

Local Culture Revitalization as A Strategy for Rural Community Empowerment (A Case Study in Village Purification Ritual in Agricultural Community at Kebonrejo Village, Subdistrict Kepung, District Kediri, East Java, Indonesia)

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Abstract

This study aims to describe and analyze the functions of the revitalization of local culture, especially "Village Purification Ritual" for empowerment. Village purification ritual in the villages surrounding the district Kepung is still actively held every year in the month of Muharram. To receive support from all levels of society, the ritual need to be revitalized. Cultural revitalization is began with the ceremony preparation and organization of arts that supports the ceremony. The function of the ceremonies is not only religious, but also social, economic, and maintaining the existence of the local culture. Therefore, a qualitative descriptive study was conducted using functional approach. Data were collected in 2006 with the participative observation, free and in-depth interviews of informants associated with the event organizer. "Village Purification Ritual" has a religious function as a gratitude for the overflowing fortune in agricultural activities, safety, with the hope that agricultural product is better in the coming year, 2) provide encouragement for farmers to undertake economic activities, 3) as social integration and harmonization of the villagers, 4) as knowledge transformation medium in running the farm since the villagers are gathered and as well as the forum to promote pesticides via banners ads installed on entertainment stages, 5) gathering small merchants and, 6) hiring local arts workers.

Keywords: revitalization, local culture, village purification ritual, empowerment, rural, Java, Indonesia

2. Methods

This study was a qualitative descriptive study using functional approach. Data collection was undertaken with interview and participative observation. The interview was done to: 1) village senior figures to find the history and meaning of village purification ritual for the community and impact of the ritual to the community. 2) the organizers of the ritual, from preparation, fund raising, to the implementation. 3) supporting community members, to find their response on the ritual. Interview to senior figures and the organizing committee was conducted to find the process of the ritual, and the interview to supporting community members was carried out during and after the ritual. Participative observation was performed during the implementation of the village purification ritual.

After being collected, data were categorized according to each theme in order to answer the question of the study, and then reinterpreted and analyzed functionally. Problems related with the implementation of village purification ritual, formation process of the organizing committee, fund raising process, time and stages in the ritual, and performing arts that support the implementation.

3. Literature Review

Village purification ritual is still actively performed in some rural farming villages of Java, Indonesia. Village purification ritual is meant as a gratitude to Almighty God for having bestowed his fortune in farming activities and requested that the harvest will come better than ever. Designation and the organization of village purification ritual may vary. For example, village purification ritual in Wukirsari village, Imogiri, is called Rasulan. Wukirsari village is home to many historic villages, especially the tomb of the kings of Mataram and the tomb Giriloyo. Rasulan is expressed profound gratitude to Almighty God for giving abundant crops to the farmers for one year. The farmers in this village hope that the forthcoming harvest will be much better than that in the previous year and expect to be kept away from temptations that can thwart the harvest. The ritual is usually done after the full moon, on the day Legi or Wage according to the Javanese calendar. Usually Rasulan is accompanied by Salawatan, Rodat, Maulud, and art with dancer. Some are sacral, but some others are merely entertaining (<http://www.bantul.biz.com.id>). For the ritual can gain sympathy, its implementation needs to be revitalized, especially in regard with the entertainment supporting the activities.

3.1 Revitalization of local culture and functional approach

3.1.1 Revitalization or strengthening process

Revitalization of local culture means the process of strengthening the organization of village purification ritual. The process of strengthening the local culture is all ways that are used to reinforce the elements of the staging of

village purification ritual. Cultural revitalization is necessary to obtain sympathy and support from the wider community to the village purification ritual. Modes or strategies that are used, among others, are seeking financial support, in the implementation stage, and art to enliven the ritual.

Village purification ritual is a form of culture, as a medium of communication of agricultural community with supernatural power that is considered to give life for the farming community. Geertz (1992) stated that culture is a historically transmitted meanings embodied in symbols, a inherited conceptions system expressed in symbolic forms by which humans communicate, preserve and develop their knowledge and attitudes about life and attitude towards life. Geertz further emphasizes culture as a system of symbols to communicate. Village purification ritual is a form of religion that communicates with supernatural power that gives life.

According to Malinowski (1939), that every religion in primitive or modern society basically has three aspects, the dogma, ritual, and ethics. These three aspects are interrelated. A dogmatic system of beliefs concerning religion and the human conception of human nature, about the supernatural being, spirit, and the existence of supernatural powers. Ritual is a manifestation of religion conducted jointly and earnestly. The development of ritual and dogma influenced by individual behavior in everyday life and vice versa.

Koentjaraningrat (1987) says that human behavior is religious because 1) human begins are aware on the concept of spirit, 2) human beings recognize various symptoms that cannot be explained by reason; 3) human willingness to deal with various crises ever experienced in the circle of life, 4) the vibration of the emotion of fear that arises in the human as a member of the community; 5) man receives words from God. Therefore, religious system is centered on an unseen concept who has supernatural powers. Further, Koentjaraningrat (1987) wrote that religion consists of five components: 1) Religious emotion, 2) religious system, 3) belief system, 4) system of rites and ceremonies; 4) rites and ceremonies equipment; 5) people. These five components in religion have close functions, affecting each other.

One of the media relating human with supernatural and sacred beings is religious ceremonies. Van Gennepe wrote (as cited in Koentjaraningrat, 1987):

"Religious rites and ceremonies are universal, in essence serves as a ritual to reawaken the spirit of social life among the citizens. Symptoms of decline in the spirit of social life usually occurs at the end of hunting season, fishing or at the end of a stage in agricultural production, as if human energy had already been used up in social activities during the last season. "

Ritual is meant to address various crises in human life. Ritual can be divided into two. First, the Rites of Passages, ritual activities undertaken related to the stage or life cycle events such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. This ritual has a function of introduction of an individual to his group and introduction of the new relationship that will be more complex for individuals. Second, the Rites of Intensification is a ritual that was held to unite people, overcoming the crisis, such as ritual for rain and village purification. Village purification ritual is performed by the farmers to overcome various crises in order to prevent harvest failure, to hope for a better future harvest and expression of gratitude for the fortune that was bestowed through the farm. The ritual is usually enlivened by a puppet show with the play "Sri Sadono", the God of farming

1.2 Religious Function of Ritual

Village purification ritual has religious, social, and economic function. To explain this we used functional approach. The basic assumption of the functional theory is that culture has a function to meet the needs of human life. According to Sanderson (1993), the basic principles of functionalism are: 1) The community is a complex system consisting of parts which are interconnected and interdependent, and each part has significant influence on the other parts. 2) Any part of a society exists because that part has an important function in maintaining the existence and stability of society as a whole; 3) All citizens have a mechanism to integrate itself, a mechanism that can unite; one important part of that mechanism is the commitment of members of the society on a series of the same beliefs and values; 4) People tend to lead to an equilibrium or homeostasis situation and disturbances in one part tends to lead to adjustments in other parts in order to achieve harmony and stability. 5) Social change is an unusual occurrence in the community, but if there is a change it will bring beneficial consequences as a whole. Community consists of several different and interrelated elements and complements each other to order and balance. That is because the people have value as a guiding norm of the roles to achieve those goals. Social order can be seen as knowing what can unite the community.

Religious rites can strengthen social solidarity. According to Durkheim (1965), something that is able to unite the community and strengthen social bonds in the collective life is belief and religious rites. Individual totem rites unite in joint activities and strengthening confidence in the moral commitment (Johnson, 1986). Meanwhile, according to Bronislaw Malinowski, all cultural activities serves to satisfy a series of human instinctive life needs related to their life (Ihromi, 1999). Robert K. Merton, a figure in functionalism, argues that cultural activity manifest and latent functions. Manifest function is the expected function and a conscious consequence, while the latent function is an unconscious function. Village purification ritual has manifest and latent functions. The ritual is generally followed by local arts performances. In order to attract all people, revitalization should be made, adapted to the needs and development of society. For example, the classic puppet

show may not appeal to younger generation because it is less communicative or not entertaining.

Art, as an element of culture in human life, has a function in which there are instruments of the model of cognition, symbolic system or historically transmitted delivery of symbols. Art is an expression of one form of creativity itself (Kayam, 1981). Puppet show as a form of art to support village purification ritual has an important function for the life of the community. Alan P. Merriam (in Indriyanto, 2002) mentions at least nine functions: 1) as a means of ceremonies; 2) entertainment functions, 3) the function of communication tools, 4) the function of symbolic offerings; 5) maintaining the norms of society; 6) as an affirmation of religious ceremony ; 7) as a means of cultural continuity and stability, and 8) for the integrity of the community. The function of art in indigenous traditional ceremonies can be categorized into two: the secular and sacred functions. Sacred functions are relating to matters of religion, belief. Art used is to accompany religious ceremonies or beliefs as a form of accompaniment to the ritual event. Secular functions of the arts are for the benefit of worldly interests and the arts are used only as spectacle without an element of religion (Bastomi, 1997).

Arts that support the implementation of village purification ritual in Kebonrejo village subdistrict Kepung is revitalized. Revitalization serves as adaptation, so that the implementation of village purification ritual may attract the attention of peoples from all social strata. Community interest in the ritual may preserve culture, serves as the integration of the people, and even it has a function to empower rural economic activity, hiring local arts workers and so on.

4. Results and Discussion

This research was conducted in the Village Kebonrejo. Subdistrict Kepung, Kediri in 2006. Most of the villagers in Kebonrejo depend on agricultural sector. Agricultural system in this village is dry land farming of cash crops that produce a combination of subsistence crops such as maize, horticulture such as chili tomatoes, vegetables, sugar cane, and others. In this village there are also coffee plantations. People's coffee plantation area also experience changes in cropping patterns. There are some farmers who maintain the coffee plant, but there are some who switched to other crops deemed favorable. Activities of farmers in this village are quite intense. Only in the dry season agricultural activities slightly decreases since agricultural land at the bottom of slopes cannot be planted, although at higher slopes of the mountain with cold air crops can still grow.

Most of the villagers in Kebonrejo are Muslim and a few are Christian, Hindu and Javanese beliefs. Religious facilities in the village are mosque, langgar, church, and temple. In fact, there is also growing number of traditional beliefs followers in the village, called Sapto Darmo confidence. Nevertheless, village purification ritual in the village Kebonrejo is actively performed annually in the month of Muharram. The day and date were determined by agreement of village elders, village officials, and organizers of the ceremony are the Karangtaruna. Here is an overview on the village purification ritual at village Kebonrejo:

"Village purification ritual is carried out through two stages. The first stage, on Friday afternoon at 16.30 a feast of selamatan kenduri was held attended by villagers, especially males. Old men, young, and children flocked to the Kebonrejo village hall where the feast took place. Any representative of a family carried a package of food containing rice, vegetables and side dishes. Types of food brought was not determined by the committee but wealthy villagers bring savory rice, roast chicken, and urapan. Food dish was made uniform from a rectangular stem of banana bunch. Food covered with banana leaves. Food packages are placed in row at village hall auditorium. Residents who come sitting cross-legged around the food. After all the citizens and the food is ready, the selamatan ritual begins and opened with a report from the organizing committee. The report contains information of funds collected and expenses incurred in organizing the ceremony. Then, other speeches, the first was the village head represented by the village secretary, and then remarks by the head of Dusun Kebonrejo and closed with a prayer led by a cleric of the village Kebonrejo. After reading the prayer, everybody is free to take the foods lining the Village Hall Auditorium. Most of the villagers bring home some food and some others eat at the Village Hall. Towards sunset, the ceremony ended and the hall is cleaned.

The second stage, in Friday evening, starting at 19.00 villagers, men, women, old, and young, and the invited guests come to see the puppet show and campursari. Stage has been set up since early morning in front of Village Hall Kebonrejo. The invitation consists of village officials, community leaders and donors occupying seats that have been provided by the committee and were treated to a meal cooked by the PKK Kebonrejo Village. Other villagers are outside the area and some traders holding and selling stuffs, such as foods, beverages, snacks and others. They poured the place watching the show. Before the show started, there are remarks by Chief of the village, thanking everyone who has helped organize the ritual. The young and old men are especially having fun watching shadow puppets show and campursari and once they join in the singing and dancing with the singer or tempting campursari sinden who sing popular songs accompanied by Javanese gamelan. Puppet show with the story Sri Sadono and campursari finished at 05.00 am. The terob is

dismantled in the morning, the groups returned to Nganjuk transported by truck and passenger car”

4.1 Village Purification Ritual and Empowerment

The primary function of village purification ritual is an expression of gratitude of the villagers for having given the fortune through farming activities in a year and a request for next year's crop will be better. This is evident in the ritual, which was attended by villagers mainly men, on Friday afternoon until sunset. They came to Kebonrejo village Hall as the site of the event. The slametan ritual was led by clerics in the village with a prayer in Islamic way and using Javanese. Puppet show was held the next day with a story of Sri Sadono, presenting as offerings from village community to the goddess of farming. According to one of the village elders, in the 1990s, village purification ritual at the village Kebonrojo was enlivened with tayub performances and at that time there was a storm that ravaged the venue. It was seen as the goddess of agriculture anger for not being entertained with shadow puppets. Therefore, puppet show with the play Sri Sadono is a necessity for holding the ritual in the village Kebonrejo.

Inadvertently, the village purification ritual has a function as social integration and stimulates the emergence of non-agricultural economic activities. Most of Kebonrejo villagers as farmers generally have solid activity. Farmers who work at dry land farming with horticulture products generally have a hectic schedule with a high activity. Even some farmers have multiple economic activities in agriculture and outside agriculture. Such condition prevents them to congregate and meet intensively for a long time. The ritual invites them to come together in one place. They have asked that same goal, to improve crop yields and enjoying shadow puppets entertainment. When they met, they told each other about issues relating to farming, family, work and even sometimes talk about the village people who may be less concerned about the environment. It was as a medium of information exchange and control over citizens who occasionally deviate from social norms.

Village purification ritual with accompanying art show will attract the attention of citizens and it stimulates the arrival of small traders and workers maintaining the existence of local art. The ritual can stimulate the emergence of non-agricultural economic activities, especially small traders who sell food, drinks and toys. The village purification ritual at Kebonrejo village with puppet show and campursari presents interesting artist an popular song that entertain villagers from layers, the young and old individuals. The presence of the performing arts will present the traders of food, toys, drinks from people in his village. Such habits will foster the spirit of rationality and entrepreneurship among farmers as villagers. The seeds of entrepreneurship and rationality among farmers will drive economic activity in rural areas. As Clelland (1961) said, the number of entrepreneurs in a society will bring economic progress. The merchants of chemical fertilizers and pesticides can products by placing a banner on the stage. The ritual appears also as a promotional event of pesticides, chemical fertilizers from large nationwide companies. According to one chemical fertilizer and pesticides traders, it is the right time to promote the pesticide from the company. These companies also leave a message or promotional products at the event.

Puppet show with the play "Sri Sadono" with charming sinden or singer enlivened the event, so that villagers, young and old, can have fun while dancing together. It certainly empowers the existence of local arts and arts workers. Local arts workers will have earning from the show. The number of members of the art entourage is so many, made up nearly two dozen gamelan players, local artists, drivers and other workers who carry the group.

5. Conclusion

Village purification ritual at Kebonrejo village is done once a year in the month Muharram. To gain support from the villagers who have experienced social and cultural change, revitalization is necessary. Revitalization occurred in the implementation and fund raising. Funds were obtained from villagers and some from pesticide company through its staffs who promote the products to the village Kebonrejo. Puppet show with the play Sri Sadono is to support and enliven the event, displaying interesting local sinden and popular songs. Therefore, the villagers can happily watch the show all night long.

The implementation of purification ritual in the village Kebonrejo has religious, social and economic aspects as the empowerment of local communities. The functions of village purification ritual for the villagers are 1) as a gratitude for the abundance of fortune in agricultural activities, safety, and hope that the coming agricultural year will be better, 2) provide encouragement for farmers to undertake economic activities, 3) as social integration and harmonization among the villagers, 4) as a medium of knowledge transformation in running the farm as the villagers are gathering, and pesticides promotion also takes place through banners ads installed on entertainment stage, 5) bring small merchants and, 6) hiring local arts workers. The villagers are now living in the middle of the globalization process, so the implementation of ritual should be actively performed for survival in an agrarian society.

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