

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Water is important for and inseparable from human life. It is a fact that human's body consists mainly of water. Moreover, other than consuming water for drinking, human beings also use water to as a means of cleansing. Cleansing or also called purification ritual is a form of reunification with one element of human creation's origin, namely water. Besides that, it is a form of cleansing away the "dirt" from the body. After humans feel clean and pure, then they can pray to God to ask for the success of their children, for their success in their own career, for their good health, for the success in finding a partner, and other prayers (Nuraini, Zuhri, & Ariyanto, 2011, p. 225).

Acknowledging that water is the most important source of cleansing, it is no wonder that the practitioner of *Kungkum*, a ritual done by dipping oneself in the water, believe that performing *Kungkum* ritual will wash away all kinds of dirt and bring back the purity (Nuraini et al., 2011). In addition to dipping themselves in water, the practitioners of the ritual also pray to God for one hour or depend on their will.

In the Javanese calendar, *Kungkum* ritual is done on the first of *Sura* (*Satu Sura*). The first of *Sura* is the first day in the Javanese calendar in the month of *Sura* or *Suro* where it coincides with one Muharram in the Hijriyah calendar. One example of *Satu Sura* tradition is *Tapa Bisu Lampah Mubeng Beteng* in Keraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat, Yogyakarta. It is a tradition that people should encircle the castle for several kilometers without talking to each other, without wearing footwear, without eating, without drinking, without smoking, and

without activating any gadget. The purpose of this tradition is to introspect and reflect on what someone had been done for a year to be ready for the coming year.

As the writer lives in Semarang, the writer wants to find out more about *Kungkum* ritual in Semarang. According to Farika, the first of *Sura* tradition is held in Tugu Soeharto, Semarang. *Kungkum* ritual in Tugu Suharto, Semarang is a tradition that people should dip in the water for one hour or as long as they want to. The purpose of this ritual is to get blessings and salvation or other than that, to get a partner, long life, good fortune, health and purifying themselves, and good fortune for the children.

In Umbul Sungsang Pengging Boyolali, there are many preserved rituals such as the ritual of seeking blessing to Yosodipuro Tomb, the ritual of Sebaran Apem "*keong mas*", and also the ritual of *Kungkum* on Friday night at Pahing. Every night on Pahing Friday, there are many visitors who perform *Kungkum* rituals. They dip themselves in the water as high as an adult's neck. People who manage to perform the *Kungkum* ritual in Umbul Sungsang for 40 consecutive days or for 7 Friday nights, will have their wish granted (Nuraini et al., 2011).

Kungkum ritual is also a means to invoke a will (*hajat*) to God, to resolve problems, to heal, to do self-cleansing, and to calm down. Some myths are developed with regard to *Kungkum* ritual in Umbul Sungsang Pengging Boyolali. The myths are based on the beliefs of the community. Some believe that *Kungkum* is a ritual done by the Kings of Java in the ancient times. Others believe that *Kungkum* ritual that was done by Bagus Burhan, later known as Ronggowarsito, a famous Javanese literary writer, who was still studying religion at Pondok Pesantren (Nuraini et al., 2011).

Based on the explanation above, *Kungkum* for Javanese people is not only believed to have a mythical effect, but also to build mental and physical strength to be stronger. That

whole thing makes the writer interested in studying *Kungkum* ritual. The writer chooses *Kungkum* ritual in Tugu Soeharto Semarang as the object of the study. The place is chosen because it is close with the writer's home and it is researched by people yet. To complete this research, the writer needs a deep observation of the ritual. The writer will also interview people who really know about *Kungkum* ritual in Tugu Soeharto, Semarang. The theory that becomes the basis of this research study was from Sims and Stephens' book entitled "Living Folklore" (2005). For observation, the writer will follow the whole tradition to get answers and accurate results for the research questions. The purpose of this research is to know the procedure and the reasons people perform *Kungkum* ritual in Tugu Soeharto.

There are two researchers who study *Satu Sura* tradition. Dian and Mujiono's research (2015) write a research report entitled "An Analysis of Symbolism on Satu Suro in Keraton Yogyakarta". In the research, they found out that in celebrating *Sura* tradition, people use symbols as a form of expression of gratitude to God. Dian and Mujiono mention twenty-four objects that should exist in *Sura* offerings. Later, Dian and Mujiono describe the functions of the ritual before the celebration, why ritual must be done before the celebration, the functions of symbol which are used in celebrating *Satu Sura*, the meaning of *Satu Sura* symbols. The difference of this study from the previous study is that this study focuses on understanding the steps taken in the *Kungkum* ritual, and then try to find the reasons people still practice in this *Kungkum* ritual.

1.2 Field of the Study

This research is related to the field of folklore, focusing on ritual.

1.3 Scope of the Study

My study will focus more on the process of *Kungkum* ritual. After understanding the process, then, the second focus of research will be to find the reasons and motivations of the people who still perform it.

1.4 Problem Formulation

There are important problems which will be answered in this research:

1. What are the procedures of *Kungkum* ritual in Tugu Soeharto, Semarang?
2. Why do people perform *Kungkum* ritual in Central Java?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study can be stated as follows:

1. To find out the procedures of *Kungkum* ritual in Tugu Soeharto, Semarang.
2. To investigate the reasons people perform *Kungkum* ritual in Central Java.

1.6 Significance of the Study

By doing this research, the writer expects that people will know more about *Kungkum* ritual in Tugu Soeharto, Semarang. The writer hopes this study could help people in understanding the procedure of *Kungkum* ritual and why the ritual still performs in Semarang. The writer also hopes this *Kungkum* ritual will be better known and preserved by Indonesian, especially Semarang people.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1. Ritual

“A ritual is the enactment of a myth. And, by participating in the ritual, you are participating in the myth. And since myth is a projection of the depth wisdom of the psyche, by participating in a ritual, participating in the myth, you are being, as it were, put in accord with that wisdom, which is the wisdom that is inherent within you anyhow. Your consciousness is being re-minded of the wisdom of your own life. I think ritual is terribly important” (Campbell, 2018).

2. *Kungkum*

The word *Kungkum* is from the Javanese Language that means dip in the water.

3. Tugu Soeharto

The word Tugu Soeharto is from the Indonesian language that means a monument which is created by Soeharto after he and the others dip in the water for long days to hide from Dutchman attack.

