

Tradition of Dreadlocks Shaving Ritual (*Gimbal*) in Dieng Plateau Wonosobo

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Abstract

Ritual cukur rambut gimbal or dreadlocks shaving ritual is tradition ritual which is done by people who live in Dieng plateau. The ritual is inherited from ancestor of the Dieng people, Kiai Kolodete. This ritual aims to eliminate the dreads in children which done based on Javanese calendar calculation. This paper aims to find out the relationship between the ritual and myth and Dieng people's belief. Finding out the good and correct ritual procession based on empirical facts of the local community is the goal of this research as well. Parikesit is the village which is located in Kejajar sub-district, Wonosobo in Dieng plateau. There are some children with the dreadlocks who live in the village. Therefore, its people still maintain the ritual well. Parikesit is chosen to collect the information about the ritual of this research by interviewing its people. Meanwhile, this research also uses some books to define the myth and the ritual. Dreadlocks shaving ritual is done as a form of praying to dreads in children do not grow anymore. This ritual is done differently in every village in Dieng plateau. There are some communities with Javanese belief (Kejawen) held the ritual in Arjuna temple area with Javanese tradition and the ritual also held by other communities at their own home like other traditional party based on their religion (slametan). This ritual basically has same essence which is to pray and fulfill the desires of the children (who will be shaved) which is an absolute requirement.

Keywords: *Dreadlocks Shaving Ritual, Myth, Experience*

Introduction

Dieng plateau is well known as mountainous region of two districts Wonosobo and Banjarnegara. Most people who live in this area are potato farmers because Dieng has fertile nature. Meanwhile, people in Dieng plateau have different way of life from people who live lowland. It is affected by nature condition and culture. Culture is the identity of people in certain area because each community has their own value and norms inside the culture that must be done by the community (Koentjaraningrat, 1990: 217). It means that value and norms of the

culture as the internalization so that they are able to influence the way of life of the community.

Dreadlocks shaving ritual is the one of tradition ritual that still done by people who live in Dieng. This tradition has become a way of life for the Dieng people since decades ago. Therefore this way of life is considered part of the element of culture (Koentjaraningrat, 2004: 2). Children with dreads are believed as descendants of Kiai Kolodete. Kiai Kolodete is a figure who has an important role in the formation of Wonosobo especially Dieng (Mubin, 2016: 121). Dreadlocks shaving ritual aims to eliminate dreadlocks of the children. Based on the local beliefs and the story of Dieng people, dreadlocks shaving must be done by the ritual and the process of ritual must be perfect so that the dreads of the children would not grow anymore.

Every people in Dieng has different pronounce of dreadlocks. It would be different pronounce of people who live in Dieng village from people in Parikesit Village. People of Dieng village pronounced as *Gembel* of the dreads while people in Parikesit as *Gimbel*. There is no special reason of the differences but habit of their community and as the part of identity between them.

Tradition of dreadlock shaving ritual is the topic that would be discussed in this writing. This ritual as the object of the research is the ritual that is done by people who live in Dieng plateau specifically Parikesit village, Kejajar, Wonosobo. The aim of this research are to know how the correlation between myth and local beliefs of the dreadlocks shaving ritual, how is the perfect process of the ritual, and empirical experiences of the dreadlocks shaving ritual.

Literary Review

Explanation of this writing is based on Edward Bernett Tylor's *Primitive Culture* to find the definition of myth and Nurul Mubin's *Ritual cukur rambut gimbal: studi makna ritual bagi pendidikan moral lingkungan dalam komunitas muslim penghayat kepercayaan tunggul sabdo jati di kawasan dataran tinggi Dieng* as reference to find the definition of dreadlocks shaving ritual.

Myth

Myth is the value system or story that is trusted by society even though the truth cannot be proven scientifically. Myth comes from knowledge based on human's creative power through his limitless imagination (Tylor, 1871: 273). Myth is the element of culture of the society that has sacred position because of its essence that cannot be described scientifically. Although myth cannot be described scientifically, the interpretation of myth scientifically can be explained and strengthened by the existence of cases that occurs in the community (Tylor, 1871: 282). The facts of each event reinforce the truth of the myth. Myth is also a belief system that has close relation with the religion. It is because the natural events that occur are the part of God willing (Segal, 2004: 13).

Myth is the story that is delivered and heard by the community in order to convey information. Myth is not a stand-alone belief system. Its existence always has correlation with action and or ritual (Segal, 2004: 61). Both have inseparable relationships or in other words, myth without ritual does not mean anything and vice versa. Religion or belief gives rise to rituals or ceremonies as expressions of trust. The practice of religion rituals is divided into two that are expressively and symbolically rituals (Tylor, 1903: 362). Those rituals are the result of the doctrine that absorbs it into trust. Ritual religion practices are not only carried out on the basis of trust but also related to moral conditions and historical records (Tylor, 1903: 363).

Dreadlock Shaving Rituals

Ritual is the spirit of belief or religion as sincere desire of the community with content of prayer or mantra. Ritual is also done as spiritual expression to that sees other forces from outside the human being (God). The power beyond human control and even unable to be held by the human mind is considered as the natural thing in order that the worshipping and praying practices arise (Tylor, 1903: 364).

Dreadlock shaving ritual is one of belief practice that has become identity of Dieng people. Based on the community's story, the ritual has been carried out by the ancestors of the Dieng people since the time of the glory of Kiai Kolodete.

The story about Kiai Kolodete becomes a legend. This story tells that Kiai Kolodete had dreads that he never combed (Mubin, 2016: 119).

The existence of children with the dreads is entrusted from ancestors. (Mubin, 2016: 128). Nurul Mubin explains through his book (2016) that there are two version of belief of addressing children with the dreads. First is considered as a gift from Kiai Kolodete as the ancestor of Dieng people. Second is as a curse from Kia Kolodete. Generally, Dieng people believe that children with dreads are a gift from Kiai Kolodete so that those children get different treatment from the community. Children with dreads are considered have the ability to interact with the occult. The dreadlocks that assume as the heritage is not accepted by all the Dieng people in long term so the desire to eliminate it must be done. Ritual is the way that is believed by the community to eliminate this type of hair.

According to Nurul Mubin (2016), dreadlock shaving ritual is the tradition that shows Dieng people's identity as gathering community based on their belief as Moslem. Dreadlock shaving ritual is basically same as other rituals that express the gratitude and pray based on faith or religion (it is called *slametan* in Java). The different is the ritual of dreadlocks shaving is done during the day because it needs long time than other *slametan*. It is because there will be negotiation of the children who will be shaved with their parents in the ritual. The negotiation is the request of the children that must be fulfilled.

Dreadlocks shaving ritual is done to maintain the belief and sacred value of the Dieng people (Arif, 2010: 144). There will be a person who is positioned as an intermediary communicator with the occult in the ritual procession. The negotiation result and some conditions that called *sesajen* are the requests from ancestors through the children.

Research Method

Method is very important of this writing because it would give illustration of the writing or research. Method is the way that used to study the topic of the research. Meanwhile, research is the activity to find the data. (Mulyana, 2002: 12).

The method that would be done in this writing is literature review to find the definition of the myth and the dreadlocks shaving ritual. Interviewing to some

people of Parikesit village is also used in this writing. Collecting data is the essential aspect of the research. The method of collecting data of this research is done by determining of the location to collect the data. The location is in Dieng plateau especially Parikesit village. This is done to make the focus of the research. This research uses some references such as books as the supporting statement as well.

Discussion

Myth and Local Belief to the Dreadlock Shaving Ritual

It is like the explanation above that myth is story or belief system of people that has sacred value and in order to convey information. Myth is the belief related to actions based on religious beliefs or beliefs in ancestors. One of the action based on the beliefs is dreadlock shaving ritual. This ritual is done by people who live in Dieng. The ritual aims to eliminate dreads of the children.

Nadhir (40) is a person who is often involved in the ritual process of shaving dreads in Parikesit. He says in an interview that the dreadlocks shaving ritual is a hereditary tradition that its process is always done with religious values. The ritual is the praying and or expression of being grateful to the God like *slemetan* based on religion faith. Sending the salutation or is also part of the ritual process that is done by people in Parikesit.

The ritual procession with some requirements becomes mystical activity because it cannot be accepted by human logic. People do believe of the dreadlocks shaving ritual because of the empirical experience. They believe of the power praying and that the requirements offered in the procession will mediate the wish to eliminate dreads of children. Rudi Susanto (27) adds in the interview that the involvement of religion leader in the ritual is important because he is considered more capable of leading prayer in the society.

Dreadlocks Shaving Ritual Procession

The procession of dreadlocks shaving ritual in every village is different. It is based on their own beliefs. Nadhir (40) says that the ritual procession in his community or Parikesit village is different from the ritual procession that carried

on in Arjuna temple (Dieng village). The ritual procession in Parikesit is very simple. It is performed like *selametan* with prayer based on Islamic teaching. Ritual procession that is held in Arjuna temple is done by *kejawen* (Javanese values). It is also stated in Nurul Mubin's research (2016). The differences between those processions are influenced by their belief system, but both have same essence that is praying for the dreads in children do not grow anymore.

The community who held the dreadlocks shaving ritual in Arjuna temple is the community with *kejawen* system beliefs. Children who will be shaved gather in a place and paraded to Arjuna temple with white headband to start the procession while people who lead the procession of ritual wear complete Javanese traditional clothes. This ritual requires offerings such as *tumpeng* (cone shaped of yellow rice) original snacks of Dieng, chicken, seven kinds of flowers, and children requests. In the beginning of procession, the leader of the procession starts by praying to the God and the ancestors begging for the ritual procession to go well (Mubin, 2016: 135 – 137).

The ritual procession in Parikesit is very simple. According to Nadhir (40), the ritual is held in house by inviting their neighbors and it is done like other *slametan*, praying and praising to the prophet (*sholawatan*). *Sesajen* in the ritual is very simple as well. It is adjusted to the economic condition of the ritual organizers. *Sesajen* of ritual is interpreted as alm because *sesajen* will be distributed to the guest after the procession ends. Basically, the most important thing of the ritual is the children's requests that must be given to prevent the dreads do not grow after shaving. Every request of the children during the procession is believed as the ancestors' voice and it is based on parents' ability. The children sometimes ask someone to shave their dreads. It means someone who shaves the dreads is not always the leader of the ritual but it depends on children's request as well.

The ritual in Parikesit does not refer to a particular month. It is carried out when the children ask for shaving their dreads. Javanese calendar calculations are also often used as references to adjust the children's birth date. The ritual can be held on day or night and it almost done such as *slametan*. The different part of this

ritual and *slametan* is shaving part and giving the gift to the children (children's request).

The ritual procession in Parikesit is different from the ritual in other villages. The community who still adopt *kejawen* system, they will carried out the ritual refer to Javanese calendar calculation that it is on *Suro* 10th (*Suro* is one of month of Javanese calendar). This ritual becomes a series of Wonosobo anniversary events.

Empirical Experiences of Dreadlocks Shaving Ritual

The dreadlocks shaving ritual aims to eliminate dreads of children and to prevent the dreads do not grown anymore. As has been mention above, the ritual procession is full of praying and giving children's request. It is the ritual that is carried out based on trust from generation to generation and it is cannot be explained scientifically but the empirical experiences. The empirical experiences become strong purpose in conducting ritual. Some mystical occur to the children after the ritual. Those mystical things explained by Siti Zainab (35), Subkhi (39), and Zuhrotun (25) in interview as follow:

Siti Zainab has two children with the dreads. She has mystical experiences that caused of the dreads. Siti Zainab says that dreads are not given by God since their children were born. It appears several years after. The appearance of deads in children is accompanied by other condition such as high fever and they have trouble of eating. This condition makes her panic that she should visit doctor for helping her children many times. The condition assumed as the normal situation by the community but Siti Zainab still feels serious panic when her first child in that condition. First experience is when Siti Zainab tries to brush her first child's hair intended to tidy it up because the hair looks matted. The condition is the beginning of hair becomes dreads. Siti Zainab always does that activity and sometimes she tries to cut the dreads herself. Those make her child gets high fever. The more she tries to comb the more terrible her child's fever. It makes her and her husband worry and let the dreads grow.

Children will get fever when the dreads come to them in the beginning. This condition is assumed as the normal condition by the society but it will cause

worry to the parents. People believe that the fever will heal when the dreads have grown perfectly. Siti Zainab says that the growth of the dreads begins with the growth of thinner hair like fibers that glue the hair. The thinner hair grows thick until all the normal hair glued. The thinner hair does not grow simultaneously but alternately. The children will get fever when the thinner hair appears in a certain part of the head. It means every appearance of the thinner hair the child will get sick.

The experience makes Siti Zainab and her husband more believe of the power of dreadlocks shaving ritual. She cuts her first child's dreads but it makes her child sick and the dreads grow again. Therefore, Siti Zainab held the ritual to shave her child's dreads and the dreads do not grow anymore. Siti Zainab's second child also has dreads and she does not do anything to the dreads because of her experience. She will has her second child get to shave her dreads when she ask for and Siti Zainab will held the ritual again.

Other experience is explained by Subkhi (39). He has neighbour who ever held the ritual but the requirement of the ritual is not complete so the dreads grow again. The ritual is formed lively at his house and *sesajen* seems complete because it contains many kind of requirements but there is one little request (secondary) of the child does not fulfilled that is salted fish so that the ritual failed. Therefore, he mush held the ritual again to eliminate his child's dreads.

Zuhrotun (25) also states that children cannot be shaved their dreads and the parents cannot held the ritual before the children ask their parent to shave the dreads. It is because the one of important requirement of the ritual. This fact confirms that the dreads of children have power and it is inherited from Kia Kolodete. Asking and readiness to shave the dreads in the ritual from the children is believed as the voice of the ancestors.

Conclusion

Tradition of dreadlocks shaving ritual is the tradition of the community who live in Dieng pletaeu. This ritual is held since long time ago. The ritual assumes as the heritage from Kiai Kolodete as the ancestor of Dieng people. It is held not only for preserving culture but also it aims to eliminate dreads of children. The dreads

are not given since the children were born but it appears several years after they were born. Children with the dreadlocks are believed as the children who get mystical power from Kiai Kolodete so that people treat them different from other children.

Dreadlocks shaving ritual has sacred and high position in the society. It is because of the experiences in the community. The children with dreads will get fever or sick if their dreads is cut without the ritual. The dreads will grow again although it is done with the ritual but the request and *sesajen* do not fulfilled completely. It means the ritual will fail.

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