

Legend of Watu Umpak and the Structure Construction (Study of Folklore as an Effort to Maintain Social Position in Social Stratification of Village Communities)

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Abstract :

This study follows up several previous studies in same location. This study aims to examine how the efforts of elite groups members of local rural to maintain their social position in social stratification system of rural communities. This study uses a qualitative approach. Research is based on reality in the field, namely the existence of folklore or oral history about boulders which are called “*watu umpak*”. The boulder was placed inside the mosque and functioned as a seat for preacher. The results showed that presence of “*watu umpak*” in the mosque contributed to maintain the social position of local elite members in social stratification system of village community.

Keywords : legend, *watu umpak*, social stratification

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INTRODUCTION

This is a follows up research of Ridjal et al. (2022) about *Nyadran* and Social Status: Case Study of the Efforts of Local Village Elites in the Field of Religion in Maintaining Social Status in the Javanese Muslim Community. This research was done in Sumberarum Village, East Java Province, within geographical area of Jombang Regency, hometown of *Nahdlatul Ulama*. This village is flanked by two rivers, *Konto Wedok* River at west and *Centhing* River at east.

The community structure at Sumberarum Village is similar with other Javanese villages. Geertz and Geertz (1981) said that the structure of Javanese village society was generally under the joint influence of Islam and colonialism. The cultural value system of Javanese society is classified into “*santri*, *priyayi*” and “*abangan*” (Geertz, 1960). However, Legge (in Muchtarom, 1988) argues that such a classification poses a danger of confusing different categories, because in reality there are “*santri-priyayi*” or “*abangan-priyayi*”. In this regard, McVey (1970) emphasized that Javanese society is actually divided into two cultural divisions, namely the “*santri*” group and “*abangan*” group.

This research is related to legend within village community. There are several studies on the legends, as done by Dewi Astuti (2018) on Legend of *Asal Usul Ora (Komodo)*, Rita Neldi (2020) who examines the Legend of Loke Ngerang. Furthermore, Alifah and Sumartini (2018) examined the Myths in of Dusun Blorong Origins, Ramazan and Mufti Riyani (2020) examined the Langsa City Origins. This research relates to folklore passed down from generation to generation about boulders that are considered lucky. The boulders resemble with the thrones of ancient princes. The village community calls these boulders as “*umpak watu*”.

Sumberarum has places and objects that are considered sacred by a number of its residents. One of them is the “*watu umpak*”, which now functions as a seat for preacher for Friday prayers or Eid prayers. The elderly villagers said that the object has a local history related to development of social stratification in Sumberarum village.

Tadjoer, et al. (2022) showed that *Nyadran ritual tradition* has a connection with the function of maintaining the social stratification pattern of village community. A certain groups maintain the influence over the villagers. Wendy Bottero (2005) stated that, “....., power, or influence gives more control over the external forces that affect us all, and opens doors that may close”. In fact, efforts to maintain social stratification pattern of village community in also involve legends in Sumberarum. One of these legends is the story of “*watu umpak*”. In this regard, research question is “what is the relationship between the legend of “*watu umpak*” and social stratification of village community?”

THINKING FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Sumberarum has a history of village establishments referred as history at local level which originates from stories or verbal expressions of members of community. It is more of a folklore character. This village was

known as the santri village or “*kedhung agama* (religion lake)” in its early days. This comes from oral history that lives and develops in Sumberarum. Raymond Williams states that this type of history generally called the myth of concern with functions as stability of values and order. Abdullah (1985) said that local history only means the history of a place, a locality, whose geographical boundaries can be a village. Furthermore, Abdullah added that local history can simply be formulated as a story in past of a group people in a limited geographical area.

Finberg and Skipp (in Abdullah, 1985) stated that limited comprehension is more specific boundaries of a community. Therefore, local history, depending on boundaries of its geographical scope, will be more directly and intimately related to humans as actors. Even though it originates from oral expressions, local history actually contains an important meaning, which is a reflection of social system of community, or projective system. Vansina (1973) argued that oral traditions are shadows of reality. Furthermore, Abdullah (1985) emphasized that reality is actually a cultural formation.

The local history in this study is story that are passed down orally from generation to generation. The history referred here is oral history. Lynn Abrams (2010) gave a broad definition of oral history, namely “..... almost all interviews done with an individual can be labeled 'oral history'.” James (2000) stated that “...life stories are cultural constructs that refer to public discourse structured by class and gender conventions”. Therefore, oral history uses a wide spectrum of possible roles, self-representations, and available narratives. The related stories, symbols and logic can be understood for a deeper meaning to complexities found in lives and historical experiences of the actors.

Tradition and identity relates dialectically. Effendi (2009) stated that a tradition is useful to demonstrate the meaning of philosophy moral values to connects one person to another that contains deep psychological elements. Furthermore, Guibernau (2004) stated that the myths role for values, traditions and symbols becomes strong differentiators and reminders of unique cultures and fate of ethnic communities, to their analysis of national identity. Kleden (1986) stated that relying tradition and integration can maintain a culture's identity will and the survival. The concept of social identity contains the same meaning as the concept of ethnic identity, which refers to all aspects of ethnic issues, such as inherited beliefs, knowledge, culture, religion, language, and customs (Rahmaniah, 2012). Therefore, Muliadi, et al, (2020) emphasized that behavior or character of each individual is motivated by characteristics of an identity.

Williams (1977) stated that tradition is the surviving past. The process of identity construction relates with historical background of community and the traditions development. The survival of a tradition as the surviving past depends on socialization. Furthermore, Williams added that tradition in practice is actually an expression of hegemonic and dominating restrictions and pressures. Witton (1986) stated that hegemonic ideology is a system of ideas to dominate people's thinking patterns, but originates and benefits the upper strata of society.

The construction process of Sumberarum's identity symbol as a *santri* (Islamic student) village or “*kedhung agama*” cannot be separated from power relations based on its social stratification system. The elite concept from Laswell is better in this regard. Laswell and Kaplan (1950) explained elite as , “..... a class consisting of those who have succeeded in achieving a dominance position in society, they create value to gets high ratings in the community”. If this view is related to Laswell views on concept of elite, then the background to process of constructing the identity symbol comes from world of life of local Sumberarum elites. These local elites are members of “*wong njero*” circle.

The symbol construction of santri village identity or “*kedhung agama*” is inseparable from thought pattern socialized by “*wong njero*” community. The members of “*wong njero*” circle, especially since the restoration of mosque and establishment of Islamic boarding school, from start have declared themselves as *santri*. In addition, their circle has controlled most of values that are highly valued in society, namely *property*, *prestige*, and *power*. These three components, according to Weber (in Sanderson 1995), are the building dimensions of community's social stratification system. The change of Sumberarum to a *santri village* will change the previous pattern of social relations.

This study uses a qualitative approach based on Yin (2011), Tracy (2013), and Miles et al. (2014). Ridjal (2003) stated that studies like this have the aim to explore or building a proposition or explaining the meaning behind reality. Researchers use field reality, namely folklore or oral history about the boulder called “*watu umpak*”. The boulder is functioning as a seat for preachers in mosque.

This study explores the case in the world and the obtained findings. Therefore, this field is included in a case-based, ideographic, and emic position, which directs attention to specifics cases. The meaning of social phenomena, through the method of self-intersubjectives, is emphasized, but the objective conditions of socio-cultural life are not ruled out (Ridjal, 2003).

This study focuses on everyday cultural life. This study area emphasizes on people comprehension of oral history regarding the existence of “*watu umpak*” in the mosque, and functions as a seat for preachers. The meaning of oral history about “*watu umpak*” is the basis for data collection. This study also pays attention to

Anderson and Jack statement (1991) that nature and level of community largely is an individual definition. Thus, representatives of these study units emphasis in data collection on comprehension or meaning of individuals as members of society towards the oral history.

The implementation of consistency and congruence techniques to field data collection is not ruled out. Merriam (1996) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated congruence for internal validity, and consistency or dependability for reliability of qualitative study data. Therefore, field data collection process involved a number of informants. They not only assisted in collecting data, but also assisted in clarifying or cross-checking field data. The collected data was interpreted based on the informants comprehension. The differences in interpretation of data regarding the same event are clarified again on another occasion by involving more informants. It is very likely that informants who live outside the study location villages were also involved.

A high level of consistency and congruence of data can be achieved from Adler and Adler (1994) directions, namely: using the “multiple observer” strategy, conducting data relevance tests through discussions with colleagues, using various data collection techniques from various sources and involved in a study site situation. Data analysis goes through the stages of flow model from Miles and Huberman (1994), namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and verification which run simultaneously, or take place simultaneously with data collection process.

RESEARCH RESULTS DISCUSSION

The structure developed in Sumberarum Village is similar with the view of McVey (1970). The folklore showed that in the early days of village, Sumberarum community consisted of “*gendera ijo*” (term for *santri*) and “*gendera abang*” (term for *abangan*). Their views may follow the guess for name of area of Jombang, the acronym of word “*Ijo*” and word “*Abang*”. “*Kirata (kira-kira ning nyata)*” is stands for estimation but real, it is a strategy to achieve compatibility of meaning, Geertz (1993) termed it as *cocog*. This is stated by one one villager.

Javanese villagers, including residents of Sumberarum, have the habit of “*nguthak-athik gathuk*”, meaning guessing something to seek justification, often by assuming every word is an abbreviation or acronym; for example “*sego*” (from “*yen nye seg, rasane le go*” (if full is satisfied)); so does “*sepatu* (shoes)”, which is explained by parsing the acronym of “*yen wi ndlesep ora bisa metu* (if entered cannot going out)”

Furthermore, Sumberarum community developed into three parts, namely “*wong njero*”, “*wong njaba*” and “*wong mambu-mambu*”.

“*Wong njero*” is a identity symbol for family members descended from founder of village, as well as the village *kyai* (Islamic leader). “*Wong njaba*” is a identity symbol for family members descended from immigrants, and third group is known as “*wong mambu-mambu*”. Based on kinship, members of “*wong mambu-mambu*” group consider themselves to still have a kinship relationship with “*wong njero*”. Meanwhile, those from “*wong njaba*” group consider themselves to have no direct kinship with other two groups, especially with “*wong njero*”.

The genealogical myths legend explained that the founders of village were Mbah Kyai Isman and Mbah Nyai Maidah. He was a descendant of Prince Alif, a cleric of Majapahit descent who was buried in Betek, Mojoagung. Alif grave is visited by many pilgrims, especially every Friday night. After Isman died, village leadership in religious field (or village Kyai) was continued by his son. Village Kyai continues to controls the leadership in religious field. They always come from descendants of village founders until now. The religious leadership in this village never been controlled by members of “*wong mambu-mambu*” and “*wong njaba*” circles.

Most villagers believe that “*watu umpak*” story is related to Nurman's leadership. “*Watu umpak*” is a stone in form of a block, each side base is approximately 75 cm long, and height is approximately 50 cm. The story of “*watu umpak*” is related to an event in Nurman's time when the symbols of identity as “*wong njero*”, “*wong njaba*” and “*wong mambu-mambu*” began to come to fore. Nurman was the founder of pesantren and restorer of Sumberarum mosque. The Sumberarum Village was known as the santri village or “*kedhung agama*” during his time. The Sumberarum village mosque was named the Al-Nurman mosque for the Nurman's services.

Nurman married a woman from Sewulan, Madiun. Nurman's wife is still a descendant of Raden Bagus Basyariah from Tegalsari, Ponorogo. Therefore, villagers called Nurman's wife Den Nyai. Nurman's wife has a special skill that is not possessed by most of villagers, especially the women, namely read Arabic letters and Latin letters. Such ability was a skill that was very rare at that time. At that period the women were culturally assessed as “*kanca wingking*” (obeying their husbands and working in kitchen).

Women at that time were playing the role of “*ma-papat*” (4M), namely “*Masak*”, preparing meals and drinks for the family, “*macak*”, make up, “*mapan*”, serving their husbands, and “*manak*”, giving birth and caring for children. Along with progress of times through their involvement in women's association meetings, especially in *PKK* and *Dharma Wanita*, one role of these Javanese women have been abandoned. Therefore, she has three role to play. Shobari (1993) termed these three roles as *Three-ah* (3-ah). The three roles that are expected to be played by women are manifested in learning material in every meeting of women's association

formed by state, namely “*ning omah*” which relates to family care and cleaning of house including furniture, “*olah-olah*” which relates to various recipes knowledge and how to process them, and “*mlumah ngablah-ablah*” which emphasizes on knowledge and skills regarding facial makeup and body shape for household harmony.

The block-shaped stone about half a meter high was found during Nurman's time. The stone, according to villagers who more than 80 years old, was found under a mango tree to west of Nurman 's house. The stone was moved by Nurman to be used as a bearing for rice barn. Attempts to remove the object mobilized more than 10 people. Apparently, benefits of stone were only felt for one day, because the next morning the stone had shifted by itself from its original place. This strange incident forced Nurman to find out more about the stone.

Efforts to know more about these stones are carried out through spiritual approach procedures. As stated by one of villagers, that stone was occupied by a large family of moslem jinn descendants. Their ancestors were named Ismail and his son was Ridwan. The two spirits are the leaders of other creatures who are members of their descendant group. Negotiations took place between Nurman and Ismail. Ismail and all of his members are willing to serve Nurman and will not disturb members of his lineage as long as they are given a suitable place, namely in mosque. Since then the “*watu umpak*” which was originally intended to be used as a bearing for rice base pillars changed its function to become a seat for *khatib* (Islamic speaker).

The villagers stated that when the “*watu umpak*” was moved into mosque, atmosphere of Sumberarum village changed. *Santri* began to arrive. Islamic boarding schools in Sumberarum became very crowded. In fact, area of pesantren building is not proportional to number of students. As a result, most of santri sleep in “*jerambah*” (terrace of hut rooms) and some sleep in mosque. The negotiations between Nurman and Ismail decide that the students who sleep in mosque must comply with conditions in agreement that Ismail has submitted, namely not being allowed to sleep in place between the imam and middle pillar. In addition, students who sleep at night in mosque are not allowed to say obscene words or play games that make loud noises, except for reciting the Qur'an. If these requirements are violated, they will be disturbed by jinn, for example when sleeping is moved to tomb or the well of mosque. An incident like this was experienced by Nurman students named Parto and Abdullah.

Most students come from surrounding villages, but many of them come from outside the Jombang area. In fact, some of santri eventually chose to settle down and become residents of Sumberarum village through marriages with women from “*wong njaba*” circle. Most of them are students from Kediri, Nganjuk and Yogyakarta regions. Their marriage is one of *dakwah* (preach) strategies attempted by Nurman to “*wong njaba*” community. At that time, *Wong njaba* were known by derogative identity symbol of “*wongkeddhusan*”, which meant people who committed a lot of sinful acts or behaved like *wedhus* (goats). Some actions emerged from this circle cause them to be labeled as the identity of *religious person*, among others, were committing acts of extramarital affairs, getting pregnant out of wedlock, and some even committing acts of *taboo incest*. There are two people who were born as a result of taboo incest. Due to habit of such behavior, a number of people in *wongnjaba*, as acknowledged by two members of community, traced the kinship from mother's line, because his father was not clear biologically. At least, the terms *putuasli* (grandchildren born from daughters) and *putu resmi* (grandsons born from sons) was emerged among them. The grandchildren born from daughters are definitely descendants, while those born from sons are considered doubtful because they do not necessarily originate from fertilization of their child's sperm seeds.

The other incident related to sacred element of “*watu umpak*” was experienced by a villager, a member of mosque board, who suffered from illness. The man suffered from urinary tract obstruction twice, and both times underwent surgery. Based on his confession, after undergoing surgery for his second disease, member of takmir committee who was sick realized that he had made a mistake in treating “*watu umpak*”. The mistreatment is *melepo* (leveling it with cement mixture). In fact, his actions were aimed at beautifying the antique stone to make it look artistic. However, it is interpreted differently by occupant of stone residents. As a result, his illness did not go away. Since then the disease has not recurred, his incident was judged as something miraculous.

The link between “*watu umpak*” and jinn is probably related to beliefs of Javanese people about Sunan Kali Jaga action, a very powerful guardian in Java. Sunan Kalijaga often meditated at Mantingan hermitage. There is one of eight main jinn in Java. This was stated by one mosque cleaners in a village on border of East Java and Central Java. The efforts to revive this myth have the possibility that system of social stratification that has developed in Sumberarum will gain support for cultural legitimacy. The “*watu umpak*” myths should maintain the social position of “*wong njero*”.

In fact, there are also a number of villagers who think that “*watu umpak*” is a relic from Majapahit era, namely the seat or throne of Hayamwuruk King. Therefore, folklore or oral history about the sacred “*watu umpak*” is understood by villagers as a symbol of power. The shape resembles with thrones of ancient dignitaries and the sacredness and placement of “*watu umpak*” in the mosque indicates the strong influence of “*wong njero*” circles. The influence relates with controlling the socio-religious life of village community. In other words, existence of “*watu umpak*” in mosque contributes to maintaining the social position of members of

“wong njero” circle in social stratification system of Sumberarum community.

CONCLUSION

The story of “*watu umpak*” is reminiscent for a greatness symbol of Muslim Javanese kings, a throne which is usually placed in *Pangrawit* ward. This is very sacred symbol in form of a boulder which is considered the former throne of Hayam Wuruk (the thing that guarantees its connection with Majapahit). In addition, connection between “*watu umpak*” and jinn was following the Sunan Kali Jaga action, a very powerful guardian in Java. Therefore, this boulder is a legitimacy symbol of *wong njero* rule over the village.

“*Watu umpak*” is still maintained according to its original form. Fairy tales on *watu umpak* are also still being socialized, although not as intensively as before. The efforts to revive this myth have the possibility to support cultural legitimacy of social stratification that has developed in Sumberarum. The “*watu umpak*” myth can maintain the social position of *wong njero*.

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