

Peribahasa (proverbs) in Sumbawa

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Peribahasa is “1. a set phrase or sentence that normally describes something anaphorically for a certain intention..., 2. a compendious sentence or expression that contains comparison, parable, advice, principle for life, or manner” (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia Pusat Bahasa 4th edition, 2008, p. 1055)¹.

Peribahasa is often translated as ‘proverb’ in English, but its range is wider than proverb, including what may be called as ‘anaphoric idiom’.

This paper gives a preliminary observation of Sumbawa peribahasa on the basis of the work of a native researcher Pranajaya (Pranajaya 2012). The following tendencies are observed in Sumbawa peribahasa.

- The content is prototypically a description of an undesirable situation/ action to be avoided, and almost all the examples are metaphorical expressions (e.g. *dadi lentah* “become a leech; leaving someone soon after getting benefit from him/ her, *sekarat api ké kadebong punti* “make a fire with a banana stem; useless deed”); only a few non-metaphorical examples are found.
- Like proverbs in other cultures, some of Sumbawa *peribahasa* deliver advice or a social rule, but only in an inexplicit way.

Sangentok raret ko bodok
caus.guardjerked meet to cat
“Making a cat guard a jarked meet.” (Don’t make a cat guard a jarked meet.)

Kita bagerik, kita baeng pili
1pl shake 1pl get take
“We shake, we take.” (Those who shake a tree (should) take fallen fruit.)

Negative or positive imperative that is quite common in English proverbs is rare in Sumbawa peribahasa.

- The grammatical structure reflects rather an older state of the language. Conjunctions, including relativizer *ade*, which is often used in the contemporary Sumbawa, is never used.

¹ The original definition in Indonesian is as follows.

Pe.ri.ba.ha.sa *n* 1 kelompok kata atau kalimat yg tetap susunannya, biasanya mengiaskan maksud tertentu (dl peribahasa termasuk juga bidal, ungkapan perumpamaan); 2 ungkapan atau kalimat ringkas padat, berisi perbandingan, perumpamaan, nasihat, prinsip hidup atau aturan tingkah laku.