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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Cultural Meaning and Society Belief of the *Nyalasé* Tradition Reflecting Local Wisdom in Death Ceremony in Aeng Tong-tong, Saronggi, Sumenep, Madura: An Ethnolinguistic Study

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### | ABSTRACT

This research is about the *Nyalasé* tradition that exists in the Aeng tong-tong community, which means a pilgrimage to the grave and aims to find out the cultural meaning and views of the community that reflect local wisdom in the tradition in every verbal and nonverbal expression. This research is a type of qualitative descriptive research using an ethnolinguistic approach through an in-depth interview using the listening and speaking method. The results of the study revealed that there are verbal and nonverbal expressions. Language expressions that have verbal and nonverbal meanings include Assalamualaikum ya Ahlil Kubur and Yasin tahlil, both of which mean praying for the dead, while nonverbal expressions include *gembhang* (flower) which means remembering the kindness of the deceased and aeng (water) meaning purity, purity of heart and strength for everyone.

### | KEYWORDS

Ethnolinguistics, Cultural Meaning and Community Views, Nyalase Tradition, Madura

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### 1. Introduction

Madura is a rich cultural and traditional area. These cultures and traditions can reflect the local wisdom of the community. Local wisdom is a system of local knowledge owned by the community based on self-experience and the instructions of their ancestors from generation to generation, which is flexible in overcoming local situations and conditions reflected in verbal and nonverbal expressions to obtain peace of living together, humanely and with dignity (Abdullah, 2017, p. 47). In the sense that the culture and traditions of the Madurese community have their own meaning. This is reflected in the Madurese language obtained from the ancestors as a way of life.

A tradition is closely related between meaning and language. So, it can be interpreted language and meaning are obtained from a tradition that has been entrenched. The entrenched tradition is obtained from the community so that it gives birth to a language that has meaning. Therefore, it can also be said that a language is born due to environmental influences in the form of traditions that become the habits of the local community. This is closely related to Shapir Worth's words that language is influenced by the community itself. Thus, tradition and culture should be understood as the meaning contained in an idea and idea as well as mindset as well as objects because the traditions and culture owned by the Madurese community reflect values, ideas and forms of knowledge to be conveyed by other people from generation to generation from one generation to another. Therefore, these ideas are the legacy that will be sought because culture is a heritage that holds meaning to be conveyed to the community.

The culture and traditions that are one of the local wisdom of the Madurese community that are still maintained today are the *Nyalasé* traditions in the death ceremony. The *Nyalasé* tradition is an activity of sowing flowers on graves accompanied by prayers asking for forgiveness for those who have died, which are carried out from generation to generation as a form of inheritance from their ancestors. The sowing of flowers on a grave has an important meaning in human life as a form of view and reference in life.

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However, over time, this understanding is less understood by some of the Madurese community, even though these activities are often carried out. This reflects that the knowledge possessed by the Madurese community regarding the cultural meaning and way of life of the community towards the activities or traditions of the Nyasé is very minimal so that researchers are interested in uncovering the meaning of the Nyasé culturally through the views of the community to solve the existing problems.

Cultural meaning is the meaning that language has in accordance with the cultural context of the speaker, Subroto (in Abdullah 2017, 56). This means that cultural meaning is intended to translate the meaning in the form of verbal and non-verbal expressions or expressions in the context of the local wisdom of the community in the Nyasé tradition related to the knowledge system that is reflected in the community's mindset or view of life.

Thus, the researcher aims to describe the cultural meaning as well as how the community views the Nyalasé tradition through verbal and nonverbal expressions in the Aeng Tong Tong, Saronggi, Sumenep community. Previously, similar studies had been carried out. First, Toha (2016) examines the contestation of the views of the religious elite in Gersik on Nyekar in Surowiti Village, Panceng District. Second, Maulana (2015) researched the Nyekar Cultural Capital Ritual and Political Mobility in Indramayu. Third, Hartatik (2011) examines the Pilgrimage Tradition in Central Java. Fourth, Najitama (2013) examines the Holy Pilgrimage and the official pilgrimage of the holy pilgrimage and the Official Pilgrimage (Meaning of Pilgrimage at the Santri's Grave and Priyayi's Tomb). Fifth, Anam (2017) The Tradition of Splice and Nyadran in Suruhan Hamlet. Sixth, Aziz (2018) examines the Pilgrimage of the Grave, Didactic Values and Reconstruction of Humanistic Education Theory. Seventh, Mujib (2016) examines the Pilgrimage Tradition in Javanese Society: Contest of Piety, Religious and Commercial Identity. And (Wahid, Sumarlam, and Subiyantoro (2018) The Tradition of Pilgrimage to the Tomb of Bathara Katong, the Founder of Islamic Civilization in Ponorogo (Overview of Symbolic Meanings). From the literature review, researchers have not found any research that discusses the cultural meaning and views of the people in Sumenep Madura Regency, especially in the village of Aeng Tong-tong regarding the Nyalasé tradition. Therefore, the researcher was motivated to conduct research on the cultural meaning and views of the people of Aeng Tong-tong, Saronggi, Sumenep in the Nyasé tradition through an ethnolinguistic approach.

Ethnolinguistics is a science that studies the relationship between language and culture. Conceptually, ethnolinguistics (anthropological linguistics) is a type of linguistics that pays attention to the position of language in a wider socio-cultural context to promote and maintain cultural practices and social structures (Foley, 1997:3 in Abdullah 2017, 2). It is also stated that ethnolinguistics is a study of the linguistic problems of society as a cultural phenomenon, which can be used as an understanding of culture (Ahimsah-Putra, Heddy Shri. 1997:5; in Sugianto, 2014: 52). From the explanation above, it can be said that this approach is very relevant to the purpose of this research.

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to ethnolinguistic research through written documentation. Furthermore, practically the research is expected to provide a benefit for the community and further researchers. For the Madurese community, it is hoped that this research can add to the treasures of knowledge about the cultural meaning and way of life of the community regarding the Nyalasé tradition. In addition, this research is expected to be used as a reference or literature study for further research related to this research.

## 2. Literature Review

First, the journal written by Ayu (2014) with the judul *Konsep Hidup dan Mati dalam Leksikon Khaul Buyut Tambi* (Kajian Etnolinguistik di Indramayu).. The research is about traditional ceremonies that are routinely carried out in religion every year called Khaul Buyut Tambi. He explained the cultural classification, description, and reflection of the concept of life and death in Buyut Tambi's khaul lexicon. In his explanation, he describes the reflection of the dimensions of vertical and horizontal relationships from Buyut Tambi's khaul lexicon. This research approach is an ethnolinguistic approach. The method used is participatory observation. Data collection techniques using observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of this study show that based on lingual classification, the lexicon is in the form of 28 words and 18 words. Based on the cultural classification, description, and reflection of the concept of life and death as reflected in the lexicon, which is classified based on activities, tools, food, places, and animals. Based on the reflection of vertical and horizontal relationships, there is 5 lexicon that reflects vertical relationships and 19 lexicon reflecting horizontal relationships.

Second, the journal written by Sri Wahyuni (2003) entitled *Makna Simbol-simbol Ritual Upacara Kematian Pada Masyarakat Jawa di Kecamatan Takeran Kabupaten Magetan Suatu Kajian Deskriptif*. This study discusses the meaning contained in the symbols in the ritual of the death ceremony in Takeran, Magetan, with the aim that the public knows the meaning contained in it using the Ogden and Richards triangle theory, namely the word (as a symbol or symbol), meaning (as a concept), and referent (as the thing or thing represented). In addition, the semiotic theory proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce is also used. The result of this research is the discovery of symbols contained in the customs before the funeral ceremony, the customs during the funeral ceremony, and the custom after the funeral ceremony. These symbols are in the form of goods or objects used in the

death ceremony and the naming of some stages of the death ceremony. Through the symbols used, there are two relationships carried out by the Takeran community. The two relationships are human relations in society and human relationships with God as the creator of humans and other realms outside the human realm.

Third, the journal written by Samingin (2007) with the title *Perilaku Verbal dan Non-verbal pada Upacara Kematian dalam Tradisi Jawa, Kajian Ethnolinguistik*. The research focuses on the form of the death ceremony, the symbolic meaning of each ubarampe used in the death ceremony, as well as the Javanese way of life and mindset related to death. The death ritual carried out by the Javanese Islamic community is actually a Javanese custom before the entry of Islam. This tradition then undergoes a process of cultural acculturation between Islam and Java, so it appears this tradition is a unique tradition of Javanese Islam that exists in Indonesia and is not owned by people in other countries. The synergy between Islamic and Javanese cultures has actually formed a new culture that has certain meanings and goals, including getting mercy from God, getting protection, etc.

Fourth, a research journal is written by Abdul Karim (2017) entitled *Makna Ritual Kematian dalam Tradisi Islam Jawa*. This research focuses on the meaning contained in the ritual of death of the Javanese Islamic community in the village of Bakalan, Kalimantan, Jepara. The death ritual carried out by the Javanese Islamic community is a Javanese custom before the entry of Islam. This tradition then undergoes a process of cultural acculturation between Islam and Java, so it appears this tradition is a unique tradition of Javanese Islam that exists in Indonesia and is not owned by people in other countries. The synergy between Islamic and Javanese cultures turned out to form a new culture that had certain meanings and goals.

Fifth, research journals written by F.X. Sawardi (2007) *Ungkapan-ungkapan Kematian Masyarakat Cina yang Tertulis di Rumah Duka (Sebuah Tinjauan Etnolinguistik)*. This research focuses on the form of language and writing in the expression of death at the Thiong Ting funeral home using Chinese writing and Chinese, which is expressed in quotations of Bible verses using Indonesian. Expressions that use Chinese and Chinese writing are general expressions of farewell and post-death wishes. Some of these expressions are the same as those of the Catholic tradition. Meanwhile, according to people's views, these expressions are religious views of life, especially Christianity/Catholicism.

From the description above (previous and related research), the researcher can conclude that the researcher's research on the cultural meaning of the Nyalase tradition in the community's view is still maintained today and is inherent in the community as a form of belief even though they do not understand what the meaning behind the tradition is.

### **3. Methodology**

This research was conducted in the Madura area, Aeng Tong-tong village, Saronggi District, Sumenep Regency, on July 31, 2019, to describe the cultural meaning and views of the community regarding the Nyalasé tradition. Therefore, this type of research is descriptive qualitative using an ethnolinguistic approach.

The data in this study are in the form of words, phrases, discourses and symbols or objects that exist in the Nyalasé tradition. Furthermore, the primary data sources came from 3 informants, namely Ust. Jibrawi as the Koran teacher, Mr. Kiyai Kandar as the caretaker of the cottage, and Nyai Kene as the advice, while the secondary data sources were pictures, books and written documents related to this research.

In collecting data from primary sources, the author uses two methods, namely the listening method and the speaking method. The listening method is carried out with basic techniques, namely tapping techniques and advanced techniques in the form of listening and speaking techniques. Furthermore, the proficient method or what is called the interview, is carried out with the basic technique of fishing because the researcher has to use an inducement by using several lists of questions to obtain the desired data. Furthermore, this technique is also juxtaposed with advanced techniques in the form of face-to-face conversation techniques because the authors conduct interviews or conversations directly, orally, and face to face with informants. The interviews conducted in this study were in-depth interviews. Furthermore, to collect data from secondary sources, the author also uses the listening method with the basic tapping technique and advanced techniques in the form of free listening and speaking techniques and note-taking techniques.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

After conducting interviews with three informants, the people of Aeng tong-tong, Saronggi, Sumenep have a tradition of Nyasé in the tradition of death. This tradition is a tradition of sowing flowers on graves carried out by children and grandchildren or relatives. The sowing of the flowers is done while praying, in which the prayer is devoted to the souls of the deceased in the hope that they will be forgiven for all their actions and avoid the torment of the grave and be elevated by Allah SWT. Nyalasé is a Madurese word in an online dictionary that means to visit the grave (Syaiful Rahman, 2018). The pilgrimage is usually carried out every Friday night

or on Eid days. According to Taufik in Sibtu Asnawi (2018: 1), pilgrimage is an activity to visit or visit a place where a deceased person is buried.

From the opinion on the side, it can be said that Nyalasé is a tradition of visiting the graves of people who have died as a form of remembering the good that has been done in their time by praying with the aim of being able to forgive all their sins. The tradition is carried out as a form of self-encouragement to keep in mind the two parents who have preceded them or as a form of devotion of a child to his parents.

The Nyalasé tradition has a cultural meaning in which the meaning is in the form of verbal and non-verbal expressions or expressions in the context of the local wisdom of the community related to the knowledge system, which is reflected in the people's mindset or way of life. The verbal and non-verbal expressions contained in the tradition are:

Table 1. Verbal and Nonverbal Expressions and Cultural Meanings and People's Views

No	Verbal Expression	Cultural Meaning	Cultural Meaning	Belief of Society
1.	<i>Assalamualaikum ya ahlil kubur</i> (May peace be upon you, O inhabitants of the graves)	Spoken when passing or attending a funeral.	Pray	It is a good ethic for humans who are still alive to just say excuse me when passing through people's homes and visiting people's homes by praying for the safety of both themselves and others.
2.	Yasin tahlil	Reading while sitting next to the grave facing west with the position behind the corpse.	Pray for the deceased	Hoping that his sins will be forgiven.
3.		<i>Gembhang</i> (flower)	Sunnah to be perfumed	To remember the kindness of the deceased
4.		<i>Aeng</i> (water)	holy	Purity and cleanliness

From the table above, it can be seen that the verbal and nonverbal expressions found in the Nyalase tradition have two forms of verbal expression, namely *Assalamualaikum ya experts of the grave* (May peace be upon you, O inhabitants of the grave) and *Yasin tahlil*. Meanwhile, there are four nonverbal expressions in the flaming tradition, namely in the form of actions and objects. The nonverbal expressions are in the form of actions, namely greeting greetings to the inhabitants of the grave, reading Yasin's letter while sitting next to the grave. While nonverbal expressions are objects, namely *gembhang* (flowers) and *aeng* (water).

1. *Assalamualaikum ya ahlil kubur* (May peace be upon you, O inhabitants of the grave)

The expression above is a verbal form spoken by someone who comes on a pilgrimage to the grave. The pronunciation is usually done when they pass a grave and visit (pilgrimage). The greeting is a greeting that is devoted to the spirits of the dead to greet them with words of kindness which implies a hope full of salvation given to the inhabitants of the grave by the Almighty Creator.

In passing a grave, the people's habit of greeting with the above words can be interpreted as a form of prayer in which the prayer is dedicated to the spirits in the hope that safety will not be disturbed on the way. This meaning is a form of human respect for people who have died to maintain good relations with the spirits so that if good relations are maintained, goodness will also accompany us. This can reflect an activity and community activity in the world that still holds fast to a sense of brotherhood and harmony and etiquette to just say excuse me when passing someone's house.

In addition, the above words are also spoken by someone when visiting the tomb to pray for the souls of those who have died. This is done with the aim that people who have died can be forgiven of all their sins. Furthermore, the activity of visiting the grave is also a form of respect for a child and grandchildren to honor and respect their parents.

Therefore, the above speech is a form of kindness that is guarded by generations of ancestors to maintain good relations with the spirits. It is also a form of respect for the ancestors who have preceded us and glorifying them for what they have given their children and grandchildren while they are still alive so that the reciprocal relationship through a prayer continues to flow in the hope that they can be accepted by the side of the Almighty.

2. Yasin Tahlil

Yasin tahlil is a form of verbal expression which is done by reading the letter Yasin and reading tahlil in the form of the sentence *laa ilaaha illallah* 100 times. The reading of yasin and tahlil is usually devoted to the spirits of the dead. Yasin tahlil readings are performed by children and grandchildren of people who have died in a cemetery with the aim of praying for the deceased so that their sins are forgiven, and their graves are made wide and freed from the torments of hell.

The person who recites the yasin and tahlil is on the east side of the tomb facing west. It shows that people come to the tomb to pray for the dead. In terms of mindset and view of human life, reciting Yasin tahlil for those who have died is a form of repaying children for their parents to pray for them. Because there is no treasure that will free both parents from the torment of the grave except the continuous prayer that is offered by their children and grandchildren, this is also a teaching and education that must be taught to the next generation so that they remember their dead parents by praying for them because prayer is the only good thing for people who have died as a form of help when facing the Almighty.

3. Gembhang ( flower )

The language expression above is a form of nonverbal language expression found in the pamaté tradition, especially in the funeral procession. Gembhang 'flower' is an object that emits a fragrant smell. It is usually sprinkled or placed on graves. Giving flowers on graves is a form of respect for people who have died for their services and kindness while still alive. Flowers are likened to a symbol of fragrance, in the sense that the person who died leaves a name with his character and goodness that deserves to be remembered by those who are still alive. Therefore, the giving of flowers or the sowing of flowers on graves is still carried out today with this purpose.

*Gembhang* is a lingual unit of the word meaning flower. It is a noun form in the form of objects. Flowers are one of the things that can spread a fragrance. In terms of people's thoughts and views about flowers sown on graves, it reflects a form of a picture of life for humans. In the sense that humans will remember death, as the concept of human life "comes from Him and to Him will return". It encourages people to be reminded of death.

On the other hand, sowing flowers is the meaning of the term *nyekar* in Javanese the word *nyekar* comes from the name *flower sekar*, which means flower in Indonesian. Because philosophically, *nyekar* means sowing flowers, which is a "ritual" that is never left behind from a series of pilgrimage processions, apart from praying, of course. In the next stage, there is a shift in meaning where *nyekar* can also be interpreted as a pilgrimage, which Madurese language is also called *Nyalase*, which means a pilgrimage to the grave with flowers to be sprinkled on the graves of people who have died.

In addition, sowing flowers gives meaning to remembering the kindness of the deceased. Because when the person who died is gone, they leave nothing but his good name, which will be remembered by the general public and be used as inspiration in his life. Therefore, the tradition of sowing flowers is a form of local wisdom that gives a message to those left behind to remember death. Thus, the tradition of sowing flowers becomes a separate identity in society in carrying out grave pilgrimages with the aim that the special prayers of the deceased are delivered quickly and honoring those who have died so that they are treated properly to maintain their relationship with their ancestors. In addition, the sowing of flowers gives a message to remember the services and kindness of the deceased so that they are remembered by the general public.

#### 4. Aeng ( Water )

Lexically, aeng means 'water'. Grammatically, the word above is a noun form in the form of a liquid. Culturally, white water, which is also a complement to the flaminga tradition, means reviving the plants on the graves because the plants above the graves will always pray for those who have died so that all their sins will be forgiven. As Ust. Jibrawi, in his interview (07 June 2017), said that '*kajuan se badha e tas koburan aroah adhu'aghi ka orenge se mate* (plants on the grave praying for the dead)'. Thus, white water becomes an important thing in the process of life, becomes a strength for creatures, and can reflect the meaning of clean and holy. This means that the process of spraying prayer from a living plant is able to cleanse, erase or free the deceased from their sins.

The mindset and views of the community about water also reflect human life in their world. White water is symbolized by purity and cleanliness for human life in the world; it is manifested in its wisdom to cleanse the entire body of dirt that sticks and symbolizes that humans must be in a holy state to face the creator. Therefore, water is the main thing in human life with the environment, the creator, and oneself.

#### 5. Conclusion

From the analysis above, it can be concluded that in the Nyalase tradition, there are two verbal expressions and two non-verbal expressions. These expressions have cultural meaning through the view of society. Verbal expressions are Assalamualaikum ya expert of the grave (May peace be upon you, O inhabitants of the grave) and reading yasin tahlil. These two verbal expressions are speeches or forms of the speech made by living people with the aim of praying for the dead to be saved from all their dealings with the Creator. Meanwhile, nonverbal expressions consist of gembhang (flower), which means to remember the kindness of someone who has died, and aeng (water), which symbolizes purity and cleanliness as well as strength for creatures with its white, clear, and lively nature.

The meaning of the Nyalase tradition can provide encouragement for living humans or the next generation to always remember death and be able to remember and glorify their parents who have died by praying for them. In addition, this is local wisdom that should be taught to their children and grandchildren so that in the future, they will continue to pray for their parents even though they are dead as a form of devotion.

Research on verbal and nonverbal expressions that are reflected in the Nyalase-in-death tradition is still very limited, only in one tradition which is revealed with cultural meanings and people's views. Research on language and culture related to death, in addition to the Nyalase tradition used, is still very potential to be used as material for further research.

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