

# The Ritual and Mythology of *Ruwatan* in Mojokerto

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## Abstrak

Artikel ini menjelaskan tentang sejarah munculnya ritual *ruwatan* di Mojokerto, tujuan, bentuk ritual dan makna *ruwatan* bagi masyarakat lokal. Dengan menggunakan metode etnologi penulis menemukan bahwa munculnya ritual *ruwatan* di Mojokerto merupakan hasil dari proses magis yang berupa mimpi. Berawal dari mimpi salah satu pemuka desa yang bermimpi bertemu dengan pendahulu desa yang memberi simbol-simbol magis untuk menyuruh masyarakat setempat melakukan ritual *ruwatan* di area makamnya. Ritual tersebut diyakini oleh masyarakat setempat sebagai *tameng* atau senjata untuk menghindarkan masyarakat dari berbagai bahaya bencana. Bentuk *ruwatan* yang dilakukan mencakup dua model yaitu membersihkan makam serta memberi *sesajen* di waktu pagi dan menyelenggarakan wayang di sore dan malam hari. Secara umum, masyarakat lokal memiliki cara pandang bahwa *ruwatan* tersebut selain untuk menyelamatkan mereka dari mara bahaya, juga mengingatkan mereka pada leluhur serta merupakan suatu bentuk ungkapan terima kasih mereka kepadanya. Kesimpulan artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa ritual *ruwatan* desa merupakan representasi hormat masyarakat kepada leluhur. Selain itu, tujuan diadakannya ritual ini untuk membentuk keharmonisan di dalam masyarakat, karena masyarakat yang datang dari latar belakang yang berbeda datang dan berkumpul di ritual ini.

**Kata Kunci:** Ruwatan, Mitos, Bencana.

## Introduction

Indonesia is multicultural state that has many kinds of ethnics, cultures, languages, and traditions. Especially in Java, it is one of the islands in which the culture and tradition are hold by the almost majority of rural and urban society. They always deliver their tradition and culture to the next generation orally by such kind of mythology stories. It can be seen from within their daily religious practices such like the *Ruwatan Desa* ritual.

*Ruwatan Desa* ritual is one kind of *slametan* which lived long time ago in Javanese culture. It is considered as special *slametan*. There are some scholars who have already discussed about it, such us Clifford Geertz, Andrew Betty, Mark Woodward and Andre Moller. As already mentioned by Clifford Geertz; and it is criticized by Mark Wood Ward and Andrew Beatty; in some cases, Andrew Moller also take part to criticize Mark Woodward on the concept of *slametan*. So, this topic is still being debated and taking a significant place in the discourse of contemporary scholar on Javanese tradition.

Generally, they explain *slametan* in broader thing. This article will focus to investigate the religious practice specifically that regularly held in Mojokerto, East Java, Indonesia. That is *Ruwatan Desa* ritual. It is more specific *slametan*. As I mentioned above, actually *Ruwatan* is one of specific kind of *slametan*, which is the ritual still be influenced by some religions or cultures. It can be seen as a 'hybrid tradition' of Hinduism, Islam, and Javanese culture. The evidence to show on the influence of Hinduism can be linked through *Sudamala* book. It tells a lot of story of how can *Sadewa* be successfully doing *meruwat Batara Durga*.<sup>1</sup> So, this story shows that Majapahit Kingdom has practiced the *ruwatan*, and this ritual is from Hinduism. On the other side, the signal of the hybrid tradition of Islam comes from Mark Woodward argument on *slametan*. He argues that the *slametan*, a ritual meal at which Arabic prayers are recited and food is offered to the Prophet Muhammad, saints, and ancestors, who

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<sup>1</sup> Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Risalah Sejarah dan Budaya* (Yogyakarta: Balai Penelitian Sejarah dan Budaya, 1981), 17.

are appealed to shower blessings on the community.<sup>2</sup> Those are the emerging that happened in this ritual.

From that emerging, the most known identity for Javanese people is maintaining their tradition. They do not only keep their traditions, but keep their eternal relation with the ancestor in this modern life. This is interesting to see. In this modern life, they still maintain their tradition and culture. This paper aim is to examine the aspect of *Ruwatan Desa* ritual including the structure or form, meaning, and function of *Ruwatan Desa* ritual. This ritual is kind of rejecting the disasters that will come to the village. Generally, the purpose of this ritual is to keep the village from *Batara Kala* who will eat people or village that get *Sukerta*. This ritual is held by some villagers in Mojokerto once a year; in *Ruwah* month (Java: *Syakban*, Arabic: *Sya'ban*).<sup>3</sup> This *slametan* is reaction of community for avoiding the disasters from God as their belief.

The background above mentioned leads this research to discuss more on: 1) the process of *ruwatan Desa* ritual in Mojokerto; 2) the purpose of *Ruwatan Desa* ritual in Mojokerto; and 3) the meaning of the symbol in *Ruwatan Desa* in Mojokerto. To conduct this research, I will explore by using field research of ethnography, participant observation and collecting data through unstructured and semi-structured interview. I am an inhabitant; I can be considered as participant observation. And I conduct semi-structured interview to members of religious leaders; I also use unstructured interview to the followers of *Ruwatan Desa* ritual. Data analysis is the process of examining and selecting the data into patterns, categories, and descriptions in order to discover particular themes. The data analysis covers taxonomic analysis, reduction and the

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam* (New York: Springer, 2011), 113.

<sup>3</sup> The Javanese name of *Ruwah* derives its name from the Arabic word for soul, *ruh* (plural: *arwah*). As will become evident below, there is a strongly felt connection with the souls of the deceased during this month in Jawa. Andre Moller, *Ramadhan in Java: The Joy and Jihad of Ritual Fasting* (Sweden: Lund University, 2007), 256.

interpretation.<sup>4</sup> The interpretation and conclusion give comprehensive understanding of the subject under discussion.

### **The Concept of *Slametan***

*Ruwatan Desa* ritual is considered as special *slametan*. We know that *slametan* is already debated by some scholars such as Clifford Geertz, Andrew Betty, Mark Woodward and Andre Moller. Clifford Geertz researches *slametan* in Pare, for him, He identifies the *slametan* as: (1) the “core ritual” of Javanese culture; (2) an animistic rite the purpose of which to reinforce social solidarity and (3) as being primarily a village ritual.<sup>5</sup> In other hand, Mark Woodward researches Javanese Muslim in Yogyakarta. For him, *slametan* is a locally defined Muslim rite and that: (1) the criteria Geertz employs to distinguish Islam from animism are misleading; (2) the *slametan* is an example of a ritual complex that links blessing (*barakah*) and food and extends from Arabia to Southeast Asia; (3) that it is not primarily a village ritual; (4) that its religious and social goals are defined in terms of Islamic mystical teachings; (5) most of the modes of ritual action it employs are rooted in universalist texts including the *Qur'an* and Hadith; and (6) that elements of the *slametan* derived from pre-Islamic traditions are interpreted in Islamic terms.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, both two-anthropologist scholars, Andrew Betty conduct his research about Islam in Banyuwangi. He argues that the *slametan* is a communal affair, but it defines no distinct community; it proceeds via a lengthy verbal exegesis, to which all express their assent, but participants privately disagree about its meaning; and, while purporting to embody a shared perspective on mankind, God, and the world, it represents nobody's views in particular. Instead of consensus and symbolic concordance we find compromise and provisional

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<sup>4</sup> Kaelan, *Metode Penelitian Agama Kualitatif Interdisipliner* (Yogyakarta: Paradigma, 2010), 160-163.

<sup>5</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, (Glencoe Ill.: The Free Press, 1960), 10-15.

<sup>6</sup> Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*, 113.

synthesis: a temporary truce among people of radically different orientation.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, Andrew Moller who conducts his research in Blora Central Java explains about *bancakan* which is considered as *slametan*. He argues that *bancakan* is heavily influenced by Islam, and animist or Hindu-Buddhist features are totally lacking. Nevertheless, contrary to Woodward, He (as Beatty) has never heard any Javanese explicitly state that the *slametan* is an Islamic ritual. In an example, he mentions some arguments from Islamic side that *bancakan* is not pure an Islamic ritual. Everyone has stressed that the *slametan* is a Javanese ritual, but has suggest that it should be animist, Hindu-Buddhist, or none Islamic in any other way.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Mythology of *Batara Kala***<sup>9</sup>

Now let us skip to the end of *slametan* concept by some scholars. The story behind *ruwatan* is from *Batara Kala*'s birth. Here is the story of it. One upon time, in a sunny day, *Batara Guru* is the king deities. He walked with his beautiful wife by the bull that was called "lembu Andini". His wife was *Dewi Uma*. In the top of ocean when the sunset, *Uma* looked at a very beautiful woman. Then *Batara Guru* saw his beautiful wife. Suddenly, he was interested to his wife. He asked making love with her. *Dewi Uma* tried to refuse it, it was failed. She thinks that it was unusual and unappreciated time, because they have been driving a bull "lembu Andini". She hoped that *Batara Guru* felt shy because he was a king of deities.

All of her reason was not accepted by *Batara Guru*. He still wanted to do it. When his sperm (Java: Kama) go out, *Dewi Uma* avoided it. And the Kama fall into the ocean. That sperm become a wrong sperm that actually it falls to *Dewi Uma*, but it falls into ocean. Because of that

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew Betty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion: An Anthropological Account* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 25.

<sup>8</sup> Andre Moller, *Ramadhan in Java*, 279.

<sup>9</sup> Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Risalah Sejarah dan Budaya*, 4-6.

incident, the ocean was boiling up. There was a thundering sound from that ocean.

They came back to the *Suralaya*.<sup>10</sup> And *Batara Guru* was still angry with *Dewi Uma*. He whipped *Dewi Uma*. Then *Dewi Uma* cried loudly all day. *Batara Guru* said, “You are like a giantess”. Directly she became giantess, because what the *Batara Guru* said, it will become what he said. And she was called *Batara Durga*. Then *Batara Durga* leaved *Suralaya* and stayed in the forest which was called Pasentran Gondomayit. *Batara Durga* became king of evils there.

In other side, *Batara Guru* realized that because of his act. The ocean the ocean was boiling up. There was a thundering sound from that ocean. He asked *Batara Narada* to handle it. But he cannot do it. Suddenly, there was a horrible giant. And *Batara Narada* said that his father was *Batara Guru*. The *Batara Guru* admitted him as his son. So he gave a name for him. He was called *Batara Kala*. Then *Batara Guru* cut *Batara Kala*'s tongue with his weapon. After that, *Batara Kala* apologized to *Batara Guru*. *Batara Guru* gave forgiveness for him and made a certain food for him or *sukerta*.

### **The Category of *Sukerta***

Regarding what kind of *Sukerta*, there are several versions. According to Pakem *Pangrawatan* Murwakala, there are sixty kinds of *sukerta*; for Pustaka Raja Purwa, there are 136 *sukerta*; there are twenty-two for Sarasilah *Wayang* Purwa; while according to Murwokolo book, there are 147 kinds of *Sukerta*.<sup>11</sup>

There are three kinds of *Sukerta*; *Sukerta* according to birth, *Sukerta* because of mistake act, and *Sukerta* because of calamity. Here I will mention those kinds of *Sukerta*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Suralaya* is the palace of deities.

<sup>11</sup> Negoro, Suryo S, “Ruwatan”, in <http://jagadkejawen.com/>, accessed May 17, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

*Sukerta* according to birth has 23 natures, they are: 1) *Ontang anting*: the single son; 2) *Unting-unting*: the single daughter; 3) *Gebana-gedhini*: one son and one daughter of sibling; 4) *Uger-uger lawang*: two sons of sibling; 5) *Kembar sepaang*: two daughters of sibling; 6) *Pendhawa*: five sons of sibling; 7) *Pandhawa pancala putri*: five daughters of sibling; 8) *Kembar*: son and daughter of twin; 9) *Gotong mayit*: three daughters; 10) *Cukil dulit*: three sons; 11) *Serimpi*: four daughters; 12) *Sarambah*: four sons; 13) *Sendang kapit pancuran*: there siblings, two sons but the daughter is in the middle; 14) *Pancuran kapit sendang*: there siblings, two daughters but the son is in the middle; 15) *Sumala*: the physical defect from birth; 16) *Wungle*: the blue child; 17) *Margana*: the child born when the mother was traveling; 18) *Wabana*: the child born when the mother was in party; 19) *Wuyungan*: the child born in war or disaster; 20) *Julung sungsang*: the child born in the middle of the night; 21) *Julung sarab*: the child born in sunset; 22) *Julung caplok*: the child born in twilight; 23) *Julung kembang*: the child born in dawn. And *sukerta* because of mistake act (Java: ora ilok) has only 3 meanings, they are: 1) People who whistle at midnight; 2) People who destroy the *Gandhik*<sup>13</sup>; 3) People who drop the *Dbandang*.<sup>14</sup> And the last, *sukerta* because of calamity, that is the people who are unlucky in their life. They always get the *aib* in their life. It is considered as people who get calamity in their life because of *Batara Kala*. Yet, the village that always get disasters or diseases. It must hold *Rumatan Desa*.

### Escaping from *Batara Kala*

There are many people who always get unlucky in their life. In doing their job, they always get a wrong way or their efforts are failed. In other case, the village gets many calamities or disasters (catastrophic). Moreover, maybe there are many diseases in that village. Generally speaking, that people or village is categorized as *sukerta*.<sup>15</sup> So the way to escape from *sukerta* as the food of *Batara Kala* is by doing *rumatan* ritual. They must be cleaned (*dirumai*). Hopefully they do not become the food

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<sup>13</sup> The stone is used to make traditional medicine.

<sup>14</sup> The tool is used to cook the rice.

<sup>15</sup> The mistaken thing (in Java: *aib/kelesa*).

of *Batara Kala*. And they can be free from the calamities and disasters that come from *Batara Kala*.

Kala means time. The time that can threaten and give catastrophic is bad time. Bad time is from *Batara Kala*. In most common fact, most of the people hope that their whole of the time will give fortune for them. So, they can live safe (java: *selamat*), healthy, harmony, success in their life, and getting blessing from God.

The *Ruwatan Desa* ritual is a best way to escape from that problem or *sukerta* and can give safe for the village. It is an inheritance from the ancestors. This ritual cannot be separated from offering (java: *sesajen*) and *wayang kulit* (English: Puppet or shadow play theatre).<sup>16</sup> The offering consists of special elements and the story of puppet is telling about Murwakala. If the *Ruwatan Desa* ritual does not require the offering and performing the puppet, it will give a small disaster. For instance, there are winds or some disasters that make people to be passed away.<sup>17</sup> But according to Stephen, Nowadays *Wayang Kuling* (shadow play theatre) does much to preserve the pertinence of myth during specific ritual occasions, but at the same time *wayang* has slowly moved toward secularized entertainment.<sup>18</sup> Yet, in addition, one of important thing is offering. The elements of offering on *Ruwatan Desa* ritual are egg, the white and red rice, cooking spices,<sup>19</sup> coin, incense, and seven kinds of flowers.

### **Ritual of *Ruwatan Desa* in Mojokerto**

Now let us return to the lives of Mojokerto people in the month of ruwah. As discussed above, the essence of the practicing *Ruwatan Desa* is *slametan*. The primary goal of *Ruwatan Desa* ritual is to get safe from *Batara Kala* who will eat *sukerta* by giving some disaster to the village.

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<sup>16</sup> Lembaga Javanologi, *Ruwatan Murwakala* (Yogyakarta: Duta wacana, 1996), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Sariman, *Interview*, 7 July 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen C. Headley, *Durga's Mosque: Cosmology, Conversion and Community in Central Javanese Islam* (Pasir Panjang Singapore: ISEAS Publication, 2004), 116.

<sup>19</sup> Cooking spices consist of ginger, turmeric, galingale, *keluak*, *kencur*, and so on.



Below are the explanations on the history behind the practice of *Ruwatan Desa*, the purpose, the form, and the meaning of *Ruwatan Desa* according to the local society of Mojokerto.

### 1. The History of *Ruwatan Desa* Ritual

*Ruwatan Desa* ritual in Mojokerto East Java is one of the rituals that have inherited from Majapahit kingdom. This ritual is transmitted orally to next generation by the story or myth from *sesepuh*.<sup>20</sup> As I mentioned above, there is a story about *ngruwat* in Majapahit era. It already shows that it is influenced by Hindu-Buddhism. People believe it and always do that ritual every year in *Ruwah* month. They believe by doing this *Ruwatan Desa* ritual, they will be safe from *Batara Kala*. One of the elders tells that it happens many calamities and disasters in this month, for instance; landslide, the trees fall down, and there are many people who are died continually. Many years ago, one of the elders dreamed that was come by *Mbah Sentono* -the person who clearing new land in forest (*mbabat deso*) that his grave is under a big tree of *Beringin*-. He asked to the elder to hold *Ruwatan Desa* ritual for escaping from *balak/aib/sukerta*. So, one of the village that I have researched is holding this ritual at *punden* of *Mbah Sentono*.<sup>21</sup>

The characteristic of *Mbah Sentono* is black skin (Java: *cemani*), tall, bring setigi stick, and unmarried. He is a supernatural being, and always struggle the village with his power.<sup>22</sup> This brief extract of Javanese oral literature grows orally to the next generation until nowadays. It is embodied for most of people in Mojokerto. In the one hand, people believe that the sacred grave of *Mbah Sentono* has a supernatural being. It is located in under the tree of *Beringin* that has grown hundred years ago. That tree produces flowers. Many people often come to the grave and wait the fall flowers. Those flowers are message from *Mbah Sentono*. Then in the middle of night they will come back again to the sacred grave and ask what they want.

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<sup>20</sup> *Sesepuh* is the elder of village.

<sup>21</sup> Paiman, *Interview*, 12 November 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Sariman, *Interview*, 17 July 2011.

One of the elder said:

“The proof, I often go to grave (*punden*) because I have some asking, I ask number of *togel*. Then, there is a flower fall. In the middle night, I come back to the grave, finally I find the bekicot, I belief it is a message from mbah Sentono. the bekicot<sup>23</sup> is symbol of number two. I follow togel<sup>24</sup> and I get much money”.<sup>25</sup>

That is the historical story and cause of holding *Ruwatan Desa* in Mojokerto. They still maintain their belief and this is a media of creating harmony. For Stephen Headley, In Java there is a fluid structure above the household; religious life is dependent on community life. For this level of the *slametan*, the likeness (*pada-pada*) of neighbor united by rituals, where physical proximity determines association, provides a temporary synthesis of diverse religious traditions by creating community and harmony (java: *rukun*).<sup>26</sup>

### **The Purpose of *Ruwatan Desa* Ritual**

The goal of this *Ruwatan Desa* ritual is praying to the God by doing worshiped the ancestor as the mediator, because our praying will be easy to be accepted by worshipping to our ancestor who has supernatural power that can keep from *Batara Kala*. For Koentjaraningrat, the ritual or site is the adaptation of people who live in world with respecting their ancestors.<sup>27</sup> So, this ritual is representing their respect to the ancestors. On the one hand, there is also the additional goal of holding this ritual that is creating harmony.

There are several points about the purposes or goal of *Ruwatan Desa* ritual. The primary goal of this *ruwatan* is ‘cleaning’ the village. Hopefully, the people will be saved from catastrophes (*malapetaka/ klesa/ sukerta*) that can distract their sustainability of life, whether it is in

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<sup>23</sup> The animal that is similar to the escargot.

<sup>24</sup> *Togel* is kind of gambling.

<sup>25</sup> Jaiz, *Interview*, 7 November 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Stephen C. Headley, *Durga’s Mosque*, 62.

<sup>27</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan Jawa* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1994), 375.

economy, social relation, or in the private family and health. They saw that this is the alternative and the only one way to preserve their life from those terrible lives in the future. On the other hand, the identity of agriculture Javanese village is thanksgiving (java: *wujud syukur*) for their harvest. This ritual is held as a sign of thanksgiving (java: *wujud syukur*). In a year, they can get their harvest. This is kind of the agriculture Javanese expression for abundance.

Yet, this ritual creates the harmony in the village. As we discussed above, the *ruwatan desa* ritual is kind of pattern of cultural compromise. For Beatty, *slametan* seems appropriate to begin a study of religious diversity with an event which both expresses and contains cultural difference: to begin with a sense of the whole, however insubstantial this may prove to be. In observing the various elements of Javanese tradition in combination, we can form a better idea of their individual shapes and their influences upon each other. The *slametan* is, moreover, the pattern of cultural compromise: the attitudes and rhetorical styles it exemplifies are, in varying degrees, carried over into the different spheres of religious life.<sup>28</sup> In this case, *ruwatan desa* ritual is kind of living in diversity. People from different background – ethnics, traditions, religions, and organizations- come and help each other for preparing the ritual. One of the elder says the aim of this *ruwatan* is to maintain the brotherhood and peace.<sup>29</sup> In addition Sunyoto argues that this *ruwatan desa* ritual is for raise a harmony.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Form of *Ruwatan Desa* Ritual**

Now, let us return again in the process of *Ruwatan Desa* ritual in Mojokerto. People hold *ruwatan* every year in *ruwah* month. *Ruwah* month is a specific time, this already shows the sacred time, because in *ruwah* month people belief that will be happened some great disaster so they hold *ruwatan* in *ruwah* month. At 6 o'clock man people come to *punden* (grave's *mbah Sentono*)—as the sacred place that people belief—to help

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<sup>28</sup> Andrew Betty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion*, 25-26.

<sup>29</sup> Sahal, *Interview*, 17 July 2011.

<sup>30</sup> Sunyoto, *Interview*, 17 July 2011.

*ruwatan* enthusiastically. They clean the grave, bring offering, and bring some incense to put in grave, this is as the ritualistic practice. Because the grave is sacred place, it has regulation and taboo where people do not allow what they want. Children do not allow what people do. They just see and wait the *ruwatan desa ritual* without doing anything without being allowed to do anything. For Beatty, it is practice of social harmony. People clean grave together, eat together, help each other, share together. Those already show practice of communal affair that create a harmony according to Beatty. At 7 o'clock all people including child, young, old, women, and man come together in *punden* and bring some foods, fruits, *tumpeng*, and *berkat*.<sup>31</sup> After that the *ruwatan* is held, leader pray *do'a*.

There are two languages of *do'a* on this ritual. Those are Javanese and Arabic languages. The *do'a* is:

“In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful. In the name of Allah, we give the offering to the Allah, it is all from Allah and His prophet, there is no god, except Allah and His prophet Muhammad SAW. People here, I ask some *do'a*. I represent mbah Sentono as the owner of this *hajatan* and all the family of Segunung village, as one family from male or female, saying happy *ruwatan* (for village), our father and mother who get clothes and feed, healthy. In this *ruwatan* month, we provide respect for the ancestors. We hope Allah will give much blessing to the Segunung village and the other village. We hope Allah will give the safety, far away from disasters, closer with the blessing, we hope Allah will give safety inside and outside of village. I think enough, I pray safety *do'a*. *Robbanaa aatina fiddunya khabasanah wafil akhiroti khabasanah wakina adaa banner*”.<sup>32</sup>

Then people eat together in the grave, more practices and rituals are done by people in the sacred place.

The next ritual is puppet (*wayang kulit*). The puppet is held twice a day in the afternoon and in the night. They hope they can save from *sukerta* (great disaster) and from *Batara kala* that can disturb the village.

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<sup>31</sup> *Berkat* consist of cooked rice, vegetables, and egg or fish, similar with *tumpeng*.

<sup>32</sup> Betty, *Interview*, 12 November 2011.

On the other hand, some people said that this ritual is representing as asking to the God. For Woodward, the *slametan* is an example of a ritual complex that links blessing (*barakah*), because last time, my village didn't hold *ruwatan*, so there are many disasters. For example, landslide, the trees are fall down and kills someone, the death is everyday continued.<sup>33</sup> It shows that, if village doesn't hold *ruwatan*, it will be implicated for social disharmony. As we know if there is disaster in some place. People just want save for their selves, and don't care about the other. Moreover, disaster usually can make conflict between people and other and implicate disharmony in the village. So that's why, people in my village always do *ruwatan* desa every year in *rumah* month.

### **The Meaning of *Ruwatan Desa* Ritual**

The important elements of this ritual are offering and puppet. Both of them have the implicit meaning. People have interpretation of what they do. If we refer to Geertz's theory of symbol. In this case, the culture concept to which I adhere has neither multiple referents nor, so far as I can see any unusual ambiguity: it denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes forward life.<sup>34</sup> So, the meaning of offering and the story of puppet are kind of message that embodied in symbols.

In addition, Budiono argues that *slametan* for death, traditional dancing, and puppet (*wayang*) are the remainder of Javanese and animist actions. Another religious symbolic action is giving offering to Sing Mbaureksa, Mbahe or Danyang (the spirit) that live in *Beringin* tree, old big tree, sendang-sendang (spring that is like river), belik (spring), the sacred grave, or another sacred place.<sup>35</sup> People in Mojokerto do the same

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<sup>33</sup> Paiman, *Interview*, 12 November 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Book, 1973), 89.

<sup>35</sup> Budiono Herusatoto, *Simbolisme Dalam Budaya Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Hanindita Graha Widya, 2005), 90.

thing. They bring offering for sing *Mbaurekso*, hopefully the spirit will give safe and transmitter to the God.

Offering (*sesajen*) is the important element in this *Ruwatan Desa* ritual. The offering is conditional for success of *Ruwatan Desa* ritual. If the offering is not agreed with the ancestor, the process of ritual will be unsuccessful. According to an elder, there are two kinds of offering in this ritual in Mojokerto. Those are offering for sacred grave of *Mbah Sentono* and the offering for the puppet (*wayang kulit*) that is done by *Dalang*. The offering consists of seven kinds of flowers, egg, yellow rice, coconut cooked rice (*nasi gurih*), coin, fermentation of cassava (*tape*) and the cooking spices (*bumbu pepak*) that is wrapped in a piece of banana leaf.<sup>36</sup> Let us refers to Beatty, Incense is referred to in the invocation as holy rice (*sekul suci*). It is what the ancestors and spirits eat along with the smells of the offerings and food, the essence (*sari*) of the feast.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, *Wak Sariman* explains that other elements are *kemenyan/dupa* (incense), *Kendi*, *Tumpeng* or *berkat*, fruits, and *keris*. *Kemenyan* is for respecting to the ancestors. People believe that the smoke of *kemenyan* can bring our dua to the sky to our God. And the aroma of incense is good. So the essence of arome is to bring up our ancestor. In this case, the smelling is to bring up *Mbah Sentono* then is delivered to the God. *Kendi* is water place that is made from soil and given some flowers. It is put on *maesan* (grave stone) of *Mbah Sentono*. The essence of this symbol is remembering that people is made from soil and water. Other element is *tumpeng* or *berkat* (cone rice). *Tumpeng* consist of rice and vegetables. This *tumpeng* will be eaten together (*dipurak*) in sacred grave of *Mbah Sentono*. This *tumpeng* is symbol of our harvest. It is represented of abundance. Eating together (*purak'an*) is kind of creating togetherness and harmony in that village. Fruit also is representing of harvest and result. *Mbah Sariman* gives addition that if we work hard; we hope that we will get the result (*oleh buahe*). The last element is *Keris*. *Keris* has supernatural power. It is a component for *Ki dalang* for handling the puppet, because it is symbol of bravery.

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<sup>36</sup> Sariman, *Intervien*, 17 July 2011

<sup>37</sup> Betty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion*, 36.

## Conclusion

*Ruwatan Desa* ritual is kind of *Slametan* in Mojokerto East Java. It is transmitted orally to the next generation by delivering of myth. It is influenced by Javanese religion, Hinduism-Buddhism, and Islam. It mixes together in this ritual. *Ruwatan Desa* ritual is kind of cleaning the village from *Batara Kala* who will eat *Sukerta*. It is held in the sacred grave (*punden*) of *Mbah Sentono* in Ruwah month. Beside of cleaning the village, there is effect for doing the ritual. It can create the harmony of people.

On the one hand, there are some elements of practicing *Ruwatan Desa* ritual. Those are *sesaji* and performing of puppet (*Wayang kulit*) twice a day in the afternoon and evening. It is kind of symbol that has many meaning and interpretation, because the meaning embodied in the symbols. People belief it and always keep in in their belief.

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