

The Ritual “*Mantenan Tebu*” and Its Role as the Promotion Media of Inherited Indonesian Culture

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Abstract: *Mantenan Tebu* is a traditional ceremony that is still held in the Tasikmadu Karanganyar area. Besides, as a form of gratitude, the ritual is believed to invoke salvation from God. The purpose of this study is to describe the performance of the *Mantenan Tebu* ceremony in Tasikmadu Karanganyar which is used as cultural heritage. The data in this study were in the form of a procession from the *Mantenan Tebu* ceremony in Tasikmadu Karanganyar. Data collection in this study was carried out by the method of observation and interviews with informants. The type of this research was descriptive qualitative. The results of this research were that before starting the procession of the *Mantenan Tebu*, the pilgrimage to the tomb of Astana Mangadeg could not be left, then the pilgrimage to Giribangun, and Girilayu. After that, there was the cleaning of the Mangkunegara statue in Colomadu. At night, there was *midodareni* and making up the bride and groom’s sugar cane. The highlight of the event was a pair of bride and groom’s sugar cane along with the accompanists were escorted from the official residence to the sugar mill grinding machine. A pair of *tebu temanten* that has been inserted into the grinding machine indicates that the milling season will soon begin, marked by the sound of the siren. This cultural form must be preserved as a form of local cultural heritage in Indonesia, in addition to the *Mantenan Tebu* tradition can be used as a medium for cultural promotion.

Keywords: *traditional ceremonies, Sugarcane wedding ceremony, cultural heritage*

Introduction

Indonesia is the wealthiest country in cultural heritage. Culture in Indonesia is very diverse. The cultural heritage is in the form of dances, traditional houses, traditional clothes, musical instruments, traditional food, traditional weapons, traditional ceremonies, or rituals that are unique to each region. "Culture is a whole complex of knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and all other abilities and habits that are obtained by a person as a member of the community." Besides that, culture has several forms, which include: first, value, or norm; second, forms of culture as activities or patterns of human action in society; third is the form of culture as objects created by humans. This cultural form is concrete because it is the object of all human creations, works, actions, activities, or actions in society (Koentjaraningrat, 2009: 150-153).

Local wisdom can be found in the songs, sayings/proverbs, *sesanti*/vision, advice, motto, and ancient books that are inherent in the behavior of everyday life. Usually, local wisdom is reflected in the habits of life of the community that has lasted a long time and, in its development, transformed into traditions, even though the process requires a very long time (Hariyanto, 2014: 202). Traditional ceremonies are held in the community and passed down from generation to generation. An enduring tradition may generate a meaningful identity to one society (Kistanto, 2016). Traditional ceremonies are a form of local wisdom that must be maintained, preserved, and developed. Meanwhile, according to (Rais, 2017: 47), local wisdom is a local knowledge system owned by the community. It is based on self-experience and ancestral instructions for generations. The existence of efforts to preserve these traditional

ceremonies has a goal that is not extinct. It can enrich and strengthen the pride of the next generation of the nation's precious heritage (Hasanuddin, 2016).

One example of tradition in Central Java, especially in the Tasikmadu Karanganyar area, is the traditional ceremony of *mantenan tebu* (sugar cane marriage). This ceremony was held to welcome or signify that the milling season in the Tasikmadu sugar factory will begin soon. Thanksgiving rituals are a sign and prove to participants their ability to meet abundant basic needs through consumption (Wallendorf and Eric, 1991).

The era of globalization as it is today, which is all modern, makes local culture less attention. The existence of local culture is increasingly getting pretty heavy tests. One of them is the decline in love for culture, which is the identity of a nation (Suneki, 2012). Western culture has more place than the culture itself, especially with cultural contacts with foreign cultures, not only is the intensity significant, but also the spread takes place quickly and broadly in its reach (Setyaningrum, 2018). It can make people feel unfamiliar with the culture, such as traditional ceremonies in their area. Implicitly in traditional ceremonies, some values can be emulated by the community.

This research is expected to provide exclusive benefits for supporting communities that can be used as a form of cultural preservation. Besides, this research can also be used as a media to promote cultural tourism about traditions that are still being carried out by the community in the Tasikmadu Karanganyar Sugar Factory area. In this case, it is hoped that it can increase the awareness of the community members and a sense of belonging to the culture in their area.

Method

This research was a qualitative descriptive study. According to Ismawati (2012: 7), qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. Qualitative research emphasizes the way people interpret and understand experiences through observation, interviews, diaries, journals, and questionnaires (Mohajan, 2018). The data in this research were the procession of the *Mantenan Tebu* ceremony. This *Mantenan Tebu* performance was chosen because of this unique ceremony but was still rarely observed by many people. Data collection in this research was carried out by field observation, in-depth interviews with informants, and document review. Observations were made concerning the events, actors, and places where the *Mantenan Tebu* tradition was held. In-depth interviews with the leader of the *Mantenan Tebu* ceremony, with residents involved in the *Mantenan Tebu* ceremony, and the local residents who witnessed the traditional ceremonial procession. Document review was taken from photographs, articles, books, and other writings relating to the object to be studied. The subject of the research was the *Mantenan Tebu* traditional ceremony in Tasikmadu Karanganyar. The research sample was taken by purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is considered more able to capture the completeness and depth of data (Sutopo, 2002: 36). To test the validity of the data, it used triangulation techniques. Moleong (2014: 33) states that triangulation is a data validity checking technique that utilizes something other than data to check the data as a comparison to the data obtained.

Results and Discussion

The Tasikmadu sugar factory was established as cultural preservation, which was established by Kanjeng Gusti Pangeran Adipati Arya (KGPA) Mangkunegara IV in 1871. Sugar cane milling tools were a historical heritage from the Netherlands in 1926. The management of the

Tasikmadu sugar factory is under PT Perkebunan Nusantara IX (Persero). This sugar factory is a relic that still exists until now and even able to support the surrounding community to meet the needs of sugar for the population.

Unlike other modern industries, the sugar industry in Java has a tradition that is still inherent and is still being carried out today. The *Mantenan Tebu* ceremony in the Tasikmadu Karanganyar area is a unique traditional ceremony because other regions do not own it. The salvation tradition of the milled season is a tradition that is very sacred/spiritual.

Mantenan Tebu Ceremonial Procession

The *Mantenan Tebu* ceremony is held around April-May, taking Friday on that month. Friday is considered a good day calculated with the help of psychics or elders. Javanese people call it the knowledge of *petangan*/forecast. In the Javanese forecast, starting from the day, the month, and the year has specific characteristics in it (Widodo & Kundharu, 2012). The *Mantenan Tebu* is held on Friday because it is always considered to bring safety, profit, and success. The milling salvation ceremony is held like a human marriage to make it more interesting. Because the one who has the will is the sugar factory, then the bride and groom symbolically embody a pair of sugar cane, which is then better known as "*Temanten Tebu*."

Before the procession of sugar cane pageantry begins, this procession begins with a pilgrimage to the tomb of the ancestors. This pilgrimage was held in upper Astana, including Mengadeg, Giribangun, and Girilayu. About 25 people represented participants on the pilgrimage by directors and representatives of those appointed who were employees of the Tasikmadu sugar factory. In addition to the upper *astana* pilgrimage, a lower *astana* pilgrimage is also carried out, namely in Karanganyar, Solo, Wonogiri, and Boyolali. Like pilgrimage in general, this pilgrimage is done by sowing flowers and pouring water on the tomb and by praying for the ancestors. According to Mujib (2016), the meaning of pilgrimage is not merely to visit the cemetery, but there is an intention to pray and learn from the pilgrimage.

After the pilgrimage to the tomb of the ancestors, the next procession is *jaman* or washing or cleaning the statue of Mangkunegara. This tradition is carried out in the Colomadu area. Participants of the statue *jaman*, namely administrators, section heads, Plantation Workers Union Organization (SPBUN), employees, Afd. Colomadu. This ritual was held to coincide with Tuesday *kliwon*. *Jaman*, as in general, the participants cleared the statue of Mangkunegara with water mixed with flowers and lime. After being washed thoroughly, then the elders say a prayer to God Almighty. *Jaman* statue is equipped with complete *ubarampe*/equipment such as incense and *setaman* flower. The purpose of the ritual *jaman* statue is to restore magical power or strength that will bring blessings if it was treated by cleaning or bathing.

The process of making sugar begins with the preparation of land for planting sugar cane. The process of planting sugar cane seeds, fertilizing, maintaining until finally picking/cutting sugar cane, all of which involve the people at large. It cannot escape from the beliefs of the local people who make sacred plants that provide fertility and prosperity to humans. In certain places, it was considered to have still gatekeepers who should not be disturbed or must be invited to participate in these activities. Besides, the earth is considered as something sacred that needs to be respected and given offerings. The element that has never been missed in every traditional ceremony is the *sesaji*/offerings. These offerings can be in the form of food, objects, and so on, addressed to the spirits of the ancestors (Koentjaraningrat, 2009: 378).

The first sugar cane that is picked and cut down will later become a *tebu temanten*. Then, it was followed by picking and logging the accompanist of the sugar cane. *Tebu temanten* is the first sugar cane to be put into a crusher in a sugar factory. As befits a marriage ceremony to the Javanese people, the ceremony for the entry of sugar cane into the sugar factory has a long series of events according to the situation and conditions of each region where the factory is located and their respective histories. The uniqueness of the marriage is in terms of its implementation because it is different from human marriages that are generally people in Indonesia (Hajar; Nurlidiawati, & Dahlan, 2018).

The location for selecting the bride and groom of sugar cane must also be chosen based on instructions from elders or psychics. These instructions are to determine the direction, location, and path that must be taken. Sugarcane to be picked must meet the criteria; namely, sugarcane must be full, straight, long, broad, sweet, and quite yield. Before being picked on the chosen day, a *midodareni* (*tirakatan*) night is held in the form of no sleep all night long in the sugar cane garden, which will be picked for the first time. The purpose of this *midodareni* is to ask the angels from *Kahyangan Syailendra Bawana* or *Kahyangan Jonggring Salaka* to come down to earth. It is intended to visit the bride-to-be and give her blessing to be beautiful like the angel (Susanti, 2019). The pair of *tebu temanten* will then be given a name that is adjusted to good expectations.

The ceremony of putting up *sodaqoh* is complete pageantry of offerings/*sesaji* (*ubarampe*). These offerings were made at the house of one of the Tasikmadu residents, then paraded using *Jolen* (palanquin made from bamboo decorated with colorful paper, which consists of three types). The palanquin was shouldered each by two people from the front of the Nglano market to the Tasikmadu sugar factory. The ceremony of putting up *sodaqoh* was attended by all the committee members of the milling salvage event. The event continued with a pilgrimage to the tomb of Kyai Sondokoro. In the pilgrimage, they generally spend time to meditate, pray, and perform religious rituals (Ebadi, 2015).

The highlight ceremony of the series of events is the *tebu temanten* pageantries. The ceremony for the departure of *tebu temanten* is from the official house of the Assistant Plant Head to the *besaran* (Tasikmadu sugar factory). This *kirab/carnival* is accompanied by the Reog art when the *tebu temanten* begins to depart from the official house to the front of the sugar factory. After being declared finished, the couple of *tebu temanten* are put together with their accompanists at the mill station. The bride and groom of *tebu temanten* that has been inserted into the grinding machine indicates that the milling season will soon begin marked by the sound of the siren.

Thus, sugar cane has become the foundation of the hopes of farmers, sugar factory employees, and people around the factory. Sweet water from ground sugar cane, which will turn into sugar, really means a lot to their lives. Accordingly, the sugar cane milling season may be the most awaited season. It is one of the preservation of traditions that are maintained around Karanganyar district, especially in Tasikmadu Karanganyar, because this tradition has been passed down for generations, so that everyone can be thankful for what is obtained, appreciate the expected results of the earth that can be abundant and meet the needs of sugar consumption in Indonesia, especially in Karanganyar Regency.

The traditional ceremony of the *mantenan tebu* is one form of acculturation between Javanese culture and Chinese culture. This tradition appears to start the sugar cane milling season and before the first sugar cane is inserted in the grinding machine. This ritual ceremony symbolizes the relationship between the community and God (Suryani,

2014). This traditional ceremony is a form of gratitude for the harvest and is a prayer that the sugar cane milling process can run smoothly, and the results can meet the target.

Ceremony Equipment of Manten Tebu

Every traditional ceremony is not separated from the equipment that includes offerings (*sesaji*). The understanding of Javanese people, offerings are not devil food, but as philosophical teaching delivered through symbols (Achmad, 2017: 80). Just like the Javanese marriage ceremony that never leaves offerings, the ceremony of picking up and juxtaposing the *tebu temanten* in the mill is accompanied by various kinds of offerings, among others: buffalo head, various types of porridge, *kecok bakal*, eggs, *kinangan*, various types of offerings cone, various kinds of *kupat*, *polokependem*, *telon* flower, twin *mayang*, *kecok manten*, *pisang tuwuhan panjang hilang* (kind of banana), etc. All offerings are placed in a particular place and performed at certain events in a series of milling ceremonies and assigned to certain people who are considered elderly to be given the responsibility of carrying out.

The offerings cannot be separated from the burning of incense (Javanese: *kutuk*/curse) and the *ujub*, which are aimed at who and what the purpose of the offering is. The person responsible for carrying out the offering usually also undertakes *tirakat*/penance/behavior before and during the offering is cooked, arranged, until it is served at the designated place. In Colomadu, the person in charge of the offerings fasts during the making, arranging and finishing the ceremony. While in Tasikmadu, the person in charge underwent a *topo bisu* /silent isolate oneself around the factory a day before entering offerings and then also carrying an initial offering (*cecolo*) with a unique expression to the spirits of the watchmen or the *bau rekso* at the factory and mainly asking guidance from the Almighty God. Every human will start a work, like always prayed to God, begging to the smoothness and safety (Hariyanto, 2017).

The existence of culinary in each cultural tradition has a strategic role in supporting the existence of the ceremony. The cuisine offered contains historical description and philosophical meaning. Various types of culinary in cultural activities depicts the belief, symbolic and spiritual meaning (Indrahti, Yanuar, Alamsyah, Siti, 2018). The existence of culinary has a role in social activities to build their world of life by displaying attitudes, identities, values, norms and beliefs (Fitrisia, et al, 2018). Therefore, this culture-based culinary needs to be preserved, developed, and the supporting community needs to be empowered in cultural tourism activities in order to have economic value and drive the local economy (Indrahti, Siti, & Alamsyah, 2017: 73).

Similarly, women who work on basic offerings must be clean (not menstruating and not giving birth). Specifically regarding the head of buffalo/cow is symbolized as devotion to the Almighty God, asking for mercy and guidance, so that in carrying out large tasks involving many people ranging from farmers in sugar cane plantations, sugar cane transport officers to factories, all employees who serve large machinery in the factory, and all staff and leaders in His protection, and can produce good sugar that is needed by the people and the country. In the past, *tebu temanten* was placed in a cart decorated with a pillow, done by a *roro* or *demang* officer. Two cows pulled the cart, and the bulls arrived at the factory and then slaughtered, their heads for offerings, their bodies for salvation purposes, and many people ate the meat. Therefore, until now, the conditions for buffalo head/cow offerings must be to choose fresh ones/still have blood. Thus, the presence of these offerings is used as a complement in each ceremony.

Through this offer, it is also used as an intermediary between humans and the spirit of the ancestors, God.

Promotion of Culture for the Community

Local culture, especially in the Tasikmadu area of Karanganyar Regency, has a unique tradition that can be developed to improve cultural tourism. This effort can be done through collaboration with the Karanganyar district government as well as with the private sector. It also requires an essential role in the surrounding community with the existence of a tourism awareness group (*Pokdarwis*). In addition, it is also necessary to maintain the uniqueness of cultural tourism in accordance with local wisdom.

The promotion of culture in the *mantenan tebu* traditional ceremony is shown in the pilgrimage procession. Pilgrimage is mostly done by the community, not only local people but also people from outside the area. In the *suro* month, the tomb is visited by many tourists. It includes religious tourism. The tradition of pilgrimage, according to (Rahmawati & Ridlo, 2016), is considered to be very sacred because it is for contemplation, introspection, cleansing of the physical body, and to be closer to God Almighty.

The *mantenan tebu* traditional ceremony is an interesting and unique tradition. This ceremony is in the form of performing arts as a cultural attraction. The high cultural level of tourist, the significant economic level of travellers and the perceptions of heritage tourists (Guzman & Francisco, 2016). It can be used as an event to attract tourists to get to know the local culture in Karanganyar. Many tourist attractions and a variety and qualify as a tourist attraction (Achmad & Rif'an, 2016). With the promotion of this culture, it can influence tourists to come to the Tasikmadu Karanganyar area. According to Yuliati (2016), an increase in the flow of tourists who come can provide benefits, including increased local revenue.

Conclusion

The results of this study are that the *mantenan tebu* traditional ceremony is a form of acculturation between Javanese culture and Chinese culture. This tradition appears to start the sugar cane milling season and before the first sugar cane is inserted in the grinding machine. This traditional ceremony is a form of gratitude for the harvest and is a prayer that the sugar cane milling process can run smoothly, and the results can meet the target. A pair of bride and groom of *tebu*/sugar cane that has been inserted into the grinding machine indicates that the milling season will soon begin marked by the sound of the siren. This cultural form must be preserved as a form of local cultural heritage in Indonesia. Besides that, the *mantenan tebu* traditional ceremony can be used as a media for cultural promotion.

Conflict of Interest

The authors confirm that the data do not contain conflicts of interest.

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