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Communication of Local People about Myths of Mount Merapi Disaster

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Abstrak/Abstract

Sebagai salah satu gunung teraktif di dunia, Gunung Merapi dipercayai memiliki mitos-mitos yang dikaitkan dengan bencana erupsi oleh masyarakat disekitarnya. Penelitian dengan menggunakan metode wawancara ini, bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi elemen komunikasi terkait mitos-mitos yang berkembang pada masyarakat lokal tentang bencana erupsi Gunung Merapi. Elemen-elemen komunikasi yang diidentifikasi yaitu lingkungan, sosial, proses, simbol, dan makna. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dari elemen lingkungan, masyarakat memercayai mitos bencana erupsi melalui mimpi-mimpi yang pesannya diterjemahkan terkait alam lingkungan tempat tinggal mereka. Pada elemen sosial, dapat tergambar bagaimana relasi sosial diantara warga yang berusia lanjut yang memercayai mitos, dan generasi muda yang sebagian besar tidak percaya tentang mitos. Pada elemen proses teridentifikasi bahwa kepercayaan masyarakat terhadap mitos adalah proses yang dialami sejak ratusan tahun secara turun-temurun, walaupun saat ini mengalami perubahan. Pada elemen simbol teridentifikasi simbol-simbol apa saja yang dianggap sebagai mitos dalam ritual labuhan Merapi dan tanda-tanda erupsi Merapi. Pada elemen makna dapat diterjemahkan aktifitas dan kepercayaan warga yang mengandung mitos tentang bencana. Pada akhirnya, penelitian ini merekomendasikan bahwa kepercayaan terhadap mitos, dapat diintegrasikan dengan pengetahuan modern dalam mitigasi bencana.

Mount Merapi is one of the most active volcanoes in the world and the local community has long believed several myths related to eruptions of Mount Merapi. Concepts of communication elements used in this research are environment, social, process, symbol, and meaning. This study aims to identify communication of the myths developed in local communities regarding Mount Merapi eruption. Regarding the environmental element, the research found that some people believed myths were the interpretation of messages in dreams related to their natural environment. The social elements described social relations between old generation, who believed in myths, and young generation, who did not believe in the myths. From the point of view of the process element, it was found that the myths have been developed since hundred years ago, i.e. from generations to generations. The elements of symbol used to identify some symbols in the sacrifice ritual activity or signs of Merapi eruption. The meaning elements were used to interpret the local community's activities and beliefs which contained myths on the eruptions. The messages about the myths were conveyed through informal communication and traditional arts. This study recommends that the belief in myths as traditional knowledge can be integrated with modern knowledge for disaster mitigation.

Kata kunci/Keywords:

Mitos, elemen-elemen komunikasi, bencana erupsi

Myths, communication elements, eruption

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Introduction

In some areas in Indonesia which are prone to natural disasters, it is found that people believe in myths, which are related to natural disaster. Myths could be defined as a complex story which told and described various hidden aspects of human existence and invisible things (Hoed, 2014). People believe in myths as common knowledge to understand the behaviour of nature .

Indonesia has diverse myths regarding the natural disaster. An example of such myths is a myth of "Prabu Boko", which is believed by local people in Tawangmangu, Central Java. The myths were related to "danyang" as a god of envi-

ronment and the community reflected the myths by engaging in traditional rituals to refuse any natural disasters (Herimanto, 2013). In addition, there was another myth about the disappearance of Masalihe Villages in Awu Mountain, Sangihe North Sulawesi (Widiyanto, 2012). The myth were believed by local people since hundreds of years ago. It's regarding the Awu Mountain eruption that caused the vanishing Masalihe village due to marriages among family members in the village. To avoid any natural disaster, the people penalized incest couples.

Another myth also occurred in Mount Merapi, Central Java. Mount Merapi in Central Java is one of the most active volcanoes in the world. From some of the eruptions, there was a major eruption in 2010 which caused extreme damages and many people lost their lives (Pramono and Birowo, 2012). Like some other places in Indonesia, Mount Merapi is densely inhabited and the local community has believed some myths from hundreds of years ago. Such myths are told from generations to generations. The local people build their perception with their limited knowledge and education to understand the natural occurrence.

Mount Merapi is one of the most active volcanoes in the world. Local people in Mount Merapi believe myths regarding the Mount Merapi eruptions which cause extreme damages. As Qodir (2012) described, one of the myths is famous person named Mbah Maridjan. He is the old man assigned by the King of Yogyakarta Palace where Mount Merapi is located. One of his jobs is managing traditional ceremonies for sacrifices to Merapi. Second, myth tells about place named "Pasar Bubrah", i.e. a place where evil spirits have their transactions at a certain midnight. The third is the Nyi Roro Kidul, who is the famous queen ruling the North Sea in Java. She is considered as the decision maker of the Mount Merapi activities and has a close relationship with the King of Yogyakarta Palace, Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono. Fourth, myth is Awan Mbah Petruk, namely the cloud picturing an Indonesian puppet character. He has a long nose which may indicate that there is something wrong in the country, whether it is related to the government or the nature. This cloud will occur on the top of Mount Merapi when it erupts. Furthermore, Lampito (2015) also stated Petruk was represented as the guard of Mount Merapi. He was described as humourist, powerful, generous, and has long nose, which indicated a bad thing would happen to the surrounding. His tall body impersonated someone who was able to see the view from far distance if something has to be solved.

According to the structural analysis of myths, Strauss used myths to understand language in some culture, which dominated the community (Hoed, 2014). In another perspective, Herimanto (2013) explained that the media could apply myths as a message in traditional activities,

such as ritual sacrifice and religious activity. In the context of natural disasters, myths as local knowledge are transmitted traditionally from one generation to the next generation. Many tools have been used for a long time for disaster learning communication, especially myths. People use oral communication, gossip, informal meeting, neighbourhood or traditional activity. People note a great deal about their surrounding and are able to indicate which area is prone to myth exposure and history about natural disaster.

Since Indonesia is one of the most vulnerable countries to natural disasters, it is very important to study how local people communicate myths regarding the natural disaster. Smith (in Abdullah, 2009) found that disasters could change the local people's paradigm using symbols and traditional rituals which are perceived as some myths. They would be materialized in traditional ceremonies when the people found some important evidence.

From other perspectives, the natural phenomena like typhoon, flood and earthquake are not perceived as disaster. Early warning, protection, knowledge, best practice, network, and resources could mitigate the disaster and improve the community's capabilities (Blaikie in Abdullah, 2009). Furthermore, mitigation is part of collaboration between government institutions, community by using some resources to reduce some effects of the disaster by mitigation project. In addition to the community's obedience to the disaster safety procedure, it needs integration from several disciplines to analyze, forecast and reduce future risks of natural disasters.

Literature Review

According to Paursen (1988), myths were stories which could be used to lead group of people or communities in facing natural phenomena. The story could be delivered or expressed through the art of performances, such as dance moves and drama. It tells us about the ancient life in many ways. The myths do not only contain stories but also guidance for people to behave and manage the human behaviour.

Furthermore, Paursen (1988) explained that myths had some important functions. *First*, it made people realized that there were some powers which were considered to help people to overcome and solve their life problem. *Second*, the myths were related to the current condition. For example, some people would sing together about fertility to ricefield in order to increase the rice productivity. In modern life, Africans held a dance party to welcome the new season or celebrate birth. *Third*, myths had similar function to modern science and philosophy that "myths explain the world". Through myths, primitive people could have some explanations about the birth of the world relationship with gods and origins of a misdeed crime. Those three functions described the whole strategy, gave direction and connected human and the nature.

Related to Paursen's description, Keesing (1988) also explained that myths were stories about how some world's events occurred up until these recent decades and unusual events of the nature which had happened. Myths could be stated in a traditional ceremony which had strict structure and they would provide any reason or rationale for such ceremony.

In terms of the Javanese's view on the nature, Koentjaraningrat (2002) explained that some Javanese people believed that the world has been organized in the universe. Therefore, most of them accepted and surrendered their life to the faith. They believed that a person's life could not be separated from the other's life and the nature. They depended on their community and surrounding. That's why human, who lives in another part of the world and has some difficulties in his life, will have the same.

As Paursen described, Keesing (1981) also provided the concept of myths as a story of the birth of the world or the earliest condition of the world, the nature, or unusual evidence which had never been found before. Those stories were accepted by local people as true and sacred. Some of the stories were embodied in actions during religious ceremonies, strike structure and that have meaning and variousity. Myths helped people to understand and provide rationality to the religious ceremonies.

Nicolas (in Qadir, 2012) outlined that myths spread in religious communities. When the communities developed from a traditional community to a secular one, it was inevitable that myths returned to the community's life. In fact, as the community developed myths would still exist. This may cause between rationale thinking and belief in irrational things. Furthermore, engagement in myths almost could not be separated far from religious communities.

A researcher on Javanese topics, Geertz (1983) described Javanese's behaviour related to the myths. They who believed in myths in certain time would have specific meditation ceremony in mountain. They perceive the mystical experiences as denial to the material things. On the other hand, it was considered as a phase for developing the human's soul.

One of the ancient stories on Mount Merapi is related to the Mataram Kingdom (now the Yogyakarta Kingdom). During the 8th century, this Kingdom had ruled most parts of the Java Island. This Kingdom was significantly prosperous and had high civilization, so they could build some big temples, such as Prambanan and Borobudur. The Mataram Kingdom was the ancient Solo and Yogyakarta Kingdom, in which those Kingdoms still exist. In the 8th century, the Mataram Kingdom as the centre of Mataram Hindu was destroyed by Mount Merapi eruption and the central government had to move to east Java. Other evidence on how big the Mount Merapi eruption

was, could be observed from the killed soldiers of Pajang Kingdom that would attack the Mataram Kingdom in 1587 (Kresna, 2011). The history shows that the big eruptions of Mount Merapi do not only cause major damages and high toll of deaths, but also change the civilization. Some ancient people related the big eruption of Mount Merapi to some changes in the Mataram Kingdom government. Another source also stated that the big eruption of Mount Merapi in 1822 was a sign of the Diponegoro war in 1825.

Lombard (2005) explained that in Java, some concepts from Sansekerta cosmologists completed the understanding on the ancient religious sacrifice to the mountains, which were related to the kings and their power. The old Javanese offered sacrifice to the volcanoes and it is the same with Balinese people who offered sacrifice to Mount Agung or Tengger people (East Java) who offered sacrifice to Mount Bromo. Ancient belief, which caused the birth of the sacrifice, stated that Mount Meru was the centre of the world and the soul of Brahmana lived there. Buddhists were also related to this idea of the king, who was known as the "King of Mountain In Java, the close relationship with the mountain was one of characteristics known to their ancient Kings.

Mount Merapi in this recent time could not be separated from the Yogyakarta Kingdom (Soemardjan, 2009). The palace of Yogyakarta Kingdom appointed someone as a "guard" of Mount Merapi. He has to regularly hold some traditional ceremonies to offer sacrifices to Mount Merapi at certain time. These traditional ceremonies have to be delivered as ordered by the Kingdom. If they disobey this direction, some bad things will come. The ancient mythological characters, such as Nyi Roro Kidul as the guard of the sea, and other mountains, sea and heritage guards, will be angry and the disasters will strike.

Previous researches related to the myths of Mount Merapi were published into many articles. One of the researches showed that traditional myths which were acknowledged by the local people near Mount Merapi did not have any correlation with the number of local people who believed in the myths and frequency of modern or scientific information promotion on the volcanic activity (Miswanta, 2009). Myths are only a supporting factor in evacuation process, instead of the main factor. Another study by Martin (2005) about disaster mitigation pointed out the importance of inclusive research quality improvement by using the cultural concept and strategy to integrate local, national, and international communities in the disaster management. Other research on folk stories by Kusumaningtyas (2007) found that some Indonesians expressed their spirituality regarding natural disasters from the folk stories. From these stories, they had understanding about the cause of the disaster, perceived the disaster and coped with it.

Claude Gilbert proposed the concept of disaster (Porfiriev in Quarantelli, 1998). *First*, disaster was caused by external pressures. *Second*, disaster was caused by social vulnerability and *third*, disaster was caused by the uncertainty. These concepts were almost the same as the Pelanda's concept from the same source, which interpreted the disaster. *First*, disaster was caused by social and environment conditions. *Second*, disaster was caused by collective pressure from community and *third*, disaster was caused by deviation between the capability in handling the damage and result of the damage.

Another definition of disaster by Maloney and Cappola (2009) :

Disasters are measured in terms of lives lost, injuries sustained, property damaged or lost, and environment degradation. These consequences manifest themselves through direct and indirect means and can be tangible or intangible.

Sometimes natural disaster occurs quickly with a few warning or no warning at all. Most natural disasters take place in a couple of hours or days. The natural disasters are earthquake, typhoon, volcanic eruption, landslide, flood and tsunami. Some of the natural disasters will cause big damage and loss because the government and community lack of capacity in handling the disaster. Impact of the disaster may take months or years to recover, such as drought, famine, disease and erosion.

Social expertise, which can assist in understanding the disasters, is social construction. For those experts, the disaster is caused by a social process or social consequences are derived from any danger or vulnerability of a social system. (Porfiriev in Quarantelli, 1998).

From the study of concept and pragmatics regarding the disaster, Quarantelli proposed his definition:

A state/condition destabilizing the social system that manifest itself in malfunctioning or disruption of connection and communications between its elements or social units (communities, social groups, and individuals), partial or total destruction/demolition, physical and psychological overload suffered by some of these elements; thus, making it necessary to take extraordinary or emergency countermeasures to reestablish stability.

Carter (2008) also explained about five phases in the disaster mitigation. Some of those phases were prevention and preparedness. *Prevention* phase focused on the actions to avoid the damage caused by the disaster and mapping the location which was vulnerable to major disasters. In this phase, some identifications had to be elaborated, such as the community's capacity to face with the probability of the disaster and the impacts. The second important phase is *preparedness*. The important task to do in this phase was an early warning to the community, system, and decision maker. Starting from this phase, the information

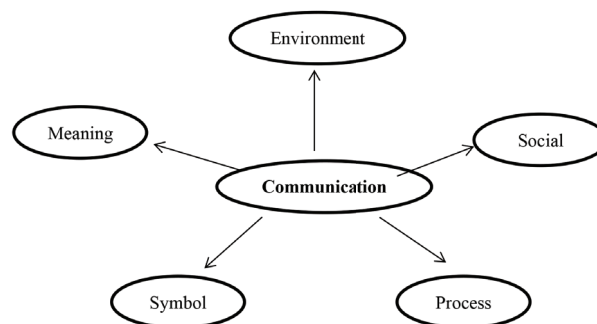
should be disseminated in appropriate time and had to be executed in the right time. From some previous experiences, the appropriate execution of the preparedness phase will give some benefits in saving the people.

We can see people's capacity in handling the disasters from many perspectives. One of the important perspectives in understanding the disasters is communication. Traditional communications help people to remember the disaster which took place thousands or hundreds of years ago. Word of mouth communication provides information from many sources regarding the disaster, apart from formal communication.

Research regarding disaster communication is very important for comprehending how the community's perspective on the disaster. In addition, there are different perspectives in considering disasters as natural events. The most important factor was the disaster mitigation to avoid loss of lives and properties (Carter, 2008).

The study about disaster communication is imperative to indicate people's perception on the disaster. Since there are different perceptions on the disasters as natural events, the more important factor is the natural disaster mitigation in order to avoid damages or losses of life. Carter (2008) also reminded that from all aspects of the disaster management, good communication was the most essential thing for obtaining an effective response.

Communication has significant power when people deal with suffering in the disaster. In the context of natural disasters, the applicable communication theory is elements of communication by West & Turner (2008).



Source: West & Turner (2008).

Environment. The environment element is a situation or context in which communication occurs. Elements in the environment are time, place, historical period, relations, and cultural background of the speaker and listener. The culture in which a person is raised will influence his views and attitudes about something. Someone, who rarely interacts with people who have different backgrounds (religion, education, economy, etc.), will tend to lack of tolerance in interacting with different environments.

Social is a concept where humans and interactions are part of the communication process.

Process is an event which is continuous, dynamic, and has no end.

Symbol is defined as the arbitrary label given to a phenomenon. Words are symbols for concepts and things. For example, vulnerable words represent an idea of vulnerability. The word "mountain" represents an object that exists in nature and can be climbed. In the language of communication, symbols are often described as symbols used to designate something else, based on a group agreement. Symbols include words (verbal messages), non-verbal behaviour, and objects whose meanings are mutually agreed upon. Human ability to use verbal symbols allows the development of language and handles relations between humans and objects (both real and abstract) even without the presence of humans and objects (Sobur, 2004).

Meaning. It is an element that plays an important role in this definition of communication. The meaning is what people take from a message. This argument is relevant to Bungin's explanation (2006) that in communication, the issue of meaning becomes very important to be interpreted by someone who gets information (reporting), because the meaning sent by the communicator (receiver) and recipient of information (audience) becomes very subjective and is determined by social context when the information is disseminated and received. Furthermore, Littlejohn et al. (2002) explain that most meaning are not learned as a result of direct experience with natural stimulus but are learned by an association between one sign and another, a process that can occur in the abstract out of physical contact with the original stimulus.

Methodology

The research subjects are local people of Glagaharjo Village, Sleman Yogyakarta, Central Java, where Mount Merapi located. Glagaharjo Village is one of the most severely damaged villages in 2010's great eruption. The research used qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected by in-depth interviews with nine local people during 2015-2016. Six of them were more than 65 years old and the remaining subjects were between 25-45 years old. The data validity was confirmed by interviewing the formal village leader and observing the village environment and local people's daily activity both in group and individual.

Results

Glagaharjo is one of the nearest areas from the top of Mount Merapi which was most severely affected by the great disaster of eruption in 2010. Thousand of people were evacuated in the 2010's big eruption and all properties were lost. After the eruption, the government declared the village as a forbidden area for settlements, but local people did not obey this instruction. They built their houses in the area for more than four years after the eruption and independently established a vil-

verbal parts of communication elements: environment, social, process, symbols, and meaning.

Those myths related to the **environment** element could be observed from the natural evidence which came through dream or vision. The local people believed that those signs signified that something bad would happen, such as an eruption of Mount Merapi, other natural or social disasters. The dreams that were believed as a sign were dreams about flood, being on the riverside or something related to water. Other dreams were cracks of lands, home filled with lot of sand and no plantation. The elderly believed all these dreams since they received the story or messages from their ancestors and related to their environment and place.

One of the respondents, who was around 70 years old, stated about his dreams that he connected to the Merapi eruption.

"It's about two weeks before the Merapi eruption that I had a dream. So, in that dream, I saw all things in front of my house were covered by ashes. I could not see properly. I thought it's similar to what I had seen in my dream. All I saw were more like the reflection of my dream, in which the floor of my house was covered by volcanic ashes. There no more plants that I could find. Before the incident, I didn't understand my dream, but now I found it as a sign of the Merapi eruption."

A respondent, who was around 80 years old, also told his dream regarding the Merapi eruption.

"In the Javanese customs, dreaming about water could mean a bad sign. Before Merapi erupted, I dreamt that I had a wash on the river. It couldn't be understood. I realized my dream came true. It's so related to the Merapi eruption. My dream gave sign to warn me."

From their explanations about the element of their environment, these descriptions can be clearly understood that they interpret the meaning of their dream which is related to their daily life.

Social elements of communication can explain the social relations between old and young generations in mythological belief on Labuhan Merapi ritual. Messages of the Labuhan Merapi ritual ceremony are local people have to cope with environment and there are abundant blessings given by nature. By this ceremony, local people hope for the peace and manage the community to avoid inappropriate behaviour. However, some local people did not believe those myths, especially the young generation. Some of them mentioned that those myths were believed by local people in the neighbouring villages.

The head of the hamlet explained in interviews that the rituals related to Merapi were upheld and carried out to this day.

"Here, every single of year the offerings to Merapi are organized. In the past, each hamlet made its own, but now several hamlets are

tain, we pray together. The pray is a mixture between Javanese custom and Islam. For the food, we eat some together, but we also leave some foods behind. Only men can participate and they wear traditional clothes. The food are offered to those who take care for Merapi and also our safety, so Merapi will not erupt again."

This traditional ceremony had some purposes. *First*, it displayed the need for communication channel to the God to hope for safety, avoid any disasters and pray to the God that the God would bless the people around Mount Merapi with prosperity. *Second*, for some local people (especially the young generation), this ceremony had no relation with communication to the God or ancestors. They just considered that this ceremony did not only create a close relationship among local people but also serve as a means for paying respect to the elderly who still believed in the traditional activities. Even though the elderly and young generation accepted the myths of Mount Merapi in a different way, there was no contradiction among them. The young people showed their respect to the older generation and myths which they believed in. These also served for social structure positions of the young people.

In the recent times, only local elder generation had faith on the myths of Merapi while the local younger generation no longer believed in these myths. This situation described the **process** of myths dissemination, which was as effective as early warning systems, including an oral warning by villagers. During the earlier years, myths could be found in messages of the traditional "Labuhan Merapi" ceremony and also art performance of "ketoprak". The traditional art performance, "ketoprak", was performed in villages. This performance consisted of dances and traditional music known as "gamelan", which was played by some people in Javanese style. These shows routinely delivered messages about the history of Mataram dynasty. The messages were the history of Mount Merapi big eruptions and the myths surrounding the incidents. These messages reminded the community about the ancient high value, especially the kings of Mataram. Some moral messages were delivered to encourage people to preserve the environment, and restrain themselves from committing any misdeeds to the nature and social environment.

These transmitting processes would remind the local people and next generations about the big eruptions which took place many years ago. Furthermore, they would be reminded to show their gratitude to the God for fertile soil in Merapi. Traditional ceremony was one of the medium for communicating to the God in the hope for safety and avoidance of disasters. Knowledge was transmitted to family, close relatives and neighbours.

Regarding some myths which are discussed in the previous section (about Nyi Roro Kidul, Mbah Marijan, and Mbah Petruk), all respondents did not believe and rely on those myths anymore. They have ever heard about those myths from their ancestors as signs of the Merapi eruptions. However, for them some myths have changed. On the contrary, the younger generation did not believe in myths. They relied on volcanic activities information from formal institutions, which disseminate on the disaster mitigation information, such as village leaders, disaster volunteers, media and other formal sources.

One of the respondents who fell into the younger generation category and was at his early 40s, explained about trust in dreams.

"I totally don't believe those myths. We only show our respect to the old people here. We're just living with them all this time. They believe to things like that which are originated from the time of our ancestors. For us, we also believe in information from the local government. We have local community radio for gathering information. So, if there is an offering ceremony to Merapi, we just come along. Praying is good too. But, if there are myths in the ceremony, I totally don't believe in them."

This statement complies with the research by Maskerey and Rossi (Abdullah, 2009), which stated that response to disasters were different by race, gender and age.

The older generation believed in myths because they encountered the big eruption a couple years ago, and received knowledge from their ancestors and community. These conditions were also triggered by their illiteracy. They trust dreams, or something visualized and they perceived those as signs of the natural events. On the other hand, village leaders as young generation did not believe in myths, but they have public accountability and respect to the older generation.

Another factor which influenced people not to rely on myths was higher intensity of religious activities after the great eruption in 2010. They created some groups for studying the Al Qur'an every week. These groups were targeting children and older people and they would pray together five times a day in the mosque.

The **symbols** as communication elements could be found in the traditional ceremonies of Labuhan Merapi, which were organized annually and served as sacrifice to Mount Merapi. These rituals were derived from the Yogyakarta Palace and have been held since hundreds of years ago. The ceremony was organized by each village. However, now villages managed the ceremony together with other nearby villages. The participants of the ceremony were older and younger people and all of them were men who wore traditional Javanese clothes. They brought certain meals for the sacrifice and ate together on Mount Merapi after the praying. The pray was the combination of Javanese belief and Islamic

religion. Some symbols in this ceremony could be explained as means of communication between human and God. Some symbols could be expressed in the forms of, meals, property, relationship among people, and the offering activity. From those symbols, we can understand people's communication to the God regarding the eruption disaster.

Regarding phenomenal and famous person in media, i.e. Mbah Maridjan, we could find some **meaning**. Since all respondents stated that they did not believe in him, we could interpret that people had their own meaning regarding the Merapi eruption, which was different to the media release. Mbah Maridjan was an old man assigned by the King of Yogyakarta Palace where Mount Merapi is located. He had to organize traditional ceremonies related to the sacrifice to Merapi. His special image in the big eruption both in 2006 and 2010 (when he died) made some questions emerged which could influence the local people to refuse for evacuation.

"No ... I don't think I believe it. Mbah Maridjan was an ordinary person like us. He was asked by the Keraton to help with the offering ceremony of Merapi. But we don't assume that Mbah Maridjan can reject Merapi's eruption."

In terms of the element of meaning, we could also find some indicators to understand some events which could explain about the local people's belief in myths. There was another natural event which was seen by local people as a sign that a bad thing or disaster would happen. A couple weeks before the eruption of Mount Merapi in 2010, the people found some incidents, namely Mount Merapi's increasing activities, sound of thunders and tremors. Some elderly interpreted that Mount Merapi would cause a great event. They believed that every mountain had a "guard" and sometimes the guard had certain behaviors. To respond to these natural phenomena, the local people believed that they had to do certain traditional activity to avoid the occurrence of bad thing. Meanwhile, some younger people interpreted those Mount Merapi's activities as signs for them to prepare for the evacuation as soon as possible.

There were several reasons why the young people did not believe the myths of Mount Merapi anymore. *First*, there were some social changes in community. The older community members focused on the traditional orientation from generation to generation, while the recent generation more focused on to make a living and shape their future. They tried to connect to people from city, and find another alternative to increase their life capacity. The elderly had different characteristics, such as lower education and focus to the current situation and fulfillment of their basic needs. Most older people did not have an orientation to the future or quality of life. They still relied

on their natural environment for making money, such as gardening, farming, and sand mining. In addition, they were not willing to move to other places, which were far from the mountain and had lower risk of eruption. After the eruption in 2010, this area was declared by the government as a forbidden area for living.

Second, most young local people had higher education, i.e. at the minimum middle level of education. This condition encouraged them to seek for works outside their villages or develop new tourism opportunity from the volcano. They did not rely on traditional jobs anymore. This evolving orientation may serve as an important consideration for the young people to change their paradigm about Mount Merapi myths.

Third, the use of current communication technology by the young people created an opportunity for gathering more information from any modern knowledge resources.

Fourth, the obedience of people to the Islamic religion by joining the community's religious activities, such as praying in mosque and studying the Qur'an as their references, had changed their paradigm to the myths as things which were not appropriate with the Islamic religion. In addition, after the Merapi eruption in 2010, their belief in the Islamic religion was increasing.

Discussion

For some people, belief in myths is perceived as the preparation phase in the disaster mitigation (Qodir, 2012). However, there are several reasons why the young people do not believe in the Mount Merapi myths anymore. Communications about the Mount Merapi eruptions in this study can indicate the elements of communications, which consist of environment, social, process, symbol and meaning.

Meaning is interpreted by someone who gets the information (reporting), because the meaning sent by the communicator (receiver) and recipient of information (audience) becomes very subjective and is determined by the social context where the information is disseminated and received.

The interpretation of myths supports local people to further realize and pay more attention to the disaster signs. On the other hand, they often disobey the government's direction to move to other location when volcanic activities increase. The disobedience to the government's instruction is caused by their reliance on myths and experiences related to the increasing volcanic activities.

The government, which relies on modern science and technology, urges the local people to evacuate to another safer location from the effects of the eruption. However, according to the myths and hundred years of experiences, the local people do not want to follow the government's direction.

The local people's belief in myths should be combined with the modern knowledge which is

based on scientific methods to manage the natural disaster mitigation. It is understandable since most local people have some limitations to understand the disaster phenomena, because they think such disaster has happened since their ancestor's time. Their limitations are low education (most local people graduated from an elementary school), minimum interaction with people from other villages and lack of sustainable intervention from any government institution for the modern disaster mitigation. Furthermore, even though the social structure of the local people is dominated by the younger generation, they remain unable to influence most of their fellow villagers to change the paradigm to the modern disaster mitigation.

On the other hand, their belief to the myths can help them to face the disaster, especially during the recovery phase. Since they believe that the disaster happens only due to God's will, this belief may help them to avoid any stress or psychological problem in the long run. As referred to in the conclusion of this research, the author proposes that the advanced scientific method to measure natural disasters more accurately should be combined with the local people's myths. This can be another advantage in observing the signs of disaster. It may become a new integrated approach in the disaster mitigation.

In some places, many conflicts due to natural disasters take place between the local people and the government due to the mitigation process. Some local people use myths traditionally to understand the natural disaster, while the government stands with the modern knowledge to identify the process and mitigate the natural disasters.

Setyarto (2012) in his study about responses to the disasters in the evacuation process found that some problems emerged when local people had their point of view which was contrary to government regulation. The conflict between the local people and local government rises since both parties apply a different paradigm to respond to the disaster. In this case, in order to tackle the issue, the government should apply modern approach, rational knowledge and technology. On the other hand, some local people stay with their traditional knowledge which has been applied since long time ago. Moreover, the research by Sakir (2011) on the Javanese values described about the values maintained by Moslems living at Dusun Tutup Ngisor (i.e. one of the villages in Mount Merapi). Such value is known as *jagad gedhe lan jagad cilik*. This belief focuses their indigenous knowledge, which is internalized in their ritual and culture in the hope safety and welfare to the God. This includes their concern on the natural disasters.

Currently, many people are interested to the myths of Mount Merapi. In 2010, when the technology and modern knowledge has been applied in each aspect of the big eruption of Mount Mer-

api, myths surrounding this disaster remained strong. Furthermore, some eruption pictures were interpreted as myths and discussed in social media and studied by scientists. From these phenomena, myths cannot be construed as something to be left behind. According to Indiyanto (2012) in his study about the modern science and local knowledge of the natural disaster risks, he found that some failures or successes in the natural disaster predictions could result from modern science and local knowledge. It was related to the research by Pramono and Birowo (2012), who studied some communities on Mount Merapi after the 2006 eruption. He applied the Hofstede's philosophy and found that the synthesis of traditional and new elements could be met by the local people and local government, as the disaster management needed people's participation.

Conclusion

There are five elements of communications for analyzing the myths about Mount Merapi eruptions (social, environment, process, symbols and meaning). The older generation interpreted the dreams they had before eruption that the condition in their dream was the same as the situation when Merapi erupted. They believed that those dreams were an early warning for the disaster.

The social elements described the social relations between older generation who were the believers of the myths and the younger generation who did not believe the myths. The local villagers who believe in the myths of Mount Merapi were mostly elder. Meanwhile, only a few younger people believed in such myths. The young people showed their respect to the older generation and had no objection related to the differences in the belief of the myths. The younger people had their respect to the elderly since the latter had long experiences of Merapi eruption.

The myth dissemination process has been developed from hundreds of years ago and the myths were passed from generations to generations. The older generation received the myths from their ancestor and organized the Labuhan Merapi ritual ceremonies every year. Nevertheless, in this recent decade, there were some changes in the ritual ceremony which made the ceremony be more efficient.

Some symbols for identifying the messages of the myths are the sacrifice to Mount Merapi in the Labuhan Merapi ritual activity. This ritual ceremony is the command of the King of Yogyakarta since hundreds of years ago. Some symbols are traditional clothes which signify the unification, foods which symbolizes the sincerity to other people and the God and all pray which symbolizes the surrender to the natural phenomena. The myth perception from some symbols in the traditional Labuhan Merapi ritual can be accepted as mental preparation in facing any possible disaster. From this process, the local people learn to understand natural events which some-

times cannot be comprehended from the rational point of view. In terms of the element of meaning, some communities do not interpret the increasing Mount Merapi's activities as the early warning signs of Mount Merapi eruption.

For some local people, parts of the mitigation are the preventive and preparation phase. The

perception of a disaster as a myth can be used for preparing and reducing the disaster risks. Collaboration among two methods should be preferred as the most appropriate solution for the disaster mitigation rather than the adoption of myths from local people.

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