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## **FOLKLORES FROM SOUTH SUMATERA IN ENGLISH: MEDIA TO INTRODUCE INDONESIAN CULTURE TO INTERNATIONAL WORLD**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this research is to describe culture values which are contained in three folklores from South Sumatera and its functions as a media to introduce Indonesian culture to international world. This research is a library research. The data were gathered by using descriptive method and qualitative approach. As it is well known, Indonesia has a lot of folklores from 35 provinces as precious Indonesian wealth, one of them is South Sumatera Province. There are three folklores from South Sumatera; Legend of Kemaro Island, Legend of Bidar Boats Competition, and Semesat and Semesit. Indonesian folklores in English have role to introduce Indonesian terms, to describe Indonesian culture, and to promote Indonesian places. By reading the English version of the folklores on this website, people from all over the world can comprehend the stories and its culture values.

**Keywords:** Indonesian folklores, South Sumatera, culture values, functions

### **1. Introduction**

Culture has a very large definition so that everyone can interpret it from many points of view. There are two kinds of culture, universal culture and local culture. People can learn culture by seeing directly communities in some regions. Besides, we can learn a culture by reading folklores from all over the world.

Since folklore has many definitions, no one can define it clearly and succinctly. Based on Wikipedia, the most common definition of folklore was that it represented 'oral tradition', or traditions that have been transmitted in an oral manner. In the past, folklore was generally focused on traditional stories and songs. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folklore>).

According to Sims and Stephens (2005:1) folklore is presented in many kinds of informal communication, whether verbal (oral and written texts), customary (behaviors, rituals) or material (physical objects). It involves values, traditions, ways of thinking and behaving. It is about art. It is about people and the way people learn. It helps us learn who we are and how to make meaning in the world around us.

Meanwhile, Noyes (in Kuper and Kuper, 2004:375) stated that folklore is a metacultural category that is used to mark certain genres and practices within modern societies as being not modern. By extension, the word refers to the study of such materials. More specific definitions place folklore on the far side of the various epistemological, aesthetic and technological binary oppositions that distinguish the modern from its presumptive contraries. Folklore therefore typically evokes both repudiation and nostalgia.

In this research, folklore is seen as a fictive traditional story that is created from a thought of human being, telling a life journey in a region with moral lesson about how to interact with others. Folklore is defined as stories that originated orally and have no authors. In Indonesia, folklore is known as *cerita rakyat*. Its origins are probably an oral culture, with a range of hero stories that was associated with forms of theatre, and it is transliterated to a written culture. Folklore in Indonesia are closely connected with mythology. There are several genres of Indonesian folklores, such as tales, legends, epic, fable, and myth.

Indonesia has a lot of folklores from 35 provinces as precious Indonesian wealth, one of them is South Sumatera Province. It is located in the southern part of Sumatra island, east of the Bukit Barisan Mountains with Palembang as its Capital.

## **2. Culture Values in the Legend of Kemaro Island**

Legend of Kemaro Island is a about love story between Princess Fatimah and Tan Bun An who tragically ended. Tan Bun An was a Chinese young man. He went

to many places to do some business. After travelling so long, he finally got a partner from a kingdom in Palembang. Because of his dedication, diligence, and loyalty, the king and the queen really liked him. Tan Bun An fell in love with Princess Fatimah, a daughter of the king and the queen.

The king and the queen asked Tan Bun An to give many golds and jewelries as a requirement to marry their daughter. Tan Bun An sent a letter to his parents in China. He asked them to send him what Princess Fatimah's parents asked. After waiting for a few months, a big ship arrived to Palembang and brought nine jars. Tan Bun An thought that the nine jars were filled out with golds and jewelries. When he checked them, he was very dissapointed. He saw rotten vegetables only in the jars. With full of anger, he threw out the jars to the river one by one. But when he was going to throw out the last jar, it fell to the ship floor. He was very surprised when knew that there were many golds and jewelries in it. Apparently, his parents covered the gold and jewelry with vegetables to avoid pirates. Without thinking it over, he directly jumped to the river. Princess Fatimah worried about her husband's safety. Before she jumped, she told her guards not to wait for them if they didn't come back in ten minutes.

After waiting for so long, the guards concluded that Princess Fatimah and Tan Bun An had died. Suddenly, a land appeared from the river. The land was getting large and formed an island. People named it 'Kemaro Island' that means a land that is always dry like 'Musim Kemarau' (dry season). It is because the land is is never wet, even though in rainy season.

From the *Legend of Kemaro Island*, we cand find three Indonesian culture values. *First*, it is about politeness. This character was shown by Tan Bun An when he first came to the kingdom. We can see the character from the following citation.

*He planned to stay for several months. He came to the palace to meet the king. He wanted to ask the king's permission.*

(<http://indonesianfolklore.blogspot.co.id/2009/09/legend-of-kemaro-island.html>)

*Second*, it is about friendliness. Indonesian people are well-known by their friendliness. This character was shown by the King and the Queen when they first time welcomed Tan Bun An. Here is a quotation about it.

*"I will let you stay here and do this business. but remember, you have to share your profit. You have to give half of your profit to the kingdom," said the king.*  
(<http://indonesianfolklore.blogspot.co.id/2009/09/legend-of-kemaro-island.html>)

*Third*, it is about dowry. In Indonesia, giving a dowry to a bride is an obligation for every groom. Srimulyani (2015:317-318) stated that Dowry in Indonesian language is called as 'mahar' or 'mas kawin'. Although, it is said as *mas kawin* (gold of marriage), in reality, the local practices in some Indonesian ethnic communities, it is not always in kind of (gold). In indonesia, some of dowries are in the form of money, jewellery or others, such as 'seperangkat alat sholat'(a set of materials for prayers).

In the *Legend of Kemaro Island*, the King asked Tan Bun An to give dowry as a requirement to marry his daughter, Princess Fatimah. This part was narrated as follow.

*"I will let you marry my daughter. But there is one thing you have to do. Give me nine big jars filled with gold," said the king. Tan Bun Ann wrote a letter to his parents in China and told them about Siti Fatimah. The parents agreed and sent him*  
*nine big jars filled with gold.*  
(<http://indonesianfolklore.blogspot.co.id/2009/09/legend-of-kemaro-island.html>)

### **3. Culture Values in the Legend of Bidar Boats Competition**

Legend of Bidar boats competition is a triangle love story among Princess Dayang Merindu, Kemala Negara, and Dewa Jaya. Kemala Negara fell in love with

Putri Dayang Merindu. He wanted to marry Putri Dayang Merindu, he talked to her parents and proposed her. But he was rejected by King Sah Denar (Princess Dayang Merindu's father). King Sah Denar said that Putri Dayang Merindu was engaged to Jaya Dewa.

Kemala Negara could not accept Sah Denar's decision. He challenged Jaya Dewa to fight, but both of them have the same power, no one lost in the fighting. Princess Dayang Merindu had an idea. She asked Kemala Negara and Jaya Dewa to have river boats competition. They agreed her idea. People gathered along the side of Musi River. They were curious to know who would win the competition and would marry Princess Dayang Merindu.

Kemala Negara and Dewa Jaya started to row their own boat. However, those two strong men could reach the finish line at the same time. When people approached them, they were surprised. Both of them were lying on their boats. They were very tired, they lost their strength and slowly died. Putri Dayang Merindu was very sad. Her heart was broken due to the death of two men who loved her. She never thought it would happen. She said that she just wanted to die. She asked her parents to divide her body into two parts. One part was buried with Kemala Negara's body, and one part was buried with Dewa Jaya's body. She wanted to be fair to both of them. People were touched by her decision. To commemorate the incident, people always have river boats competition in Musi River. The word '*Bidar*' was from '*biduk lancar*' or swift river.

From the *Legend of Bidar Boats Competition*, we can find three Indonesian culture values. *First*, it is about honesty. This character was shown by Kemala Negara when he tried to give back Dayang Merindu's comb that he found in the river. Read the following part.

*One day Kemala Negara was walking on the side of Musi River. He saw a comb floating in the river. The comb was very beautiful. Kemala Negara knew that*

*the owner must be very rich. He wanted to return it to the the owner. So he asked people around. Finally, Kemala Negara met a girl. He knew the owner of comb he had found. The comb belonged to Putri Dayang Merindu, the daughter of Sah Denar.* (<http://folklore4u.blogspot.co.id/2009/12/legend-of-bidar-competition-folklore.html>)

*Second, it is about Bidar boats competition. It was shown in the following part.*

*He asked Dewa Jaya to compete. They agreed to have a river craft competition. People were gathered along the side of Musi River. They were curious who would win the competition and would marry Putri Dayang Merindu.*

(<http://folklore4u.blogspot.co.id/2009/12/legend-of-bidar-competition-folklore.html>)

*Third, it is about a justice. This character was shown by Princess Dayang Merindu when he asked her parents to divide her body into two part so that it would be fair for both of Kemala Negara and Dewa Jaya who loved her. This part was told as follow.*

*Putri Dayang Merindu was extremely sad. She never thought that it would happen like this. She said that she just want to die. She asked her parents to divide her body into two parts. One part was buried with Kemala Negara's body and one part was buried with Dewa Jaya's body. She wanted to be fair to both of them.*

(<http://folklore4u.blogspot.co.id/2009/12/legend-of-bidar-competition-folklore.html>)

#### **4. Culture Values in Semesat and Semesit**

Folklore *Semesat and Semesit* tells about two brothers, Semesat and Semesit. They lived with their father and step-mother. Their stepmother did not like them. She tried to throw away both of them. She hit her own cheek. She told her husband that Semesat and Semesit hurt her. Their father was very angry, he threw away Semesat and Semesit to a jungle.

Semesat and Semesit were sad, they were hungry and thirsty, but there was no food to eat. Suddenly, a bird came and approached them. The bird said, “Whoever eats my flesh, he will become rich soon”. Semesat took a stone and hit the bird. A few minute later, another bird came and said “Whoever eats my flesh, he will face hard life but finally he will find happiness.”. Semesat gave the first bird to her brother, Semesit, meanwhile he ate the second bird. After that, they continued the journey. They arrived to a kingdom. People said that their king had just passed away. They wanted Semesit to become their new king, meanwhile Semesat continue his journey.

One day Semesat took a fruit in a yard. He thought that the fruit had no owner. People arrested him and brought him to the King Semesit. Unfortunately, the King Semesit could not recognize him anymore. Semesat was punished, a half of his body was buried in a sack of husks that was called ‘*Bujud Keling*’

A few days later, there was a good news from another kingdom. A princess was looking for her future husband. The King Semesit and his guards went to the kingdom by using a very large ship, but suddenly the ship was shaky. A guard said “My King, if we don’t want our ship to sink, you should use a ‘*Bujud Keling*’ with us. Semesit decided to back home and brought ‘*Bujud Keling*’ with them, and they safely arrived in the kingdom. The princess had a contest with a unique rule. Whoever was kissed by her horse, he would become her husband. The princess started riding her horse, surprisingly the horse kissed a sack, not the contestants. The princess asked her guards to open the sack. Semesit told the princess that the man in the sack was only a thief, he thought that he was the winner, he had the right to marry the princess.

The princess still chose Semesat rather than Semesit. Semesit was very dissappointed. Soon, Semesat told Semesit that he was her brother. Semesit regreted what he had done to his brother. Finally Semesat and Semesit lived happily in their kingdom.

From *Semesat and Semesit*, we can find at least two Indonesian culture values. *First*, it is about sacrifice. This was shown by Semesat when he gave the first bird to his brother Semesit, and he just ate the second bird. I quoted it as follow.

*“My brother, eat this bird so that you will be a rich man soon. Let me eat this one. It is alright for me to live a hard life as long as the end is happy,” said Semesat.*

(<http://ceritarakyatnusantara.com/en/folklore/60-Semesat-and-Semesit>)

*Second*, it is about patience. This character was shown by Semesat when he was punished by her brother Semesit, but he didn't angry because he knew that Semesit was his brother. We can see this part in the following citation.

*The people took him to King Semesit to be punished. King Semesit did not recognize his brother. The King Semesit sentenced him to half body burial in a sack of husks called 'Bujud Keling'.* (<http://ceritarakyatnusantara.com/en/folklore/60-Semesat-and-Semesit>)

## **5. Functions of Folklores from South Sumatera**

The folklores from South Sumatera have some important functions. *First*, folklores from South Sumatera in English have role to introduce Indonesian terms. When people try to translate Indonesian folklores to English version, they will find some Indonesian terms that cannot be translated to English. For Example, in the *Legend of Kemaro Island*, there is the word 'Kemaro' that means 'dry season', but people translate 'pulau Kemaro' as 'Kemaro island' in English, not 'dry Season Island'. In the *Legend of Bidar Boats Competition*, there is the word 'Bidar' that means 'swift river', but people still translate 'perahu Bidar' as 'Bidar boat' in English, not 'swift river boat'. In *Semesat and Semesit*, there is the word 'Bujud keling' that means 'sack of husks'. People still use the terms 'Bujud keling' in English version rather than 'sack of husks'.

*Second*, folklores from South Sumatera in English have role to describe Indonesian culture values. According to Tripungkasingtyas (2016:518) folklore is one of the literary works in particular that can help students to recognize the cultures of the archipelago which are contained in the folklore. As it is explained before, in the *Legend of Kemaro Island* there are three Indonesian culture values, *politeness*, *friendliness*, and *dowry*. In the *Legend of Bidar Boats Competition*, there are three Indonesian culture values, *honesty*, *Bidar boats competition*, and *justice*. In *Semesat and Semesit*, there are two Indonesian culture values, *sacrifice* and *patience*.

*Third*, folklores from South Sumatera in English have role to promote Indonesian place. There are some places in the folklores from South Sumatera, *Musi river* and *Kemaro island*. *Musi River* is one of South Sumatera icons, with a length reaching 750 kilometers, it becomes the longest river in Sumatera island. Meanwhile *Kemaro island* is one of most popular destinations in South Sumatera. It is located in a small delta of Musi River, it is about 6 kilometers from Ampera bridge.

## **6. English as an Instructional Language in International Class**

English is one of international languages with the highest growth. This condition causes people around the world learning English, either for academic or specific purpose. Sharifian (2009:347) stated that English as International language implies a way of communication across different nationalities.

Nowdays, English is used as an instructional language in many countries, either in ESL class or in EFL class. According to Hasbi (2013:5) English as a second language (ESL) belongs to those whose English is a secondary language used for a particular purpose and in a particular situation. The countries that have English as second language are Malaysia and India. Furthermore, Hasbi (2013:5) stated that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) belongs to those whose English is a foreign language used for a limit purpose and in a limit situation. The countries that have English as foreign language are Indonesia, Bhutan, Iran, Iraq, etc.

Integrating literature such as Indonesian folklores into English Language Teaching (ELT), either into ESL or EFL class will increase students interest in learning English. It is not only because folklore can educate students, but it can also entertain them. Perizade (2015:V) stated that by integrating literature into ELT and knowing how to effectively implement it in their classrooms, teachers will be able to improve their students' English performance as well as introduce local and international literature to the learners. In line with that, Fadhli (2015:198) stated that through Indonesian folktales in translation as learning material in EFL classroom, English teachers can integrate culture knowledge and moral values as well as some language aspects.

## **7. Conclusion and Remark**

There are three folklores from South Sumatera; *Legend of Kemaro Island*, *Legend of Bidar Boats Competition*, and *Semesat and Semesit*. In the *Legend of Kemaro Island* there are three Indonesian culture values, *politeness*, *friendliness*, and *dowry*. In the *Legend of Bidar Boats Competition*, there are three Indonesian culture values, *honesty*, *Bidar boat competition*, and *justice*. In *Semesat and Semesit*, there are two Indonesian culture values, *sacrifice* and *patience*.

Indonesian folklores in English have role to introduce Indonesian terms, to describe Indonesian culture, and to promote Indonesian places. By reading the English version of the folklores on this website, people from all over the world can comprehend the stories and its culture values.

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