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**THE STRUGGLE OF THE COMMUNITY OF SEDULUR SIKEP  
FOR ITS IDENTITY IN PATI REGENCY, CENTRAL JAVA**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study was intended to reveal the phenomenon of the struggle of the community of Sedulur Sikep in Pati Regency, Central Java Province for its identity with the approach of cultural studies. The problems of the study can be formulated as follows (1) what was the struggle for the identity of the community of Sedulur Sikep like?; (2) what caused the struggle for the identity of the community of Sedulur Sikep to appear?; (3) what was the meaning of the struggle for the identity of the community of Sedulur Sikep to its existence. This study is a qualitative one with the researcher as the main instrument supported by an interview guide. The data were collected using the techniques of in-depth interview, observation, and documentary study. After the data were analyzed, the data were descriptively and narratively presented.

The results of the study showed that the current identity of the community of Sedulur Sikep was the result of a dialogic discourse between the community of Sedulur Sikep and the non-Sedulur Sikep communities. Based on the description above, it was found that the struggle made by the community of Sedulur Sikep for its identity was reflected in various forms of its daily life. The factors contributing to the struggle for the identity of the community of Sedulur Sikep were economic, political, social and cultural factors. The *botoh* Sedulur Sikep that was used as a model also contributed to it. The struggle for the identity of the community of Sedulur Sikep successfully deconstructed the old meaning and revealed the new meaning.

Keywords: struggle for identity, community of Sedulur Sikep, subaltern

**INTRODUCTION**

The diversity in Indonesian society can be found in geographical, cultural, religious, ethnical aspects and so forth; as a result, Indonesia is referred to as a plural society (Lubis, 2006: 166-169). This is in accordance with the slogan 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' (Unity in Diversity) which is prescribed in Article 36A of the 1945 Constitution. The diversity in the Indonesian society should be used as the main capital for developing Indonesia; in addition it should be used to tighten the unity. However, pluralism and multiculturalism in Indonesia still show the matters pertaining to identities and the recognition of the minority group (Tsing, 1998: 50-51),

especially the community of Sedulur Sikep in Pati Regency, Central Java Province. Its people are frequently treated as the others in their social environment. Belonging to the minority society, they are frequently treated as the people with low prestige; they are frequently hated, subject to ridicule and anger, and become the victims of violence. Therefore, their existence in Pati Regency is always opposed to those who belong to the majority with a dominant position, high social status and a number of social peculiarities (<http://www.interseksi.org.>, 20 March 2012). It is highly interesting to explore the phenomenon of the community of Sedulur Sikep which has struggled for its identity as inspired by the discourse of equality, freedom, and democracy in the reformation era. Based on the phenomenon described above, the problems of the study were formulated as follows: (1) what was done by the community of Sedulur Sikep in Pati Regency, Central Java Province to struggle for its identity? ; (2) what contributed to the struggle of the community of Sedulur Sikep in Pati Regency, Central Java Province for its identity?; (3) what was the meaning of the struggle of the community of Sedulur Sikep in Pati Regency, Central Java Province for its identity?

The present study geographically covered Pati Regency, Central Java Province, and explored what happened from 1965 to 2012. The present study was intended to explore the struggle of the community of Sedulur Sikep in Pati Regency for its identity as an adaptive strategy to maintain its existence. It was expected that the result of the present study would give contribution to what should be done to maintain cultural diversity and give input to the government as to what to do to develop the way of protection. In addition, it was also expected that the result of the present study would give acknowledgement of the rights of the community of Sedulur Sikep in its existence as a minority group. In this way, it was expected that its identity and culture would be strong and equal to the identities and cultures of the other ethnic communities.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This present study is a qualitative one with the researcher as the main instrument (human instrument) supported with an interview guide. The data were qualitatively analyzed through three stages such as (1) data collection: the data were collected through in depth-interview, observation and documentary study; (2) analysis and interpretation; and (3) formal and informal presentation of the result of

data analysis, the result of data analysis was presented in narration, and using tables and photographs (Strauss and Corbin, 2003: 9-10).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result of analysis showed that the community of Sedulur Sikep, as far as the context of ethnicity is concerned, is a sub of Javanese ethnic group, meaning that in general their culture is identical with the Javanese culture, which is agricultural and traditional in nature. Physically, the people of Sedulur Sikep are not so different from the Javanese people in general; their complexion, faces, hair, height and other physical characteristics are similar to what the Javanese people have. However, they are categorized as a traditional, simple and honest people. They strongly adhere to the customs and traditions they have, referred to as *angger-angger pratikel*. Their philosophy of life is the same as that of the non-Sedulur Sikep people; in addition, their physical features are not so different from those of the non-Sedulur Sikep. However, there is still an impression that their status is lower than that of the non-Sedulur Sikep. They are still stereotyped as being stupid, underdeveloped, atheistic, and so forth. A number of characteristics which are different from those of the non-Sedulur Sikep people which are differently interpreted have been responsible for such an impression.

It is difficult for the Sedulur Sikep people not to accept being similarly labeled as the non-Sedulur Sikep people for two reasons. The first reason is that the religion they adhere to is Adam and the second reason is that the way they undertake marriage is different from the way the non Sedulur Sikep people undertake marriage. The opinion that the Sedulur Sikep people do not belong to any religion is basically based on the fact that the non-Sedulur Sikep people do not know how the Sedulur Sikep perform their religious activities. Therefore, it is necessary for Adam, as the Sedulur Sikep's belief, to show its ritual activities. In addition, it should be equally treated as the other official religions in Indonesia. The stereotype given to them by the surrounding communities has caused them to struggle so that their identity will be equal to that of the non-Sedulur Sikep people. Such a struggle for identity is the basis for developing a dialogic discourse so that a balanced relation will be created. In this way, the opinion that the Sedulur Sikep people are inferior to the non-Sedulur Sikep can be reduced, as stated by Jeffrey Weeks (Kinarsih, 2007: 4) concerning what is equal between one to others and what distinguishes one from others.

Specifically, the identity of the community of Sedulur Sikep gives emphasis on a story established after thinking over its identity. Based on the description describing the appearance of the struggle of the Sedulur Sikep community for its identity, it was found that, as a subaltern, it made attempts to struggle that its position was not regarded as inferior to the position of the non-Sedulur Sikep communities. Its struggle was shown through daily practices such as education, societal interaction, marriage, religiosity, and conservation of natural resources. Based on the phenomenon of the marginalization of the Sedulur Sikep community, Wallerstein (Sanderson, 2003: 251) stated that it is reasonable if individuals or communities struggle for opportunities, progress, and independency. Therefore, through the social interaction the community of Sedulur Sikep has made, it expects that the non-Sedulur Sikep communities will accept it.

The factors contributing to the struggle of the Sedulur Sikep community for its identity are political, socio-cultural and economic factors. The fact that the both Sedulur Sikep used as a model has also contributed to it. The political aspect includes the pressure from the regional and central governments and from the non-Sedulur Sikep communities. It is them which have been responsible for its marginalization. The hegemonic practice of the government has been shown by making those who belong to the Sedulur Sikep community adhere to the official religion. In addition, the Government of Pati Regency has also asked them to arrange for their identity cards (KTP) and marriage registration, and to send their children to formal schools. The Government of Pati Regency, through the Government of Sukolio District, has never taken the existence of the Sedulur Sikep community into account. Such a condition is referred to as a subaltern by Spivak (Morton, 2008: 159). What is meant is that the Sedulur Sikep community is treated as the marginalized, oppressed and powerless subject. The limited access it has reflects its position as a subaltern. The reality of life undergone by the Sedulur Sikep as described above shows that it has been victimized as far as the binary relation in modernism is concerned.

It has pretended to satisfy the political policy applied by the government, just an attempt made to avoid conflicts. This is in line with what is stated by Scott (2000) that basically farmers never stop showing disagreement with the unjustness they suffer from. Such resistance shown by the community of Sedulur Sikep is identical with the "Asian style" farmers' rebellion, which includes the non formal, antonymous

and one-by-one coordination organization. It is a daily minor resistance which is shown patiently and carefully. The Sedulur Sikep people tend to be stupid; they say “yes”, but actually they say “no” to avoid direct confrontation, and the like.

The struggle of the Sedulur Sikep community for its identity has successfully destructed the old negative meaning in order to reveal the new positive meaning related to the existence of it existence. In the context of the struggle of the Sedulur Sikep community for its identity, it is defined as an attempt made to explore more widely and profoundly what is behind it. The new meanings include the meaning of becoming a traditional group, the meaning of equality, and the meaning of solidarity. The rights to expressing opinion, democracy, achievement of welfare and conservation of environment, and the rights to religious freedom and practices show that the rights of the Sedulur Sikep community start to be acknowledged; however, their religious belief, as Adam has not been acknowledged as an official language in Indonesia, has not been significantly acknowledged yet.

#### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Several conclusions can be drawn as follows: (1) the identity of the Sedulur Sikep community in Pati Regency has been the result of the dialogic discourse between it and the non-Sedulur Sikep communities. The struggle the Sedulur Sikep community, as a subaltern, has been shown through daily practices so that they are not treated as inferior any longer by the non-Sedulur Sikep communities; (2) the factors contributing to the struggle for its identity are the political, economic and social cultural factors apart from the fact that the *botoh* Sedulur Sikep is used as a model; (3) the struggle of the Sedulur Sikep community for its identity has been able to deconstruct the old meaning and to reveal the new meanings which include the achievement of equality and solidarity strengthening, expressing opinion and democracy, welfare and environmental conservation, apart from religious freedom and performances of belief.

Based on what was concluded above, it is suggested that the related parties should pay attention to the existence of the Sedulur Sikep community so that the multiculturalism which has been dreamed of will come true. It is expected that the Sedulur Sikep community should maintain its special characteristics in order to strengthen its identity.

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