

Conference Paper

Repositioning Javanese Traditional Local Culture “Siraman”: The Philosophy and Trends

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Abstract

Siraman is a Javanese traditional culture that is held for a bride or bridegroom at a day before *ijab qobul*. This study uses qualitative research method to gain information from respondents. The researchers collect information from 32 people who experienced Javanese *siraman* whether as bride/bridegroom or as parents/elders, and literature reviews on the related topic. The researchers limit the object into Javanese *siraman* tradition that has several steps; *sungkeman*, *ngracik sekar*, *siraman*, *wudhu saking kendi*, *pecah kendi*, *pangkas rikma*, and *gendongan*, where each step of the *siraman* process has its own meanings. The aim of this study is to reinterpret the emergence of *siraman* as a series of rituals done in traditional Javanese weddings. The focus is on *siraman* especially in East Java. It also includes the philosophy of each step, the tools used and the people involved in the process of *siraman*. In other words, it also seeks information on the different functions of *siraman* from the past and present as one of trends in Javanese wedding process nowadays. At the end, this study can be used as one of information sources about Javanese *siraman* traditional culture, and gives confirmation and perspectives about Javanese *siraman* trends as a Javanese traditional culture.

Keywords: *Siraman*, Javanese Traditional Culture, Philosophy, Trends

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1. Introduction

Culture is the root of human's life. In other words, human's life is the culture itself. The culture can be in the form of clothes that are worn, languages which are used to communicate, music, houses, and even ceremonies that are done to celebrate events such as birth, funeral, or wedding. These things are considered as culture since the people wear the clothes, use the languages, music, or do the activities for several times. Therefore, everything that has been done by people for several times in the past is considered as their culture.

The culture itself comes from the habits done because the people believe in the values of each activity or thing that they use to do the activity. This belief leads them

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to set rules which are good for their lives. These rules can be represented in the form of kind of clothes, ceremonies, and others. This can also be in the form of spoken or written. Thus, the habits become the culture in which it becomes the identity of a certain people.

It is true that every place has its own culture as every place has its own habit. Every habit will depict the personality of a certain people in which this depiction shows their belief. This belief affects the tools that are used by those people in doing such cultural tradition. This is because they believe that every tool has its own values. Accordingly, in doing a cultural tradition such as an important ceremony, people choose the tools carefully and match them with the aim of the event.

The belief prevails also in Javanese traditional culture which is *siraman*. Javanese traditional culture of *siraman* is one of wedding traditions that has been taken place in Javanese community for a long time. It is one of Javanese wedding series that is held for a bride or bridegroom at a day before *ijab qobul*. It is held for the bride and bridegroom separately in the different places. It is actually a combination of ceremonial tradition and spiritual practice that can be seen from the aim of *siraman* itself. The aim of *siraman* is symbolically to clean the bride and bridegroom's body, heart, and soul and to erase sins and other bad things from the bride's past before they have a new life ahead. Therefore, some of Javanese people believe that *siraman* should be held as it is one of wedding series in their tradition from their ancestor (Irmawati, 2013).

This traditional culture has several types based on its place and needs. In this paper, the researchers focus on one of *siraman* versions that is held in East Java that has several steps which are *sungkeman*, *ngracik sekar*, *siraman*, *wudhu saking kendi*, *pecah kendi*, *pangkas rikma*, and *gendongan*. Each step has its own values in which it uses certain tools. The tools also depict certain values which match with the aim of *siraman*. The steps will not be part of *siraman* if the elderly do not consider the values and the aim of *siraman* itself. Moreover, in considering this wedding series as a traditional culture, the elderly must have done it for several times. Thus, in order to do this ceremonial tradition well, people should know the meaning of each step and each tool so that the aim of *siraman* itself will be achieved well (Irmawati, 2013).

On the one hand *siraman* has been an important tradition which is rarely separated from wedding series ceremony (Irmawati, 2013). It has been one of valuable series that will bring good things on the wedding day and the marriage life of the couple. On the other hand, as the time goes by, people tend to neglect to believe the literal values of ceremonial tradition. Some of them do the steps of the ceremonial tradition just for formalism since the elderly have done the tradition before. Moreover, they might

do *siraman* without knowing the literal values. They also probably see *siraman* as an unnecessary step so that they might not do the process of *siraman*. Furthermore, they might do *siraman* only for a trend and do not really understand about and believe in the values itself. Thus, this paper is aimed to know the position of cultural tradition which is *siraman* done in the past by the elderly and done in recent time. In other words, it seeks information on the different functions of *siraman* as well as people perspectives about *siraman* from the past and present as one of trends in Javanese wedding process nowadays.

2. Methods

This study uses descriptive qualitative research method to gain information from respondents. The researchers collect information from 32 people who experienced Javanese *Siraman* whether as bride/bridegroom or as parents/elders or even one of their family members, and literature reviews on the related topic. These people are around 20 years old. This study is limited to the respondents who are 17 years old as the minimum age. The researchers assume that on that age, respondents might have been able to share their perspectives about *siraman*. They are females in their 20s up to early 30s. The data is also collected from the elderly who have been married or experienced *siraman*. More than 70% of them have experienced *siraman* as a bride or the relatives.

In this study, the researchers use online questionnaires that are given to several respondents based on the criteria that have been set. The questionnaires include several questions about the general knowledge about *siraman* such as the aim, the steps and tools used in *siraman*, and the meanings behind those things. The respondents are also asked questions about the difficulties of conducting *siraman* nowadays, the reason of conducting *siraman* as one of Javanese wedding series, and whether in the future they want to have *siraman* in their wedding series. Moreover, the questionnaire also contains questions that ask respondents' perspectives about *siraman* nowadays.

The researchers limit the object into one of versions of Javanese *siraman* tradition, especially in East Java, that has several steps; *sungkeman*, *ngracik sekar*, *siraman*, *wudhu saking kendi*, *pecah kendi*, *pangkas rikma*, and *gendongan* in which each step of the *siraman* process has its own meanings. This study focuses on the way the respondents see *siraman* as one of traditional local culture in Java.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1. Steps of Siraman and The Meanings

Siraman in Javanese traditional culture has several steps which are *sungkeman*, *ngracik sekar*, *siraman*, *wudhu saking kendi*, *pecah kendi*, *pangkas rikma*, and *gendongan*. The respondents only understand 4 out of 7 from the steps well which are *sungkeman*, *siraman*, *wudhu saking kendi*, and *pangkas rikma*, but for the other steps mostly they do not understand them well. The first step of *siraman* is *sungkeman*. *Sungkeman* is done by the bride and bridegroom to ask for blessings and best prayers from their parents. Here, the bride and bridegroom also show their respect to their parents and ask for forgiveness from any mistakes (Irmawati, 2013). It is because their parents have been taking care of them and loving them unconditionally from they were born until now.

The second step of *siraman* is *ngracik sekar*. It is preparing and mixing the flowers to the water for *siraman*. The flowers are called *Sritaman*, such as rose, jasmine, and ylang-ylang or cananga flowers (Irmawati, 2013). The water also comes from many different sources like from the parents' house, grand's house, parent-in-law's house, and other elder people's house. Therefore, it symbolizes a hope for the bride and grooms to have a unity in differences because they will become one and a new family.

The third step of *siraman* is *siraman* itself or pouring the water to the bride and bridegroom which is the main agenda in this Javanese wedding tradition series. The watering in *siraman* is done by seven people and each person pours the water 3 times to the bride. The seven people are their parents and their elder members of family. It is because seven means *pitu* in Javanese, *pitu* means *pitulungan*, which is *pertolongan* in Bahasa Indonesia or a help (Setyaningsih & Zahrulianingdyah, 2015). Thus, it symbolizes a hope for the bride and bridegroom to always get help from God and can also give help to others (Irmawati, 2013).

The fourth step after *siraman* is *wudhu* using water from a jug or *kendi*. This is done with a hope for the bride and bridegroom to get blessings, happiness, and purity from the God because they will face a new life together in the future. This step involves spiritual practice because *wudhu* in Islamic religion is aimed at hoping purity from God. Therefore, this is one of the *siraman* steps that combine cultural tradition and spiritual practice.

The fifth step is breaking a jug or *kendi* which is done by the bride's or bridegroom's parents. It symbolizes that the bride or bridegroom is not single anymore because they will be a wife or a husband. The broken jug also symbolizes the bride and bridegroom's aura that shows their beauty so that hopefully they will look more beautiful in their

wedding day. Thus, it is hoped that the bride and bridegroom will be more ready for the wedding.

The next step is cutting the bride's and bridegroom's hair or *pangkas rikma* which is done by their parents. This step symbolizes removing bad things in their past and put away obstacles so that they will have a brighter life in the future. It also symbolizes that their parents have already given full permission for them to have a new family. After that, the hair that is cut will be kept and buried in the yard. Therefore, it is hoped that their marriage life will be less-obstacles in the future.

The last step in this version of *siraman* is *gendongan*. In this step, the bride's and bridegroom's parents carry the bride or the bridegroom from the *siraman* area to their house. It symbolizes that their parents' love will always accompany them and be with them although they will have a new family. Therefore, their parents hope that the bride and bridegroom will live happily ever after with their new family.

3.2. Tools of Siraman and The Meanings

Siraman in Javanese traditional culture uses several tools which have meanings (Irmawati, 2013). The tools in this version of *siraman* are *Sritaman* or three kinds of flowers; rose, jasmine, and ylang-ylang or cananga flowers, water that comes from seven different wells or sources, a jug or usually called as *kendi*, a big cauldron or usually called as *kuali*, a water dipper made from coconut shell, some kinds of flowers that the bride wears during *siraman*, and a scissor to cut the bride's and bridegroom's hair. All the tools used in *siraman* have their own meanings. Based on the questionnaire result, mostly the respondents do not understand the values behind them. For example, the three flowers symbolize fragrance (Irmawati, 2013). They are rose that symbolizes a hope for the bride to always be honest and sincere, jasmine that symbolizes a hope for the bride to bring fragrance for family names, and ylang-ylang or cananga flower that symbolizes a hope for the bride and bridegroom to have a peace in their heart. Not only have the flowers that have meanings but also the water and its pouring had their meanings. The water comes from seven wells because seven means *pitu* in Javanese, *pitu* means *pitulungan*, which is *pertolongan* in Bahasa Indonesia or a help (Setyaningsih & Zahrulianingdyah, 2015). Furthermore, the pouring is done three times by elder people because Javanese people believe that doing something three times, which three is an odd number, can bring something good in their lives. Meanwhile, the water dipper is made from coconut shell because it symbolizes the parents' strong will to let their children have their own family (Setyaningsih & Zahrulianingdyah, 2015).

3.3. People's Perspectives on Siraman

According to the result of data collection using online questionnaires, most of them understand the aim of *siraman* which is to ease the sins. Furthermore, most of them tend to do *siraman* if they have a chance to do it. From their responses, they plan to do *siraman* because they believe that it is a tradition that should be done as one of wedding series. In other words, those people plan to do *siraman* only for formalism. Therefore, they do not really believe in the values of *siraman* itself. This is also proven from those who do not want to hold *siraman* as one of their wedding series. Some of them prefer to have a simpler wedding series as they think *siraman* is not as important as *ijab qobul*.

Based on the questionnaire result, some people who plan to do *siraman* on their wedding tend to use the same tools as the tools used in the past since they believe that those are still easy to get. However, from this response, the researchers assume that people nowadays do not understand the values of each tool well. They tend to use the same tools because they think the tools should be used as the way their elders used in the past.

From the questionnaire result, people who do not plan to do *siraman* think that the steps of *siraman* are too complicated to follow. They also think that some of the tools are not easy to be prepared. One of the tools that they think is difficult to get is water from seven wells. Since wedding day should be well-prepared, people who prefer a simpler wedding series choose not to do *siraman*. Thus, the researchers assume that there are some people who do not take serious of *siraman* nowadays in their marriage lives.

Despite the different perspectives about the importance of *siraman* for their marriage lives, all of the respondents agree that *siraman* must be preserved as one of Javanese traditional local culture in wedding series. They believe that the younger generation should know about *siraman* since it is important to keep it as the identity of Javanese. Therefore, it is important to know that *siraman* is a tradition in Javanese wedding series.

4. Conclusion

Siraman has been taken place as one of important wedding series in Javanese for a long time. It is one of Javanese wedding series that is held for a bride or bridegroom at a day before *ijab qobul*. Most of the respondents understand the aim of *siraman* which is to clean the bride and bridegroom's body, heart, and soul and to erase sins and other

bad things from the bride' past before they have a brand new life. It has been done by Javanese as they believe that every step and tool used in *siraman* have meanings and values. The steps are *sungkeman*, *ngracik sekar*, *siraman*, *wudhu saking kendi*, *pecah kendi*, *pangkas rikma*, and *gendongan*. However, the respondents only understand 4 out of 7 from the steps well which are *sungkeman*, *siraman*, *wudhu saking kendi*, and *pangkas rikma*. Besides, the common tools used are *Sritaman* flowers, water that comes from seven different wells or sources, a jug or usually called as *kendi*, a big cauldron or usually called as *kuali*, a water dipper made from coconut shell, some kinds of flowers that the bride wears during *siraman*, and a scissor to cut the bride's and bridegroom's hair. These steps and tools are the reflection of the aim of *siraman* itself. However, mostly the respondents do not understand the values behind them well. Despite the difference prepectives and understanding about *siraman* and its values, people nowadays still see *siraman* as a tradition that should be preserved. Thus, *siraman* still takes place as an important tradition even though there are some people who do not really believe in the values of *siraman* nowadays.

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