

## THE STUDY OF TYPE AND MEANING OF JAVANESE INDONESIAN SPELL LANGUAGE

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### ABSTRACT

*The spell language of Javanese people can independently be interpreted as a method or idea—as an affirmation to certain purpose—stated with words. It is considered to have magical power and is created as a breakthrough to cease problems in life as well. The result of the research toward Javanese’s spell language describes that the spells are special chain of words, dominated by Javanese language arranged in such a way in self-suggestive affirmation types. Javanese’s spell has 3 types or structure: ideal, arbitrary and unstable. The ideal structure of Javanese’s spell is made of: head, body and foot. Spell structure is ‘wrapped’ by mystique, magical, mythological, sound, diction and images formula. Javanese’s spell for its users is an area or ‘sacred room, holy room’ which is personal in nature and full of philosophical meaning. The mystery of laku (ritual procedure) in spell ritual is psyches or emotion as well as cognitive game, created purposively to achieve meditative level. At least there are 28 kinds of Javanese’s spell according to its function.*

**Keyword:** Spell Javanese people, laku, and kasunyatan (reality).

### INTRODUCTION

Spell is one of Nusantara’s culture embodiments. Culture traits have three components: 1) Mentifact, 2) Sociofact, 3) Artefact (Koentjaraningrat, 1984: 5-6). Javanese Spell Language *Mantra Orang Jawa (MOJ)* is a blueprint of cultural product in mental and embodiment subjects. Culture is crystallization of activity (creation, feeling, idea) and dynamic human’s work. It is difficult to look at the emergence of MOJ because of the limited written data. As far as it is known from ancient Javanese documents and scripts, MOJ has blended with outside ideologies, from Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity or Islam. Nevertheless, (considered) original Javanese local wisdom values are still embraced.

The term “spell” stems from Sanskrit meaning ‘protecting one’s mind from low worldly passions (Prabhupada, 1987: 77). Yet, in its development in Java, the term “spell” has underwent the shift of sense, meaning, and point. In a simple way, MOJ is a method or idea as an affirmation of certain purpose which is stated with words and is considered to have magical power. In addition, it is created as a breakthrough to cease problems in life (see Arif, 2010). Spell text is similar to literature in the form of free poem. It has its own structure and characteristic as well. Literature does not emerge in a cultural void, literature is not free from values, and literature does not work in a vacuum situation (Teeuw, 1980: 11). It means that, this culture product contains a certain meaning, point and purpose. This artifact saves records of genius idea from ancient poets/the *kawi*/litterateurs, artists or philosophers. Literature is actually a dead artifact, it will only has meaning and is embodied into aesthetic objects if readers give it sense based on concrete literature convention in a certain period of time (see Teeuw, 1984: 191), and so does spell.

Emoto (2006: 115-117) provides the fact of an occurrence, that is a chief monk Houki Kato spelled on Fujiwara dam water, which has been contaminated by industrial waste. After getting the spell force, the water in the dam turns to be clear and sterile as new. Japanese people call such force as *kotodama*, meaning “word spirit”. Now, Masaru Emoto becomes a successful “healthy water” entrepreneur in Japan. In Indonesia, there are numerous companies which enfold spells in their slogans inducing society trust, so that they are aroused to build and join up to raise the company. Seeing the fact, the researcher is suspicious toward the “magic” spell role in the development of behavior, modern science and modern communication capitalism. Such fact is a datum that needs consideration. As far as the researcher’s investigation, the things always forgotten by the researcher, critic, artist and litterateur, both of Indonesian and of especially Javanese literature, that words have power, they have spirit or expression. Existed and saved spells among Javanese society are necessary to be explored to reveal the types, contents, values or meanings, purposes, functions and mysteries inside them. Research toward study object like “spell” is accordingly to use combined approaches; they are western approach which tends to be mechanical, positivistic, pragmatic, materialistic, rationalistic, and eastern approach with organistical, spiritualistic and mystic tendencies.

The term “*mantra*” (spell) can be observed from etymology, meaning and pragmatic points of view. Related to the type, MOJ has 3 embodiments: (1) words are called *Japa*; *Mantra*; *Aji-aji*; *Rapal* (magic utterance), (2) writing, printed for instance on metal, paper, skin, bamboo, nail, flower is called *Rajah*, and (3) spell with its power set in certain objects called *Jimat*; they set it in agate stone, stick, *keris* (a sword-like Javanese weapon). Another fact is that the researcher finds the type of spell with song poetic meter, *macapat dhandanggula* (*Mantraweda* Ballad, *Purwa Sejati* Ballad) which are bind by the convention of *guru lagu* (vocal ends in each lines), *guru wilangan* (number of syllables in each line), *guru gatra* (number of lines in a verse). Javanese people who practice “spell” in this research’s definition and scope do not highlight to certain concrete personal group (Magnis, 1984 in Jatman, 2000: 23). Javanese culture is heterogenic in nature and not monolithic. The scope of the study orientates toward two kinds of traditions which have appreciation and interpretation values to the society. Those two traditions are mystic and ethic tradition. The tradition of Javanese values appreciation, at least can be traced from pre-Islamic mentality appreciation and system or hegemony coping it. Magnis (2003: 3) said that in Java, nothing is really ‘typically Javanese characteristic’, everything has plural social way of life (compare to Mulder, 2005: 17). The statement above is supported by Ahimsa (2000: 425) that what we call Javanese culture is actually anthropologists’ conception and it is not the concrete reality existed in society.

MOJ is still seen as something magical. In magical world, human makes point of departure to that highly powerful magic world. Therefore, as if in that magical practice, magic plays important role (Mulyono, 1983: 30). Furthermore, Peursen (in Mulyono, 1983: 30) said that magic can be compared to self-insurance for modern society. Magic has occultism nature, tends to rule something through power, intelligence and ability. In *Wedhatama* written by Prince Mangkunegara VII, that things is called as *ilmu karang*, magic here is a mysticism comes from spirit or ghost. Mulyono (1983: 30) stated that magical practitioner tries to resist and repel threatening danger with subdued natural force. They prefer to use spells or other means which are considered higher, for instance teacher, ancestor, God. This means that spell is one of the magic itself.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative, considering that the collected data are words, sentence or picture (*rajah*) which have meanings more than numbers or frequency. Research in this spell study does not only develop knowledge through speculative construction inside someone's mind—thought manipulation to shape a theory—like the one pioneered since Socrates up to Hegel, but also seize knowledge meaning through the presence of data inside mind consciousness.

The location of the research is in cultural area of Surakarta Ex-Residency (Boyolali, Sukoharjo, Wonogiri, Klaten, Sragen, and Karanganyar). The selection of these initial locations is regarded appropriate considering several things, among them are: 1) there are ancient cultural centers in these places; Karaton Kasunanan and Pura Mangkunegaran, 2) there are ritual ceremonies held in some parts of the area within nowadays, 3) Javanese language is used as daily communication language or mother tongue. The source of data in this research can be divided into primary and secondary data. The primary data are informants, people who really possess knowledge and ability in spell; they are *dhukun* (shaman), *kiai*, paranormal or traditional elders. The secondary source of data is books on spell widely spread as comparison (Sutopo, 2002).

Data collecting methods can be separated into two; interactive and non-interactive collecting methods (Goetz & Sompte, 1984 in Sutopo, 2002: 58). Both are explained into three techniques; (1) comprehensive interview, (2) observation, and (3) substance analysis. Data validation in this research employs source triangulation technique that is the source of data, either from informant source, data of events or documents (1987: 331 in Moleong, 1990: 178). Data analysis technique for this research is interactive analysis technique. Interactive analysis is an organizing process and data sequencing into a pattern, category and basic analysis unit so that the theme is found and we can formulate hypothesis as suggested by the data. Interactive analysis is established by the existence of three main components; data reduction, provided data, and verification or conclusion drawing (Sutopo, 2002: 96).

## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

### MOJ Text Structure

Substance in MOJ text, besides stating the meaning of practice which is the real indication of certain spell's function, is also containing of mythology history repetition. It means that MOJ text tries to bring back occurrences believed to existed in the past, about God's authority, messengers, king's and knight's supernatural powers. Followings are MOJ text:

MOJ text for *kanuragan* (mystical power to protect someone's body):

- i. Suksma Pawekas
- ii. *Sallalahu ngali wasalam*
- iii. *Mbok suksma pawekas*
- iv. *Sira metua lan jumbedula ana gawe*
- v. *Bantunen jabang bayiku supaya peng-pengan*
- vi. *Dibacok ora tedas*
- vii. *Ditembak ora tumama*
- viii. *Apa ciptaku bisowa kelakon*
- ix. *Entuk ijine guruku, suksmaku, rasa kang sejati*

Number (1) and (3) show the identity or name of spell, it is Mantra Sukma Pawekas (MSP). This spell name often means as the source of power in spell. The word *pawekas* is Javanese vocabulary. Explanation from spell informant, MSP is a spell to awaken a power inside spirit's heart. Before this power is raised, it is still asleep (see: *kundalini* and *atomism* in the next explanation). The meaning of *pawekas* is equal to the meaning of *pepunthon* that is 'the last/end, surrender/yield'. Yet after having advance research, this use of the word *pawekas* is a meaning deviation and meaning creation because of grammatical deviation as said by Riffatere. If the word *pawekas* has meaning as the informant said, the appropriate word to use is *kawekas*. The word *wekas* also mean 'delivering message'. For example in the dialogue: *nduk, dhawuhe simbah mengko wekasna bapakmu ya (Child, please deliver this message from grandfather to your dad)*. Spell informant said that MSP is used to awaken the sleeping force. As we pay attention, the meaning of 'awaken' is to send/to deliver message to the spirit's heart.

Number (2) is a greeting component which reads *salalahu ngali wassalam*. It means that MSP has acquired influence of touch from Islam, but it is seen that the influence has not been utmost that the utterance should be read *Sallalahu alaihi wassalam* (at least). This is misguiding yet prevalent matter in our society. This vanishing is only to simplify the pronouncing like addressing Kartasura with Tosura. Another word with grammatical deviation is syllable *Om* which is pronounced *Hong*, *awignam* pronounced *wigeno* or *wilaheng*, *Sri* pronounced *Seri*, *bismillah* pronounced *semilah*. Back to the previous spell, such type of Islamic influence was revealed by the employment of Arabic language by which common people is identified to Islam, a religion spread by Prophet Muhammad SAW. The greeting component inside spell body has relation to its closing component, like: *amin, la illaha ilallah*, and so on.

Number (3) is a motive component. Although there are no words or phrase mentioning 'motive', the phrase *mbok sukma pawekas* has indirectly pointed to the definition of motive, which has been an activity of calling, practicing or activating the force of *sukma pawekas* as stated in following spell:

*Sallalhu ngali wasalam  
Sun matak ajiku sib ala srewu  
Sekethi ana mburi, selaksa ana ngarsa*

If we trace back thoroughly, even greetings has actually referred to someone's motive in practicing something, in this case is spell practicing. In many MOJ, motive component is shown by the phrase *matak ajiku* (to practice/activate my charm) *si bala srewu*. Comparing two *Kanuragan* spells and one philter spell has given firm explanation to reveal that motive component often shows the spell name or function, as well as mythology formula (for example: *balasrewu*) existed inside the spell text. The informants, as they pass on the mystical knowledge (Jav: *mejang ngilmu*), said that 'motive is the most important thing in learning or in other activities such as practicing spell, next the motive will awaken the hidden forces in the body to rise and work'.

Number (4) and (5) are imperative component. In this spell, the speller orders *Sukma Pawekas* to come out and do the duty, help trying to solve the problem faced by the speller, in order to make him invulnerable. The duty here can also mean the duty of the spell to finish its function. Thus, it is clear that choosing a spell to certain purpose is very vital. To get X purpose, someone needs X spell, too.

Number (6) and (7) is suggestion component. The spells above give mental suggestion power to the speller in order to raise confidence. Suggestion power given by the spell to the speller

is that as if the speller was invulnerable to weapons and always spared from attack of hot tin or fire gun.

Number (8) is hope component. Speller hopes that what he creates on his mind, or what is said on chain of words in singing spell can come into reality and embodied in material world. In this component, the speller fixes his assurance and honor toward the spell.

Number (9) is closing component plus suggestive component and visualization symbol reinforcement. What has been created in speller's mind will really come to reality because it has received permissions from *teacher*, *spirit*, and *true feeling*. According to the informants, three of them are name symbol for *Gusti Allah* or God of which name has their own territorial autonomy. As we see comprehensively, this concept is similar to Christianity concept spread by St. Paul. It is the Holy Trinity concept that states Allah as Father, Allah as Son (Jesus Christ) and Allah as Holy Spirit.

The meaning in the spell text is attained by contextual understanding. For example, Javanese sentence *ana kidung rumeksa ing wengi*. Heuristically (sense layer), the sentence is read 'there is a song that guards the night'. However, retroactively (meaning layer), we can get this meaning, 'this is the—(salvation)—song—(that save us from threat or the evil (witchcraft, voodoo, hex, black magic))'. The word 'night' (*Jav: wengi*) does not only point to a certain period—night, after day—but it points more to connotation toward 'dark world' activity. Spell is unanimity of meaning using language as media. Below are MOJ text's ideal structure patterns: (1) Beginning '*purwa*': Head, (2) Middle '*madya*': Body and (3) Ending '*wasana*': Foot.

### MOJ Laku Meaning (Ritual Discipline)

This research does not only give out the development explanation of interpretative mental culture, but more to the meaning existed in MOJ. It is fully realized that when society follows the pattern exceptionally made for some group's interest, so the matters which are merely fiction on the beginning will be an ideology. Such thing is a consequence toward the development of human's thinking either particularly/individually or collectively in three steps, they are: 1) mystical step, 2) ontology step, and 3) functional step (see Peursen, 1988: 18-21). *Laku* is one of the most important elements in learning MOJ to attain spiritual and supernatural forces.

Special note in this explanation is that all the *laku* starts in the evening approaching sunset after the body consecration phase. The purpose of *laku* process is to create humbleness, patience, firmness, receptive, sincerity and remorse for the committed sins. Mind and spiritual attitude is suggested to be serene, clear, wary and mindful to the Almighty Creator '*heneng, hening, awas, eling*' (silence, quiet, aware, mindful) as the soul consecration. As *laku* process is carried out, it is then redeemed by *bancakan*/expressing of gratitude to God with savory rice, chicken along with intended spelling *atur dhahar Gusti Rosul* for welfare to be knocked on wood.

In addition to *laku* explained above, there are many kinds of *laku* conducted by witchcraft embracer, such as *manekung/samadi* (meditation), *wiridan* (repetitive prayer to God), *mlaku neku sikil pisan* (walking in the determined long distance, and allowed to pause once in sit position), *туру pisan* (sleeping not more than 2 hours within 24 hours), to sleep under the water of *talang/grojogan/pancuran* (round tile/waterfall/natural shower), *sesirih* (restraining desires), *nepi* (desolating), *bertapa* (variation Javanese word of meditation), *kaul* (pledge), charitable and interrelated substances aroused from the soul conviction of the spell practitioner. Yet, the common applied spell is as mentioned above.

The subsequently nature of *laku* is to improve one's stability to apply the spells and practice concentration or thinking focuses of what he/she aspires and wants. Clearly, it is to put the aspiration or hope above all needs. The purpose of *laku* is to feed spiritual needs by body drill. Considering that spell works spiritually, hence the spiritual condition has to be satisfied.

The ritual of *kungkum* can be interpreted as an effort to pursue one thing diligently with strong will of '*golong gilig*'. *Pati Geni* implies as an effort to conquer anger (evil) dwelling in the heart. *Mutih* fasting is to consecrate mind and soul against the influence of worldly desires. *Tapa pendhem* aims to warn human beings toward fatality in order to repent and improve their morals. The purpose of the other rituals is to turn one's feeling and intuitive condition to be better. For example, by *laku ngedan*, the doer can feel how to be disgraced by others. The purpose of *tapa ngidang* is for the practitioner to experience a life being a deer. The feeling resulted from the ritual is expected to awaken respect toward nature. Capra (2003) calls it by the term 'organistical ecology'.

In every particular ritual in spells activity, there is *sajen* which is prepared before and after the ritual. In Java and Bali, each place which is considered as an eerie place, *sesajen* is offered in particular days or in special occasion. Yet, it may even exist that the *sajen* is offered out of particular occasions and days. *Sajen* derived from word '*aji*' which means: king, worthy, respectful. *Sajen* is a set of symbols representing goodwill and mental or spiritual condition. *Sajen* of roses symbolizes an aromatic goodwill. *Sajen* of *telon* flowers (three kinds of flowers), *kembang piton* (seven kinds of flowers) and *kembang setaman*, which consist of many kinds of flowers, symbolize plurality and pluralism or united diversity.

Three kinds of flowers symbolize actions of beginning, conducting and finishing (*Jv: purwa, madya, wasana*). Seven kinds of flowers is a manifestation of appeal for *pituduh*, *pitutur* and *pitulung* (guidance, wisdom and help). Magnolia in the *sesaji ilmu pengasih* is as a symbol of appeal for an ease in achieving the goals. Banknote of one hundred rupiahs (*satus*) is a symbol of the seriousness as Javanese people call the effort until their sweat drops (*ditus*). Young coconut water '*degan*' symbolizes the holy water which is interpreted to remain untouched by either human being or animal. In terms of semiotic, *sajen* is not simply a manifestation of deviation, but it would rather to say something without words. The meaning represented in *sajen* is equal to the meaning of mantra and prayer.

The *laku* above is essentially a way to search *ngilmu*. Based on Javanese thought, *ngilmu* has different meaning from it has in scientific knowledge. *Ngilmu* refers to *gnosis*; forms of mystical, religious and intuitive experiences. This spiritual journey is called *olah rasa* (the manner of sense) that is the manner to turn the sensitiveness to a full and total comprehension toward what is called as *rahsa* which is deeper and more supernatural than *rasa* (sense). *Rahsa* is where the supernatural enthrones. Metaphor for *rahsa* is blood connoted as the essence of 'life' (*JV: Sejatining urip*). Stange (2000: 5) tries to describe the sense as an introduction ability to comprehend intuitive aspects toward reality. According to Javanese concept, experience and intuitive knowledge is able to reach '*wahyu*' (divine revelation).

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn from the explanation above is that Javanese poems having spell genre (MOJ) have particular characteristics, i.e: 1) ideal, unstable and arbitrary structure, 2) the spell verses can be strung in *macapat* songs, 3) having a sense of autonomic or free verse, 4) Javanese combined with Sanskrit and Arabian, 5) in a certain spell is psychologically egoistic, emotional, coercive and affirmative, 6) in some verses, there are words which are meaningless, 7) the spell's dictions are direct, 8) the verses contain statement and information

of the ruler of magic, supernatural or mythic, and 9) in some MOJ for *kanuragan* and clairvoyance are cloning which is make one's own as iconic character in the spell text.

Spell is an idea of spiritual and mental which remains exists nowadays. There is a correlation of 'interplay' between spell and literature. Literature makes use of spell as the object, while spell applies literature as the medium. MOJ is expressive poems, prose and *macapat* songs. MOJ text's content is nostalgic which repetitively conveys and reminds of mythological characters. Contextually, it encloses the unlimited understanding of life learning. The activity (*laku*) of MOJ is an individual's action symbolism, namely prayer, which means that spell is comparable to prayer in a universal understanding. In this research, MOJ has 28 functions in accordance to each classification. The rule of learning spell is *memayu hayuning bawana agung*, which denotes 'to participate in reassuring the life of the world'.

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