The Survival of Dieng Rural Society in Maintaining Local Wisdom

Hamdan Tri Atmaja¹, Ba’in¹

¹Faculty of Social Science, Universitas Negeri Semarang
Semarang, Indonesia
¹Corresponding email: hamdan.ta@mail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract – Modernity becomes an important determinant in a rural discourse of Indonesia nowadays. Dieng is a central development area of Javanese culture in the rural part which is also affected by the modernity in the Java Island. The Dieng society nowadays has considerably changed from the social, economic, and cultural aspects. These changes become important to discuss related to the existence of the local wisdom and survival of the society in maintaining their identity.

Keywords – survival of the community, local wisdom, Dieng

I. INTRODUCTION

A characteristic of Javanese people who are open to the cultural impacts from outside encourages the Javanese culture vulnerable to erosion even chancing following the incoming cultural currents. Dieng as one of the important areas in distribution and cultivation of Javanese culture becomes one of the areas. If it is observed, this has undergone a rapid change from time to time. Sukanto in this point explains that the Dieng is an area which obtains a big impact of a Western-style modernization [21]. The Dieng society nowadays lives in semi-urban area, so they no longer actively sympathize in maintaining their cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, the Dieng society still has the predicate as a unique community and a special characteristic which distinguish them with the common Javanese society. Dieng, since the period of the Hindu Buddha, has already known as an area which supplies humanists who have knowledge about the Javanese culture. Dieng is a big civilization which makes Javanese quite famous, and the historical value in Dieng is one of the important heritages to be maintained.

A high value of culture on Dieng’s society is reflected in the local wisdom which still survives in that area. Moertipito and friends explain that the local wisdom is a cultural product which reflects the quality of a people community [6]. Dieng as a highland area has artifacts and sociofact as the relics of the past and reflects a community with a high civilization. However, unfortunately, the condition of Dieng nowadays has obtained many impacts from the outside culture and the technology disruption which is now developing rapidly expands the countryside in Java in recent times.

Sedyawati strengthens this argument that modernity changes many things from the traditional social order, and modernity is a turning point of social changes in the Indonesian countryside [6]. The people attitude of modernity itself which will determine the condition of social-culture, either the essence or the existence. The Dieng society with a cultural consciousness which dropped dramatically since the Indonesian Independence, face up a serious problem related to the negative impact of modernization.

The researchers have reviewed first related to the social changes which go on in Dieng, for example, Raharjana [18], Laksita and Rosyid [13], and Frianto [11]. These three types of research have resulted in a discourse about Dieng and its changes, but the changes meant here are different with the modernity, and these three types of research have not discussed the local wisdom and its existence in society.

This article aims at describing how the existence of the local wisdom and the modernization process appear in Dieng. Moreover, the most important thing is that how these two beat each other, this research contributes to the rural area and social changes study in Indonesia generally and can be a reference for research in other regions.

II. THE GEOGRAPHICAL STATE OF DIENG RURAL AREA

A. The Layout of Dieng Rural Area

The Dieng Plateau is the second highest plateau in the world after Nepal and the largest on Java Island. Dieng lies in the geographical position of 7.11° – 7.13° South Latitude and 109.54° East Longitude, at an altitude of 6,802 feet or 2,093 m above sea level. Administratively, Dieng area is divided into two, Dieng Kulon (West of Dieng) region located in Banjaranegara Regency and Dieng Wetan (East of Dieng) Region located in Wonosobo Regency, Central Java Province. Dieng Plateau is a volcanic area which is formed gradually since the quarter,
The initial stage is that volcanic eruption activity forms craters and mountains. The second stage is that some of the craters are no longer active and become pockets of rainwater in the plains between the mountains. The third stage is that the volcanic activity in the earth is still ongoing and the influence of hydrothermal solutions causes hot springs and new craters, and this process continues until now [11].

Dieng Plateau is formed as the result of a massive eruption of a volcano. Therefore, the geographical conditions until now are still relatively unstable and often occur inland movements. Some evidences show the event of the disappearance of Legetan Village, the road was cut off between Banjarnegara Karangkobar and Sukoharjo Ngadirjo as well as cracks of land that emits toxic gases like the Sinila event. Dieng Plateau area is a volcanic complex with cones consisting of Bisma, Seroja, Binem, Pangonan Merdada, Pagerkandang, Telogo Dringo, Pakuwaja, Kendil, Kunir, and Prambanan. Fumarola Field consists of Sikidang Crater, Kumbang Crater, Sibanteng Crater, Upas Crater, Telogo Terus, Pagerkandang Crater, Sipandu Crater, Siglagah Crater and Siler Crateri [18].

B. Social Values Formed

The values related to the geographical condition of the Dieng Plateau and its potential are: (i) Regional independence. The utilization of the regional natural resources (SDA) to provide the needs of Dieng society, the independent and creative society in developing the geographical potentials such as, agriculture, plantation, mining, and other potentials cause the regional dependence on other parties’ assistance reduced; (ii) The willingness to coordinate and to work together. Because Dieng is divided into two districts, it needs a coordination and cooperation between these two districts in the matter of management and conservation of Dieng, in order to Dieng's natural preservation to be unbalanced and easier to materialize, so that shared prosperity can be achieved; and (iii) The willingness to preserve the natural resources wisely. The nature conservation in Dieng has not been said to be perfect because natural conservation has collided with the efforts to fulfill the economic needs of the people of Dieng and its surroundings, in order to make the natural conservation efforts of Dieng be able to be pursued more, so that later the next generation can still feel the natural wealth of Dieng..

C. Dieng’s History

According to Canggal Inscription (732 M), King Sanjaya is the founder of the Ancient Mataram Kingdom from the Sanjaya Dynasty. King Sanjaya ruled very fairly and wisely, so that his people were guaranteed safe and secure. In the matters of religion, King Sanjaya brought in Hindu Shiva priests. From these priests, the King could deepen the Shiva Hinduism. The highest worship in the Ancient Mataram Kingdom was given to Lord Shiva who was considered the supreme Deity. To worship the god, temples were erected [17].
The temple construction consists of feet which symbolize Bhurloka (The world of men), and the body which symbolizes Bhuwarloka (their sanctified world), and the roof which symbolizes Swarloka (the world of the gods). The sketch of the feet is square, rather high, similar to Batus, can be climbed through the stairs to the temple booth. In the middle, there is a gate to plant Peripih. The body of the temple consists of a booth containing the embodiment. In the middle of the booth, just above the gate, facing the entrance of the temple. The outer wall cubicle is given niches filled with statues. The side niches are enthroned by the teacher's statue, north-Durga and in the backwall niches (west or east, depending on the direction of the temple) the statue of Ganesha. The roof of the temple: it consists of an arrangement of three levels, the more it goes up the smaller the size, at the peak given a bell. Inside the roof, there is a small cavity which is basically a rectangular stone carved with a picture of red lotus, the throne of the god. It means as a temporary dwelling place of the god.

D. Local Wisdom

As one of the areas which has been exposed by modernization, the Dieng society nowadays has so much changed. This thing also applies to the existence of the local wisdom there. The condition of the local wisdom in this area is recently threatened [4]. The identification result of the local wisdom in that area beside the existence of Hindu temples which are a lot, the most prominent is the development of cultural value. In Dieng society, wisdom is more reflected in the cultural ritual. The values of the local wisdom are;

(i) The religious values: honesty, justice, truth, and godliness which are presented by Dieng traditional leaders in leading ritual ceremonies. In the ritual ceremony, the leaders read prayers in the Qur'ān. This ritual activity aims at asking for safety for Allah SWT for children who are entrusted with illness in different ways to be healthy and get protection from Allah. Various ancient relics of Hindus are found in Dieng, including temples, statues, slate, and other ancient sites. The Dieng society, though they have Hindu relics, almost all have embraced Islam. Therefore, the people still preserve and protect the place of worship of the Hindus. The people really honor and appreciate whatever the ancestor inherited. The ritual of dreadlocks is usually carried out in the Arjuna temple complex;

(ii) The aesthetic value (beauty): this aesthetic value is presented in a form of artworks either in a voice, music, or dances. The ritual of shaving the hair from the beginning until complete, is accompanied by the song of Macapat and gamelan. The cultural procession will be accompanied by various dances, such as the Rampak Yoko dance and lumping horse [9].

(iii) The human value: this human value is presented in the procession of Ngelab Berkah, which teaches how to share and to give half of the sustenance to other people. Peralungan procession teaches to share sustenance to other creatures of God such as animals and plants.

(iv) The togetherness value: the togetherness value is presented in a community involvement in the ritual of shaving dreadlocks. Mutual cooperation is held to prepare the ritual of a mass hair shaving. This mass hair shaving is to ease the burden of ritual costs to parents, and at the same time preserve and introduce Dieng local culture to the tourists.

(v) The democratic value: The democratic value is seen in preparation before the mass ritual of dreadlocks. Various aspirations are accommodated and discussed in order to reach a democratic and responsible decision.

(vii) The prosperity value: This value of prosperity can be seen from the increase in people's income due to the cultural rituals. The increased income is coming from the ticket sales, food sales, souvenirs, knick-knack, and home-stay services.
A cultural ritual in Dieng as explained above is a masterpiece as quoted from Wibisono (Nurgiantoro, 2011:20), to be a world masterpiece, there are six requirements which must be fulfilled, they are: (1) an extraordinary value as a masterpiece of human creation; (2) rooted in cultural traditions or cultural history of the people concerned; (3) acts as a means of expressing the identity of the nation or ethnic group concerned as a source of inspiration for cultural exchange, as a means of making people closer to one another, and their present social role in the community concerned; (4) usefulness in applying the skills and nature of the techniques which are shown; (5) its role as a living cultural tradition; (6) the risk of the culture concerned can become extinct due to lack of means to preserve and protect it. All these requirements have been fulfilled as explained above.

III. MODERNITY AND ITS CHALLENGES IN DIENG

Anthony Giddens, pictured modernity (modern life) like a giant Panzer (called “juggernaut”) [19] which is detached and uncontrolled, to crush human life, thus producing an “uncontrollable world” too (runaway world). This idea is in accordance with the theory of Giddens Structuration, about space and time and this juggernaut exceeds the power of agents in influencing the structure of Giddens defining modernity seen from four fundamental institutions: capitalism, industrialism, surveillance capacities, and control over tools of violence, by focusing the study on the nation-state. The dynamism of modernity from the Giddens structuration theory, through three aspects: distanciation (separation of space and time), disembedding (release), and reflexivity. These three aspects then drag “the modern human” to “sequestration of experience”, a process related to concealment that separates the routine of daily life from phenomena such as madness, crime, disease, death, and sexuality [23]. The alienation of this experience results from the increasing role of abstract systems in everyday life. The modernity described in the Dieng context is more about the expansion of capitalism into the Javanese rural area and also an effort of overseeing the expansion from the community. Some modernity found in Dieng rural area are:

A. The Modernity of Telecommunication Equipment

Before there is a technology as today, humans communicate more by using gestures, expressions, and postures because humans as social beings need other human beings. However, along with the times, the people are able to make a new innovation to facilitate communication, then they make a communication device called handphone.

Around 2005 before Handphone became cheap, in this Dieng rural area, it was still rare to use Handphone. In fact, Handphone was still a strange object which was only rich people who could afford it. However, with the advancement of technology in this country, Handphone becomes a familiar item, because at a price of a hundred thousand rupiahs, people can get a handphone and it can be used to communicate.

With the development of Handphone which is more advanced and sophisticated, now it can be felt by all societies, even the societies in the rural area do not want to be missed out, either adults or children. In fact, starting from children in elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, university students, to mothers and fathers have owned the handphone.

In a village in Dieng, Batur sub-district, handphone is no longer a secondary need, but a primary need. No wonder that this thing is said to be a must object to own. From Handphone, we can communicate with the distant people, so that in an urgent situation it can be used to call the closest people or family, thus the communication with those who are distant can be a lot easier [1].

For adults there, such as gentlemen, handphone is usually used to call their co-workers if they are in need. However, for fathers who work in a distant place such as outside the island or city, handphone is usually used to call the people in the house as they miss their family. However, handphone is not only used for communication but for a business. They can easily sell things and offer service through Handphone.

Before there is a Handphone development now, the mothers in Dieng do not have Handphone. Nevertheless, now almost all mothers either young or old have had it. For mothers who have a job outside the house, Handphone is also used to communicate with their co-workers, meanwhile for housewives Handphone is no longer an important thing, it only functions as a secondary need. The use of Handphone for housewives is only used as a tool of communication with their children or husband.

Meanwhile, for children in Dieng, almost all of them have already owned Handphone, either a good phone as Smart-phone or a regular phone. For elementary students, Handphone is only used to play a game or listen to music. Meanwhile, for junior high school, high school, or university students, Handphone is not only used for communication but also used in other matters such as SMS, MP3, Video, Camera, Record, internet to find information of a school subject, so that Handphone becomes Multimedia.

In addition to being able to communicate easily, most of the children in Dieng said that the main purpose of using cell phones is as a means of communication and as a connector for hospitality, as entertainment, and does not rule out the possibility of being an additional tool to help smooth the business. Because with Handphone, teens in this village can also do business through the internet by opening an online store, so that they can make their own money.

B. The Agricultural Modernity

Dieng is a plateau region in Java. In the past, this region is a place of worship for Hindu people and a trade route. Islamization had occurred since the presence of the Islamic kingdom in Java and the population of Dieng as a
Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR), volume 313

whole is now Muslim, with each village having at least one grand mosque, including Patak Banteng which has two magnificent mosques. The population of Dieng comes from Bagelen and Pekalongan (west) and the royal warriors of Mataram (east). This expansion into the highlands was possible since the colonial era which introduced various food crops and colonial pressure, and the New Order with its green revolutionary policy [2].

There are two types of agricultural crops, plants for subsistence and commercial needs. Previously, farmers’ commercial crops were Citronella flowers and tobacco, while subsistence crops were corn and potatoes. Commercial agriculture began to be known since the commodity of potatoes began to be planted and intensive management of agricultural systems began to be conditioned by the New Order era. Intensive commercial agriculture has changed the Patak Banteng and Dieng landscapes as a whole from protected forest areas to productive areas.

The development of the New Order period made the interaction between Patak Banteng farmers and the market run smoothly. In the market, highland farmers interacted with other individuals, which led to the introduction of the commodity of potatoes into Patak Banteng. The entry of potato commodities that replaced other vegetables was used by the community of Patak Banteng to make a fortune. Various methods have been carried out by the Patak Banteng community in order to obtain economic benefits, including borrowing capital from the bank. For families with low economies, the inclusion of potato commodities makes the intensity of their working time with farmers higher because of the short potato growing season [4].

The changes of a landscape do not only happen physically or geographically, but also ideologically [7], economically, socially, and culturally. These various sectors change with the increasing living standards due to the economy of potato farming which is supported by the government and market policies. The policies related to massive land expansion occurred during and after reformation in 1998. Community dynamics have occurred since then.

A massive expansion (region and population) actually had an impact on the decline of potato farming productivity and this was responded by the community by increasingly treating land owned more intensively again. The impact is the ecological degradation of the plateau. The rapid population growth and land stagnation make some of the losing population in the zero-sum game farm, emigrated outside the region. This had an impact on the lack of agricultural labor that could not be managed by the farmers themselves with family member resources [20].

The shortage of labor was responded by various efforts to bind workers to keep working in the farms’ fields. In addition to farmers, a boss also had an effort to keep workers and farmers in order to gain profits through potato farming. Workers who are needed by farmers and bosses finally had a higher bargaining power through the learning process with farmers who are able to tie workers at high prices. Various strategies are planned and implemented by various actors to overcome problems (adaptation behavior) that characterize the socioeconomic life of the Patak Banteng community so that they can fulfill (adaptation) their needs through potato farming.

The dynamics of the (fluctuating) production and selling prices of potatoes, do not decrease the role of potato commodity as a teacher of the community's economic milestones. Farmers can enjoy the potato products through their income and status in the social structure of the community. Workers still get jobs provided by farmers and bosses, and their roles are increasingly needed. The traders can still extract surplus through the sale of their merchandise, which is supported by the increasing tourism sector of Dieng. The surplus extraction from the bosses is greater when they remain superior in terms of potato bargaining and access to factual information.

The entry of potatoes into Dieng also triggers the emergence of agricultural technology that is born from the creativity of the community, for example, fertilizer and water sprayers which are designed very creatively by the community so that the community can be facilitated by the process of plant care. It also supports community productivity, it is noted that agriculture in Dieng is always smooth and has never encountered any problems. This is also what makes the people there live relatively well-off.

C. Education Modernity

A research result shows that the Dieng society individual motivation to get an education in school to the highest level is very low. It is known that the average score of the motivation of the Dieng community is included in the low criteria, meaning that the motivation of the people in Dieng Wetan Village is relatively low in terms of education. The community is not interested in going to a high school level [5], they tend to choose to be in the Islamic boarding schools or to work than to have a formal school. The desire of the community to go to school is low, they prefer to study religion in Islamic boarding schools and work as farmers to help their parents. In addition, the ideals of the individual are not far from the work of parents, which is being farmers, only a few have high hopes of leaving the circle of farmers.

Klausmeier stated that the difference in the achievement motivation intensity is showed in various levels of achievement which is obtained by various individuals [10]. The greater the motivation of someone to continue to achieve, then the more he tries to get the education to a higher level [3]. The condition that occurs in Dieng is that the people lack the motivation of individuals to have achievement by taking a high education. Therefore, it needs encouragement especially from the family, in this case, the parents to motivate their children to be able to take education as high as possible. In addition, socialization is also needed for them about the importance of education and the benefits and objectives of
school education. This will also encourage and motivate the people in Dieng Wetan Village to take high education. The social condition can influence the social norm in the community. This also includes the norms related to the education. The condition of the community with a low level of education and lack of importance in formal educatio can make people who are in the environment also recognize and are accustomed to even following it. This is confirmed by the Sheriff, that social interaction between members of a group can cause a social norm in the society that applies in that society [8].

The social condition of the people of Dieng Wetan Village is still quite good. Even though the people are farmers who have their own busy activities, the social relations of the community, especially in their families and closest neighbors, are still good enough for their education. This social condition means the environmental conditions of the respondent's family and the environmental conditions of the community which includes interactions between family members, interactions with community members, and communication between the two.

The factor of the family economy determines a lot in children's learning. For example, children in a rich family can afford to buy complete school equipment, whereas children from poor families cannot buy them. With this incomplete tool, the hearts of children become disappointed, retreat, and despair, so their motivation to learn is lacking [14].

However, it does not apply to the people of Dieng. The family economic condition that is classified as good does not then help encourage the community to pursue education as high as possible. The Dieng people, who mostly work as potato farmers, are spoiled by their fertile nature. They have been able to fulfill their life necessities well as potato farmers, although they don’t have a high education. The motivation of parents become one of the factors which influence the low level of education of the children. Viewed from the average score of parent motivation obtained is included in the criteria of very low. This thing proves that the motivation of parents is still very low in supporting the education of their children. The parental motivation can be seen from parents' awareness of the importance of education.

The parent’s awareness of the importance of formal education for their children is still lacking. The parents consider what is the benefit of sending their children to school in a high education if later the children will also become farmers. In addition to it, the parents are not strict enough in sending the children to school. The children who do not want to go to school are left out of school on the grounds of following the children’s wishes. Generally, the parent so if the village community has a hope so that their children can get a high education as possible, but in fact, the parents cannot encourage the children to go to school. The parents tend to give up the willingness to go to school for children [15] [16].

In fact, the motivation that comes from parents has a big impact on the education of their children. The awareness of the responsibility to educate and foster the children contentiously needs to be developed to every parent, so that the education which is done is no longer based on the habits seen from parents, but has been based by the modern education, according to the times [14].

D. The Transportation Modernity

The discovery of two wheels is an important role in transportation because the two-wheeled round shape can require easy movement, then is more facilitated by the use of towing animals, so that the human burden becomes lighter. After finding the engine which can move the wheels, then transportation is not only lighter, but also faster.

The biggest discovery in the world after the alphabet discovery is the discovery of means of transportation. There is no place in this world that cannot be visited, all of the isolated spots still can be accessed by the transportation, the human does not need to waste the time for months to go to a very distant location, with the choice of transportation which has been opened widely nowadays. The development of transportation follows the development of information and rapid growth, in this case, transportation acts as savings in production costs in terms of shortening the distance and time.

The rapid development of transportation eliminates divides within national borders both in terms of economy, world cooperation, social etc. The transportation tools that are supported by electronic or mechanical technology such as cars, always experience changes from the past that are modified in such a way as to produce a sophisticated car in its speed and shape.

The development of a technology science has changed the transportation system in a human’s life, there are a lot of easiness that can be enjoyed even as if causing the world to be narrower. Before the existence of the development of science and technology, the land transportation was done by on foot, horsing, bull-drawn carriage, horse-drawn carriage, or camel in the desert. As for after the development of the science and technological facilities and infrastructures, the transportation becomes easier. For example, the motorcycle, car, bus, truck, train, bridge with certain strength in accordance with the needs of vehicles that may pass through. For transportation through the sea, this can be made according to the needs of a vessel of a certain size. In fact, it is now made of nuclear-powered ships, before there was an aircraft industry. With the development of technology, an aircraft industry with greater speed can be created, guided by the speed of sound.

The Dieng Plateau, which is used to be unfamiliar with the modern transportation, was estimated since 2005 to be familiar with various modes of transportation, both individual and communal. The people in Dieng currently own cars because they are potato farmers. To move
potatoes from Dieng to other regions, it is necessary to have sophisticated transportation, once in the past the activity was carried out with carts, classic transportation which is currently abandoned.

The impact of modern transportation that has developed in Dieng has positive and negative impacts on humans. With many types of transportation that require petroleum as a driving force in various countries, of course, this is very influential on the environment, then the fumes emitted from motorized vehicles cause urban air pollution. Moving from that, transportation vehicles also have a positive impact on the comfort of transport.

The positive impacts; (i) For rural communities, transportation vehicles will be felt very important to connect them to other cities or regions in meeting all their needs. The far distance between villages and cities will be a barrier to the village growth [12]. Without transportation vehicles, everything will be very difficult; (ii) Saving time, while traveling to a place that is distant; (iii) The air pollution caused by transportation vehicles besides giving a negative impact, can also have a positive impact, such as, lava and particulates which are erupted by erupting volcanoes, when it is cold it causes soil to become fertile, sand and rocks released by volcanoes that erupt can be used as the building materials; and (iv) the carbon monoxide gas when reacting with oxygen in the air produces carbon dioxide gas which can be used for plants to carry out photosynthesis to produce carbohydrates that are very useful for living things.

The negative impacts; (i) Petroleum is still the most important natural resource to meet the world’s energy needs. This situation is seen that from all the machines, train, ship, plane, car, all of the transportation tools, are transportation facilities that use petroleum fuels, while petroleum is a natural resource that cannot be renewed (non-renewable) if this continues to be drained, then the ideal environment will never be felt by the future generations; (ii) With the development of technology, natural changes are not aesthetic, for example: as soon as possible vehicles mixed with dust will form a nitrogen oxidation in the air, so that it will form brownish clouds, this is very necessary when enjoying the beauty of nature. There is an oil carrier that is leaking or exploding; (iii) The soil pollution and air pollution that can disrupt human psychology. Loud noises of transportation can damage hearing and can result in deafness. Dirty air can cause air pollution. The emergence of sound pollution (noise) and air pollution. This situation can be caused by the construction of the equipment or the actions of the irresponsible people; (iv) The decreasing number of a productive agricultural land because it is used to accommodate the need for transportation services such as terminals, runways for aircraft or parking vehicles; and (v) The high level of pollution due to emissions (release) from the motor vehicle fumes. This situation is a serious threat if left unchecked, not only for the environment that we live in, further this thing can lead to a decrease in the degree of public health with the outbreak of respiratory diseases due to air pollution.

This situation causes the air quality and environment in Dieng decline. According to the informant who conveyed that, the modern transportation made the Dieng area not cool or polluted. This thing is conveyed in a more general context.

CONCLUSION

The Dieng society has a local wisdom that still survives, among them, namely the cultural ritual which contains a religious value, the aesthetic value, the human value, the togetherness value, the democratic value, and the prosperity value, but the emergence of the technology impacts changes the people’s orientation of their culture. Some modernity which is found in Dieng, are; the communication tools, agricultural technology, education, lifestyle, and transportation. Modernity is a common form of expansion of capitalism in the rural Java. Dieng is an area that now has changed a lot due to the expansion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer would like to thank the Research Institutions and Community Service (LP2M) of Semarang State University who has supported in funding for this research.

REFERENCES


