# *SANSANKUDO* Tradition as a Form Social Identity of Buddhist Communities

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**Abstract** This article aims to analyze *Sansankudo* tradition and its meaning among the Buddhist communitisin Wonomulyo which can be observed from the behavior and traditions carried out by these communities. *Sansankudo* tradition is conducted by the Buddhist community at Wonomulyo from time to time and already entrenched as one of the forms of the social identity of Buddhist communities as a unique community, and can be accepted by other groups outside the community. *Sansankudo* tradition, performed a marriage ceremony or ritual carried out by the Wonomulyo Buddhist community has a meaning of an association of two people bound in a family relationship to equally carry out the task of spreading the great law of "*Namyohorengekyo*" (Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism).

**Keywords:** *Sansankudo, Identity, Buddhist Communities, Symbolic interactionist.*

## 1. Introduction

Plurality and difference is a reality happening in human life, especially in Indonesia. From ancient times, intercultural encounters had been inevitable. The form of plurality itself is not only in terms of language but also in terms of cultures that have been passed down from generations. One of the places famous for its thick Javanese culture is the Wonomulyo village, in Magetan, East Java. Even though its community is religious and plural in terms of adherence to religions or beliefs, but the people in Wonomulyo Villagehas never renounced *Kejawen* traditions passed down from time to time and ingrained in their way of life.

One interesting thing to be researched further is the existence of a Buddhist community in Wonomulyo. What is defined by "interesting" here means that the Buddhists in Wonomulyo are interesting and unique, different from other Buddhist communities in Indonesia. Buddhism spread throughout the world has a plurality of sects and schools of thought [1]. Explained that Buddhism in Southeast Asia is divided into three major schools of thought, all of which have their belief systems, practices, and cultural nuances[2]. Described that the development of Buddhism in one region will always be accompanied by acculturations to the region's local wisdom[3]. One of the forms of uniqueness shown in Wonomulyo Buddhist community practices is traditions that have a sense of Japanese culture, such as traditions of drinking wine during a marriage ritual called *Sansankudo* in Wonomulyo.

Buddha taught about 5 principles[4]. Even though wine is one of the drinks generally considered as intoxicating, and that the act of drinking it is considered by Buddhists as a violation of the fifth principle of Buddhist *Pancasila* which is "*Surameraya majjapamadathana Veramani Sikhapadam Samadiyami*", which means "I will practice to avoid consuming various food and drinks causing weakness to awareness"[5], but the *Sansankudo* ritual can be accepted by Buddhist community in Wonomulyo, Magetan, East Java, as a form of tradition held for generations.

It becomes interesting when Buddhist communities performed communication in creating local wisdom so that both Buddhism and Japanese culture can be accepted by local communities and thrive like other religions or beliefs presently existing in Wonomulyo. Buddhism in Wonomulyo presently experiences growth in development compared to other regions, proven by several things, such as the expanding population of Buddhists, and the development and inauguration of a Buddhist vihara as a place of worship for Buddhists in one of villages in Wonomulyo.

In accordance with the aforementioned background, the problem that can be posed in this research, in general, is "How is intercultural communication in Wonomulyo region, Magetan can form acculturation and resulted in the birth of new tradition and culture in the area?" furthermore, this research in particular also seek answer to two problems, such as:

1. Whether Sansankudo tradition the result of forming social identity in Buddhist societies in Wonomulyo?
2. How does the *Sansankudo* tradition have meaning within the Buddhist community in Wonomulyo?

## 1.1 Identity Theory

Humans or their groups build their self-identity in their interactions with others. By interacting with other humans, humans build, appropriate, and develop a coherent feeling of themselves concerning the situation and people surrounding them. Social identity is identified as a part of the concept of someone's selves originating from individual knowledge of membership in a social group in conjunction with the significance of value and emotion of the membership[6][7], [8].

Further, according to[9]identity theory stated that an individual thinks, feels, and acts as conducted by members of the group s/he follows, so that social identity has an important meaning to the individual in identifying self as a part of the group s/he follows [10]. Social identity can also be interpreted as a way performed by an individual in defining himself/herself based on his/her membership in a social group which has distinct attribute not owned by other social groups[11]. Social identity theory was developed to understand how individuals understand themselves and others in a social environment[12], [13]. [14].

An individual who feels to have a similarity of emotion and values with certain group member, so that the individual feels to become a part of the group, is also proposed by[15], [16]Tajfel, 1979; [6]Hogg and Abrams, 2003; Mckinley, 2014; Sarifah, 2016: 78 as a definition of social identity. It is additionally explained that group behavior happens because of the existence of two processes, which are the cognitive process and the motivational process. Social identity is conceptualized into 4 dimensions: (1) perception and context between groups, (2) In-group appeal, (3) interrelated belief, and (4) depersonalization [16]. Moreover, Barker (2005) explained that social identity is a similarity and difference at once, of personal and social matter, and what is owned together with several people and what differentiates it with others. Baron dan Byrne (2003) stated that social identity is a definition of the self that guides an individual in conceptualizing unique characteristics such as name and

other unique characteristics [17]. In addition Jacobson (2003) states that social identity theory focuses on individual in preparing and grouping themselves based on personal and social identity through process of social comparison, that is to consider the same individual as a part of a group or "in-group" and the different ones as a part of the outer group or "out-group" [18].

## 1.2 Symbolic Interactionist Theory

The theory of symbolic interactionism is the other side of a viewpoint that views individuals as products determined by society. Symbolic interactionism is a sociological approach by Herbert Blumer and Goeorge Herbert Mead that has a view that human is a thinking, feeling individual capable of giving understanding to each situation, that gives rise to reaction and interpretation of meaningful symbols or communications conducted through motion, language, sympathy, empathy, which gives birth to other behavior showing reactions or responses given influenced by characteristics owned by the individual, such as social status, relational situation, and motivation possessed[19].

The main feature of symbolic interaction is that it nullifies the concepts of society, country, and other social institutions since they are perceived only as abstractions. The existence of concepts of society, country, and social institutions is only a group of certain abstractions so that it is almost meaningless at the micro-level. In addition, there are several main steps to the occurrence of symbolic interactionism, as stated by Mulyana (2001: 71-73). First, an individual responds to a unique situation called symbolic situation. The individual responds to his/her environment including physical objects (things) and social objects (human behavior) based on the meaning contained by such components of the environment for him/her. Secondly, the meaning is a product of social interaction since it does not attach to the object but negotiated through the use of language.

Symbolic interaction is further defined as all things interconnected with the formation of meaning of an object or a symbol, either animate or inanimate, through communication process both as a verbal message and as a nonverbal behavior, whose final purpose is to interpret the symbol (object) based on mutual agreement prevailing in certain region or community group [20].

There are several effects of this symbolic interaction's existence according to Prasanti [21], such as associative process comprised of accommodation, assimilation, and acculturation, and dissociative process covering fair competition and unfair competition, which is called as controversy and contention or conflict. Furthermore, in the theory, it is stated that social life fundamentally is an organic evolution and that the society itself ideally is democratic, moral, and progressive. According to this theory, an individual has the freedom and choice in doing any action (Poloma, 1993; Yalin, 2014: 3-4). After that, the individual within a group will create realities, covering moral rules, ethics, values, behaviors, and perception, by creating social interactions between each other. It is further explained that an individual is involved in a social action based on meaning obtained from social sources, including own individual's experiences, and that the existent meaning is studied from other people and then reconstituted by the individual using symbols by his/her mind (Turner, 2004: 345; Dong, 2008: 14).

## 2. Research Method

This research is a cultural study research by using critical social approach and uses descriptive qualitative analysis, in which according to [22]Bungin (2006: 147) it is defined as a research producing descriptive data in form of observable words or actions by stressing at concept development and understanding of the patterns existing in the data. [23]stated that "as is the paradigm of cultural studies in the area of postmodernism, the research is always positioned in a system of critical thinking". Descriptive qualitative research always considers any data observable by the researchers. The procedures of data analysis were open, axial, and selective coding[24], [25]. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990;[24]; [25]).

## 3. Results And Discussion

The wine-drinking tradition in a marriage ceremony is performed by families of the married couple who has their marriage blessed in Vihara by a Bhikkhu or a *Pandita*. The *Sansankudo* ceremony is held after the rituals (prayers and chanting of the *Sutras*), with the two families pitted face to face with each other and drink the wine together. The tradition has a meaning of association of two people bonded in a family relationship to equally carry out the task of spreading the great law of "*Namyohorengekyo*".

The term *Sansankudo* comes from Japanese, meaning "drinking wine together". This tradition symbolizes that the families of the married couple has become an extended family, bonded in a familial relationship not only occurring in present times of life but also acknowledges the existence of a cause of becoming mates and the karma bond occurring from times of the past to the present time and the times of the future. This tradition is performed by drinking the wine in three gulps, symbolizing the three unities that should be present in marriage: the unity of the body, mind, and soul.

The acceptance of the *Sansankudo* tradition by the Buddhist community of Wonomulyo, Magetan, East Java, indicates that there has been an acculturation of Japanese culture with the Buddhist and Javanese community. This is evidence that the Buddha taught his students to develop Buddhism following the traditions or culture of the community. On the other hand, Buddhism that thrived in Wonomulyo was the form of Buddhism originating from Japan, namely Nichiren Shoshu Indonesia, so that there was inevitably a cultural acculturation between Buddhism and Japanese culture. The forms of tradition and culture that exist are forms of local wisdom owned by the Wonomulyo community.

### 3.1 The Identity of the Buddhist society at Wonomulyo

Social identity is a way conducted by an individual in defining self-based on his/her membership in a social group that has its distinct attribute, not owned by other social groups (Sarwono and Meinarno in Hafizhudin, 2016: 684). In these terms, the identity of the Buddhist community of Wonomulyo can be identified in several things:

1. The Buddhist community in Wonomulyo chants *Paritas, sutras*, and *spells* by using Japanese. This is a unique form of identity not owned by Buddhist communities in other places. The Buddhist school of thought adhered by the community here comes from Japan, which entered and thrived in this place since the 1960s, pioneered by Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist figure, Mr. Seno Soenoto.

2. Not only in terms of *parita* and *mantra* chanting in which acculturation of Japanese culture can be seen, but also in the rituals, performed by using Japanese traditions. One of them is the *Sansankudo* ceremony (wine-drinking ceremony) in a marriage blessing ceremony. For other Buddhists, the act of drinking wine is a form of violation of Buddhist *Sila,* but in Wonomulyo this tradition is a tradition that is compatible and acceptable by the community and also functions as a form of social identity. This corresponds to the statement[6], [7], and [8], that social identity comes from individual knowledge about membership in a social group with significance of value and emotion from the community group, which in this case is Buddhist.

Based on the two things aforementioned, it can be stated that *Sansankudo* tradition performed by the Buddhist community in Wonomulyo from time to time and has ingrained to their culture is a formation of the Buddhist community's social identity as a unique society, and can be accepted by other groups outside the community as a social group not deviating from values and norms existing in Indonesia, so that the performed tradition is considered as a form of local wisdom. The *Sansankudo* tradition existing in Wonomulyo is a form of acculturation of Japanese culture and Buddhism.

### 3.2 Sansankudo tradition meaning for the Buddhist community in Wonomulyo

The meaning of a tradition comes when individuals interacting in a community that gives the tradition meaning (Turner, 2004: 345; Dong, 2008: 14). In this research, it was found that *the Sansankudo* tradition has a profound meaning, and since it has profound meaning, the tradition can continually be a tradition of the Buddhist community of Wonomulyo. The ritual of drinking wine which by some people or communities is considered as violating general values, norms, and morals, is not considered as such in this community. In this community, the wine-drinking ritual performed during the marriage ceremony does not violate religious or community rules.

Wine drinking (*Sansankudo*) performed by families of the married couple has a profound meaning not only to the married couple but also to their extended family. The tradition has a meaning that the married couple and the extended family has been made one in a marital association, so that after marriage, there is no decision made unilaterally or based on egoism, but that all decisions are made by joint discussion.

When drinking wine, it was consumed in three gulps. It means that the marital bond has not resulted from a "sudden" or "rushed" decision, but happened because of the karma bond from three times, which are times of the past, present time, and the times of the future. The three gulps also mean that the married couple should have three unities: unity of the body, mind, and soul. So profound is the *Sansankudo* tradition for the Buddhist community of Wonomulyo that it is held continually and can be accepted, or tolerated, by communities outside the Buddhist community itself.

## 4. Conclusion

*Sansankudo* tradition held the Buddhist community of Wonomulyo for generations is an identity of the Buddhist community not owned by other Buddhist communities. This tradition is a form of acculturation of Buddhist beliefs and Japanese culture able to be accepted and conducted by the Buddhist community of Wonomulyo. The tradition, held during marriage ritual, has a meaning that the married couple and the extended family has been made one in a

marital association, so that after marriage, there is no decision made unilaterally or based on egoism, but that all decisions are made by joint discussion.

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