The Elements of Paganism as Reflected in Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery"

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Abstract: Modern society is usually marked by the logical thought and behavior. Modern society is a society which has advanced science and technology, in which the people in this society are able to adapt with the situation and the condition where they live. The people in modern society are open minded to new inventions and experiences, so they can accept changes easily. Besides, they are people whose orientation is today and future. Thus, they are not tied with the past, moreover, if the elements related to the past hinder the advancement and are superstitious. It is triggered by the belief of the people in the strength of science. Anyhow, in reality, not all people in modern society can free themselves from illogical and superstitious, past thought. These people are still influenced by pagan thought and behavior which is mystical and superstitious. Related to that idea, the aim of this analysis is to analyze the elements of paganism reflected in a short story entitles "The Lottery" written by Shirley Jackson. This analysis applies descriptive analysis in which the Pagan thought and behavior reflected in the short story are described descriptively. The result shows that Pagan belief is adopted and applied in the life of the villagers in the story. The elements of Paganism are seen from the tradition or the ritual which is originated from ancient culture (pagan). The tradition or the ritual that the villagers conduct is to sacrifice one of the villagers by stoning him/her. Even though the tradition is scary but the villagers keeps applying it because they believe the ritual can save them. This is one of the Pagan believe. In the Pagan culture, someone was sacrificed to God and Goddess. Besides, the person is stoning to death. Stone used is originated from Pagan culture in which stone was a common weapon at that time.

Keywords: Paganism, The Lottery, Shirley Jackson.

1. Introduction

Pagan culture is an ancient culture. It existed when religion was not known. That is why people at that time were polytheists. Ideally, Pagan belief is no longer believed by modern people because nowadays religion has been part of humans' lives. Ironically, though, it can still be found people practice the Pagan culture in their lives. It may be caused by the thought that the culture or the belief that they carry out is part of their tradition. So, it is only a matter of practicing tradition, and the people don't see it as an element which can ruin their belief in their God. Dealing with this perception, the writer is interested in analyzing the elements of Pagan culture as portrayed in a short story entitled "The Lottery" written by Shirley Jackson.

Paganism is a term used to describe a group of people who believed in Goddess (polytheism), even though there were also Pagan people who were monotheist who believed in the highest God. So, Paganism is a thought existed when religion was not known. So, it is categorized as a belief in Goddess. The ancient belief of Pagan people covered mystical elements in which the mystical elements are found in their rituals. It can be said that rituals (particularly quite "uncommon" ones in which in that ritual it sacrifices something or someone) are one of the characteristics of Pagan culture. In this modern era, rituals adopted from Pagan belief are still found in many places. Besides, it is also found religions which are constructed from Pagan belief with undergoing some changes and elaboration even though its belief is the same.

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Therefore, the problem discussed in this writing is the elements of Paganism reflected in a short story entitled "The Lottery" written by Shirley Jackson. There are some researches done dealing with Paganism to show that this thought is still adopted by people intentionally or unintentionally. The first is an analysis done by Anggiputri Permanasari Halimun from the University of Indonesia. The title of the research is "*PaganismeDalamArsitektur: Sebuah Kajian Konsep Mengenai Pengaruh Paganisme Dalam Arsitektur Gereja(Studi kasus: Katedral Maria diangkat ke Sorga dan Gereja Pulisarang*).The next research is writing entitles "*Tawassul dan Paganism: KajianTafsir QS Al Maidahayat 35*," which is written by MohShopiullah from UIN SyarifHidayatullah, Jakarta.

2. Method

This is library research in which that data taken are those from books and other related materials. The analysis is then described because the research aims try to describe the existing phenomenon, that's why this analysis is descriptive analysis. Related to the analysis the data described are pagan thought and behavior found in the short story "The Lottery." Then, to present the result, the conclusion is drawn inductively in which the specific details lead to general details about those pagan thoughts and behavior.

3. Discussion

The Lottery talks about villagers who conducted a ritual called lottery every June 27th. That day was June 27th, so the villagers gathered in a square. The weather was very beautiful. The lottery started at 10. Since the numbers of the villagers were not too many, they could finish it in 2 hours, but in another villager where the numbers were big, they started on June 26th. Children gathered first. They collected stones and pebbles and put them in the corners of the square. Women gathered with women gossiping, and men gathered with men. They talked about planting, taxes, and others. Once in a while, they had jokes, but their jokes were dry and quiet. Mr. Summers came with Mr. Graves bringing a black box and put it in the middle of the square. The black box was old and dirty. Then. Mr. Summers opened the lottery formally. Then, he explained the rules of the lottery but since the villagers had joined the lottery for years they had known it, and they didn't listened to Mr. Summers. They, Mr. Summers checked his list. When he was about to declare the lottery was opened Mrs. Tessie Hutchinson came, she came late because she forgot that that day was June 27th. Then, Mr. Summers called the name of every head of the family to take a folded paper from the black box. Meanwhile, some one talked about the other village where the people had supported the lottery, listening to it, the old man Warner was angry.affter all heads of families had taken the papers, they opened it together. It was found out that Bill Hutchinson who got the paper with the black spot on it. Terssie Hutchinson protested, accusing Mr. Summers was not fair for not giving enough time for her husband to choose the paper. But Mr. Summers ignored her protest. Then, for the second round, the lottery was conducted only for the Hutchinson's family consisting five persons; Bill Hutchinson, Tessie Hutchinson, and their three children. Finally, it turned out that Tessie was the one who got the paper with the black spot, so the villagers were stoning her. She ran away and kept saying " it isn't fair." And the villagers were running after her.

Pagan culture and belief are culture and belief which was believed in ancient time before religion was known. So, this culture and belief had been practiced for centuries so that they had been rooted in the people's lives. Then, they were inherited from one generation to the next generations.In the text, *The Lottery*, the lottery carried out by these villagers was not only a habit but a ritual. They had conducted it for a long time over and over, and it was portrayed from what is mentioned by one of the characters, Mr. Old Man Warner who had joined it for 77 times which means he had joined it for 77 years, "Seventy-seven year I been in the lottery, " Oldman Warner said as he went through the crowd. " This ritual had its own rules and procedures, and those rules and procedures followed those determined years ago.

The villagers were obligated to join this ritual. They were obligated because they believed that the ritual would save them from disaster and other unfortunate life. Another event which shows that the lottery is an old tradition is the black box used in the ritual. The black box that the villagers used was not the original one. This box was made when the original one was lost. Even though it was not the original one, this box was not old and dirty which indicates that the lottery had been conducted for a long time, " The original paraphernalia for the lottery had been lost long ago, and the black box now resting on the stool had been put into use even before Old Man Warner, the oldest man in town, was born. ". As a ritual, all villagers must join the lottery. That's why the lottery was started by taking the data of all villagers done by Mr. Summers, " Mr. Summers consulted his list." It was done to make sure all villagers were in the square to join the lottery. So, it was a must to join it.

The villagers believed that this ritual would give them protection and safety and protected them from anything which could endanger their lives. For that reason, this ritual was carried out by the villagers even though they didn't feel comfortable with it. Actually, they were anxious and very afraid of this ritual. That's why the scary atmosphere could be felt when the ritual was being carried out. The comfort and fear of the villagers could be from their reluctance to involve themselves with anything dealing with the lottery. When Mr. Summer asked the villagers to make a new black box because the box they were using had been too old and dirty, no one responded him. So, the idea of making new black box disappeared and everyone was not interested in talking about it. Moreover, the villagers' anxiety and nervousness in participating in the lottery were also seen from their action. They tried to cover their comfort and anxiety by talking to friends and having jokes, but their jokes felt dry, and they pretended to be happy. " Soon the men began to gather, surveying their own children, speaking of planting and rain, tractor and taxes. They stood together, away from the piles of stones in the corner, and their jokes were quiet, and they smiled rather than laughed." The other event which strengthens the villagers' uncomfortable feeling toward the lottery was when Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves came to the square where the villagers gathered. At that time, Mr. Graves put a stool in the middle of the square and then put the black box on it. When Mr. Summers was about to stir the papers in the box, he asked for a help from someone to hold the stool, but no one seemed to help. They went away from the box. Later, after some time, someone was willing to help. " Mr. Summers set the black box down on it.

Sacrificing or killing someone without strong reason is not acceptable. Anyway, by the name of tradition, based on a belief, these villagers sacrificed one of them. This lottery was carried out to determine the person to be sacrificed. A villager who drew the lottery and s/he got the paper with a black spot on it would be sacrificed. S/he would be stoned to death. The sacrifice showed that this ritual was a heritage from pagan culture or pagan tradition which sacrificed someone to the God in order the God would give them protection and safety and gave them fertility and prosperity. And these villagers sacrificed one of them, Mrs. Hutchinson, for that belief.

Using stones as weapons to hurt or kill someone implied the heritage of ancient culture (Pagan). The Pagan people used stones as weapons. The stones showed that Pagan culture reflected violence and cruelty immortalized in the ritual they carried out," Tessie Hutchinson was in the center of a cleared space by now, and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head. Old man Warner was saying, "Come on, come on everyone." Steve Adams was in the front of the crowd of villagers with Mrs. Graves beside him." This quotation not only presented the villagers' use of stone which implied the ancient pagan culture, but also portrayed the villager's spirit to sacrifice someone. The quotation described how spirited and happy Old man Warner was when he encouraged other villagers to run after Tessie Hutchinson and stoned her. His spirit was also supported by Steve Adams and Mrs. Grave who placed themselves in the front crowd in the order they could lead the moment of stoning.

By sacrificing someone every year, this tradition caused a reaction from some of the villagers. They felt uncomfortable with it. They thought this tradition was no longer appropriate to carry out.

Moreover, they heard the people in other village had stopped it, " They do say, " Mr. Adam said to Mr. Old Man Warner, who stood next to him, " that over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery." When they expressed their idea to stop it, they faced opposition from other villagers, especially from Old Man Warner, who expressed his anger when the lottery was stopped, " Old man Warner snorted,"Pack of crazy fools," he said. "Listening to the young folks, nothing's good enough for them. Next thing you know, they'll be wanting to go back to living in caves, no body work anymore, live that way for a while. Used to be a saying about 'Lottery in June, corn is heavy soon' First thing you know, we'd all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There's always been a lottery," he added petulantly.Bad enough to see young Joe Summers up there joking with everybody." from Old Man Warner's upset tone, he represented the people who considered lottery was a must. Old man Warner represented people who believed that their lives and their welfare were dependable on the lottery because when the lottery was conducted, they had to accept that sacrificing someone was done for the sake of many people's welfare.

The villagers' obedience to keep the ritual based on their fanaticism on their tradition. This fanaticism made them unable to think logically so that they didn't feel guilty hurting or killing someone. They didn't think it bad. This thought can be found in some societies in which someone or society's fanaticism on certain tradition or belief makes them illogical people, moreover, if the belief contains ancient mystical belief.

The Lottery satires society who believes in something and this belief leads them to be fanatic blindly. This blind fanaticism is not only found in ancient society but also in modern one. In modern society, the blind fanaticism is found in new versions, new faces, and new ways, but with the same essence. Today, in societies in which most people have embraced religions, Pagan cultures and beliefs are still found the syncretism of the religions and the pagan culture.

4. Conclusion

The Lottery, written by Shirley Jackson, shows that Pagan culture and belief still stick to the life of the villagers in this literary work. The elements of Paganism are seen from the Lottery, the ritual, which is the heritage of ancient culture. Sacrificing someone is obviously the heritage of Pagan culture in which the Pagan people used to sacrifice someone for their God or Goddess.

Moreover, in this literary work, it is found out that the person who is sacrificed is stoned. Using stones as the ancient weapon indicates the influence of ancient culture. The strong belief in the Pagan culture makes it hard to transform the belief. It is implied in the text in which one of the characters strongly opposes the idea of stopping the ritual. It is triggered by the blind fanaticism embraced by the villagers and at the same time, it satires the modern societies whose thought and behaviors are still influenced by the Pagan thought and behaviors.

5. Suggestion

By understanding the big influence of Pagan thought and behavior which are still embraced by some societies, this writing is expected to be able to make people reconsider and respond more critically to cultural phenomena which can ruin the belief in one Supreme God since those thoughts are still embraced in new faces, new packages, and new versions but with the same essence.

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