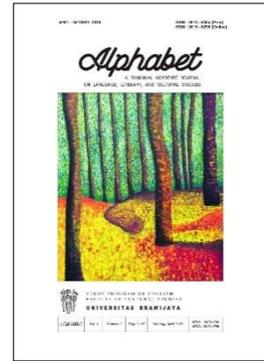


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## ***Slametan* and Tradition in *Pengakuan Pariyem*: An Expression of Equality in Javanese Culture**

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# *Slametan* and Tradition in *Pengakuan Pariyem*: An Expression of Equality in Javanese Culture

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## Abstract

*Pengakuan Pariyem* is a controversial novel portraying a confession of Pariyem, a woman living in Javanese culture. Through this novel, we are able to see Javanese culture from the eyes of a Javanese woman. This paper presents an analysis on Javanese tradition, more specifically the practice of *slametan* in Javanese culture as it is depicted in the novel. There are ideals of life shown in Javanese culture and tradition. *Slametan* and the use of food in it suggest equal relations among people in Javanese culture. The equality is built to maintain the conformity to achieve harmony among these people. Even though the equality has contradictory sides, Pariyem is able to actively engage as a subject in her society and live harmoniously in it.

## Keywords:

Pengakuan Pariyem, slametan, equality, Javanese ethics

*Pengakuan Pariyem* (*The Confession of Pariyem*) is a memoir of a Javanese woman. Published in the 80's, it was a controversial work of the time. *Pengakuan Pariyem* is a lyrical prose telling a story of a young woman named Pariyem, who is living in Wonosari, a small village in Gunungkidul. She devoted her life as a servant in a Javanese noble family. As a woman raised in the low class of Javanese society, Pariyem expresses her inner musings and shows her attitude on people and life. Pariyem fully accepts her life as a reflection of *lega lila*, a concept of showing a full acceptance and gratitude of life in Javanese culture. This attitude is also shown when she has an unexpected baby as a result of her affair with the son of the noble family she serves. Eventually, she delivers the baby and is still grateful of the baby's existence as though nothing has never been wrong about the affair.

The controversial story in *Pengakuan Pariyem* gave a new color in Indonesian literature in the 80's, where talking about sex was still a taboo for many people. *Pengakuan Pariyem*, written by Linus Suryadi Ag, is a story that is still read nowadays as it depicts how a Javanese woman acts and thinks. The Javanese tradition depicted in this novel is told from Pariyem's eyes, a woman with a Javanese background. As controversial the novel was when it was published more than two decades ago, there is an opportunity to continue to analyze the story for an alternate perspective in this modern society.

Many studies have been conducted in reading *Pengakuan Pariyem* from various perspectives, but it is difficult to find a paper on how *slametan* and the traditions in Java depicted in the novel relate to Pariyem's perspective. *Slametan* and the traditions are used to illustrate culture in Java as well as to explain the Javanese

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way of life, and they are keys to understand Pariyem's perspective on life as a Javanese woman.

Most researchers talk about Pariyem as the main character without elaborating much about Javanese tradition as the socio-political and historical context (Rahmawati, 2014; Harni, 2009; Puspitasari, 2015; Saraswati, 2010). Finding almost similar results, they agree that in the novel Pariyem is a subordinated self as a servant who is not able to defend herself of being treated rather unluckily in a patriarchal society and to free herself from the domination of *priyayi* (the governing upper class in traditional Javanese society). The papers conclusively end readings on Pariyem as a passive character in *Pengakuan Pariyem*. Other researchers discuss the Javanese tradition and Javanese philosophy without in-depth analysis on Pariyem as the main character, despite her significant role as the confessor in this novel. Several academics have studied Javanese philosophy from this novel and identified Javanese characteristics such as *nriman* (being able to accept life as it is), *lega lila* (being grateful for the condition), or *andap asor* (being humble), which reflect the main purpose of Javanese wisdom of building harmony (Nugroho, 2012; Sari, Suseno, Mulyono, 2013; Listiani, 2014). Those papers prove that culture and the Javanese system of culture cannot be separated in analyzing *Pengakuan Pariyem*. Moreover, because of its importance, Javanese culture and belief do not only function as a base for the development of the story but also as the instrument of the story.

Soemanto (1999) and Esti (2013) analyzed *Pengakuan Pariyem* with regard to the culture as the context in the meaning-making, and they examined the novel rather differently from the prior research. Soemanto scrutinized the universe that is created in *Pengakuan Pariyem*. The events in the novel are analyzed as a relational coherence which makes a whole linking chain of Pariyem's world. Not analyzing specifically on the character, Soemanto's study results in the idea that Pariyem's world is not a mimetic world. Instead, it is a representational world, which is made of Javanese culture system, a place which Pariyem creates and lives in, which

is a combination of the modern and the traditional world. On the other hand, Esti (2013) analyzed the main character and gender relation. She examined how Pariyem accepts her genealogical descendant and her position as a servant because, in Javanese culture, people should live like water, flowing with the course of life. She argued that even though she has unlucky genealogy and status, Pariyem is able to engage actively in her life and to participate actively in public domain as men do. The two papers include Javanese culture in the analyses of the main character, but the researchers do not discuss the more specific Javanese tradition like *slametan*.

Literary critics end up in different perspectives when they discuss the controversial issues in the prose lyric of *Pengakuan Pariyem* by Linus Suryadi. Some focus on the problem of gender relation where as a woman in Java, Pariyem, a village-born woman serving for a middle-class family in town, ill-treated within the dominant patriarchal society. There is also an argument that as the main character in the novel, Pariyem's submission to life is considered as a struggle, especially in the feminist point of view. Rather than passive, she actively engages to be a subject in her society.

This article addresses the life of Pariyem in quite a different way. We consider the character of Pariyem in terms of a discursive practice where through her characterization, we can examine socio-political and historical aspects of the story although to some extent we still consider the character psychologically. In doing so, we can shift from considering Pariyem as a self into a subject, which allows us to argue that Pariyem is a social and discursive structure that contains contradictions. Secondly, the discursive character reading paves us the way to think of Pariyem as representation rather than to naively perceive it as a realistic reflection of an individual person. In this respect, we can situate both the novel as the primary text and other secondary texts in an equal position. For the main discussion, we focus on the use of *slametan*, which is a widely-discussed issue in Javanese lifecycles but tends to be overlooked in discussing the character of Pariyem so far.

## DISCUSSION

In *Pengakuan Pariyem*, belief and religion for Javanese people are not two different entities, and they are depicted gracefully through metaphors as Pariyem tells her life story. Pariyem is a Catholic, a common religion in her hometown in Wonosari, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta. Her Christian name is Maria Magdalena, given by a Catholic priest Van de Moutten. Even though she never graduated from school, Pariyem once studied in Kanisius elementary school in Wonosari. Pariyem explicitly stated that she is a Catholic and *Kejawen* at the same time. However, it is common for Javanese to have a formal religion along with *Kejawen*. We can see this from the excerpt:

“*ya, ya, Pariyem saya  
adapun kepercayaan saya:  
Mistik Jawa  
Tapi dalam kertu penduduk  
Oleh Pak Lurah dituliskan  
Saya beragama Katolik  
...  
Memang saya dibaptis rama pastor Landa  
...  
Jadi jelasnya, terang-terangan saja:  
--kepercayaan saya Katolik mistik  
alias Katolik Kejawen  
Maria Magdalena nama pemandian saya  
Maria Magdalena Pariyem lengkapnya  
“Iyem” panggilan sehari-harinya  
dari Wonosari Gunung Kidul  
Tapi nama baptis Maria Magdalena dipakai  
kalan ada keperluan-keperluan resmi saja”  
...(Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 14)*

“yes, yes, I am Pariyem  
and my belief is:  
Javanese Mythic  
But on my identification card  
Pak Lurah wrote  
I am Catholic  
...  
I was baptized by rama, a Dutch Father  
...  
So clearly, being clear:  
--my belief is Catholic Mystic

or *Katolik Kejawen*

Maria Magdalena is my baptist name  
Maria Magdalena Pariyem for full  
“Iyem” is for everyday call  
from Wonosari Gunung Kidul  
But the baptist name Maria Magdalena is used  
Only for formal needs”  
...(Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 14)

*Kejawen* is a belief which most people in Java have as the basis of their way of life. Mulder (1970) said that *Kejawen* is a multilayered character or attitude which connects the everyday life, people, and nature.

The attitude of life may be heavily influenced by religious experience and religious concepts. The Javanese experience and view are totalistic, not separating the individual from his environment, from his group, or even from nature and supernature. This worldly and the otherworldly are equally unclear as well as equally real. (Mulder, 1970)

More specifically, Hakam (2017) defines *kejawen* as the mystical ideal of unity and harmony which holds three aspects in Javanese life: the relationship among humans, the relationship between human and nature and relationship between human and God. In order to build these harmonious relationship, people should be able to sacrifice their self by not imposing their will for the sake of harmony. There is an interdependent relationship among humans that a person cannot have the condition of being *slamet* if other people still do not allow it. This idea eventually constructs a bigger view: the relationship between the microcosm (individual human) and the macrocosm (the universe). The microcosm and the macrocosm are always inter-reliant, which make having two different beliefs, Catholic and *kejawen*, is not a sin.

The Javanese in *Pengakuan Pariyem* accept their belief (*Kejawen*) as their way to perform everyday life and accepts their religion (Catholics) as the inner way or a private aspect of life. Because they are also *Kejawen*, Catholics or Muslims in Java still practice traditional rituals

like *slametan*. Pariyem describes the idea of religion and belief as follows:

“*Bukankah agama, begitu kata orang-orang tua kita yang arif dan bijaksana, adalah ibarat pakaian?*  
...  
*Agama ageming ati*  
*Dan tiap bangsa punya tata, punya acara yang percuma diganggu-gugat siapa pun?*  
...(Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 19)

“Isn’t it religion, as what the wise and the prudent elders said, is like clothes?

...  
religion is *ageming ati* (the cover of the heart) and every race has its own ways which cannot be inviolated by anyone”  
...(Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 19)

The Javanese, according to Pariyem, is a society which has its own rules of conduct, shown by her statement “*Dan tiap bangsa punya tata, punya acara, yang percuma diganggu-gugat siapa pun*”. She believes that the rules cannot be violated by anyone. One of them is to accept religion as “*ageming ati*” (the cover of the heart), which expresses as the embodiment of the heart’s will. On the other hand, Pariyem also shows her belief through her names. She has two names, her birth name (Pariyem) and her Christian name (Maria Magdalena). The expression of her balance of the microcosm and macrocosm is represented by her two names, with each has its own meaning. She always uses Pariyem in her daily life and only uses her Christian name for formal administrative business. On daily occasions, she refuses to be called Maria Magdalena; she wants people to call her Pariyem or Iyem instead because it is the name her parents gave her.

“*ya, ya, Pariyem saya*  
*Maria Magdalena Pariyem lengkapnya*  
*“Iyem” panggilan sehari-harinya*  
*dari Wonosari Gunung Kidul*  
*Apabila suatu hari kita bertemu*  
*Jangan panggil saya Maria*  
*jangan panggil saya Magda*  
*Tapi panggil saya Pariyem*  
...

*lha orangtua saya memanggil Iyem kok?*  
...(Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 16)

“yes, yes, I am pariyeM  
Maria Magdalena Pariyem my fullname  
“Iyem” is the nickname  
from Wonosari Gunung Kidul  
When someday we meet  
Don’t call me Maria  
Don’t call me Magda  
But call me Pariyem

...  
well as my parents call me Iyem”  
...(Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 16)

Pariyem prefers to be called as Iyem, and not Maria or Magda, because her parents call her that way. It shows her respect to the elders, not only parents but also people who are older or have a higher position in the family because kinship in Javanese culture plays an important role as a status and a personality. Mulder (1983, p. 262) emphasizes this notion saying:

Parents have the duty to see to it that their children "become human" (*dadi wong*), that is, become fully Javanese, with an adequate knowledge of Javanese manners, customs, and culture, in order to become accepted and respected members of the community. Consequently, children should obey their parents, following their advice and honoring them.

Because of the same reason, Pariyem also states many times in the novel that her status is as a woman from Gunung Kidul, born in a farmer’s family and lives as a servant. Being born into the world, brought and raised by the parents are an important aspect of Pariyem’s life. She expresses her thankfulness by acknowledging her parents, her family and her background as a woman born in Wonosari, Gunung Kidul, a region in Java, her homeland. Pariyem shows that this is important as she gives repeats it throughout the novel.

“*ya, ya, Pariyem saya*  
*Maria Magdalena Pariyem lengkapnya*  
*“Iyem” panggilan sehari-harinya*  
*dari Wonosari Gunung Kidul*

...(Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 14, 16, 21, 22, 23, 32, 34, 36, 39,...)

“yes, yes, I am pariyem

Maria Magdalena Pariyem my fullname

“Iyem” is the nickname

from Wonosari Gunung Kidul

...(Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 14, 16, 21, 22, 23, 32, 34, 36, 39,...)

Pariyem repeats this statement every time she begins an event or ends an event in her story, from the beginning to the end of this novel. This can be seen as her expression of her identity and by the repetition emphasizes how important it is for her. We can draw further conclude that Javanese people, represented by Pariyem in this novel, are expected to be aware of their position and background in the society.

Pariyem is fully aware of her position as a servant from Wonosari, Gunung Kidul. Even though she has a beautiful formal name, Maria Magdalena, she rarely uses it. Pariyem thinks her birth name is more proper for a servant like her. She believes that by not using all the names she has and by a proper use of the name for the right time, place and situation, she shows gratitude and sincerity to life. Her Christian name is a holy name which cannot be used in every situation because it reflects the religious matter. This idea can be seen from the excerpt:

*Bukankah keyakinan, begitu kata nenek moyang kita, pada hakekatnya adalah sumber kekuatan?*

*Tak pantas diobral sembarangan*

*Lha, jika saya tetap nekad juga*

*O, bisa kacau-balau jagad dalam saya*

*yang tinggal hanya kekosongan*

...(Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 15)

Isn't it belief, as what is said by the ancestors, that are truly is the source of power?

Inappropriate to disclose it carelessly eh, if I still refuse to risk it whoa, my inner world is messed only emptiness stays

...(Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 15)

In this excerpt, Pariyem implies that religion is a private aspect of someone's life and it is inappropriate to show it to public. This also applies to Pariyem's life as a Javanese woman and this is a way to respect the very private life of a person in Javanese culture. The inappropriate use of names indicates non-conformity, which violates the roles given by God and nature and will ruin the rule of conducts in Javanese culture and social system and consequently affect peacefulness of life. Mulder (1983, p. 264) describes this idea as follows:

Being respectful to others means to be accepted and respected in return and is essential for maintaining proper order while achieving *slamet*. Consequently, open conflict should be avoided, it always is wise to maintain conformity. Ambition, the search for personal gain and competitiveness are regarded as being disruptive to the communal order and contrary to the requirements of harmony and equilibrium.

As explained in the excerpt, Javanese ethics advise that all the entities in the world have one specific purpose to build harmony. In Javanese culture, *tata karma* (etiquette) is an important thing. The basis of Javanese ethics relies in *rasa*, the way human feels harmony (Magnis-Soeseno, 1997). It becomes the underlying ground for all traditional practices and tradition.

*Slametan*, as a part of Javanese tradition, is an event of gratitude for the life given and of a condition of well being to achieve harmony. The inner recognition of self identity and the goal to achieve harmony are expressed through the ritual *slametan*. Geertz in Mulder (1983, p.261) explains further about *slametan* as follows:

The core ritual in the attempt to sustain, maintain, or redress order is the *slametan*, that is, the communal socio-religious meal in which neighbors along with some relatives and friends participate. Such *slametan* are held at all life-crises

(from the eighth month of pregnancy to the thousandth day after death), at communal cyclical occurrences (especially the *bersih-désa* or annual village festival accompanied by certain purification rites), and on all sorts of occasions where the community's well-being and equilibrium have been disturbed (Geertz 1960: 11-15, 30-85, in Mulder 1983, p.261).

Geertz describes *slametan* as the core ritual in Javanese tradition. This ritual has been discussed and speculated by many researchers (Hilmy 1999; Keeler 1987; Bowen 1993; Geertz, 1960; Woodward, 1989; and Beatty, 1999), who conducted their research mainly in central or east Java. Those researchers used *slametan* as their starting point in examining Javanese tradition, because only through *slametan*, the community's well-being and equilibrium can be achieved (Newberry, 2006: 16; Hakam, 2017: 100).

*Slametan* is a fundamental ritual way that community is recognized and reproduced on a daily basis (Newberry, 2006). The condition of being *slamet* in Javanese, derived from the Arabic word *Salam*, means a condition of being safe and no harms will happen (Geertz, 1960; Kristanto, 2016) and that is why the tradition is named *slametan*. It is the key ritual in Javanese tradition because it reflects the Javanese ethics, culture, and knowledge. Along with Mulder's statement, Hakam (2017, p. 100) agrees that *slametan* is a feast that is one of the most widely - practiced rituals in Java. In addition, Kistanto also states that Javanese *Slametan* is considered not only as a distinctive and unique socio-religious ritual practiced by the Javanese, but it also serves as a traditional media which identifies the spiritual and social expression of the Javanese. At this point, *Slametan* unifies and harmonizes the Javanese communities as collectivities. (2016, p. 291). In Javanese culture, all the elements of Javanese time and place, rotate based on one point that is the wellbeing, the harmony, and then all the people shall have been *slamet* (Permanadeli, 2015, p. 98). When all the people are *slamet*, the world is balanced and

harmonious, and this is the main goal of Javanese culture and these are the reasons of the importance *slametan* in Javanese culture.

Widely used as the central ritual in Javanese tradition, *slametan* is a manifestation of Javanese spiritual values, the base Javanese social structure and a way to maintain the sustainability of Javanese belief. From this point of view, we understand that *slametan* is an important rite in Javanese tradition. In addition, how *slametan* is described and used in *Pengakuan Pariyem* can be used further to understand these Javanese ideals.

*Slametan* is one of Javanese practice which is full of many important values. Geertz (1960) describes *slametan* as a simple and formal rite where all people gather as one unity and it can be held for various opening or closing of important events as it also embraces every person and all other aspects of nature in one humble ceremonial event. In *Pengakuan Pariyem*, the practice of *slametan* is described in the excerpt below, showing a specific event when people in the village welcome a newborn baby, which is called as *Sepasaran*:

*Sepasaran, bahasa populernya*  
*Maka tersedialah tikar di lantai, di tanah:*  
*Jenang abang: lambang kesucian si jabang bayi*  
*Jenang putih: lambang cahaya yang menerangi*  
*Alam*  
*Ingkung ayam: lambang keutuhan badan*  
*wadhag telanjang*  
*Nasi tumpeng dan gudhangan: lambang pergaulan*  
*hidup*  
*Yang kelak memperkaya pengalaman*  
 ... (Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 3)

*Sepasaran*, It is usually called Mats on the floor, on the ground:  
*Jenang abang: symbol of baby's purity*  
*Jenang putih: symbol of shining light*  
 (to) Nature  
*Ingkung ayam: symbol of body unity*  
 Bare naked  
*tumpeng and gudhangan: symbol of life relationships*  
 which will enrich experience  
 ... (Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 3)

*Sepasaran* is one type of *slametan*, which is specifically purposed to welcome the arrival of a baby to the family. It is usually held around 5 to 7 days after the baby is born. This kind of *slametan* is held when the stub of the baby's umbilical cord falls off, and it is 5 or 7 days subsequent to the birth (Geertz, 2005). In *Pengakuan Pariyem*, *slametan* is narrated not only for *sepasaran* of the birth of Pariyem, but also for the birth of Pariyem's baby. The event is narrated as follows:

“setelah upacara mandi rampung  
ada pula kenduri di ruang depan  
warga sedusun diundang datang  
datang menyelamati thnyul kami  
libatlah, para tetangga berkalang  
berkalang duduk menghadapi ambeng:  
Gudhangan, nasi golong, nasi tumpeng  
Inkung ayam jagoan dan jajanan  
Lengkap dengan berpiring jenang”  
... (Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 216)

“After bathing ceremony  
there is *kenduri* in the front room  
all people in the village are invited to come  
come to bless our baby  
look, the neighbors are coming  
come and sit before the food:  
Gudhangan, nasi golong, nasi tumpeng  
Inkung ayam jagoan and jajanan  
Complete with plates of *jenang*”  
... (Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 216)

In this novel, *slametan* is illustrated with people gathering, sitting together on the mats, facing the food. All the neighbors are invited and all of them attend the ritual to give blessing to the newborn baby. *Slametan* in this novel is described similar to as Hakam describes: it is an event where all the guests are sitting in circular or semi-circular shape and the dishes usually are placed in the middle (Hakam, 2017). Geertz in Mulder, explains that this kind of sitting arrangement has a specific purpose:

At *slametan* all the participants enjoy the same ritual status, each person presents contributing equally to the spiritual potency of the event. Such *slametan*, therefore, serve to demonstrate harmonious unity (*rukun*) among the participants

while invoking the blessing of the gods, spirits, and ancestors, who are formally invited to be present (Geertz 1960: 11-15, 30-85, in Mulder 1983, p.261).

From this two descriptions, we know that the sitting arrangement in *slametan* is symbolic: all people sit together on the floor so they can sit on the same level. They also sit together in semi-circular shape to show that no one is more privileged than the other. How people position themselves in *slametan* shows us that Javanese culture places all people in the same position and level.

In the excerpt, people in *slametan* will pray before the food to ask for blessings on behalf of the baby and the family. In the excerpt, Pariyem tells that “there is *kenduri* in the front room”. This statement is similar to what Hakam describes in *slametan* as all men are sitting in the front part of the house, can be the porch and the living room, and the women are at the back of the house, usually at the kitchen and inner rooms. (Hakam, 2017: 100).

Food, however, plays another important role in *slametan*, as it is shown in the excerpt. There are several important dishes mentioned in the two excerpts above: *jenang abang* (red sticky rice pudding), *jenang putih* (white sticky rice pudding), *inkung ayam* (whole roasted/fried chicken), *tumpeng* (cone-shaped yellow rice), *gudhangan* (side dish), and *nasi golong* (rice ball). As one of the *jajanan* (cake and snacks), *jenang abang* is a sweetmeat made from sticky rice, palm sugar and coconut milk. The color red (*abang*) is from the palm sugar. Similar to *Jenang abang*, *jenang putih* is also made from sticky rice and coconut milk but without the palm sugar, and this make the color stays white (*putih*). *Inkung ayam* is whole roasted/fried chicken served cut open from neck to bottom to show the insides. *Tumpeng* is the signature dish for *slametan*, a cone-shaped yellow rice (the color comes from turmeric) and *gudhangan* is the side dish of *tumpeng*.

As stated in the excerpt (*Pengakuan Pariyem*, p. 3), all kinds of the foods have their own meaning related to what the life means in Javanese perspective, that all the humans, nature and deities have interdependence relationship

to God. *Jenang abang* symbolizes the purity of the baby and *jenang putih* symbolizes light shining towards nature. *Ingkung ayam* symbolizes body unity; presented as bare naked, it symbolizes the purity of a newly-born human. *Tumpang* symbolizes true dignity, prosperity and a philosophy that all connected aspects of nature have one source and end: God. *Gudhangan* symbolizes life relationships which hopefully will enrich the experience of the baby later on.

Not only becomes the center of the ritual ceremony, food in *slametan* also shows relationships of all the people in the village.

“*Sehabis didongakan oleh mbah kaum diikuti dan disertai rasa khidmat lalu dibagi-bagikan: rata dan sepadan mbok rondho mbok rondho diperhitungkan*”  
... (Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 216)

“After prayer led by *mbah kaum* followed and accompanied with solemnity the food is shared: even and proportionate widows are taken into account”  
... (Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 216)

All men and women, parents and children are invited in *slametan*, and not one person is left behind. Everyone in the neighborhood is invited and they have to attend *slametan* to pray together for a blessing for the host. The people in *slametan* will share the food and have meal together. However, not all the dishes will be eaten; they will also bring the food for their family at home and share it with them (Hakam, 2017: 101). Furthermore, Newberry elaborates that *slametan* is not only a commensality ritual which connects houses and households, but it is a way of how the connection of the people in the village is woven through the exchange of food between houses, and families. It starts with the invitation of *slametan*, which is accompanied by a box of food, and then the woman guests will arrive bringing food for the host. The ceremony will start after all the man guests arrive. They will sit and pray before the food and share the meal in the ceremony. At the end of the ceremony, all the guests will bring back the food for their family at home. The flow of the food beginning from the invitation up to the ending shows the relationship between all

the people in the village is equal: everyone counts (Newberry, 2006: 15).

Javanese tradition similar to the practice of *slametan*, accepts all human beings and nature on an equal position. Geertz states that *slametan* puts all the people participating in the event on the same level, blurring the existing hierarchy. He argues, "in *slametan*, not every single person is differentiated, they are all accepted and from this togetherness, no one wants to separate from the common" (Geertz, 2009, p. 8). In hard situations, *slametan* shows that someone has been able to get through that condition, and it is similar to a baby that has been delivered safely with a healthy mother after the difficult process of delivery (Permanadeli, 2015). This is why it is necessary to have *sepasaran*, a *slametan* for newly born baby.

*Slametan*, symbolically, means fit for the moment, it is similar to when a person coincidentally meets another person he has been wanted to meet. Thus, meeting someone is never a coincidence if it is understood using Javanese culture perspective, since Javanese think that coincidences represent the power of God to arrange all the events in the world, including the birth of a baby. Permanadeli adds that in Javanese culture, a baby is a gift from God, and the families are celebrating the arrival of the baby as well as expressing gratefulness for having a new life of a healthy baby by holding *slametan*. The baby however, arrives at the right moment, fits for the condition of the family. Thus, whatever the baby's condition is, the family should be grateful and *slametan* is a way to express the gratitude.

In *Pengakuan Pariyem*, the family and also the neighbors celebrate the birth of the baby in *sepasaran* even though the baby is born out of wedlock. Pariyem was pregnant from her affair with Den Bagus Ario, a son of the *priyayi* family where she works. Even so, the baby is not regarded as a burden nor a bad luck for Pariyem, Pariyem's family, Den Bagus' family or even the people in the village. Pariyem thinks that the baby is as important as other people:

“O, saya tak menaruh keberatan  
...  
Saya tak menaruh pengharapan

*Karena demikianlah nenek saya bilang:  
Setiap anak yang lahir dari gua garba  
Niscaya ada bapak dan ibunya  
Sedang pengakuan dan pengingkaran  
Tergantung rasa blaka dari dalam  
Dan kebudayaan bagi dunia luarnya”  
... (Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 188)*

“O, I don’t mind

...

I don’t put any hope  
Because that's how my grandma said:  
Every child born from womb  
shall always have father and mother  
while acceptance and denial  
depend on sincerity from the inside  
and the tradition on the outside”  
... (Pengakuan Pariyem, p. 188)

As stated in the excerpt, Pariyem does not feel any regret for having the baby. She feels that the baby deserves the same position in life, a good life as the others. We can see from the excerpt that in Javanese culture, people believe that every soul deserves an equal right. This quality applies for every occasion in life. This idea also becomes the reason for Pariyem to hold *slametan* for her baby and she is not ashamed of it.

The description and the use of *slametan* in *Pengakuan Pariyem* show all people in Javanese culture are equal. The equality is also shown by Pariyem’s perspective for keeping the baby because even though the baby is not a legitimate child of a married couple, it is a human who deserves the equal position as others. Pariyem’s decision in having *slametan* for the baby is also accepted by the people in the village, as “all people in the village are invited to come... look, the neighbors come swarming and sit before the food” (*Pengakuan Pariyem*, p. 216). All the people in the village come to give their blessing for the baby. At this point, Pariyem is able to show that she is not ashamed of having the baby, and the people in the village also accept the arrival of the baby by attending the *slametan*.

Pariyem also says that she has no hope for the baby: as long as the baby has father and mother, **the baby is** complete. Pariyem thinks

that the acceptance or denial on the baby depends on the inner and the outer side of a human being. Pariyem describes the inner side as the sincerity of the heart, and the outer side as the tradition. This idea is explained by Mulder (1983, p. 265) that the inner is conceived as a microcosm, and the outer is the macrocosm (the Life). A good Javanese should be able to live without social purpose or *pamrib* (egoism) but should be motivated to live in tune with life and destiny. Pariyem has not set any hopes for the baby and accepts her as she is, this woman proves that she does not have any personal agenda or egoism. However, Pariyem is still able to fulfill her social role as a mother, to deliver the baby and to have the *slametan* as the tradition in Javanese culture.

The Javanese society, as other society, however, bounds every person inside it with the social and historical conditions, whilst not to leave psychological condition either. Pariyem as a part of Javanese culture, cannot be separated from her social construct. Mulder (1983, p. 266) explains that in any circumstances, people in Javanese culture can have their own faith as long as they respect the social conduct. It involves the realization of one's true self. In this point of view, a self is then becoming a social subject. A social subject, therefore, is forced into a certain role and a certain appearance as the outer side and at the same time, the subject compensates the self-realization. Pariyem as a woman in Javanese culture is able to demonstrate that even though she is living in the culture of conformity, she can act actively as an active subject.

Pariyem as a character with contradictions in *Pengakuan Pariyem* novel, however, is not a passive character. Although she is constructed and bound in a Javanese culture, Pariyem has performed and fulfilled her social identity, tradition, and responsibility to maintain the sense of togetherness in the community. Mulder states that the togetherness in Javanese culture somehow “is an attitude of passivity and it is recognized as the means of maintaining personal and communal equilibrium and as being conducive to attainment to the rather negatively defined state of *slamel*” (Mulder 1983, p.

264). However, while maintaining the sense of togetherness, Pariyem also shows active engagement in conducting her own decision to hold *slametan* for her baby.

People in Javanese culture are supposed to build social harmony through ordered relation, social control, and overt self-humbleness. Therefore, the ethics of family and the ethics of the community should be the ethic of Javanese culture, which in this case is the paternalistic leadership, mutual assistance, observance of *rukun* (getting along with all people), and attendance of each other's life-crisis rituals. As part of the society where strong humbleness and dignity of the self is vital, Pariyem should have been ashamed of having a baby as result of her extramarital affair. However, in her life, Pariyem is able to show that this contradiction can be managed as long as the act to maintain harmony is performed, and the effort is done through *slametan*.

### CONCLUSION

By regarding Pariyem as a social and discursive structure in *Pengakuan Pariyem* novel, we can understand that there is a dualistic quality in the character. Pariyem as a social subject is able to obey and fulfill her obligation in the society. As a part of the Javanese society, she is able to perform her role as a woman living in Javanese culture. She accepts Javanese belief, respects her parents, and embraces her identity. On the other hand, Pariyem as a social subject is an independent subject who is able to create her will and fulfill her own decision as long as she is sincere and grateful for her life.

In Javanese culture, being sincere to life and being grateful are important. The capability to accept life sincerely is expressed in daily practices. To accept the condition of human as a part of the universe and to get along with the course of the universe is the way to achieve harmony, which is the goal of Javanese culture which rules the idea of equality. This can be achieved through the practices of traditions, especially *slametan*. *Slametan*, as described and used in this novel from Pariyem's perspective, expresses the idea of equality.

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