

# Communication Patterns in the *Ageman Keris* Making Process in *Besalen Buwana Aji Kalingga*: an Ethnography of Communication Study

Suwarno Peter<sup>1</sup>, Kurniawan Julius Novan Deni<sup>2</sup>, and Nurhayati Nurhayati<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of International Letters and Cultures, Arizona State University, Tempe–Arizona

<sup>2</sup>Master Program of Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, Semarang–Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Master Program of Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, Semarang–Indonesia

**Abstract.** *Keris* is one of the cultural products in the form of a dagger originating from Java. *Keris* is still made today as can be seen in *Besalen Buwana Aji Kalingga* which is owned by Empu Afrizal Fadli Azizi, S.Kom.I. He uses various processions including uttering mantras containing cultural meaning that form a series of verbal and non-verbal communication patterns. This attracts researchers to examine the patterns more deeply through an ethnography of communication approach to analyze the forms and patterns of communication that occur in the *ageman kerises* making process in *Besalen Buwana Aji Kalingga*. The descriptive qualitative study was conducted using the theory of communication patterns from Dell Hymes. The researcher found that prayers and *mantras* in the *ageman kerises* making process have a distinctive communication pattern, greeting-thankful-begging for a prayer at the *wiwitan* stage and greeting-declaration at the *pembabaran* stage. Furthermore, there is assimilation between Arabic and Javanese, a characteristic of the register of spelling language in Javanese culture. This happened because of the efforts to spread and introduce Islam in the past. Now, it has become a tradition in Javanese culture.

## 1 Introduction

*Keris* is one of the cultural products in the form of a dagger originating from Java. *Keris* is estimated to have appeared in the 5th century AD, which can be seen in stone inscriptions found in the Magelang area [1]. In Javanese society, *keris* is usually made by a *keris* master. The master of the *keris* is seen as a superior person, and it is believed that in his hands, a *keris* can have supernatural powers and magical benefits for the owner. One of the places that still produces *keris* is *Besalen Buwana Aji Kalingga*, in Karangklesem Village, Banyumas Regency, Central Java which is owned by Empu Afrizal Fadli Azizi.

In the *kerises*-making process, Empu Rizal uses various processions including uttering mantras that have cultural meaning, and various distinctive media that form a series of verbal and non-verbal activities. Specifically, prayers and mantras used in the *keris*-making process show a peculiarity in the form of speech which is the embodiment of a communication event that connects humans with various entities, including other humans, the universe, and God.

\*Corresponding author : nurhayati@lecturer.undip.ac.id

Mantras are prayers, words, or verses that, when spoken, can cause supernatural or magical powers [2].

Therefore, this study will examine a cultural event in Java Island, specifically the *keris*-making process, through the ethnography of communication approach. The prayers and mantras used by Empu Rizal indicate a unique communication pattern to realize a communication event that connects humans with various entities such as humans, the universe, and God. Therefore, it attracts researchers to examine the pattern more deeply through the ethnography of communication approach to analyze the forms and communication patterns that occur in making ageman *kerises* in *Besalen Buwana Aji Kalingga*, as seen from the prayers and mantras used in the process.

## 2 Previous Studies and Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Previous studies

Several related studies have been conducted before. Fadli & Sudrajat, found that the meaning of a *keris* is influenced by collectors who are divided into two beliefs, being interpreted as a commodity and a magical object [3]. In line with Fadli & Sudrajat, Muspita *et al.*, who analyze *keris* from a sociological perspective, find that the *keris* is interpreted in various ways, both as accessories or souvenirs and as an object that has various philosophical and religious meanings [4]. Furthermore, *keris* also represents the way of life of the Javanese society, which can be seen in the procedures for treating the *keris*, holding, giving the *keris* to other people, unsheathing, and sheathing the *keris*. Not only the procedure, research conducted by Darmojo found that the prestige of the *keris*, *dhapur*, *luk*, and *pamor* of the *keris* are symbols that have various meanings [5]. These meanings also embody the culture and customs of the Javanese people. If we look at its history, as can be seen from research conducted by Ramadhan & Purwaningsih, it shows that the philosophical values of a *keris* have been fundamental in the *keris* world since past times and have become an important aspect which builds a picture of the patterns of behavior and thinking of the Javanese people [6].

It is not only the form of the *keris* that pictures the behavior and thinking patterns of the Javanese people, but the process of making it. Setiaji found that the existence of a *keris*-making tradition is a means of asking God so that the *keris* that will be finished can provide good things for the owner [7]. In more detail, Sriwahyuni states that various tools, *uba rampe*, and the process of making *keris* have various philosophical meanings [8]. This shows that the form of the Javanese way of praying is often expressed in various ways and actions, one of which is in the *kerises* making process.

Furthermore, the researcher found that the meaning is not only embedded in the *kerises*, the tools used in *keris*-making, and the procession step, as mentioned by the other researcher but also can be seen through the mantra. Therefore, this study will analyze various mantras to reveal communication patterns and meanings in the Ageman *Kerises* making process in *Besalen Buwana Aji Kalingga*. As done by Arifiani, who found that there is a unique communication pattern between the various components of communication and the form of messages in the mantras that are sung during sintren performances [9].

### 2.2 Theoretical framework

Hymes suggests three specific boundaries in the ethnography of communication theory: communicative situations, communicative events, and communicative acts [10]. The communicative situation is the general context of communication between a group of people.

Moreover, it can also happen between an individual with another being, as seen in a ritual. There are some examples of communicative situation, wedding parties, birthday parties, and ritual ceremonies [10].

The communicative event explains that a series of components describe an event, such as it starts with the same purpose, has the same topic, the same participant, has the same pattern, and the same rules [10]. Whenever one component changes, it marks that an event has ended and changed with another.

The last of the three is the communicative act. The communicative act is a single interaction in the form of verbal or nonverbal actions such as greeting, thanking, asking, and declaration [10].

### 3 Methods

This is a qualitative descriptive study using an ethnography of communication approach. To obtain data, researchers conducted interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data are in the form of oral data from the narration of related parties at the *Ageman Keris Making Procession in Besalen Buwana Aji Kalingga*, Karangklesem, Banyumas Regency, especially the mantras and prayers that are used. Furthermore, the data are taken from March 10, 2022, to June 3, 2022. The document analysis is used as tertiary data to strengthen the existing data.

Data collection was carried out by observing the process of making *ageman kerises* in *Besalen Buwana Aji Kalingga*. After direct observations, the researchers also interviewed Emru Rizal, the owner of the *besalen*. Interviews were conducted to obtain information about the prayers and mantras used. After getting the data, the researcher then started to analyze it.

The analysis step uses Hymes theory to describe the communication patterns in the *keris*-making process. Furthermore, the researcher explains the meaning of the prayers and mantras used during the procession. Last, the researcher also explains the assimilation of Arabic and Javanese languages found in the mantras.

### 4 Results and Discussion

There are three stages in the *keris*-making process, *wiwitan*, *pembabaran*, and *pungkasan*. However, in this study, researchers will focus on prayers and mantras found at the *pembabaran* stage.

#### 4.1 Pembabaran

This stage is carried out one day after the *wiwitan* stage and lasts several weeks until the *keris* is finished. A communicative situation takes place in the *besalen* with all the tools to process iron ore into a *keris*, and this process is carried out by Empu Rizal assisted by two *panjak* or assistant. Besides some tools such as furnaces, anvils, iron hammers, and grinders, there are also various offerings or *uba rampe* and raw materials for making *keris* which are prepared in the *besalen*.

At the *pembabaran* stage, there are two processes, forging and *penyepuhan*. The forging process is carried out to form iron ore into the shape of a *keris*. The *penyepuhan* process aims to make the *keris* sharper and bring out the *pamor* or the *kerises* motive. At this stage, the researcher focuses on the mantras Empu Rizal speaks when he starts the forging and *penyepuhan* process.

*Salam ngalaikum salam*  
*Niat ingsun dadi pengulu*  
*Saka karsaning Allah*

peace be upon you  
 my intention is to be a leader  
 from God's will

<i>Jodhone wesi bumi</i>	Earth ore's partner
<i>Lawan pamor akasa</i>	is space <i>pamor</i> (nickel)
<i>Ket raket, nglairake daya suci</i>	stick together, give birth to holy power
<i>Daya rahayu</i>	salvation power
<i>Saka karsa lan panguwasaning Allah</i>	of God's will and power
<i>La illaha ilallah</i>	there's no God but Allah

The mantra has been used by previous *empu* or masters since the Mataram Sultanate's era when they were about to start the forging process. The purpose of this mantra is to ask God so that later the *keris* that is made can radiate holiness and salvation for the owner and the environment because of God's will. It is unique because the request to God contained in this mantra is explicitly manifested in words, phrases, and declaration sentences because, in Javanese culture, someone who asks for prayer to God must believe that what is asked for will be granted. This also means that the Javanese people view God as having the ability to make all things happen.

In the mantra, there are two communicative acts, greeting and declarative. The act of greeting can be seen in "*Salam ngalaikum salam*" which is absorbed from Arabic, mainly because of the influence of Islam. The declaration acts can be seen from the second to the last line.

The second and third lines mean that Empu Rizal is asking God for permission to be the leader of this forging process. The fourth and fifth lines semantically symbolize the process of smelting two metals, iron and nickel, in the process of forging the *keris*. However, when viewed pragmatically, the unification of the earth's iron and the nickel from the sky means the union of the Mother, symbolized as the earth, and the Father, symbolized as the sky. According to Empu Rizal, this is a derivative of the concept of the *lingga* and *yoni* in Hindu belief, considering that Hinduism or Shiva-Buddha was once the religion of the majority of Javanese people in the Majapahit Kingdom.

Furthermore, if analyzed further from the fourth to the eighth line, Empu Rizal stated that the union of iron metal from the earth and nickel from the sky that sticks together perfectly would give birth to the power of holiness and the power of salvation as God's will and permission. This concept, it can be said, is derived from the Shiva-Buddhist religion from the Majapahit era that the union of *Lingga* and *Yoni* will create a new life, specifically a new human or a baby.

In the last line is a monotheistic sentence from Islam. This shows that this prayer is addressed to Allah.

Furthermore, after the *keris* blade is finished, it will be continued in the *penyepuhan* process, which aims to make the blade sharper and firmer. *Penyepuhan* is done by heating the blade and then immediately inserted into the oil tube for about five minutes. After five minutes, the blade is put into clean water.

In this process, the water is taken from seven springs in the Banyumas area. Furthermore, Empu Rizal also casts a mantra before the *penyepuhan* process.

<i>Salam ngalaikum salam</i>	peace be upon you
<i>Tuk pitu, sumur pitu</i>	seven springs, seven wells
<i>Gumilir ilining warih</i>	flowing water flow
<i>Saking kulon, saking wetan</i>	from the west, from the east
<i>Saking ngandhap, saking inggil</i>	from below, from above
<i>Saking lor, saking kidul</i>	from the north, from the south
<i>Saking kiwa, saking tengen</i>	from left, from right
<i>Kabeh-kabeh dadi sambatan</i>	everything is asked for help
<i>Aweh daya, urun jaya</i>	give power, joint success
<i>Saka kepareng Guru Alip</i>	from the Alif's Teacher (God)
<i>Raja ing Ngalampitu</i>	king of the seven realms

<i>Daya jaya kumpul manjing karomah</i>	the power of success unites into glory
<i>Saka kersaning Allah</i>	from God's will

The mantra has been used by previous *empu* or masters since the Mataram Sultanate's era when they were about to start the *penyepuhan* process. The purpose of this mantra is to ask God so that later the *keris* that undergoes the process of *penyepuhan* with water from seven springs can have holy power because of God's will. Similar to the previous mantra, the request is realized in a declaration.

In this mantra, there are two communicative actions, greeting and declarative. The act of greeting can be seen in "*Salam ngalaikum salam*" which is absorbed from Arabic, especially because of the influence of Islam. This is also the same as the previous mantra.

If the second and third lines are combined, "the water used in the *penyepuhan* process is taken from seven springs & seven wells that have large water flow." According to Empu Rizal, the number seven was chosen because in Javanese culture, seven or "*pitu*" has the meaning of "*pitulungan*" or help, so it is hoped that by using seven springs as a symbol of supplication, God wills to provide his help and blessings into this *keris*. "*Gumilir ilining warih*" also emphasizes that blessings and help from God will always be abundant.

If the fourth to eleventh lines are combined, it will have the meaning that "from the west, from the east, from below, from above, from the north, from the south, from the left, and the right become a place or direction to ask for help that always gives power and glory. by the will of the Lord of the seven heavens." Empu Rizal said that in this mantra, he mentions all the directions and cardinal directions because in Javanese belief, God's blessings are spread throughout the world, and in the seven realms. Therefore, in this mantra, he wants to collect these blessings by God's will.

Furthermore, it can be seen that these mantras use the Javanese Ngoko language. In Javanese culture, it is considered that God is always close to the heart of every individual. This implicitly states that the relationship between God and humans is very close, so the level of language used is ngoko.

#### 4.2 Assimilation of Arabic and Javanese in the *keris*-making mantras

In the mantras above, there is assimilation between Arabic and Javanese, such as the "*Salam ngalaikum salam*" which means "peace be upon you" and "*La illaha ilallah*" which means "there is no god but Allah".

In Javanese culture, especially mantras and prayers, they have a characteristic register of spell languages that juxtapose or absorb Arabic because, if seen from its history, this was an effort to spread and introduce *Islam*, which brought Arabic, to the Java area. Keane states that it becomes a characteristic if a language in rituals or incantations absorbs elements from other languages and cultures that are considered important in strengthening the spell in the ritual [11].

Islam began to spread widely, especially in central Java, after the collapse of the Shiva-Buddhist Majapahit Kingdom and the establishment of Islamic Sultanates such as the Demak Kingdom, which later collapsed and was continued with the Mataram Sultanate as being able to apply and assimilate Islam into the lives of its people in quite a long period even until now.

Then because the *Arab-Pegon* script is the script used by the spreaders of Islam in past times and because of the lack of ability of past people to pronounce words in Arabic, various words and sentences in Arabic have slightly different pronunciations as can be seen in "*Assalamualaikum*" in Arabic to "*Salam ngalaikum salam*". However, in the end, a mantra has taken root and confirmed various social, political, and religious fields, or it could be inferred that it has become a cultural tradition. Furthermore, because it has become a tradition, there is no correction in the Arabic pronunciation, and its use is still carried out today. Fudge states that the spell is a tradition created, applied, and preserved [12].

## 5 Conclusion

Generally, the analysis found that mantra in the *pembabaran* step have a distinctive communication pattern, greeting-declaration.

There are two processes, forging and *penyepuhan*, each of which has a mantra with the same pattern. In the forging process, the purpose of the mantra is to ask God for the *keris* that will radiate holiness and salvation for the owner and the environment because of God's will. In the *penyepuhan* process, the purpose of the mantra is to ask God so that later the *keris*, which undergoes the *penyepuhan* process with water from seven springs, can have holy power because of God's will.

Furthermore, there is assimilation between Arabic and Javanese, a characteristic of the register of spell language in Javanese culture. This happened because of the efforts to spread and introduce Islam in the past times, and it has become a tradition in Javanese culture. Then because it has become a tradition, there is no correction in the pronunciation of the Arabic language, and its use is still carried out today.

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