

WRITING AS THE MEDIUM OF LOCAL CULTURE PRESERVATION BY SUNDANESE WRITERS IN BANDUNG

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A B S T R A C T

Language is the medium used by human to communicate with other human. One function of language according to Larry L. Barker is for transmitting information. As a means of transmitting information, language can pass the time, by linking the past, present, and future to allow for the continuity of culture and tradition. This function of language is used by a number of authors in Bandung to preserve the Sundanese culture through writing. Through qualitative-phenomenological method, this article reveals the Sundanese writer's experience in using his ability to write in an effort to preserve Sundanese culture. Based on data collected through interviews and document searches, it was revealed that cultural preservation conducted by the Sundanese writers done through two types of writing, fiction and nonfiction. Literacy used in a form of humor, essays, short stories, and more. Medium that used for message distribution also varied, ranging from print media such as newspapers, magazines, newspapers, books, radio, film, up to social media. Cultural preservation efforts conducted by the writers, in essence, boils down to a desire to keep the Sundanese culture still maintained continuity, also may give a contribution to the development of civilization.

KEY WORDS : language, writing, Sundanese writers, Sundanese culture, cultural preservation

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Language is a medium that humans use to communicate with other human beings. One of the language function according to Larry L. Barker (1984, in Mulyana, 2007: 266) is for the transmission of information. As a means of transmitting information, language can cross the time, by connecting past,

present, and future so as to enable the existence of the continuity of our culture and traditions. The function is used by a number of writers in Bandung City to preserve the local culture of Sunda through writing.

Preservation, in Kamus Bahasa Indonesia (2008) is defined as an effort or process of making something stays as it is. More details, A.W. Widjaja (1986) defines preservation as continuous activities, directed and integrated activity in order to realize certain goals that reflect the existence of something fixed and eternal, dynamic, flexible and selective (Jacobus, 2006: 115).

Jacobus Ranjabar (2006: 114) argues that the preservation of local culture is to maintaining the values of arts and traditional values by developing dynamic, flexible and selective manifestations and adapting to changing and evolving situations.

One goals of cultural preservation is to revitalize or strengthen the culture. According Chaedar Alwasilah, cultural revitalization can be defined as a planned effort, sustainable and deliberate so that cultural values are not only understood by the owners, also evokes any form of creativity in everyday life in the face of various challenges. For the sake of revitalization then the cultural verses need to be re-examined and given a new interpretation. The new interpretation will be enlightening when there is a critical appraisal with foreign cultures. (Alwasilah, 2006: 18)

Sustainability couldn't possibly stand on its own, because it is always paired with the development of survival. Sustainability is a stabilizing aspect of human life, while survival is a dynamic reflection (Soekanto, 2003: 432).

Culture becomes important in preservation. This means that the culture will be preserved is still exist and is known even though its development is increasingly eroded or forgotten. Preservation can only be done effectively when objects or things that is preserved is still in use and remain supported. When the culture is no longer is use, then it will disappear. The cultural process and strategy or the pattern it uses, C.A. Van Peursen (1988: 233), explain it in the following,

“The culture actually is not a noun, but a verb or in other words, is the work of our own culture, our own responsibility. *Culture is functionally described as a relation to our own plan of life. Culture then appears as a gigantic learning process that is being run by mankind*”.

C.A. Van Peursen sees, as culture does not happen outside of our own, then humans themselves must find a cultural strategy, including in the process of preserving culture. Because, the process of preserving culture that in essence will lead to cultural behavior, if done continuously and within a certain period of time.

So is Sundanese culture. The development of the era eroded the values and conserved cultural forms. One of them is the use of Sundanese language which continues to decrease, because many Sundanese people choose to make the Indonesian language as the main language, so it is feared to be extinct. The

anxiety also attracted the attention of the Sundanese writers, to preserve one of their cultural heritage through writing. Efforts made by the Sundanese writers, is a form of strengthening or cultural revitalization that restrain Sundanese culture from extinction due to the development of the times.

Writing is part of the culture and through writing, the authors can preserve various forms of culture, such as the values of Sundanese life, the character of the Sundanese and the history of kesundaan. So, the writings that can be categorized as preserving Sundanese culture are writings depicting the Sundanese and kesundaan, both in character and in the values of life it embraces, as well as behavior in social life and history. For example the philosophy of life, religion, humor, social relations, culture and historicity. These authors use of the available media such as magazines, newspapers and books to convey the thoughts, feelings and experiences of kesundaan in writing that reflect themselves as part of the Sundanese urban who has a duty to teach this culture. In this case, Sundanese functioned not only as a communication tool, as well as a tool of developers and supporters of Sundanese culture itself.

This research uses qualitative method with phenomenology approach. This method is used, because the main object of this research is the experience of Sunda writers in utilizing writing as a media Sundanese culture perservation. The subject of this study is the Sundanese writer, the individual who works in pouring his mind through writing about kesundaan that is disseminated through printed mass media (newspapers, magazines) and books, to be known and understood by the readers. With dissemination, the paper is expected to help preserve Sundanese culture as an asset of the nation's heritage. Eight authors are selected to be informants based on their experience and ability in putting their creative ideas into writing that can be said as a media for preserving Sundanese culture. They are Us Tiarsa, Usep Romli, Aam Amilia, Aan Merdeka Permana, Eddy D. Iskandar, Taufik Faturohman, Hawe Setiawan, Dadan Sutisna All informants have a background of journalists who have been and are still actively working in Sundanese-speaking media. They also have works written in Sundanese in various forms and themes. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with resource persons and conducted a review of the documents related to the research. The collected data is then processed and analyzed using data analysis methods from Miles and Huberman. The results are presented in the form of inductive narrative that illustrates the efforts of Sunda writers in using writing as a medium of preserving Sundanese culture.

The Reality of Sundanese Writers

Sundanese language is one of the cultural heritage that has been recognized by the UN Agency, Unesco. It used by most of the population of West Java, reaching approximately 27 million people and is the second largest user language in Indonesia after Javanese language. As the dominant language used in West Java, Sundanese is used in everyday conversations as well as in writing as the work of creative people called authors. The existence of Sundanese in the life of the people of West Java is very important. As spoken by the Sundanese writer and journalist, Us Tiarsa, the following:

“Language is one of the highest cultural results in a nation’s life. Without language, of course we can not communicate. Without language we can not work. Without language of course, not a nation, “

Furthermore, Us Tiarsa said, the 1960s to the 1970s, is a period of Sunda writers thrive. At that time publishing was quite a lot. At that time, television did not exist yet. Entertainment is only radio and newspapers, so the habit of reading also grows and stimulates the authors to produce his works in the form of poetry, short stories and novels that used to be known as romance, because the story is more about romance. The condition of Sundanese publishing at that time, ie newspapers, magazines, Sundanese books, until the year ‘74 was still very much. After the mid-70’s, they are getting rare.

The number of publications correlates with the emergence of authors, then idolized by teenagers, so that many high school students want to be authors. W.S. Rendra, Utuy Tatang Sontani and Amir Hamzah were the authors of teen idols at the time, so many young people at that time wanted to become an author, especially those who go to the literature department. Many who become a writer or at least become a nerd or a passive artist is also a lot.

Over time, the Sundanese media is falling, eroded the emergence of Indonesian media. Now the media that survives less than ten, two of them survive tens of years, namely *Mangle* and Galura. *Mangle* is the oldest Sundanese weekly magazine in West Java, first published November 20, 1957 in Bogor, with its founder RH. Oeton Muchtar and Ny. RHE. Rochimika Sudarmika. With the mission of advancing Sundanese society and civilization, consistently, *Mangle* continues to survive in the format of writing with Sundanese. In 1962, *Mangle* moved to Bandung. As the oldest Sundanese magazine, many writers are proud when their writings published in *Mangle*. Consistently, *Mangle* is always trying to give birth to young writers, as a cadre of previous generations who have been involved in *Mangle* in particular and in the world of Sundanese authenery generally. The magazine located at Lodaya Street is also often a gathering place for Sundanese writers, especially the senior Sundanese writers.

In any circumstances, *Mangle* is able to survive because it is maintained by its managers as a magazine that contributes to the preservation of Sundanese culture to create social piety of Sundanese people in particular. Changes are made to suit the readers need.

In addition to *Mangle*, Galura is also a medium of print media that is quite mature, ie 39 years. Published periodically in once a week. Media headed by Eddy D. Iskandar is constantly improving to position itself as a Sundanese language media that brings the spirit of *Mawa Sora Balaea* in the midst of its readers. In 1975, Galura joined *Pikiran Rakyat* Group. Galura was often used as a gathering place for artists and Sundanese writers. Some writers who once took part in Galura, still often come to visit for friendship, such as Usep Romli, Aan Merdeka Permana, or Aam Amilia. Through both media and other media, Sunda writer regeneration continues, although its appearance is relatively slow. The emergence of young writers is a proof of their love of Sundanese culture although still dominated by senior writers.

Sundanese writers who survived were mostly senior writers, who emerged from the 60s to 80s. Now, the author who belongs to the new generation, just a little. The reason is, writing in Sundanese can not be expected for living, so, many Sundanese writers also write in Indonesian language.

The decrease of Sundanese language use in the Sundanese community, allegedly contributed to the decrease of Sundanese media and the slow process of regeneration. Young writers who appear mostly are those who are indeed studying at the Faculty of Sundanese Literature. In addition, most of them are teachers or permanent employees who make Sundanese writing as a sideline outside of the main job. In addition to state employee, some of whom work or have worked as journalists.

The development of technology erode the existence of Sundanese print media. From tens, then shrink to be under ten media. Of these, only a few can survive. the number of readers was relatively fixed and is a loyal reader. In addition, the chances of young writers to appear to be narrow because of the Sundanese publishers prefer the work of senior authors, who are more accounted for the quality.

Although its condition is very difficult for Sundanese media, but, its existence becomes a medium for the Sundanese writers to channel their creative ideas in writing. The existence of Sundanese writers can be used as a *ciciren* or marker for the existence of Sundanese culture, especially the language.

Maintaining Language = Maintaining Culture

One characteristics of the culture is growing and changing (Hebding and Glick, 1991 in Liliweri, 2011). Culture is dynamic, always changing with the times, human thought and needs. Cultural changes bring consequences to

the culture owner and culture community to adjust to the changes that occur, without losing the core or the identity of the culture. The Sundanese writers were aware of it. For them, change is not something to be afraid of, but it must be faced. To survive and be known, Sundanese culture must continue to adapt to the times. One of them with the use of Sundanese. "Sundanese language that changed until now. Perhaps when in 1920, a poet, Muhammad Musa said, Sundanese language is kamalayon, meaning much influenced Malay language. It was 1920. Especially now it's been mixed up once. Just accept it "

According to Us Tiarsa, the inclusion of new vocabulary from other languages into Sundanese, is one of the effects of the development that occurred. It does not need to be rejected. This influence becomes a kind of cultural treasure that must be received with open arms. "We will be tired of continuing to maintain the purity of a language, a culture. Because it is impossible. Culture has mutual influence."

Writing is a creative work that provides language. Through language, writers can work and communicate with writing. The way that Sundanese writers do in maintaining Sundanese culture is to write using Sundanese. For Sundanese writers, maintaining Sundanese is the same as maintaining culture, because language is one of the high cultural results in the life of a nation. Language is the mirror of a nation. With such a principle, then, the informant of this research is still productive writing in Sundanese. For them, writing is part of the process of maintaining Sundanese language and literature from the urging of globalization as well as enriching the literature of Sundanese literature with new works.

Maintaining language through writing is also an expression of gratitude for the author who is destined to live as a Sundanese. Regional idealism has been a key driver for writers to preserve Sundanese culture through language, so the authors no longer think of the honor it would receive if it were written in Sundanese, as it is very small compared to writing in Indonesian.

(.. the money is not worth. If you see the money, you don't want to write. But, the idealism as the Sundanese who do not want the language disappear, makes me do the best...) (Aam Amilia)

"If we leave it for the reason that there is no commercial value, that can not bring anything materially, it extinct already. So, for me, working is to extend the functions of Sundanese especially in the form of writing ". (Dadan Sutisna)

According to Dadan, writing in Sundanese is still needed as a form of language preservation. The reason, "One of the characteristics of the language is still alive well is the first seen from the side of the speaker. Then it is seen whether the language is only live in spoken language or also live in written language. If spoken language, I'm sure in the township is still using Sundanese language. But when we speak the language of writing, what is needed is the writers of Sundanese, both fiction and nonfiction "

Dadan's hope to be able to develop Sundanese language, was done by enriching the themes of writing according to the times. One of them by incorporating the elements of information technology, into the themes of writing fiction and nonfiction written. In fiction writing, one of them is a child novel titled *Rasiah Kodeu Biner* (the Secret of Biner Codes), which earned Rancage Literature Prize in 2011 or a poem titled *Sasemplek Portrait JPEG*. Dadan said, his fondness for information technology was still associated with his love of the Sundanese language. He wants Sundanese follow the development of technology. For that, Dadan pursue the world of information technology in the hope, one day he can make a software or software to write in Sundanese, for example dictionary, thesaurus and grammar in Sundanese.

In addition to producing writing, in order to maintain the continuity of Sundanese language and literature, the writers of Sundanese also make various other efforts, which are still associated with the world of writing. These efforts include regeneration and publishing. Regeneration is done by educating young writers to creatively produce good writings about the delay, especially in Sundanese. This effort has been done by Aam Amilia independently and her students succeeded in becoming productive Sundanese writers such as Cecep Burdansyah, Hermawan Aksan and Holisoh ME.

Taufik Faturohman established the publishing. The man who called Pak Haji founded Geger Sunten publishers specializing in publishing Sundanese language books and magazines, as well as Sundanese textbooks and literary works such as poetry and short story. Taufik was also active as a writer of Sundanese Language and Literature teaching books for elementary school, junior high school and high school students based on competency-based and Islamic-based curriculum. Especially for elementary school students, included stories of children's tales. "I want children at an early age should know Sundanese culture especially about Sundanese language. I do not want the children to lose the teaching of Sundanese, now people are not much concerned with Sundanese."

Taufik also spread the Sundanese language through radio broadcasting as announcer in the morning program of I Radio Bandung, Broadcaster of Hueureuy Bandung in RRI Studio Bandung, as well as an announcer in Panglipur Kalbu Radio Mora. In addition, Taufik became the author of *Mang Ohle* column in *Pikiran Rakyat Daily* with 60 percent Sundanese language uses.

Fiction & Non Fiction Writing

The Sundanese writers produce writings in the form of fiction and nonfiction. The Fictional writing formed in such short stories, fairy tales, novels and poems. While the works of nonfiction that produced, among others, articles, featured, essays, columns and more.

In writing out their, the authors chose themes that suits their interests and abilities to write such themes. Various themes selected by the author to convey their thoughts and feelings related to kesundaan. The themes are social, actual events, classical Sundanese history, teenage world / popular, humor and Sundanese local wisdom.

Each writer chooses the theme of their writing based on experience and knowledge of the themes. Selection of classical Sundanese historical themes for example. Aan Merdeka Permana chose Sundanese classical history in most of his writings, because there is little information about the history of the Sunda kingdom compared to the history of Java. With the selection of the theme, Aan wants the Sundanese people to know their history. Aan also published his own investigation of the history of Sundanese in Ujung Galuh magazine. Aan's works on Sundanese classical history include novel Silalatu Gunung Salak, Senja Jatuh di Pajajaran, and Sasakala Candi Bojong Emas. The theme of Sundanese history is written by former editor of SKM Galura in fiction and nonfiction, using two languages, Sundanese and Bahasa Indonesia. The reason is, Aan wants the information about the past Sundanese also read by non Sundanese or Sundanese who cannot speak Sundanese.

Eddy D. Iskandar preserves Sundanese culture through popular themes. One of his successful works is the scenario of Kabayan's film, which succeeded in introducing Sundanese culture to the national scene in 1989 and making Kabayan a nationally known and liked figure. The film Si Kabayan Saba Kota succeeded in becoming the best-selling film in Indonesia and was selected as the best comedy film of the Festival Film Indonesian in 1990.

Social Media: Adaptation to Global Culture

The development of information technology with the presentation of the internet, opened the faucet for the entry of information from various parts of the world, resulting in the explosion of information that is not controlled. Anyone can now access information anywhere and anytime. The world seems to be a global village or global village as mentioned by Marshall McLuhan (1960).

As mentioned earlier, that the Sundanese writers considered changes in Sundanese culture, as well as other cultures, to be part of the process to be followed, not to be feared or rejected. The thing that needs to be done with the development is adjusting. The adjustment is done by writing contemporary themes, such as technology and popular culture. It could also convey a post about kesundaan in social media. Some authors do this by create a blog or facebook containing writing containing thoughts and feelings about kesundaan. Hawe Setiawan, Taufik Faturohman and Dadan Sutisna do so through their social media accounts. Hawe Setiawan created a blog sundaneseCorner.org which contained things about kesundaan, which he poured in various forms,

such as writing, photos, sketches, opinions, and essays. Hawe also creates a Facebook account, which contains of his activities, both personal activities and activities related to kesundaan.

Taufik Faturohman and Dadan Sutisna went on similar terms as Hawe Setiawan. Both create a Facebook account that contains writings and daily activities, related to kesundaan. Taufik created two accounts, namely Cakakak Magazine account, which contained humor stories he made as well as Taufik Faturohman account, which contained his activities as well as humor writings that he also made. Through accounts in social media, both Hawe, Taufik and Dadan can communicate with their account visitors. Can even comment on every post submitted by the authors. Through activities in social media, writings on language and Sundanese culture can be known more widely. With the widely known, it is expected that Sundanese culture can contribute to global civilization.

C O N C L U S I O N

The global development that brought a change to local culture does not make the Sundanese authors being anti againts such change. They just respond patiently and continue to stepping the process of preserving Sundanese culture through writing about the kesundaan delivered in Sundanese, Indonesian, and English. The maintenance effort of local Sundanese culture is lived through consistency writing in Sundanese by most of the informant of this research. Idealism as a Sundanese who is obliged to maintain the culture becomes an impetus for the writers of Sundanese to survive writing in Sundanese, although financially, writing in Sundanese, not as big as writing in the Indonesian language. For the writers of Sundanese, maintaining language means maintaining culture.

In conveying the thoughts and feelings about Sundanese culture, the authors present them in fiction and nonfiction with a variety of themes fits to their interests and abilities to write them. Meanwhile, the global development of communication and information technology has been utilized by the Sundanese writers to make their writings about kesundaan widely known. Some authors create accounts in social media to spread their writing with themes that interest them. Social media used is blog and facebook. Through social media, the authors hope Sundanese culture can be widely known, even expected to contribute to global civilization.

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