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**The Meaning of *Kidung Rawapening*
in Larung Sesaji Ritual at Semarang Regency**

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ABSTRACT

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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to find out the meaning of *Kidung Rawapening* lyrics, the reason why *Kidung Rawapening* was not accepted by the Muhammadiyah community, and the perspective of NU and Muhammadiyah about *Kidung Rawapening*. **Research Methods:** The method used in this research is qualitative with a case study approach, employing Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory to analyze the data. **Results and discussion:** Research of *Kidung Rawapening* shows the meaning of gratitude to God for the fortune of Rawapening and gratitude to the ancestors who protected it. *Kidung Rawapening* makes a viewpoint comparison between Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. **Implication:** NU as a community organization believes that praying for ancestors in *Kidung Rawapening* will be easily answered by God. While Muhammadiyah states that ancestors should not be included in prayer, because such actions are *syirik* (shirk) and *takhayul* (superstition).

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INTRODUCTION

Rawapening is originated from the legend of Baruklinting, an embodiment of a snake with a bell on the neck, until one day it turned into a *bajang* boy. With his magic, he can change the Pathok village into a lake called Rawapening. Rawapening is surrounded by four districts of Ambarawa, Banyubiru, Tuntang

and Bawen. The four sub-districts are divided into two organizations including *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) and *Muhammadiyah*. The emergence of Rawapening shaped the lives of the people to respect the Rawapening authorities by holding ritual activities at the end of the month of *Sura* or precisely the night of the 21st of *Muharram*. This kind of tradition is often called the *Larung Sesaji* Ritual.

The *Larung Sesaji* Ritual Tradition received a positive response by the NU Community because it had a background in rural social life that it was easy to accept the customary rules of tradition that developed in the area without rejection. Unlike the *Muhammadiyah* community which is far from traditional culture. Knowing these various events, *Muhammadiyah* then gave a negative response and criticism to the NU community because until now there has not been a prosperity of the community around Rawapening. The negative responses that emerged from *Muhammadiyah* have not yet received clear and accurate answers from the NU community. Most of the NU community did not fully know the meaning of ritual and everything contained in it. This understanding is reinforced by Pandiman with his argument that the *kidung* (song) of Rawapening is not disseminated to the public and not just anyone knows, but only those who get a will have authority to sing the songs preferably the Banyubiru descent, so *Muhammadiyah* has the principle that the tradition of *larung sesaji* does not make sense because the use of *Kidung* Rawapening as a prayer does not have strong rules or guidelines. The *Muhammadiyah* community agrees more if its methods must be changed using Islamic prayers without having *sesaji*. The firmness of *Muhammadiyah* is written in a book from the thoughts of K.H Ahmad Dahlan (2013) which explains that he opposes the *sesaji* ritual because it tends to be incompatible with the Qur'an.

Even so, the NU community continues to maintain *kidung* (song) as a prayer of the *Larung Sesaji* ritual until now. The strength to defend the Song is proven by always singing the Song of Rawapening when the *Larung Sesaji* Ritual takes place every night 21th of *Sura* or *Muharram*. Departing from this problem, the NU community should not only merely know the Song, but they must understand very well the meaning of the Song itself. If it is true that the Song is

believed to be able to provide security, peace and well-being, then it really cannot be separated from the meaning of the Song which certainly has a very important meaning for the community.

Based on the background of the problem that has been explained, some questions arise: (1) What is the meaning of *Kidung Rawapening* in the *Larung Sesaji* Ritual; (2) Why Muhammadiyah is not easy to accept the existence of *Kidung Rawapening*, and (3) How is the way of NU and Muhammadiyah's views about lyrics of *Kidung Rawapening*.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this research is qualitative with the case study approach. This research uses the theory of Sausure's semiotics which are signifier and signified. The focus of this research is the lyrics contained in *Kidung Rawapening*. so in this research the signifier is the lyrics of *Kidung Rawapening* and the signified is the result of the meaning of the lyrics. The location of the *Larung* Ritual took place starting from the house of Mr. Topo, one of the residents of Kebondowo village, and then proceeded to Bukit Cinta on the edge of Rawapening.

This research was carried out in stages. The initial observation phase and literature study were conducted from April 2014 to the preparation of the proposal. The *Larung Sesaji* Ritual took place on the night of 21th *Sura* or *Muharram* 2014. Data collection techniques included observation, documentation, and interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Ritual of *Larung Sesaji* Rawapening

Rawapening existed since the 8th century A.D., located in the district of Semarang, Central Java. Before 1965 this ritual had been running routinely every night 21th *Sura*. The final year of the Ritual took place on November 24, 2014 precisely on the night of the 21st *Sura* according to the Javanese calendar. Before 1970 the *Larung Sesaji* Ritual was carried out simply by inviting a few people around Rawapening. *Sesaji* is in the form of *ayam ingkung* (whole

chicken) and the chanting of Kidung which only amounts to three. In 1965 to 1970 the Ritual was terminated because at that time it was believed that who carried out a crowd of more than 10 people was included in the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party). However, as time went on, the ritual progressed, it meant the procedure for its implementation was different and not as simple as before 1965.

In 1970 along with the awakening of the ritual, the Kebondowo villagers knew it by various names including often mentioning *sedekah rawa*, *sedekah tumpeng*, *larungan sedekah Rawapening*. Once being understood that the tradition is an arrangement of ceremonies that are often called rituals, *tumpeng* is nothing but *sesaji* that will be washed away in Rawapening, so from the different names there is a common thread that is centered on the designation that is the Ritual of Larung Sesaji Rawapening. In the main ritual activity for the salvation ceremony, every one of the family members (sacred community) is represented to attend. Their right in this ritual activity is to get some blessing through prayers sung in *kidung* (song). The procession of *larung sesaji* ritual then took place, stepping on the main event *Kidung Rawapening* was sung, a prayer offered to *Eyang Purbarawa*, *Baru Klinting*, and the ancestors of Rawapening guards who were manifestations of *Gusti Yang Maha Agung* (The God Almighty). *Kidung Rawapening* is also a means of communicating the relationship between humans and *Gusti Yang Maha Agung*.

Kidung Rawapening

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Rasa manis ambuka kang tulis</i> | Sweetness opens a writing |
| <i>Tur panuwun mijil telenging tyas</i> | Give thanks from the deepest heart |
| <i>Gya marak marang Ngarane</i> | Immediately worship the God Almighty |
| <i>Kang dhihin mugè katur</i> | First to be delivered da |
| <i>Kaki danyang Nyi danyang sami</i> | Kaki (male title) ancestor |
| <i>Ki danyang sukarna</i> | Nyi (female title) ancestor |
| <i>Brawijaya iku</i> | Ki danyang Sukarna |
| <i>Nini sukarini uga</i> | That is Prabu Brawijaya |
| <i>Kang nyambangi ing bukit cinta puniki</i> | Nini Sukarini too |
| <i>Iku ananing sabda</i> | Located on this Bukit Cinta |
| | (it) arises (because of) the sabda (word) |

The Semiotic Analysis of *Kidung Rawapening* in the *Larung Sesaji* Ritual

Kidung Rawapening in the form of lyrics (language) is sung in the song *Dandhang Gulo* using *laras* (key) *Slendro*. In interpreting the *Kidung Rawapening* using the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure with the concept of signifier and signified.

| Line | Signifier | Signified |
|------|------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Sweetness opens a writing | Feeling happy, comfortable, sincere, throwing away all negative thoughts which are then poured into a song. |
| 2 | Give thanks from the deepest heart | As the community must be self-aware to express sincere gratitude. |
| 3 | Immediately face the Almighty God | Immediately thank the majesty of God by facing him as it should. |

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| | | |
| 4 | First to be delivered | When worship God there are ordinances and manners for the first time that must be delivered. With traditional traditions that have been passed down for generations, the <i>Larung Sesaji</i> Ritual ceremony is a preliminary thank you to God Almighty. |
| 5 | <i>Kaki</i> (male title) ancestor <i>Nyi</i> (female title) ancestor | <i>Kaki Danyang</i> and <i>Nini Danyang</i> are the designation of the first ancestors who inhabited the Rawapening region. |
| 6 | <i>Ki Danyang Sukarna</i> | <i>Kaki Danyang Sukarna</i> was the male ancestor. |
| 7 | That is <i>Prabu Brawijaya</i> | <i>Danyang Sukarna</i> is the designation of Prabu Brawijaya. He was the first ancestor who inhabited Brawijaya Temple, now called Dukuh Temple. |
| 8 | <i>Nini Danyang Sukarini</i> | <i>Nini Danyang Sukarini</i> was the female ancestor. |
| 9 | Located on this <i>Bukit Cinta</i> | <i>Nini Danyang Sukarini</i> was the first ancestor who inhabited <i>Bukit Cinta</i> . |
| 10 | (it) arises (because of) the <i>sabda</i> (word) | That was the statement delivered. |

The Meaning of *Kidung Rawapening*

In the *Kidung Rawapening* lyrics that have been analyzed using semiotics, here are the meanings contained:

Starting from feeling happy, comfortable, sincere, removing all negative thoughts which are then able to produce ideas to scent the writings poured into a song. This feeling can arise because as a society that already feels a living, food,

peace and well-being from Rawapening land and self-aware to immediately remember the majesty of God and express gratitude to Him with the sincerity of the deepest heart.

When people worship God to express their gratitude for the abundance of fortune, there is the first procedure and etiquette to be done. With traditions that have been passed down for generations, the *Larung Sesaji* Ritual ceremony is an initial thank you to God Almighty. From this ceremony, in addition to remembering the majesty of God, the community was also asked to remember and pray for the ancestors. The ancestors who inhabited the Rawapening area were *Kaki Danyang* and *Nini Danyang*, a male and female inhabiting for the first time in the Rawapening region. Therefore, they were given the title *Danyang*. *Kaki Danyang Sukarna* was the male ancestor whose name was *Prabu Brawijaya*. In the west side of Rawapening there is *Pesanggrahan* inhabited by *Prabu Brawijaya*. In that *pesanggrahan* he lived and did a hermitage which five centuries later left a temple called the Brawijaya Temple, now called the Dukuh Temple. Since then the temple and its ancestors have been guardians of Rawapening. Besides *Brawijaya* there are also ancestors who need to be remembered, namely *Nini Danyang Sukarini*, a female ancestor who first inhabited the Rawapening region. In the south side of Rawapening there is a small hill used to be the dwelling place of *Danyang Sukarini* or called *Eyang Ganda Pameling* who is dear to the incarnation of *Baruklinthing* as told in the Rawapening legend. Ganda Pameling then used the place as a hermitage because as the reminder that he had been rescued from the *sada lanang* disaster. Up to hundreds of years, Ganda Pameling received *mukso*. Finally, the place was named *Petilasan Ganda Pameling*, located on a small hill which is now named Bukit Cinta. The ancestor in Bukit Cinta is also a watchman in the Rawapening region.

The community worships God by praying for the ancestors of Rawapening who had been taking part in protecting the Rawapening region so that it would launch all the affairs of the community in search of fortune especially in the region. Previous ancestors were holy people because they were full of *tirakat* or

concerned behavior. God easily approves or grants the wishes of such people even though they have died. The people of Rawapening pray for the ancestors because by that way the ancestors loved the people of Rawapening, so the ancestors helped deliver the people's prayers so that they would be easily accepted by God and granted by Him. The context of the ancestors is as an intermediary for the prayer of the Rawapening people to God. So that is the gratitude of the people of Rawapening which was conveyed to God.

The Meaning of *Kidung Rawapening* Lyrics from NU and Muhammadiyah' Points of Views

KH. Ahmad Dahlan and KH. Hasyim Ash'ari are a close friend. Together they studied religion in Saudi Arabia. Both were hadith and fiqh experts. While in the homeland, both of them made an agreement to spread Islam according to their respective skills and environment. Kiai Ahmad is engaged in propaganda and urban education, because he comes from Yogyakarta city. While Kiai Hasyim chose pesantren education because he came from Jombang Village. Both fought for the independence of this country by basing the nation's children with education and religion. Kiai Ahmad founded the Muhammadiyah organization and Kiai Hasyim founded the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Both of them are public organizations engaged in Religion that refer to Islam in Indonesia. The influence of the teachings from both is felt in this country. Differences in belief in worship until the determination of the big day until now are still a debate between the two groups of Muslims.

Looking at the point of view of Kiai Ahmad who moved in urban areas, it was very likely that the children of the nation who followed in his footsteps moved in the direction of pure religion, so that they were far from the influence of traditional culture. In contrast, Kiai Hasyim, who was in rural areas, was most likely to be influenced by traditional culture. Some differences in worship were very striking between the two. One of them was in terms of prayer to God Almighty. Muhammadiyah only knows Islamic prayers which are sung in accordance with the Shari'a of the Qur'an only. Similar to using prayer in worship with the Shari'a of the Qur'an, it's just that sometimes there are additions to the

influence of regional culture such as the existence of *Kenduri*, *Ziarah Makam*, Javanese Rituals, and so on. These various secular activities included NU's cultural elements in worship. Here are two viewpoints of the nation's figures as the successors of the NU and Muhammadiyah groups in responding to the meaning of the *Kidung Rawapening* lyrics that are the problem in this study.

The Meaning of *Kidung Rawapening* in Nadlatul Ulama (NU) Views

When it comes to *Kidung Rawapening*, the NU community believes that *Kidung* itself appeared before the Islamic era. At that time, *kidung* was the focus of the culture of the people, especially Javanese. Our ancestors taught how to convey something or ask for something essentially to the Almighty. There is a teaching that says that in the past, in fact whatever was done had led to the Almighty, only Javanese Muslims often said '*ngawang-nguwung*' which means that something created but did not know who created it, some did not look but could feel. Therefore by *kidung* is how they try to get closer to God. Indeed, the Islamic community also believes that from sacred places such as Rawapening and its surroundings, there is a guardian figure of ancestors.

The NU community was confused when the meaning of *kidung* Rawapening (prayer) was paralleled by pure Islamic prayer (in Arabic). Basically Javanese prayer cannot be compared to pure Islamic prayer. They are well aware that there are also Islamic prayers mixed with Javanese prayers, and that is not a problem because in essence they believe whatever prayers always lead to offerings to God. They believe that the spirits of the ancestors were God's connection, it means that the lives of previous supernatural people such as the ancestors of Rawapening when they died were still given the privilege by God to represent a Rawapening territory.

According to NU followers, the use of *Kidung Rawapening* as a prayer in the *Larung Sesaji* Ritual was already an intrinsic right or a right that cannot be opposed from any party. The meaning in the lyrics implies as a form of offerings to God Almighty as gratitude. Song in the ritual has indeed become the tradition and culture of the Rawapening people. The assumption is that through this media humans can communicate with God. The NU community is aware of religion and

culture that will not be met if both are always debated because wherever the Javanese tradition is carried out there is the song. So wherever the *kidung* prayer exists and is used in every Javanese tradition. Therefore Islam NU is Islam which respects Javanese culture and does not debate *kidung Rawapening* as a prayer offering to God.

The Meaning of *Kidung Rawapening* in Muhammadiyah Views

The teachings of Islam and Javanese culture are indeed two opposing and conflicting things. Muhammadiyah society said the *Larung Sesaji* Ritual Tradition was a tradition of mixing Hinduism, Javanese and Islamic. The religion carried by their *wali* (guardians) does not frontally say between what is permissible and what is not permissible, but with the wisdom of the guardian, the followers still accommodate traditional things of that nature. So at the beginning of the entry of Islam, things that still contain tradition are still accommodated, but then the guardian said all this was just the beginning. Later when the condition of my people is stable, things that contain things like Javanese traditions, rituals, etc. will be eliminated. They analogize that *kidung Rawapening* is sung in the *Larung Sesaji* Ritual where the lyrics contain the names of the ancestors actually not in our creed and there is no guidance in the Qur'an.

If the community believes in the meaning of *kidung Rawapening* contains prayers for ancestors as intermediaries it is really not justified. They do not justify that the ancestors are the only intermediaries. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan stated that because of equality, there was no need for intermediaries in worship. Therefore, humans must cooperate with all parties despite different religions. They argued that they did not disagree with *kidung Rawapening* used in the *Larung Sesaji* Ritual. This means that the art of *kidung* is better functioned as an art. When the art of *kidung* is converted as a prayer to God, it violates the rules of the existing Muslim guidance. In their belief there is no God but Allah. Purification of Islam rests on the systematization of the Human-God relationship, through clear rules of worship which can be referred to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Ritual ceremonies cannot be referred to the two sources, deemed deviant and *tahayul*, *bid'ah*, and *chufarat* (Mulkhan, 2013).

CONCLUSION

From all the descriptions that have been explained in the previous chapters, the final conclusion is that the results of the analysis of *kidung Rawapening* have the meaning of gratitude to God for the fortune of Rawapening and thank the ancestors who protected it. *Kidung Rawapening* causes comparison of viewpoints between the Nadlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah groups. NU believes that with the meaning of prayer for ancestors in *Kidung Rawapening*, prayer will be easily answered by God. They are also aware of religion and culture that will not meet if both are always debated. While Muhammadiyah who disagree with the opinion says that ancestors should not be included in prayer that leads to God, because such actions are *syirik* and *takhayul* (superstition). Even if *kidung* is included in the ritual it would be better if *kidung* is used as an art.

Given the many limitations and weaknesses in this study, the writer hopes there will be further research by developing sharper and varied study topics. There are still many things that need to be discussed related to this study. The study of *Kidung Rawapening* tends to only talk from the problem of semiotics which is used as a 'knife' of analysis, so it is necessary to have a new study from the perspective of other disciplines of anthropology, economics, history, musicology, and so on. This is to uncover new findings that are more comprehensive and complementary.

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