

**THE MEANING OF MERANTAU (WANDERING)
IN PETATAH-PETITIH (PROVERB) OF MINANGKABAU**

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Abstract

Indonesia is a country which is rich with cultures and languages. Minangkabau as one of the largest tribes in Indonesia which is located in West Sumatera (One of Province in Indonesia) has a famous concepts in terms of cultural wisdom that is the concept of merantau (wandering). This concept is reflected in Minangkabau's proverbs that reflect the behavior, point of view, and beliefs that is shared by the speakers. In addition, words that are used when communicating also refer to objects, events, and everything that is symbolic and metaphorical. The research on the analysis of the meaning of 'wandering' in Minangkabau society uses hypothesis theory by Sapir-Whorf. The result of the analysis shows that the meaning of the culture of "wandering" in Minangkabau society is not just 'going out of the village' but beyond that. The concept of wandering in Minangkabau culture has another meaning as a means of economic needs, knowledge, and one of the efforts to increase the dignity of personal and family.

Keywords: Semantic cognitive, Wandering (*Merantau*), Minangkabau Tribe

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INTRODUCTION

Minangkabau custom is one of the richness of local culture owned by Indonesia that still continues to be adopted and studied by Minangkabau society. Minangkabau has distinctive characteristics from other tribal customs (A kinship system based on matrilineal system). Therefore, it is very interesting to be learned and to be explored. The way Minangkabau society in running their life is part of Minangkabau culture that has existed from a long time ago. The words used when communicating by Minangkabau community reflect the behavior, point of view, and beliefs shared by the speaker. Minangkabau people or Minang people familiar with the term wandering (*Merantau*) that has a deeper meaning in the life of Minangkabau society. Basically, the culture of wandering in the realm of Minangkabau has the same meaning with other tribal wander culture, namely as a process of interaction with the community outside the world.

In daily life, Minangkabau people always hold the custom principles contained in figurative words in the form of quatrain, advices, etc as the philosophy of life of the people. One of the important concepts of society as stipulated in his advice is the concept "*alam takambang jadi guru*" (nature as teachers). The concept is contained in the following adage:

Panakik pisau sirawik, ambiak galah batang lintabuang, silodang ambiak ka niru.

Nan satitiak jadikan lawik, nan sakapa jadikan gunuang, alam takambang jadi guru

The Minangkabau people are certainly very familiar with the saying that means that people always try to investigate, read, and study the provisions contained in the universe (Hakimy, 1991: 2). In Minangkabau custom, there is an understanding that humans must learn from nature as a source of knowledge necessary to survive. The saying also implies that since the time of the ancestors of Minangkabau people have studied the properties of nature. Minangkabau people are very familiar with the nature of the region. For some areas which lack natural resources, the community is seeking to make better the area in terms of natural resources. This concept of bidding is known as wandering (*Merantau*). Minangkabau people know the term wander in the life of Minang society.

The culture of wandering (*Merantau*) in Minangkabau tribe is one form of reaction in maintaining life due to lack of utilization of natural resources around the area of West Sumatra resulting in a lack of employment. This of course affects the low level of prosperity of Minangkabau society. This is the initial trigger to "force" the Minang people to migrate and seek other livelihoods outside West Sumatra. This recurring habit ultimately not only as a means of raising the family's economic level but higher philosophical meaning, as a means to learn about life, about how to live the bitter and sweetness of life, about how to understand motto *adat nan sabana adat*, and one way to enhance one's dignity in the midst of an indigenous environment.

Minangkabau people wander with their own will and ability. They see this process as a kind of exploration to build a better life. In the mind of the Minangkabau people, wandering is to go within a certain period of time but keep returning to his hometown. The wanderers (*Perantau*) are expected to succeed in the overseas so they can have a positive impact on the *nagari* (hometown).

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

From this background, this writing will focus on the Minangkabau *pepatah-petitih* that contains the concept of wandering. The author will see how the copulations of Minangkabau nomads and abandoned people who migrated to the word "wander". In addition, the authors will also present how important the concept of wandering in the

realm of Minang so as to give the impression of the emergence of prose reply as a form of concern of Minang people to the habit of wandering. The point of view is related to a number of propositions to be analyzed using metaphorical analysis and Sapir-Whorf's relativity linguistic theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Metaphor

In modern Greek, the word metaphor also means "transfer" or "transport". Cruse defines metaphors as the use of words or phrases for meanings that differ from their literal meanings (Cruse 2004). Saeed (2005), states that the transfer of meaning (concept transference), namely the transfer of concepts from one component on the other components. Thus the meaning of the word metaphor can be interpreted as bringing about change of meaning.

b. Theory of Language Relativity

Sapir-Whorf in his linguistic theory of relativity states that differences in inter-language use cause differences in the speaker's mindset. This indirectly raises the view that the understanding of action on a community group may be different from other groups of speakers who differ in terms of language use. For example, Inut people who live in the Polar Regions have a variety of vocabulary that refers to the word 'snow, compared with the people of Indonesia. They have their own vocabulary to call melting snow, frozen snow, cracked snow, and colored snow. Unlike the case with Indonesian people who only know the word snow because the snow itself does not exist in Indonesia.

Another example of Whorf related to the naming of colors in Latin does not distinguish 'brown over gray. On the other hand, the Russian language has many words for the colors of 'blue', or Lombok people in Indonesia who do not recognize the concept of 'purple' color. This is interesting because Physiology states that the cells in the eye are connected to neurons in such a way that it can more optimally recognize the red color above the green, blue on top of yellow, and black on white.

c. Language Universalism

Every human being has an innate concept of the natural surroundings developed by experience, but the great concept remains in the mind from the beginning. So, in essence, all complex concepts (all meaning) come from a combination of simple ideas, as the sentence and the written word are actually a collection of letters of the alphabet. However, every language encodes complex meanings in different ways, but the idea is simply the same.

Language is a guide to 'social reality'. Language strongly influences our thinking about social processes and problems. Man does not live alone but is sociable and there is a language to express everything that happens in it. Humans see different languages as bearers of different cognitive perspectives.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative research. The theory used to analyze data is the theory of cognitive semantics. The analysis comes with data validation to see the use of words that represent the concept of wandering within the Minangkabau cultural context. The meaning of wandering in the *petatah petitih* Minangkabau was analyzed using Sapir and Whorf hypothesis. Sapir and Whorf have a hypothesis known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. In the hypothesis it is argued that language not only determines the style of culture, but also determines the way and the way of the human mind; and therefore influenced also his actions. The process of analysis of meaning in this framework is divided into two levels: (1) description of reference situations or identification of relevant elements, entities, and conceptual roles that play in situations or events; and (2) analysis of the designation of certain expressions and patterns of grammar that highlights aspects of the situation or event.

ANALYSIS

Petatah petitih or the proverbs are also known as Malay literature which contains advice and views, guidelines for good life, as well as clues in social relations in society. Traditional Malay people often use *petatih-petitih* when counseling children. The proverb has a very

concise, congealed character and attaches importance to the precision of words that contain the elements of instruction. Each proverb consists of two or more lines. This paper will discuss about Minangkabau *petatih-petitih* in relation to the culture of wandering (*merantau*). The culture of wandering Minangkabau can be connected with the rhymes below.

Ka rantau matang di hulu / babuah babungo balun / marantau bujang dahulu / di rumah baguno balun.

'Ke rantau matang di hulu, berbuah berbunga belum; *merantau* bujang dahulu, di rumah berguna belum'

Quatrain above is a very famous quatrain for Minangkabau society. The meaning in the rhyme is not to expel the young Minang people to another country but for the Minang youth to learn many things in the overseas lands. Learning here is not just limited to studying but also learning to work, as well as learning for tolerance because Minangkabau customs are different from other customs. The concept of quatrain above is closely related to the concept of *alam takambang jadi guru* (nature to be the teacher). That is to say, keep searching for the meaning of life to broaden the thoughts and views, unlike *ayam dalam sangkar* (the chicken in the cage), do not depend on the narrowest sphere of the village but go as far as the tired foot goes. In the village, movement and understanding will not flourish but when going to other areas, a young man's mind will open and his love for his own country will grow.

Jan disangko murah batimbakau / maracik maampai pulo // jan disangko murah pai marantau / basakik marasai pulo.

'Jangan disangka mudah membuat tembakau / meracik lalu menjemur // jangan disangka mudah pergi *merantau* / sakit dan juga menderita'.

The concept of wandering in Minangkabau customs and traditions can not be separated

from the adhered matrilineal system. The matrilineal system in Minangkabau only gives inheritance rights to women while the men only have the right to use. Hence the habit of wandering for men to seek a better livelihood. Quatrain above illustrates the miserable life in the land of *rantau* (the land where to wander). Living on a *rantau* is not as easy as living in the home country, because it is far from the family and the loved ones. Of course, wandering is not an easy matter because life must be far from the "comfort" of the hometown, away from family and friends. The hard life in the *rantau* as depicted from the quatrain above makes the Minang people think the right strategy to survive in the *rantau* realm followed by the following quatrain.

Kalau pandai bakain panjang / labiah pado kain saruang // kalau pandai baiduak samang / Labiah pado baiduak kanduang

'Jika pandai berkain panjang / lebih dari pada kain sarung // jika pandai berinduk semang / lebih daripada beribu kandung'

People who wander if they can be good at picking up the heart of the *induk semang* (landlady), then the person will feel like living with his own family. In order to be able to 'picking up the heart' of the landlady, the people who wander should put themselves in their new place wisely. The concept of *induk semang* is one of the Minang people guides to survive on the overseas lands. This concept is reinforced by;

Manyauak di ilia-ilia / mengecek di bawah-bawah.

'Menyauak di hilir-hilir, berkata di bawah-bawah'.

The above proverb means that immigrants as a minority group of immigrants must know themselves and must be good at placing themselves. However, knowing yourself here does not mean feeling inferior but knowing how to position yourself as a newcomers so that in speaking must be polite and courteous. In addition to be smart to adapt, other barriers that are very difficult to deal with the people of overseas are homesickness. The

longing for this hometown has apparently been experienced since the era of Jatang Sutan Balun Datuk Parpatih Nan Sebatang during his disagreement with Sutan Paduka Besar about the government system that must be implemented in Minangkabau. As a result, Datuk Parpatih Nan Sebatang leaves his nagari, mother, and his beloved siblings so that the adage goes out;

Satinggi-tinggi tabangnyo bangau / sampai mancapai langik biru / balieknyo ka kubangan juo // walau bajalan jauh ka rantau / iduik sanang satiok waktu / kampung halaman takana juo.

‘Setinggi-tinggi terbang bangau / sampai mencapai awan biru / kembalinya ke kubangan juga // wala berjalan jauh ke rantau / hidup senang setiap waktu / kampung halaman terkenang juga.’

At the time of the search of identity, Datuk Parpatih Nan Sebatang continue to feel the longing for the hometown despite years of wandering. The purpose of wander in Minangkabau custom is to gain knowledge to later be useful in the hometown or seek a better economic life. If you have returned from the rantau, everyone will rejoice, as reflected in,

Bak ayam pulang ka pautannyo / pinang alah baliak ka tampuknyo / sirih alah pulang ka gagangnyo.

‘Seperti ayam pulang ke pautannya / pinang telah kembali ke tampuknya / sirih telah kembali ke gagangnya.’

In addition, there are some things that should be the hand of a Minang youth in wandering that is contained in the following proverbs.

Pandirian tak namuah dipengaruhi / iman tak buliah goyang / kamudi nan tak buliah patah / haluan nan tak buliah barubah / walau lidah kadiguntiang / kato bana

disampaikan juo

'Pendirian tidak mau dipengaruhi / iman tidak boleh goyang / kemudi tidak boleh patah / haluan tidak boleh berubah / walau lidah akan digunting / kata benar disampaikan juga'

Another strategy of survival in the oceans is to be firm in faith and conviction. The Minang people are well aware that there are many temptations to be faced in the overseas lands. This proverb contains the message that to survive in living in the land of new place, do not become easily influenced, have a strong faith, therefore the main purpose of wandering do not deviate. In addition to being steadfast in the establishment, a person according to Minangkabau culture should be truthful despite having to face even severe consequences. Based on a number of *petatih-petitih* above, the authors can create a scheme of *merantau* concept that has been passed down from generation to generation Minang people. Based on the above explanation, the author tries to make an overall scheme of how the Minang people interpret the word "wander" with the reasons, objectives, obstacles, and how to face challenges in place overseas.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the writing, the authors found some conclusions based on Minangkabau *petatah-petitih* with the concept of cognitive semantics, the authors concluded that the meaning of the culture *merantau* (wandering) in Minangkabau is not only about 'out of the hometown' but wider than that. The concept of wandering in the culture of Minangkabau has been imprinted since the time of Minangkabau kingdom or may even be far from it, as a means of economic need, knowledge, and one of the efforts to increase the dignity of personal and family. In addition, the authors found many concepts of wandering in Minangkabau *petatah-petitih* so that emerging concepts of interconnected concepts, namely on reasons, goals, obstacles, and how Minang people survive in the land of *rantau* (place to wander).

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