

Representation of Life Philosophy through the *Sekapur Sirih* Symbol in the Implementation of *Gawai Dayak* Ritual in West Kalimantan

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Abstract: The research background is the researcher's interest in the strong character of the *Dayak* tribe in West Kalimantan. The *Dayak* tribe is one of tribe that is known for their uniqueness, perseverance and obedience holding and carrying on traditions derived from their ancestors. One of the traditions that is still practiced today is the *Gawai Dayak* ritual. At the implementation of the *Dayak Gawai* ritual, there is one offering that was always used, namely *sekapur sirih*. The research is aimed at reviewing the philosophical meaning of *sekapur sirih* and how this philosophy works in *Dayak* life generally in West Kalimantan. This research used a descriptive qualitative method with pragmatic semiotics approach. The data were taken from *Gawai Dayak* ritual using observation and recording techniques. The research results indicated that generally the use of *sekapur sirih* symbols represented philosophy in establishing social relations that must be accompanied by binding ethic and rules.

1 INTRODUCTION

Dayak tribe was known have a strong cultural tradition, one of the various forms of *Dayak* culture is ritual form (Thomson, 2000). Some of these ritual forms are still performed today one of them is *Dayak Gawai* ritual. The *Dayak Gawai* ritual is a ritual was performed to express gratitude for the overflow of rice crops by the *Dayak* people. Way or the media to show gratitude in the *Dayaks* in West Kalimantan was dominated by the use of different symbols. According to Bogdanovic (2013) that the presence of any object which is symbolic can be reconstructed by the value contained therein, both from nature and from everything that is abstract.

Every use of a particular symbol has the ability to represent everything that is representative, but does not describe a phenomenon directly (hidden) (Zhirenov et al., 2016). According to Sebeok and Danesi (in Iskandar et al., 2016) representation as the use of signs (images, sounds and so on) to connect, describe, photograph and produce something that is seen, sensed, imagined or perceived in a particular physical form. In this case, Sebeok and Danesi (2000) see representation as something that has the capacity to refer to the world. The representation of the language (verbal and non-verbal language and

symbols belonging to non-verbal languages) is an explicit model of its object, while Sebeok and Danesi (2000) describe that the representation is reveals how the human brain carries out its work of transforming sensory knowing into conceptual knowing. Ornelas (2012) was illustrated that the use of Beo birds on the Murai paintings was illustrated that the life concepts of Maya and Altiplano communities used bird science perspectives. This case was provided insight to Ornelos that case of images (birds) and the context was provided sufficient evidence to indicate the existence of a symbolic relationship with the concepts of life, fertility, movement and temporality of the community.

In some places, *sekapur sirih* is a ritual equipment. Hisyam with the research object of *Kapongo* ritual, the tradition of offer the offerings, in the form of betel, areca, and lime to the Pue (Hisyam, 2015). This ritual was performed by the people in Central Sulawesi. Lubis and Khasiah's research (2016) was stated that among in the Minang people, betel is a sacred leaf that is believed to launch an event, *sekapur sirih* (betel and lime) used accompany *mamak* and *urang sumando* (brother-in-law) to pick up the groom to live in his wife's family. Researchers see that this way as an expression that contains an ethics in communicating. This indicates that the meaning of *sekapur sirih* as a non-verbal language

used when carrying out the Gawai Dayak ritual is an explicit model of the pattern of life, including the Dayak philosophy of the people in general. Physical and the nature of the whiteboard is able to provide a picture or able to radiate everything so that it can function like a mirror in dialoguing how lifestyle adopted by the Dayak community in general to the wider community.

Through this research, researchers want to see how the use of the *sekapur sirih* symbol represented the philosophy embraced in the social life of *Dayak* community in West Kalimantan. Given the research on this object on the implementation of *Dayak Gawai* ritual has not been studied separately from other symbols.

2 THE SYMBOLS AND DAYAK GAWAI RITUALS

Symbol is a sign based on convention, regulation, or agreement mutually agreed (Tinarbuko, 2003), while Geertz (1973) was stated that the symbol used for each object. The importance of symbol understanding was confirmed by the Putra (2010) that to prevent clashes between tribes, need a thorough understanding of how to live and understand every used symbol. Understanding of the symbols is of course motivated that each symbol has a certain meaning and purpose, as the description of Turner (in Dolgin, 1977, p.190) stated that each symbols store information.

All of processes in the ritual implementation will always filled with symbols. Magiman and Yatim (2012) were stated that the symbol in the *Makan Tahun* ritual (rice harvest rituals of *Dayak* Kanayan in Sarawak) served as a marker of gratitude. The variety symbols were used, in the form words, goods (in the form of everything can be seen and touched), and the symbol in the form of the supernatural - symbols, i.e. symbols in the form of objects cannot be detected by ordinary senses and magical nature (Sukatman, 2012).

The nature of ritual performance Gawai Dayak / Naik Dango is as an expression of gratitude for the Dayak community to Jubata on the harvest which they have acquired (Dodo et al., 2016). In line with the description of the Dodo, et al, also described by Turyati (2015) as a form of gratitude to *Ne' Jubata* (Creator) on results that have been received by a farmer who get rice abundant, is one way to show gratitude and feeling indebted their mind to God (Magiman and Yatim, 2012). Similar rituals were also

carried out by villagers from Polaman, Lawang, East Java. The term used to name this ritual is *Wiwitan*, a ritual performed as a form of gratitude to God YME over a fertile and abundant rice harvest. In addition, as an application for the harvest process can be done smoothly (Damayanti et al., 2017).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method was used descriptive qualitative method used pragmatic semiotics approach. Cruse (2006) reveals that the main topic of pragmatics is the meaning aspect that depends on the context, while Kondoahi was believed that pragmatic semiotics is a study that reviewed the relation of sign and their users (2013). The data sources are the *sekapur sirih* symbols were used during the implementation of *Dayak Gawai* ritual, while the research data is the *Gawai Dayak* ritual. The research steps are including of data collection, data reduction, data classification, data exposure, and conclusions drawing.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of *sekapur sirih* in the *Dayak Gawai* ritual was used alongside other offerings when the prayer readings are delivered by *Panyangahatn*. The main ingredient that must exist when making *sekapur sirih* is the betel leaf. Betel is a wrapper of all other ingredients. Therefore, betel leaf plays a main ingredient beside other ingredients. Viewed from the way of growth, betel is the vines or creeping plants, despite growing by pad spread to other plants, betel plant does not damage the host plants. Therefore, its presence in other plants is not destructive, nor does its height exceed the height of its support plant. The nature that always grows by riding on other plants cause this plant does not grow high by itself, but is assisted by its supporting plants.

This creeping nature of this plant was symbolized that in social life *Dayaks* people tend to be humble, quick to mix or tend to adapt quickly when meeting new people and environment, and generally *Dayaks* people do not seem to stand out for people who others around. The self-effacing attitude of others is seen from the height of this plant that never exceeds the height of its support plant. Therefore, in the life of society, there rarely seen one party that is very prominent when compared with other party.

Other natures that exist in the betel plant are not damaging the plant it serves. The nature that does not

damage other plants means that the *Dayaks* people are not a group of people who have destructive nature. It was related to the concept of *Dayak* tribal belief that in this world there is a land above the sky, the land below and the land of the spirits. The countries in question were inhabited and guarded by certain creatures. Therefore, everything in the world has rules, including when will opens agricultural land because it was related to ethics when it comes to contact with inhabitants of other nature.

The support of betel plants implicitly means that generally *Dayaks* people tend to help each other, seen from the process of clearing the land (field) to the final stage of workmanship. When opening the land, the *Dayak* people are still familiar with the mutual cooperation system. In addition to betel, other supplies are areca nut. Areca is one plant that grows tall, straight, un-branched and not including plants that have large size trees; however, the areca is known as a fruitful tree and has an astringent sense.

Straight branches of the tree depict the social life patterns of the *Dayak* people who are virtuous and live simply. Simply life was reflected in the state of a tree that has no branches and is more giving. In this case, albeit living in simplicity, the noble minds form the *Dayaks* people's lifestyle to caring rather than receive. The astringent senses but still used as a complementary ingredient of the *sekapur sirih* illustrated that despite experiencing bitter life, this does not dampen the determination and spirit of the *Dayaks* people to survive.

The next ingredient is gambier. The meaning of gambier was based on the taste and colour of the gambier. Black and slightly bitter is one of the characteristics of the gambier marker. Bitter taste symbolizes firmness while black symbolizes bitterness and misery of life. The overall meaning that comes with the presence of bitter taste and black colour attached to the gambier is generally the *Dayaks* realize that life is filled with various sufferings, but the agony of life causes a belief and motivation to stay and live.

The next ingredient is lime. The meaning of lime was based on the texture and colour. Lime is known to have a soft texture and white colour. The white colour in lime symbolizes the *Dayak* character that basically puts sincerity when interacting, while the soft texture symbolizes the tenderness of the heart. Seen from its function, namely to redden the colour of betel, this symbolizes that behind the sincerity and tenderness of *Dayaks* character, also contains the courage meaning. This has implications for the way of life of *Dayaks* people who are not afraid of facing obstacles when they respond with nature to meet their

daily needs and are not afraid of dangers when their tribe is disturbed by other tribal injustices. Therefore, this tribe is known abstinence to disturb the lives of other tribes as long as they were not disturbed and never step back if they feel threatened.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Sekapur sirih in the daily life of the *Dayak* tribe are generally used as hospitable and friendly signs. In a hospitality, there are ethics and rules hold on for interacting and undergoing daily life. The philosophical representation of the use of *sekapur sirih* is that hospitality are interwoven framed with sincerity, simplicity, love peace, noble character, more love to give than to receive, and always ready with all the misery and suffering of life, and well-known as a tribe that does not disturb the life of another tribe but never run when their safety was threatened.

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