

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

In the era of the globalization, people face rapid technological developments. Instant products become popular in property business even though it often ignores local wisdom. People in modern cities usually buy ready-made houses in contrast to those living in a more traditional locale who build their own houses traditionally (Lestari, 2016). The process of building ready-made houses may affect the existence of local wisdom as they tend to neglect processes and values existed in local wisdoms. Koentjaraningrat (2009) says that every phenomenon or cultural expression has been always based on: (1) some ideas, propositions, values, and norms; (2) patterns activities or actions of the people in the society; and (3) artifacts. The elements mentioned previously are those of local wisdom.

Meliono (2011) defines local wisdom as “a form of expression of the ethnic groups of Indonesia, where people do the activities and behave accordingly to the idea, and at last, their actions generate certain works.” Meliono gives example of the beautiful Borobudur and Prambanan temples. She says that the building of Borobudur and Prambanan involved the local expressions of people who build the temples, the pictures depicted in reliefs of the temples. Other example of local expression of Java rural areas is food which

contains ingredients specific to certain place and its local techniques of production. In addition, housing fit to specific climate and using local raw materials is also local expressions based on local wisdom (Padmanugraha, 2010). Local wisdoms are usually inherited from the ancestors and appropriated the condition both naturally and culturally of the people living in the area. In its long run, local wisdoms are often modified to fit the changes happened in the society. While globalization era consists of instant idea about everything: local values still keep its complexity among people's lives (Lestari, 2016). This also comes to house issues related to properties business. As long as a building is a house, whether apartment, flat, or boarding house is enough for people without knowing how it is built.

Historically, Javanese people believe in the existence of spirits and ancestral spirits that inhabit various places (Walsh, 2000). In this case, Javanese people are closely related to animism belief and dynamism belief. The word animism comes from Latin *Anima* meaning spirit. Animism is a belief in spirits. Animistic beliefs believe that everything on earth has mythical soul that should be respected so that it can help human life rather than interrupt. Dynamism is the belief that all things have energy that affects the success or failure in human's effort (Majalah Pendidikan, 2017). Javanese people think it was necessary to take a certain action to resist interference that could arise from spirit or supernatural power. They manifest their beliefs in *Slametan*, the main tradition that still exists among Javanese people. By *Slametan*, Javanese people

(*Kejawen*) obtain a straight path to God. Javanese people acknowledge *Slametan* as symbolic appeal. *Slametan* is an original manifestation of Javanese culture. *Slametan* ritual includes a communal prayer that aims to ask for the welfare of family members who hold *Slametan*, and the offering called *sesajen* (Endraswara, 2016). On the term, the researcher used *sesajen* instead of *sesaji* as *sesajen* is the formal term recognized by *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (The Handbook of Indonesian Language).

*Sesajen* is the element used in a ritual (Dewi, 2018). In Javanese culture, *sesajen* is the important elements of a ritual although the specifications of *sesajen* are not always the same, depending on the event held. Basically, *Slametan* is a ritual of food alms which are full of symbolic meanings (Endraswara, 2016). Izza (2014) writes that *sesajen* contains numerous variations of traditional food, usually traditional ones. Each traditional food has different meaning and certain function. Therefore, every ritual in Javanese culture has different *sesajen*.

It is important to bear in mind that *slametan* ceremony is performed when a new house is in the final process of completion, that is, when the rooftop is ready to install. Therefore, what the writer means by building a new house is different from what common people know.

*Sesajen*, the offering, can also be found during *Slametan* in building a new house. For the Javanese people *sesajen* submitted during the ritual of building a new house is a symbol to obtain safety and peace. Other than that,

most Javanese people believe that *sesajen* in *Slametan* is a requirement that should be met to avoid bad luck or accident. In the construction of a new house, *sesajen* is submitted before installing the roof. It has a purpose to avoid the unwanted accidents while building a house (Putri, 2015). The *sesajen* along with the prayer are done in *slametan* ritual attended by family members, neighbors, friends, and the folk elders. After the prayer, *sesajen* are placed on the top of the house. In this ritual, the host also supplies any kinds of local food to serve the participants of *slametan*.

This research is not the only research on ritual in building a house. A research on ritual in building house has been done by Sri Cahyaning Putri (2015) with the research titled *Tradisi Slametan Pendirian Rumah di Desa Nglundu Denggungan, Banyudono, Kabupaten Boyolali* (Tradition of Slametan in Building a House in Desa Nglundu Denggungan, Banyudono, Kabupaten Boyolali) and Fridah Indah Sari (2014) with the title “*Ritual Memasang Kerangka Atap Dalam Membangun Rumah Baru di Desa Damarsi Buduran Sidoarjo*” (Ritual in Constructing Roof Frames in Building a New House in Damarsi Village, Buduran Sidoarjo). Putri’s research focuses on the process of *slametan* starting from the concept of *slametan* for building a house, the attendees of the *slametan*, the process of *slametan* including the prayer used during the event, and *sesajen* used in the *slametan*. Putri’s data are based on the tradition done by people living in Desa Nglundu, Denggungan, Banyudono, Boyolali. Meanwhile, Sari’s research focuses on the ritual of installing *Kudo-*

*Kudo* in a new house. *Kudo-Kudo* means rooftop. Sari explains clearly how the ritual is held in Damarsi village. She explains that the ritual is accompanied by a prayer from Al-Quran. The prayer is led by *Kiyai*, a person who understands the content of Al-Quran. The main meaning of the prayer is essentially asking for God's protection. The researcher, Sari also explains the philosophy behind *sesajen* used in the ritual of installing *Kudo-Kudo*. Sari's data are from the ritual done in Damarsi Village, Buduran Sidoarjo.

What differs my research from the above mentioned researches is that instead of discussing the whole process of ritual in building houses, my research will focus only on the *sesajen*, the offerings, existed in *slametan* in building a house in Semarang. As stated earlier, different place may present different details, so the researcher expects that he will find differences between *sesajen* in Semarang and those in Boyolali and Sidoarjo. For this study, the researcher observed a certain family, Mr. Supangat's, who happened to hold the *slametan* ritual for building a new house. This family represents Semarang's people, the scope of the researcher's study. Moreover, by focusing on only one element of building a new house ritual, i.e. *sesajen*, the offering, the researcher hopes to get a more in depth information on *sesajen*. Other than the information on *sesajen*, the researcher would also like to find out and the meaning behind each *sesajen* in *slametan* ritual of building a new house.

## 1.2 Field of the Study

The field of the study is folklore and it focuses on *sesajen*, the offerings, in *slametan* ritual in building a new house in Semarang.

## 1.3 Scope of the Study

In this study, the researcher would like to focus on *sesajen*, the offerings used in *slametan* a new house only, starting from what *sesajen* consists of and what is the meaning behind *sesajen*. The *sesajen*, the offerings, discussed are limited to those presented by Mr. Supangat's family living in Semarang who held *slametan* ritual in building a new house.

## 1.4 Problem Formulation

Based on folklore study, this research is concerned with the following questions:

1. What are the *sesajen*, the offerings, provided in *slametan* ritual for building a new house ritual in Semarang?
2. What is the meaning behind each *sesajen* or the offerings in the *slametan*?

## 1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study can be stated as follows:

1. To find out the kinds of *sesajen*, the offering, existed in *slametan* ritual for building a new house in Semarang.

2. To figure out the meaning of each *sesajen*, the offering, used in *Slametan* ritual for building the new house in Semarang

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

The researcher is expected this study to help students understand more about *sesajen* in building a new house in Semarang and the meanings behind *sesajen* used in *slametan* for building a new house in Javanese culture. The researcher hopes the research will attract other researchers to study rituals existed in Indonesia and their elements more deeply so that the differences existed in different places can be recognized and documented.

## 1.7 Definition of Term

### 1. Sesajen

*Sesajen* is the element needed or used in Javanese tradition. *Sesajen* helps Javanese people to express their ways of asking for safety, peace, and happiness (Setyowati & Hanif, n.d.). Every *sesajen* has its own meaning.

### 2. Slametan

*Slametan* is the main tradition that still exists among Javanese people. By *Slametan*, Javanese people or *Kejawen* obtain a straight path to God. Javanese people acknowledge *Slametan* as symbolic appeal. *Slametan* is an original manifestation of Javanese culture (Endraswara, 2016).

### 3. **Ritual**

Ritual is activities that have been done repeatedly. In religious ceremonies, rituals are carried for the activities to be held. These rituals are seen to gain greater spiritual strength (Angelina & Wardani, 2014).

