

Material and Non-Material Cultures in Haruko Kumota's Anime *Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju*

Singgih Agung Pratama¹, Cicilia Tantri Suryawati²

¹Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Surabaya, Indonesia

²Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Surabaya, Indonesia

¹singihagungp@gmail.com, ²tantrisuryawati@yahoo.com

Abstract

Rakugo, a storytelling performance that contains elements of comedy held on a theatrical stage. Unlike other performing arts, Rakugo is a performing art that does not require a lot of costumes and stage equipments. Rakugo storytellers use gestures and voice changes to portray the various characters and roles in the story. The depiction of cultural diversity, manners and beliefs using the medium of modern literary works in the form of anime is very great, not only adding to the value of the beauty of the work but it is also used as an educational medium. So that, it can continue to preserve culture and introduce it to other countries. This article describes the elements of material and non-material cultures depicted in the life of Japanese society during the Showa era in Haruko Kumota's anime Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju. By using qualitative descriptive method, material culture was found in the forms of washitsu, tatami, yose, kimono, and yukata. The non-material cultural elements found in the forms of seiza, ojigi, and belief in omamori

Keywords: *Rakugo; Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju; Antropology of Literature; Material Culture; Non-Material Culture*

A. Introduction

Rakugo is a kind of storytelling in Japan that began to develop during the Edo period (1603-1868). The content of the *rakugo* story or what is known as *Hanashi*, is a picture of human behavior in life, which has the style of parody and satire. The element of humor contained in *rakugo* lies not only in the content of the story, but also in the style of delivery from the storyteller that is termed as *Rakugoka* (落語家) or *Hanashika* (噺家).

In *Hanashi* or in the story content of *rakugo*, the story is pictured in three kanji as follows:

- *Hanashi* (話) that means the language sound is produced by tongue movement.

- *Hanashi* (噺) that means an event that is conveyed by mouth.

- *Hanashi* (咄) that means words or languages are uttered from mouth (Aiba 1992: 16). The storytelling of *rakugo* speakers only uses body movements and changes the way of speaking to imitate various characters and roles that are only

performed by one person. *Rakugo* is also a very simple entertainment show where the speaker only wears a *yukata* (traditional Japanese dress), folding fan and handkerchief only, no costumes or stage sets required. Even today *rakugo* is still shown to the public in theaters in various regions in Japan, besides that *rakugo* is also raised into modern cultural stories in the form of anime which aims to preserve the arts and cultural elements within *rakugo*.

Culture is the totality of human activities, that includes knowledge, moral beliefs, laws, customs, and other habits acquired through learning, including thoughts and behavior (Endrasawa Suwardi 2013:11). Japan is one of the developed countries in Asia, both in technology and culture. Up to now, the culture in Japan is still in the practise by its people both in traditional and modern cultures. Famous traditional Japanese culture abroad includes *rakugo*, *chanoyu*, *shoudou*, etc.

As the development of technology happens, digital media is able to provide entertainment

functions for its users. Various entertainments can be accessed through digital media in the form of television and internet access services via laptops, and other media. Through this media, popular shows, such as music, dramas, films, including Japanese anime are presented. This modern culture has high popularity both in Japan and abroad such as *anime*, *manga* dan *dorama*.

Anime is a collection of moving pictures that can be enjoyed both in visual or audio. *Anime* is actually an English word that is *animation* which is said as *animesyon*, in Japanese tongue so that it can ease in how word to say, and make it short just *anime*. *Anime* is a story that is presented with pictures and sounds from voice actors or called *seiyuu*, which differs from its western form which has superhero themes, *anime* has various genres, such as history, drama, horror, fantasy and science as well. *Anime* is produced in forms of TV series, and shown on movies. Each part of it has duration of 25 minutes while for its movies have 50-120 minutes length.

One of the interesting

diversity of *anime* is that it contains elements of art and culture in it, the *anime* entitled *Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju* in which the writers of this article will analyze is *Anime Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju* that is genre of drama and history about *rakugo*, in which, this *anime* has 2 parts in every part consisting of 13 episodes in 25 minutes length.

This *Anime* tells about an ex-convict named Youtarou who becomes interested in *rakugo*, the traditional Japanese art of comedy. He was inspired by Yuurakute Yakumo, an awesome *rakugo* artist. Yotarou decides to change his life through the art of *rakugo* and asks Yakumo to make him his disciple. When he excitedly starts his training, Yotarou meets Konatsu, a young woman who has been under Yakumo's care since her beloved father Sukeroku. Yuurakutei is a young woman who has been under Yakumo's care since her beloved father Sukeroku, a young woman who has been under Yakumo's care since her beloved father Sukeroku.

The author observes that *rakugo* is still preserved because it has been

adopted into modern cultural stories in the form of animation. Therefore, the author wants to examine how the culture is presented in the daily life of *rakugo* characters in *anime Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju*.

B. Research Method

This research will use anthropological theory and cultural theory which will be divided into material and non-material culture. This study will use a qualitative descriptive method that focuses on material and non-material culture contained in *anime Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju*. In this study, the procedures and work steps of the data research approach start from planning to find data sources, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques that are adjusted according to the type of research.

The data collection procedure used the listening and note method. The main data source is the *anime* entitled *Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju* by Haruko Kumota. The steps for data acquisition begin by trying to find the animation and supporting data. Then the *anime* is watched over

and over again and the data to be taken is determined and then analyzed using cultural aspects that are closely related to traditional Japanese culture.

This research uses analytical methods by using the supporting theories about material and non-material cultures including cultural values related to the life and traditions of Japanese society. The culture analyzed consists of tangible or physical culture and culture which includes values and norms and beliefs.

C. Results and Discussion

The *anime Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju*, the portrayal of the time of *showa* (tahun 1926-1989) have the elements of culture in which they are related to material one such as *washitsu* (Japanese traditional room), *yose* (comedy theatre), and the daily tools. The element of material culture is materialized and physical, so that it can be understood by the human senses, therefore this shows that material culture is easy to find. On the other hand, non-material cultural elements have no form. This culture was born because of the habits

created in people's lives such as beliefs, values, behavior, language and social systems.

This article finds that in the *anime Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju*, there are some non material culture, such as *seiza* (sit up straight position), *ojigi* (bow down position), and belief in *omamori* (amulet). The introduction of elements of Japanese culture through *anime* media to the public both nationally and internationally is a very effective way for its fans.

Material Culture

Washitsu is a traditional Japanese-style room, in which an element of material culture found in *washitsu* is the form of that is only special found in Japan like *tatami* (straw floor), *fusuma/shoji* (sliding door), *futon* (sleeping mat), *zabuton* (seat cushion) and *irori* (traditional

heater).

Washitsu has flexible function



Picture 1. Washitsu (Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju episode 3, 16:49)

because almost all furniture is portable that can be stored in the *oshiire* (a small part of the room is used to store goods) except for the room that has been installed with *irori*. *Washitsu* can turn into a living room, dining room, study room, or even a bedroom.

An interior of *washitsu* is *tatami* that is a mat made of woven straw and just made in Japan. *Tatami* has different size and it was a luxurious thing that was owned by the rich people. Since the 17th century *tatami* has become popular. Besides *tatami* that becomes a special characteristic of *washitsu* is *fusuma* and *shoji*. *Fusuma* and *shoji* are rectangular doors mounted vertically on a wooden rail, that can be shifted to open and close. The function of the sliding system on the door is useful

for minimizing the use of space besides that it can be removed and installed again. This is useful when somebody wants to hold an event that accommodates a lot of people.

The basic material of *fusuma* and *shoji* is trunk and on both sides of the surface covered with *washi* (traditional Japanese paper). Difference between *fusuma* and *shoji* is the surface of the door that can be penetrated by light is *shoji* while *fusuma* has an impermeable *washi* coating.

Some objects that have a portable function are *futon* and *zabuton*. *Futon* is a traditional Japanese sleeping device, usually laid out on *tatami* as a sleeping mat and stored in an *oshiire* when not in use. While the *zabuton* is a traditional Japanese sitting mat that is used in a room with *tatami* mat. The way to sit on the *zabuton* when in the *washitsu* room is with *seiza* (traditional Japanese sitting way). The interior which is not portable is the *irori*. It is a traditional Japanese heater that is commonly used as heating and cooking utensils. *Irori* is usually in the form of a square hole filled with

stone on the floor and is accompanied by an iron-based fishing hook or called *jizaikagi*. However, *irori* does not always characterize as one of the *washitsu* interiors, especially in this modern era

Rakugo performances is usually held on *yose* that means comedy theater. Besides *rakugo*, *yose*



Picture 2. Yose (Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju episode 6, 11:45)

is also a venue for staging various traditional Japanese dramas such as *manzai*, *kondan*, *mandan*, *ongyoku*, etc..



Picture 3. Yose (Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju episode 1, 06:50)

The elements of material culture found are equipment and interiors used in *yose* such as *chouchin* (lanterns), *nobori* (banners), *samisen*, *taiko* (musical instruments),

tenugui (handkerchiefs), and *sensu* (hand fans). *Chouchin* is lantern that is made of bamboo assembly and the surface is coated with paper in which there is candle as the source of light. Apart from being an interior in *yose*, *chouchin* is usually used at *tanabata*, *obon* and other festivals as decorations.

Nobori is one of the interiors in the form of a banner or flag with a rectangular shape tied to a bamboo stick. *Nobori* has been used since the Heian period (794 – 1185) as a regulator of battle formations and also as an indication of troop types. In modern times *nobori* is used as an advertisement by supermarkets, election campaigns, and in *yose* it is used to display the names of performers who will appear in theaters.

The equipment which is used in *rakugo* performances is one of the elements of material culture. *Samisen* is a Japanese stringed instrument that looks like a lute. The majority of

traditional Japanese dramas use the *samisen* as their introductory music. Besides the *samisen*, there is the *taiko*, which is a Japanese percussion instrument with a drum shape. *Taiko* is also believed by the Japanese people as a place that is shaded by gods. *Taiko* was introduced to Japan through Korean and Chinese culture in the 6th century. The function of *taiko* varies from accompaniment of military action, theater accompaniment, religious ceremonies and festivals.

The property which is used by *rakugo* players also includes material culture. There are also property findings that are used like *sensu* namely a folding fan which is one of the tools in the performance of *rakugo*. *Tenugui* is a thin towel made of cotton. In the daily life of Japanese people, *tenugui* is also used as a cloth for dining furniture, clothing accessories such as belts, aprons and collar covers. In *rakugo* performances, players only use these 2 properties as tools to demonstrate the content in the story, they can turn into chopsticks and bowls, books and pens and so on.



Picture 4. Baju Tradisional Jepang (Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju episode 4, 15:05)

In the anime, many Japanese people at that time still wore traditional clothes such as kimono and *yukata*. Basically the two outfits are the same, but have some differences. Kimono is a traditional Japanese clothing that has been used for generations since Japan was in the Jomon era and the Yayoi period (660 BC – 552 BC) until the present. Since then, kimono becomes the national dress of Japan. Kimono today is more often used when there is an event such as weddings and *seijin shiki* (maturity ceremonies).

Yukata is a simple form of kimono usually used when there are *matsuri* (festivals), and the property clothes are provided in hotels and so on. The difference between a kimono and a *yukata* is that the basic material of the kimono is thicker and warmer, so it is not used in summer, while on the other hand, the *yukata* is more

often used in the summer and moreover, the *yukata* can be used instead of pajamas for sleeping and not for kimono. In the *Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju anime*, Japanese people at that time still used the *yukata* during their daily activities.

Non Material Culture

Japan is a country that is famous for its polite attitude by the world community. This can be seen from *anime* and dramas that describe the activities of the Japanese. The activities are created from the habitual actions inherited and passed from one generation to others that become costume. This can be studied in the elements of non-material culture. Elements of non-material culture found in *anime Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju* such as *seiza* and *ojigi*.



Picture 5. Seiza (Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju episode 1, 11:10)

Seiza is sitting on two bent legs with a straight back. For women, the hands are brought together and cupped in the lap. It is different with a man who puts his palms on his knees. This is usually done during formal situations such as tea ceremonies, eating and visiting someone's house. In addition to this, in *rakugo* performances, it is also mandatory for actors to sit properly (*seiza*) from the beginning of the event until it is finished.



Picture 6. Ojigi (Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju episode 3, 18:31)

Ojigi that means "bend". The meaning of the word is a gesture to express greetings, apologies, respect and others. *Ojigi* is used not only in business matters, but also in everyday life and in various situations, because *ojigi* includes actions or habits that need to be carried out when communicating in Japan.

The majority of Japanese people greet each other by bowing not by shaking hands, unlike Indonesia, especially Javanese people, when they want to leave the house or visit someone's house, they do kissing their parents' hands. Even today, Japanese people still preserve *seiza* and *ojigi* manners in their daily lives.

Japan is also a country that does not interfere in the individual beliefs of their people. Although it is known as a country that does not believe in religion, Japanese people have spiritual values by praying in temples and having faith in *omamori*. *Omamori* in general is the in the form of a bag made of decorated cloth where in the cloth there is a fold of paper or pieces of wood bearing the name of a god. In the *Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju anime*, the main character named Kikuhiko who suffers an injury to his leg and so has to use a stick for the rest of his life. He trusts the stick he always carries as his protective talisman (*omamori*) because he has always accompanied him wherever he goes. This is supported by the sentence spoken by Kikuhiko on episode 05 minutes

08:14. "*Maa, tsue datte omamori miteena mon dashi*" which means "I think this stick has become amulets for me."



Picture 6. Ojigi (Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju episode 3, 18:31)

D. Conclusion

Material culture is mostly found because it is tangible and can be felt by the human senses in the form of interiors on *washitsu* such as *tatami*, *fusuma/shoji*, *futon*, *zabuton*, *irori*. In *Yose's* scope there are elements of material culture such as *chouchin*, *nobori*, *samisen*, *taiko*, *tenugui* and *sensu*. In addition to the interior, there are also daily equipment in the form of clothes such as kimono and yukata. The non-material cultural elements found in the form of Japanese society manners were born from hereditary habits, namely *seiza* and *ojigi*. In the aspect of Japanese people's beliefs, it is also found about the belief in *omamori*. Actually, there are still

many material and non-material cultures depicted in the *Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju anime*. In addition, there are findings regarding the meaning of giving names and positions in the scope of *rakugo* that may be studied further.

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