event of the *omed-omedan*, participants are pray first and then proceed with the guidance from the *kelian*. Then the groups of men enter the arena first, followed by the groups of women. Each group has a group head of a teenager placed in the front position, while the members are behind him/her. Each member behind him hugs the person’s waist in front of him. Therefore, the group head for the women group is on one side and the group head of the men group is on the opposite side. The rest of the participants who have not received the part in the first phase are reserved for the next group in the next phase and so on. In the end, all the attendees can have their part in groups in turn. The event takes approximately 1-hour which ends with the sound of *kul-kul*.

In accordance with the speech by Made Sudama as *kelian adat* of Banjar Kaja, there is a *pakem* for *omed-omedan* tradition because there are differences in the game as there people using hands, embracing so that they made clear rules. Actually, *omed-omedan* is derived from the word *omed* which means to pull, that is not pulling the hand and the rope, but pulling the hugging man and woman. There is a hand technique that the man embraces the woman, here, their cheeks are touching that gives the impression of kissing when it was not intended to kiss. There was an occasion that it was lips touching which then was considered a kiss, but it was fine it is based on how we see it whether it is a taboo or not because there is a technique which not involves kissing, but there is a rule of movement.

4.3. The meaning of *Omed – Omedan* tradition

To capture the meaning of the tradition, it is necessary to know in advance about how to interpret symbols that every time and place used by people in public life, which shows how these citizens think, feel, see, and act on the existed values. The tradition of *omed-omedan* is the spiritual activity of Banjar Kaja people, *Sesetan* villages that full of symbols of local wisdom and full of meaning.

I Gusti Ngurah Oka Putra, conveyed the meaning contained in *omed-omedan*, because to welcome the Saka New Year or *Nyepi* to held the hospitality or strengthen the kinship. In the past, there is no certain meaning, it was formed spontaneity but the *niskala* want it like that. So, it was then packed with women and men of course with certain rules so it does not look like kissing deliberately. Actually, there is no kissing because they are only embracing, but because of the pushing from behind and he still insist that it is not a kiss but sometimes touching the cheek is inevitable, so should it be called as pornography? Along with the *kelian adat* of Banjar Kaja, Made Sudama explains that the meaning of *omed-omedan* is in addition to celebrate *Nyepi*, it is also to establish hospitality between *krama Banjar* to strengthen their kinship.

The members of STT (Seka Truna - Truni) from *seka truna* (the group of men), I Nyoman Fikal Tri Lazuardi explain the meaning of *omed-omedan* as a culture that has become a tradition of ancestral hereditary, and they from the younger generation must keep running the tradition existed and keep it. Additionally, with the presence of *omed – omedan*, it can be a gathering event for all participants. From not knowing each other to know them. Members of STT (Seka Truna - Truni) from *seka truni* (group of women), according to Ni Putu Desi Ratnasari explain the meaning of *omed-omedan* as tradition that can unite the STT women and STT men which

they can gather, care for each other and the sense of belonging to each other every year.

Additionally, *omed-omedan* can be seen as an emotional overflow activity that show entertainment. There is a spiritual meaning related to the belief of Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa, the Almighty. The belief in God as the creator of man. With the ceremony of *omed-omedan* tradition, Banjar Kaja people hope to always be given protection and as a gratitude to the God.

Omed-omedan also does not violate religion or pornography, because before the *omed-omedan* is done the participants are purified by praying together witnessed by upakara or banten. By praying to the Hyang Widhi Wasa to always give protection and there are rules for playing *omed-omedan*. However, there are some participants at that time who did not understand the rules of *omed-omedan*, so there was a kiss in the game arena. But now the traditional figures, as well as the penglingsir puri (descendants of the puri), are incessantly giving instruction on how to play the right and proper *omed-omedan* so that there is no mistake in playing the *omed-omedan* tradition.

With the above explanation, in accordance with the symbolic interaction theory that there are concepts and ideas appear in the community of Banjar Kaja, Sesetan village. There is a moving self-consciousness to mingle and integrate with life in groups, which means that they plan the interaction process that ends with the realization of the process of meaning and interpretation through the motions of symbols that form a joint action in social life.

This research is based on the concept of phenomenology perspective. Based on the point of view of the phenomenon or the occurrence, that is a sick penglingsir of Puri Oka and which was healed because of the crowd created by the Banjar Kaja Sesetan community, the event gave birth to a belief amongst the community.

5. Conclusion

First, the interpretation of informants related to the tradition of *omed-omedan* is the meaning of solidarity as a social creature, a human being who *cannot* live without others by helping each other, the religious meaning as an expression of gratitude for the life given by the creator, the harmony meaning or hospitality to keep balance and integrity of the Banjar Kaja community.

Second, the *omed-omedan* tradition does not violate the Hindu religious norms due to the *omed-omedan* tradition is preceded by the purification in the holy place praying to the god. Even menstruating women are not allowed to join the *omed-omedan*.

Third, *Omed-omedan* is not a culture of pornography, because the game technique is that the man's hand embracing the woman and their cheeks are touching which gives the impression like kissing when it was not intended to kiss.

References

- Anugrahani, B. Y. (2014). Pemaknaan Etnis Tionghoa Dalam Mengaktualisasikan Nilai Leluhur Pada Bisnis Perdagangan. *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Komunikasi*, 1-16.
- Fatchan, A. (2013). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif 10 Langkah Penelitian Kualitatif Pendekatan Konstruksi dan Fenomenologi*. Malang: Universitas Negeri Malang.
- Heryadi, H., & Hana, S. (2013). Komunikasi Antar Budaya Dalam Masyarakat Multikultur. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi*, 95 - 108.
- Jailani, M. S. (2012). Interaksi Simbolik, Konstruktivisme, Teori Kritis, Posmodernisme dan Post-Strukturalisme. *Edu- Bio*, 1-16.
- Kuswarno, E. (2009). *Fenomenologi Konsepsi, Pedoman, dan Contoh Penelitiannya*. Bandung: Widya Padjadjaran .
- Mahardika, I. W. (2016). Modernisasi Dalam Tradisi Omed - Omedan Banjar Kaja, Denpasar- Bali. *Media Bina Ilmiah*, 33-38.
- Mamlu'ah, M. (2016). BAB II Teori Fenomenologi Alfred Schutz. *digilib.uinsby.ac.id*, 37-45.
- Ritzer, G. (2012). *Teori Sosiologi Dari Sosiologi Klasik Sampai Perkembangan Terakhir Postmodern*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Siregar, N. S. (2011). Kajian Tentang Interaksionisme Simbolik. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Fakultas ISIPOL UMA*, 100-110.
- Sudharma, I. M. (2013). Med - Medan Sebuah Tradisi Untuk Kebersamaan. *Shopia Dharma*, 131 -139.