

MEANING CONSTRUCTION OF 'NGALAP BERKAH' RITUAL IN MOUNTAIN KEMUKUS OF CENTRAL JAVA IN INDONESIA: AN INTERPRETATION FROM A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

Rahmi Setiawati* and Engkus Kuswarno**

Abstract: The ritual communication focused in this study is the ritual of pilgrimage, which initially has the purpose of commemorating the merits or sending prayers to the person buried in the Grave of Pangeran Samoedro, Gunung Kemukus. The pilgrims visiting that place wish to ask for blessings. This activity is called '*ngalap berkah*'. The interesting point that is focused on in this study is the belief that the pilgrims have to perform sexual intercourse (copulate) for seven consecutive times every Friday Pon, with a person who is not their spouse, who has the same intention (*ngalap berkah* on Gunung Kemukus). In its development, the pilgrimage turns into sexual activity with prostitutes. The changes in this ritual is the reason and the focus of this study. This study employs communication ethnography method to observe, describe, and analyze communication patterns existing in a society and to identify the repeated communication occurrences; then to make an inventory of the components of communication, and to structure the communication patterns in Pilgrimage Area of Gunung Kemukus. The preliminary findings of the study show that the message of this ritual is ambiguous for the local people. However, in the process of social interaction between the local people and the non-local people, the former attempts to accept the shift in meaning of *ngalap berkah* ritual. It is because the pilgrimage site has been modified or constructed for tourism commoditization, assumed to increase regional economy of the area, which affects the improvement of socio-economic condition of the people in Pendem Village.

Keywords: Ritual Meaning, Communication Perspective, Ethnography in Communication.

INTRODUCTION

Pilgrimage ritual is a form of communication that some Indonesian people perform. In Islam, pilgrimage is one of many ways to pray for the deceased; it also serves as a reminder for the pilgrims that they too will be laid in a grave, one day. The ritual of pilgrimage has been around for a long time in Indonesia, particularly in Javanese societies. As the time goes, the meaning and purpose of pilgrimage shift. Nowadays, there are various reasons for people to do pilgrimage; for example, to commemorate the deceased, to pray for the deceased, or to get blessing.

One of the activities of pilgrimage as a means to get blessing is performed by the people in Gunung Kemukus, Sumberlawang, Sragen area. The burial site that they, and other people from outside Sragen, frequently visit in pilgrimage is the Grave of Pangeran Samudro. Pilgrimage to the Grave of Pangeran Samudro is

* Departement Tourism, Vocational Programme, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, West Java

** Departement Communication, Faculty of Communication Studies, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, West Java

based on two motives; the cultural/tourism motive and the spiritual motive. The cultural tourism motive includes the visits to various special events, such as religious ceremony, king's coronation, burial of important figure, or famous art performances (RG Sukadijo, 1996: 40). The spiritual motive includes visitation rituals, such as the pilgrimage to visit the burial sites of ancestors (RG Sukadijo, 1996: 4).

The change in the cultural construct of pilgrimage ritual leads to a new problem for the people living in Pegunungan Kemukus, Sumberlawang, Sragen; their area is called the Village of Prostitutes, and the Kemukus Mountain is called the Mountain of Sex. The perception that creates these monikers is based on one of the required rituals to be performed in the pilgrimage to the Grave of Pangeran Samoedro. The ritual requires the visitors to perform sexual intercourse with a member of opposite sex who is not their spouses. Furthermore, it has to be done seven times in the period of one *lapan* (1 *lapan* = 35 days). The pilgrimage ritual in Kemukus Mountain is an interesting Javanese asceticism phenomenon, particularly because the ritual is always associated with *pesugihan* (certain acts or ritual to get a better living and wealth using the help of supernatural forces). The pilgrimage at the Grave of Pangeran Samoedro is known as *ngalap berkah* (asking for blessing), with the purpose of asking for supernatural help to obtain wealth or other wishes through performing sex ritual in the immediate area of the grave.

The development of the sex ritual in Kemukus Mountain is inseparable from the ritual communication based on the belief of the people that for *ngalap berkah* to be successful, the requirement of copulating for seven consecutive times with different people should be satisfied. Michel Foucault (2000) believed that sexuality can never be defined correctly, both from the biological and from the ideological perspectives. He argued that sexuality is always a result of certain social construct. In line with that, Santoso (1990: 193) stated that sexuality is experienced in a certain culture which affects the way man experiences the sexuality. Sexuality, therefore, is not only a matter of biology, physiology, and ideology but also a cultural matter. It means that sexuality cannot have a single definition based on a single experience. Everyone has his own parameters of sexuality. The diversity of discourse about sexuality in a society causes the attitudes of each member of it towards sexuality to be different (Fierenziana Getruida Junus, 2013).

Javanese-Islamic asceticism practice at Kemukus Mountain, including the activities of *ngalap berkah*, *pesugihan*, and sexual intercourse ritual, can be analyzed from a perspective based on the assumption about deviation in Javanese-Islamic mysticism teaching which has been developed since centuries ago in Javanese society (Soepangat, 1991; Permadi, 1991 in Sumiarni, 1989). The deviation in Javanese-Islamic mysticism teaching can be related to Geertz (1973) and Zoetmulder (1990) who stated that the Javanese mysticism is frequently ambiguous. The ambiguity can be observed in the purpose of the asceticism practices in Javanese society.

They aim not only to feel the power of God, 'the ascension to God's righteous path', but also to achieve worldly interests such as success or getting out of difficulties.

Foucault (2000) asserted that sex has the tendency to replace religion in uncovering the mysteries of life. Therefore, just like religion was integrated in cultures of man, sex is also embedded in cultural phenomena, in arts, economy, education, science, and politics. It implies that sex, for the people of Gunung Kemukus, can replace religion in the process of shaping the society. Sex for these people is a cultural product, actualized by individuals deliberately and consciously performing the ritual of *ngalap berkah*.

This perception creates a new phenomenon in Gunung Kemukus area, i.e. the emergence of prostitutes. The phenomenon began in 1980s or 1990s, when some prostitutes, due to economic motivations, came to the area and stayed in Pendem Village (the main site for *ngalap berkah ritual*). These prostitutes came from other areas and, seeing that there was economic opportunities in the village, decided to live there. Although the ritual of performing sexual intercourse in *ngalap berkah* had been around for a long time, the open prostitution only began in the early 1980s. Concerning this phenomenon, Moh. Soedha (2013) argued that the prostitution grows not only because of the sexual intercourse ritual of *ngalap berkah* but also due to the tourism business developed in the area since 1980s.

In 2014, a negative report concerning this phenomenon came to light, written by Patrick Abboud, a foreign journalist from the Dateline SBS Australia. In that report, Patric Abboud featured the story of the weird sexual ritual of Gunung Kemukus. Since then, the area is famous as 'the Mountain of Sex'. According to Patrick, those who perform the sexual intercourse ritual include married men, housewives, government officials, and prostitutes. The area is so popular nowadays that it attracts local tourists. Ironically, the local government collects fees and tolls from those who wish to enter the area.

This reality proves that the development of the pilgrimage tradition in Gunung Kemukus into a tourism industry can be considered a commoditization (Barker, 2000: 14-15). In this perspective, the tourism pilgrimage at Gunung Kemukus cannot be considered an independent system of activities because it is closely related with a wider system of activities. The tourism industry on Gunung Kemukus is related with the system of exchange influenced by political and ideological forces (superstructure) of capitalistic nation (Sutrisno, 2009: 270-271). The transformation from pilgrimage tradition into tourism industry is affected by the government's policies that modify the pilgrimage on Gunung Kemukus into a commodity.

The same thing also happens to the tradition of pilgrimage on the Pon Friday eve (a certain Friday in Javanese calendar) and the First of Syuro (the first day of the first month of Javanese calendar). These rituals are developed to be more than mere religious rituals. They are turned into a commoditized tourism industry, to be

an entertainment. The exotic nature of the pilgrimage ritual is highlighted more than its spirituality and asceticism values, which are based on the influences of Javanese culture, Hindu-Buddha, and Islam. Since the ritual involve the act of copulation, the prostitutes takes advantage of it to get money from services they render to the pilgrims (Moh. Soedha, 2013).

Based on this background, it is interesting to study the communication in that culture, in the sense that interpretation of messages in an oral myth of a society varies in such a way that it gives birth to certain act performed by those who believe in it. In the case of Pendem Village, such act develops into a social problem of prostitution, veiled by the pilgrimage ritual of *ngalap berkah*. The investigator is interested to examine the use of language in the communication activities of *ngalap berkah* ritual; in terms of its situations and use, its communication function, and its relation with social and cultural values. The focus of this study is "How is the Construction of Meaning of 'Ngalap Berkah' Ritual in the Perspective of Communication in Gunung Kemukus, Pendem Village, Sumberlawang Sub-district, Sragen Regency, Central Java, Indonesia?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication Ethnography as a Theory

The use of ethnography in communication study is categorized into two forms; the ethnography of communication and the performance as ethnography (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005: 325-328). Ethnography of communication is a simple application method in the communication pattern of a group. It is discovered by Dell Hymes (in Littlejohn & Foss, 2005: 325). Performance as ethnography is a form of ethnography that expands and deepens its analysis to cover more than just ethnography of communication. It focuses on embodied practice of a culture. Dwight Conquergood mentioned that performance as ethnography is a movement of investigation from text to practice (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005: 329) based on the following questions: (a) is culture understood more as a verb than a noun? (b) is a work in ethnography a combined performances of the investigator and his subjects? (c) how does performance influence interpretation and can practice be considered hermeneutics? (d) what are the best way to publish the result of ethnography study and the best way to present ethnography so that it is useful for performance? (e) what is the relationship between performance and power?

Ethnography of communication is an approach to sociolinguistic aspect of language, studying the general use of language in its relation with social and cultural values. The purpose of ethnographic description, therefore, is to provide global understanding concerning the views and values of a society as a way to explain the attitudes and behaviors of the members of the society. In other words, ethnography of communication combines sociology (interactional and role identity analysis)

and anthropology (the general use of language and its underlying philosophy) in the context of communication, or when the language is exchanged (Kuswarno, 2008: 13).

Understanding communication in ethnography of communication is inseparable from the concepts of language, communication, and culture. Hymes, in Kuswarno (2008) stated that ethnography is implemented as the preliminary step to describe and analyze communication patterns existing in a society by identifying repeated communication occurrences, making an inventory of the components of communication, and discovering the relationships of those components. Furthermore, Kuswarno (2008) argued that ethnography study begins its investigation by recognizing unique communication occurrences and ends it with an explanation of these communication patterns in socio-cultural context.

The Meaning of Ritual in Communication Perspective

Regarding the communication in ritual, Mulyana (2005) argued that it is closely related with expressive communication. Expressive communication is a ritual communication performed collectively. In this case, the ritual involves the use of behavioral models that express social relations. The actions performed in the ritual are the symbols of references in the social relation. In a ritual, people say certain words or perform certain behaviors, which are symbolic. Those participating in a ritual communication attempt to reassert their commitment toward the tradition of their family, tribe, nation, ideology, or religion. On the other hand, Rothenbuhler (1998) believed that ritual is identical with habit or routines. He further described that ritual is the voluntary performance of appropriately patterned behavior to symbolically effect or participate in the serious life.

Considering these opinions, it can be concluded that ritual is related with voluntary performance of patterned behaviors of the members of a society based on tradition. The performance aims to symbolize an influence in social life.

Ritual is one way of communication. All forms of ritual are communicative. Ritual is always symbolic behaviors in social settings. Therefore, ritual is always saying something. Since ritual is a way of communication, the term ritual communication is coined. It was first proposed by James W. Carey (1992) who stated that "in a ritual definition, communication is linked to terms such as 'sharing,' 'participation,' 'association,' 'fellowship,' and 'the possession of a common faith.'"

Carey (1992) then added that in the perspective of ritual, communication is not directly aimed to spread a message in a space, it is aimed to maintain a community in a certain period of time. Communication is also not an act of imparting information but a way to represent a shared faith.

In this view, communication is defined as a process through which a shared culture is developed, modified, and replaced. In the context of anthropology,

communication is related to ritual and mythology. Meanwhile, in the context of literature and history, it is a form of art and literature. Ritual communication is also called expressive communication, which focuses more on intrinsic satisfaction of the sender or receiver of messages than on other instrumental purposes. Ritual or expressive communication depends on shared emotion and understanding

Javanese Religion

Subagya (1976) stated that man is inseparable from his surroundings, both the tangible and the intangible. Tangible means all objects that can be recognized or felt by the senses (the natural objects), while the intangible means all things that cannot be reached by human senses (supernatural objects). Javanese people believes in intangible objects as much as they believe in the tangible objects. Although in reality most of Javanese people admit that they follow one of the big religions in Indonesia; for instance Islam, Hindu, or Catholic, some of them still believe in their ancestor's belief. This belief is commonly called *Kejawen*.

Koentjaraningrat (1986) noted that Javanese Islam, which is also known as Jawi Religion or *Kejawen*, is a complex belief of Hindu-Buddha concepts, which tends to be mystical, integrated with and recognized as Islam. The religion system of Javanese people is a balanced integration of the elements of animism, Hindu, and Islam: the primary syncretism of true Javanese culture. While believing in superstitious and supernatural things (ghosts, devils, spirits of ancestors, etc.), Javanese people still believe that there is a Supreme being that controls everything, i.e. God. In Javanese tradition God is called with various names: *Gusti Kang Maha Agung*, *Gusti Kang Maha Luhur*, *Gusti Kang Murbeng Dumadi*, *Hyang Wenang*, *Hyang Tunggal*, and others; all indicating the concepts of The Most Supreme Power and the One true god.

Javanese people also believe that there are prophets and God's messengers sent to the world to guide people. Javanese people always manage to balance their belief in God and their belief in supernatural things. Their belief in supernatural world is usually associated with certain places which are considered supernaturally powerful or magical. These places are considered sacred. They are usually places in which people seldom come, or the resting place (graves) of sacred people. These places include enormous trees, waterfalls, caves, beaches, huge rocks, graves and cemeteries, and others. Until today, Javanese people still believe that these places are guarded or are homes to certain spirits that have to be treated with utmost respect. One of the good things of this belief is that Javanese people do not dare to do as they wish in these natural places. They believe that man does not live alone in this world. Besides the tangible things (*kasat mata*/that our senses can perceive), there are the intangible things (*datan kasat mata*/invisible). Hence, *uluk salam* (saying greetings or asking for permission) is a common practice when a person comes to a foreign area or a sacred-looking place.

A place is considered sacred or have supernatural properties because, aside from the spirits that take residence there, certain sacred or powerful person once lived there. Javanese people believe that the power of such person remains in the place. One of such places is the graves of sacred or powerful person (Yana MH, 2012:109).

The Meaning of Grave for Javanese People

Koentjaraningrat (1986) noted that “the graves of ancestors are places in which the spirits can get in touch with the living people, and in which the descendants make symbolical connection with the spirits.” Koentjaraningrat (1986) further added that the site or position of a grave is still considered a sacred place so that many people often visit it to ask for blessings. In their culture, Javanese people highly respect their ancestors. Koentjaraningrat (1986) asserted that the spirit of the deceased can be contacted by the living members of his family or descendant anytime they need. The respect may take the form of presenting certain offerings, usually the late person’s favourite foods, fruits, cakes, or drinks, in certain areas of the house. The offerings are also presented in graves, usually in the forms of the petals of roses, jasmine, *khantil* flower, and cananga. Besides flowers, the offerings to ancestors can also take the form of coconut water, poured on the grave, or sweet-smelling incense. The sweet smell of burned incense is believed to be able to please the spirits. The same offerings are also used in the ritual to ask for blessings from the spirits.

Ngalap Berkah

Ngalap (asking for) *berkah* (blessing) is an inherent trait of man, since the very first generation. Blessing is even considered need of everyone. The practice of *ngalap berkah*, in whatever name it is called and whatever form it takes, is a tradition in every culture in the world, including in this modern and global world.

The word ‘*berkah*’ originates from the Arabic ‘*barakah*’, which means having a lot of goodness. The word ‘*barakah*’ itself is derived from the word ‘*birkah*’, which literally means the place where water gathers.

Ngalap berkah can be interpreted as an activity to get a benefit or blessing from a certain Being, thing, man, or something that is considered able to provide that blessing or benefit.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs communication ethnography method, which is the implementation of ethnography methods in ethnography of communication as outlined by Spradley as follows: (1) the system of cultural meaning is encoded in symbols; (2) language is the main system of symbols that encodes the cultural meaning in society; (3) in a culture, the meaning of a symbol is related with other symbols (Purwasito, 2002: 249). Ethnography of communication is different from linguistic anthropology or

sociolinguistic because ethnography of communication focuses on communication occurrences that involve language and culture (Kuswarno, 2008: 17).

Cresswell categorized ethnography as one of the traditions in qualitative research. Cresswell categorized qualitative research into five traditions: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. In particular, Cresswell mentioned that ethnography approach is a combination of the anthropology (particularly Wollcoat and Fetterman) and sociology (Hammersley and Atkinson) approaches. According to Cresswell, the following are the key elements in ethnographic research: (1) presenting detailed explanation; (2) reporting in a style of storytelling; (3) investigating cultural themes, particularly those related with roles and behaviors in certain society; (4) explaining the everyday life of persons, not specific events; (5) the overall format of the report is a combination of descriptive, analytical, and interpretative formats; (6) the result focuses not on what the agent of change is but on how it can be the pioneer of change due to its powerful nature (Kuswarno, 2008: 34).

The end result of ethnography of communication is an explanation of communication patterns through categorization of speech. Categorization of speech is the act of grouping communicative events and actions into certain setting, or the relationships of communication components into certain communication setting (Kuswarno, 2008: 38).

The primary data is obtained through participative observation and interviews with informants; including the pilgrims who perform *ngalap berkah* ritual without copulating with others, those who perform the ritual of copulating for seven consecutive times, the prostitutes, the caretaker of the area, the authorities responsible for the tourism site of Gunung Kemukus, local people of Gunung Kemukus, and other informants. The secondary data are obtained from literary study, including analysis of documents containing facts, articles, or references, and other materials pertaining to the pilgrimage ritual of *ngalap berkah* on Gunung Kemukus.

FINDINGS

The Meaning of Communication Occurrences that Includes Communicative Context/Situation and Action in the Ritual of *Ngalap Berkah*

The communication occurrences that include the communicative context/situation and communicative actions in the ritual of *ngalap berkah* on Gunung Kemukus consist of the ritual of pilgrimage and the first of Syuro ceremony.

The Pilgrimage Ritual

The pilgrimage ritual can be performed any time, as long as it is performed continuously. It means that the pilgrims can do it at noon or in the evening. However,

most of them come on Friday Pon, because it is considered a sacred day. It is believed that Pangeran Samoedro deceased on that day, based on the stories and documents dating back to Demak kingdom era.

The procession of the pilgrimage ritual is as follow. The pilgrimage begins at Sendang Ontrowulan (Ontrowulan Spring). The pilgrim takes water from the spring in bottles. Then, he brings the water and some flower petals to a grave near the spring. At the grave, a caretaker is ready to guide the pilgrim. Both sit face to face, separated by the grave, upon which flower petals have been scattered. On the grave, incense is burning and two umbrellas, commonly used to screen the body of the deceased, are opened. When the pilgrim is face to face with the caretaker, the former scoops the smoke of the incense and wipe it to his face. Then, the pilgrim handles the flower petals and the water he brings to the caretaker. The caretaker receives the items and asks the pilgrim his name, his origin, and his intention or wish. After all the questions are answered, the caretaker opens the wrapping of the flower petals and takes the leaf covering it. Enchanting prayers in Arabic, the caretaker re-wraps the flower petals; then he continues to enchant prayers to the water. When the caretaker is finished, the pilgrim once again scoops up the smoke of the incense and wipes it to his face.

When they finish praying in front of the grave, the pilgrimage ritual is completed. The ritual is performed in stages, beginning at the lower building and ending at the top building. It symbolizes that all effort must begin at the bottom, and then gradually goes to the top. And before doing anything, we have to cleanse ourselves physically and spiritually.

The ritual must be performed continuously. It means that the time of performing the ritual must be constant for the seven times. If after performing the seventh ritual, the pilgrim finds changes in his life, a blessing in certain forms, he has to hold a ceremony to express his gratitude towards God. The ceremony can take various forms: cooking and distributing *tumpeng* (traditional meal of Javanese, in which the rice is shaped like a mountain and the dishes are arranged as decorations), holding a *wayang* performance, slaughtering sheeps, etc. This ceremony must be held at the Grave of Pangeran Samoedro, however, in the hope that the gratitude can also be enjoyed by the people in Gunung Kemukus area. Should the pilgrim decline to do the ceremony, after his wish is granted, it is believed that the consequence includes the taking away of the blessing.

The First of Syuro Ceremony

In addition to pilgrimage, another ritual performed in *ngalap berkah* is the ceremony of Syuro. This ceremony is called *Larap Slambu*. To commemorate the coming of the first month of the year in Javanese calendar (the month of Syuro), commonly called *suronan*, the ceremony of *larap slambu* and *wayang* performance are held in Gunung Kemukus area.

Larap Slambu is a ceremony in which the *slambu* or the cloth covering the Grave of Pangeran Samoedro is purified. The purpose of this ceremony is to purify (spiritually and physically wash) the cloth covering the Grave of Pangeran Samoedro, and to replace parts of it that needs replacing. The procession in this ceremony is outlined in the following.

All parties involved in the ceremony are ready in full Javanese traditional attire, including the honorary guests such as the Regent or the Head of Sub-District. The ceremony commences with the disassembling of the main building of the Grave of Pangeran Samoedry, which then is folded neatly. After recitation of prayers, the *slambu* is taken to a river, which is an overflow of Kedung Ombo dam that separates Pendem Village and Gunung Kemukus. On the trip to the river, *slambu* is guarded by 20 sentries with pikes (pikemen) and 20 sentries with arrows (archers), in traditional sentry attire. They are followed by a group of traditional singers and musicians who enchant Islamic songs and prayers.

When they leave the main building of the grave, the group begins their singing with tambourines as the music. Upon arriving at the site where the *slambu* will be rinsed, the background music is changed into *gamelan* (traditional Javanese instruments), and then the *slambu* is taken to the river. Up to this point, all spectators wait patiently. In the river, the cloth is washed and some parts, which are broken and need to be replaced, are floated away. After the washing procession is finished, *slambu* is taken to the rinsing site on Gunung Kemukus. The site is fenced to keep the spectators in order because they will grab the water used to rinse the cloth.

A set of *gamelan* and *janur* (decoration made from coconut leaves) decorated the rinsing site. The rinsing water is placed in six plastic barrels. Before *slambu* is rinsed, the Regent of Sragen will have a speech and a historian will read the history of Gunung Kemukus; the caretaker of the Grave will also say his speech. The Tourism Office of Sragen uses this opportunity to straighten the public views concerning Gunung Kemukus, as well as to promote the tourism in that area. After all these speeches, *slambu* is rinsed, with *gamelan* music plays in the background. When finished, *slambu* will be taken away to a safe place, and the water used to rinse it will be fought over by the spectators. They come altogether at the same time to take as much of the water as they can. Some of them use plastic bottle, others use buckets. Some people even wash their face and/or body with the water.

Larap Slambu ceremony is a program designed by the Tourism Office of Sragen to increase regional income. Hence, the ceremony is prepared to attract tourists. It is a unique attraction for foreign tourists. However, the domestic tourists and the local people attend the ceremony for another reason; to get blessing from Pangeran Samoedro, whom they believe to have divine power.

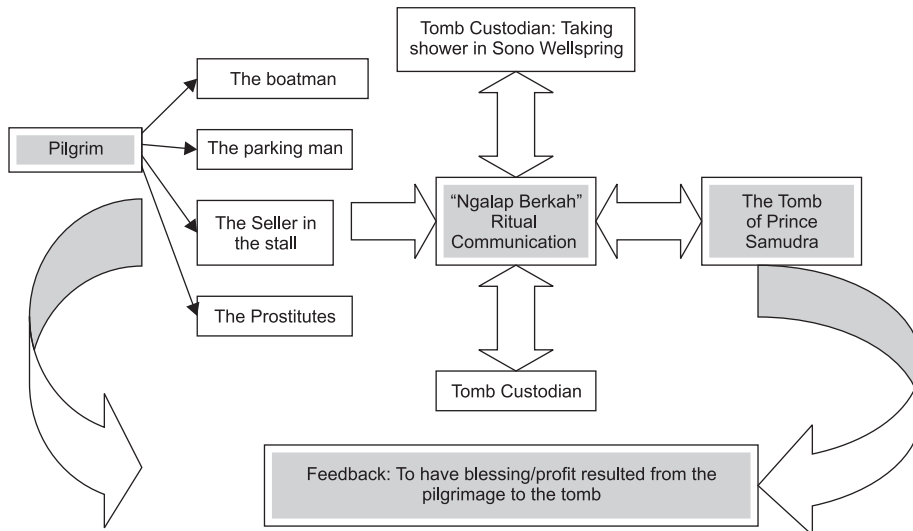
A performance of *wayang kulit* (shadow puppets) is held all night long at the end of Syuro, usually on Friday *Kliwon*. One of the most famous stories performed

in this performance is 'Semar Mbangun Khayangan' (Semar Builds the Heaven). The moral of this story is that success can only be achieved through hard and diligent work, not instantaneously. *Wayang* performance is another routine program of the Tourism Office of Sragen, held annually. During the performance, a message concerning *Sapta Pesona* (seven wonders of tourism) is delivered in order to involve the people in introducing the tourism potentials of Gunung Kemukus as one of the tourism attractions in Sragen area. The performance is always fully-packed and enthusiastically watched by the local people.

During such night, the area of Gunung Kemukus is full with visitors. Some of them perform the pilgrimage ritual and some just come to watch *wayang*. However, some others gamble and drink in the small huts around the area, in which people can buy foods and drinks. This practice is hard to obliterate because some people are accustomed to celebrate the event by drinking and gambling, accompanied by prostitutes.

Communication Patterns of Ritual "ngalap berkah" on Gunung Kemukus

The communication patterns in the ritual of *ngalap berkah* occur when an activity is performed repeatedly or continuously due to trust. The communication includes various forms of functions, categories, speeches, attitudes, and concepts of language from the actors. In general, the communication pattern in the ritual is shown in the following diagram.



The diagram explains that the communication patterns performed by the pilgrims include the verbal and non-verbal communication. The language used is

the local language of Javanese. The tourism site of Gunung Kemukus is interesting because of its unique culture and spiritual values, in which business and fun are combined to satisfy sexual needs of the visitors. Most of the visitors come from outside Solo City, mostly from West Java, particularly Bandung. This is clearly evident from the license numbers of the cars parked in the area which shows that they are from Bandung area. It is also confirmed by the caretaker of the grave. Regarding the pilgrims, the investigator categorizes them into three categories; common pilgrims, pilgrims with certain beliefs, and casual pilgrims (those who come for fun or tourism). Common pilgrims are those who visit for the purpose of pilgrimage. They visit the grave to say prayers or read Al-Quran, and stay there. Pilgrims with certain beliefs are those who visit to perform the ritual of copulation for seven consecutive times every Pon Friday or Pon Tuesday. This kind of pilgrims will look for inns to stay and do their business. The casual pilgrims are those who visit only to satisfy their curiosity regarding the place. In other words, they are tourists who wish to see, observe, and perform pilgrimage as they normally do. Some of them also come with a certain motive; i.e. to use the service of the prostitutes. It can be deduced from their transaction (bargaining) with the prostitutes.

The communication occurrence that is constructed purely by the Tourism Office of Sragen is the *larap slambu* ceremony. This ceremony is held as one of the cultural tourism attractions. However, behind the ceremony, there is economic commoditization that benefits the Government and the local people. The benefit comes from the entrance fee, the sale of water used in *larap slambu* ceremony, and the order of *slambu* clothes of Pangeran Samoedro through the caretaker.

DISCUSSION

The components of communication consist of genre or type of communicative occurrences, topic, and purpose of communication. The function and setting of communication occurrences among the communication participants visiting Gunung Kemukus are the ritual of *ngalap berkah*. Communication that occurs in this ritual is developed by several groups of people; including the local and non-local people of Gunung Kemukus, the pilgrims, the prostitutes, and the users of services in Gunung Kemukus Area to perform the ritual.

Under further analysis, the behaviors or actions of the individuals performing the ritual of *ngalap berkah* are based on their own perception, experience, and interpretation of belief. This condition developed through publications in several mass-media and the perception of the local people that Gunung Kemukus is a place for *pesugihan* or *ngalap berkah* which involve the act of copulation with other people. In reality, there are various versions of public perception concerning Gunung Kemukus.

These various perceptions make the ritual of *ngalap berkah* to be ambiguous. This is congruent with the information obtained from the respondents. The public perceives Gunung Kemukus as a place to get blessings so that their business can be successful. One of the processes in the ritual to get such blessing is by performing sexual intercourse with other people who are not their spouses. However, another opinion believes that copulation with other people is not necessary in the pilgrimage. The most important thing is strong 'intention'. Yet another opinion views that the requirement of sexual intercourse is just a form of attraction to get people to visit Gunung Kemukus. It is because the more pilgrims visit the area, both for pilgrimage and for tourism purposes, the more the regional income of Sragen area will increase.

Based on these information provided by the pilgrims, the investigator concluded that the myth of the sexual intercourse ritual is spread by certain parties who wishes to benefit from deviating the myth from its true origin. There are some actors with certain interests to obtain from the myth, for the purposes of power, economy, or religious. The Regional Government of Sragen Regency, particularly its Office of Tourism, stated that in the management of Gunung Kemukus as a tourism site, it is forbidden to perform sexual activities during the pilgrimage ritual at the Grave of Pangeran Samoedro. This is in line with the information of Karno K.D, a historian of Gunung Kemukus, that Sunan Kalijogo once made a speech, after the burial of Pangeran Samoedro, preaching that it is forbidden to use the area of Gunung Kemukus as a place to pray to anything but God and as a place for fornication.

It is important to note that many people visit Gunung Kemukus not for the purpose of pilgrimage, but to have fun with the prostitutes. As observed on the field, a lot of visitors did not go directly to the Grave of Pangeran Samoedro or to Sendang Ontrowulan, the two sites of pilgrimage, but to the huts where prostitutes negotiate their deals. This observation is confirmed by the interviews with the local shop-owners in the area, who state that some visitors come only to have fun with the prostitutes or to satisfy their curiosity about Gunung Kemukus.

The Regional Government of Sragen vehemently denies that Gunung Kemukus is the Mountain of Sex or that the pilgrims are required to perform sexual intercourse as part of the pilgrimage ritual. To straighten this incorrect perception, the Government published a book that serves as a manual for the visitors of Gunung Kemukus tourism site. The Regional Government believes that it is necessary to clarify the true story of Pangeran Samoedro. The purpose of this communication is to make people aware that what is believed by the public and the pilgrims concerning the sex ritual in the area is not true; it is a deviation of the original story.

The popular belief is an anomaly, according to the Cognitive Dissonance Theory of Roger Brown (1965). The foundation of this theory is simple, "cognitive dissonance is a state of psychological discomfort or tension which motivates efforts to achieve consonance. Dissonance may be considered as a state of disequilibrium

while consonance will be a state of equilibrium. Brown further stated that this theory allows for two elements to have three types of relationship with each other. The relationship may be dissonance, consonance, or irrelevant. For instance, the effort of the Regional Government of Sragen to install announcements that prohibit the acts of immoral or sexual nature, and the acts of gambling and drinking; seems to have no effect. There are still people performing immoral or sexual activities in the area, which indicates that there is a state of disequilibrium or irrelevance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, the following conclusion is drawn. Myth is a form of delivering messages used by Javanese society to influence the behaviors of its members. However, messages delivered through myth may be ambiguous because it contains more than one meaning or it carries certain interests pertaining to the condition or events occurring during the time of the myth development.

The meaning contained in the communication occurrences in '*ngalap berkah*' ritual is that Indonesian people, in their efforts to get something, still visit places that are considered to have spiritual or magical properties to grant blessing to people so that their wishes will be realized. This phenomenon can be seen in the Tourism Site of the Grave of Pangeran Samoedro, which is a destination for pilgrimage tourism. The place has a long history which attracts tourists to visit and perform the ritual of '*ngalap berkah*' there.

The communication competence of the pilgrims that visit the grave of Pangeran Samoedro on Gunung Kemukus, based on linguistic analysis, generally consists of Javanese language. However, to deal with visitors from outside Java Island, Bahasa Indonesia is used. The pilgrims perform this ritual due to their desperation or severe feelings of helplessness in handling problems of life. Rational thinking and reason fade away because the pilgrims expect to realize their wishes instantaneously, through the ritual of copulating with other people who share their intention, and who are not their spouses, for seven consecutive times. However, some pilgrims do think rationally. In their pilgrimage, they perform the ritual of *ngalap berkah* not by copulating with strangers but by praying to God. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no correlation between the ritual of sexual intercourse and the success of the pilgrims. Their success is attributed to their strong belief or auto-suggestion that forms such a self-concept that enables them to succeed (self-fulfilling prophecy). To summarize, the ritual of *ngalap berkah* can be categorized into two types; the rational pilgrimage, in which the pilgrims visit the site and pray in accordance with the common social norms, and the irrational pilgrimage, in which the pilgrims expect to be granted blessings based on the experiences and beliefs developed through word of mouth.

Notes

1. Pemerintah Kabupaten Sragen. Dinas Pariwisata Kebudayaan dan Olahraga di Obyek Wisata Ziarah Pangeran Samudro Di Gunung Kemukus Antara Keyakinan dan Mitos Sragen tanpa penerbit.
2. Pusat Informasi Pariwisata. Pesona Wisata Budaya Jawa Tengah Kabupaten Sragen.
3. Booklet Dinas Pariwisata Kabupaten Sragen.
4. TRIBUNNEWS.COM, JAKARTA – Tentang Kisah Ritual Seks Aneh di Gunung Kemukus atau dengan nama “Gunung Seks” oleh Patrick Abboud, jurnalis asing dari program Dateline SBS Australia.

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