

Art Styles Comparison Between Jepara of Central Java and Bali

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Abstract - Art product is based on between the line meaning divided into four categories, which are: (1). Art, which is made as cultural symbol product, (2). Have a meaning of faith in God, (3). Have a meaning of local cultures, and (4). Have a meaning of economics. From the four aspect, the writer is trying to compare, symbolic meaning which is implied in public art in Bali with industrial carving in Jepara, and also trying to know the form of the social construction of art.

Keywords: art styles, social structure of art, comparison, Jepara and Bali.

INTRODUCTION

There is no human culture that does not have an art form even though the art may be created for practical useful purposes only. For instance, at the Chichicastenango Market in Guatemala, textiles and other objects are not sold as works of art, but they are clearly artistic. Art reflects the cultural values and attention of the supporters of that particular culture in which they convey their thoughts through artwork, especially verbal arts such as myths, legends and fairy tales. In addition to adding to the enjoyment of everyday life, diverse arts have a number of functions and meanings, and every form of art can reinforce the close bond of solidarity of the community involved [1].

The shared meanings are inscribed in the symbolic elements of culture such as language, clothing, art and others. Subsequently, the shared meanings are functionally manifested through economic, religious and social institutions (structures). The behavioral pattern or habits (customs) are the link between the cultural structure and cultural function as symbolically communicated. The creation of meaningful symbols is a human-specific ability that is not possessed by other creatures such as animals.

Fundamentally, social economics system of a society in an area will perpetually be associated with various elements of social life. In this case, social activities will continuously relate to ritual activities, elements of kinship, elements of power, social status, and so on.

This paper attempts to compare Balinese crafts and arts with Jepara handicrafts in which, although both regions have a distinct socio-culture and belief systems and the art products are also physically different, they are quite similar in the process of growing and developing, especially regarding the arts' symbolic value and social structure.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Javanese and Balinese culture is mostly conducted by social, cultural and economic experts, including Sp Gustami and Fred B. Eiseman Jr, whose previous studies contribute to the paper topic.

SP. Gustami, in his research entitled "Jepara Carved Wood Furniture Industry: Continuity and Change", published as a paper for his inaugural

professorial address of the Faculty of Fine Arts of ISI Yogyakarta, on November 29, 1997, begins his writing by outlining Jepara history from the early seventh century to the twentieth century. In Chapter II he depicts the heyday of Early Metal Age or the age of craftsmanship that occurred before the nineteenth century. In Section III he continues by mentioning the revival of craftsmanship activities of the Early Metal Age during the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, through Section IV Sp describes the prime time of the twentieth-century carved wood furniture industry. Chapter V encompasses the development and distribution of the products, while Chapter VI consists of Conclusion where he explains the involvement of female figures in the development of Jepara wood carved art [2]. Sp research is advantageous for this paper since therein lies an in-depth analysis of the history of the Mataram Kingdom, specifically Jepara which was under the *tlatah pesisir wetan* (east coast cultural area of Mataram Kingdom). On the other hand, Fred B. Eiseman Jr. discusses the life of Balinese people by presenting "Bali Sekala and Niskala: Essays on society, tradition, and craft", a book that got published in 1995 by Periplus Editions, Hongkong. This seven chapters book focuses more on geography, society, language, craft, entertainment, food and industry [3]. By examining on preceding writings and research, it can be concluded that no study has correlated the style of art in Java, particularly Jepara and the art style in Bali.

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

From the description mentioned above, this paper tries to uncover and bring out several ideas and goal for future reference, which include:

1. Similar factors and the differences that occur between Jepara and Bali style of art A profound understanding regarding factors that influence sustainability and changes in function, form and meaning.

METHODOLOGY

The method used is an ethnographic method and comparative method combined with various theories and concepts and disciplines of history, socio-cultural, artistic functions, aesthetics, and semiotics. By

comparing Balinese crafts with Jepara Regency crafts of Central Java, this paper aims to draw not only a meaningful but also sacred and divine art form and function for life purpose. Furthermore, in understanding an art object that initially possessed an expressive function but then went through changes, a qualitative research method will be used by applying a multi-disciplinary approach.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

To Balinese, art activities, such as dancing, drawing, painting, and decorating the temple, are part of their daily life that signifies a meaning of how most of their daily activities strongly relates to Hinduism as their religion and way of life.

Meanwhile for the Javanese art, particularly in Jepara wood carving, the art can be found in traditional houses which installed a *gebyok* (a traditional door as part of the house that brings traditional value to the complexity of wood carving). In Kudus traditional housing, the art is usually seen on the wall made out of wood that carved beautifully with intense complexity which displays a close relationship between the art and the local people devotion to God. Similar to the Balinese, with most of the Kudus people are Muslim, their value influences the wood carving ornament that went through stylisation. The process of transmitting knowledge and skills in families and communities merges with the process of establishing religious values. Within the Javanese (Jepara) and Balinese education systems there is no separation between aspects of knowledge/skills and religious values. Therefore the behaviors of religious people have a strong influence on the views, values and activities of daily living, including the activities of craftsmen and artisans in producing their works.

The Balinese cultural system has its uniqueness, mainly because it is built on the Balinese Hindu religious system. It has led to the emergence of various forms of cultural expression as a manifestation of the Balinese views of the world. Among the many cultural expressions, there is one aspect of Balinese life that aesthetically produces diversified forms of expression. Some people believe that the Balinese aesthetic expression of the art cannot be separated from their spiritual needs. Art expression, either through painting or dancing, both mediums convey a form of ritual. Every Balinese is an artist, in which through their art they convey a thorough manifestation of life that has become a concept of ritual activity. In Jepara, craft activities are carried out from generation to generation by the craft community, especially wood carvers who retain the same old lifestyle and behavior through the creation of wood art that based on the concept of "God king". The concept that indicates craftsmen and artisans loyal activities as part of the offerings to a deified ruler.

DISCUSSION

A. Art Style and Institutionalization Process

Claire Holt (1967) asserts that there is distinctiveness between Balinese and Javanese, particularly Central Java people if it comes to art style [4]. On top of favoring gold as a color, the Balinese

have a strong fondness for the Baroque style, which is extravagant, expressive and often vulgar. The distinct characteristic of Baroque eventually embodied in Balinese contemporary art, such as colored wooden figures and creatures with violent expressions and bulging eyes. On the contrary, the Javanese who are subject to mysticism, generally display a subtle, gentle and spiritual knight through their artwork. However, this particular art form can also be found in Balinese artworks as well as through motifs that appear on Jepara furniture carvings.

The skill inheritance system that is being carried out for generations is a legacy to preserve the continuity and development of the art industry, both in Bali and Jepara. Along with the increasing number of public appreciation and awareness toward the art of painting and crafting, more art groups showed up, contributing to the local economy. Mooi Indië, a painting style that emerged in the early twentieth century that the roots of the painting are society and culture environment with landscape as the subject matter in general and also accentuates beauty and exoticism of native women, for instance, a new wave of Indonesian modern art that amalgamates painting techniques and concepts with society cultural conventions and practices by still considering art standards that aims for an emotional response within the art community [5].

For Jepara wood carving culture, four notable female figures influenced the growth and development of the handicraft wooden furniture industry in Jepara. (1) Queen Shima of the seventh century Kalingga Kingdom of Central Java, whom at that time, though failed in realizing the activities of carpentry industry on a large scale basis, succeeded in initiating woodworking activities in Central Java. (2) In the sixteenth century, long after the reign of Queen Shima, appeared another female figure, known as Queen Kalinyamat who began developing the industry sector of wood carving. Her endeavors were a series of processes that cannot be separated from the evolution of carpentry industry in Jepara which later transformed into a carved furniture industry. (3) At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, R.A Kartini emerged putting her attention for art and culture which was shown through her concern in developing the arts, particularly puppetry, in which it inspired R.A Kartini in creating unique ornaments for carved furniture products. (4) Until at the peak of its glory at the end of the twentieth century, the role of female figures was still very prominent in Jepara wood manufacturing. Siti Hartinah Soeharto's efforts were proven through the development of the Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park which is a place to promote Indonesia's various forms of art, including the Central Java platform where visitors can witness the Jepara wood carving artwork. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the State Palace accommodates a special room, called the Jepara Room, to promote the richness of the Jepara carving furniture [2].

These women figures were the ones who indeed played the role of motivating, directing and determining the process of art created for the Palace

while establishing Jepara as the center of the craft industry's activities, as well as the leading region in providing ideas, materials and products. The work system at that time was a form of devotion to the kingdom that acted as a very dominant art institution. During that period, the craftsmen did not expect money for completing their artwork, but rather the artwork was an expression of respect toward the King as the protector of the art. This relationship between the royal family as the patron and artisans as the client was well-established.

During the Dutch occupation, art institutions that function as a shelter for the development of education, interest, and love for painting and crafts emerged to the surface. One of them was *Bataviasche Kunstkring*, an art organization which received an order from the government that mentioned policies concerning art and economic aspects must always include crafts. In Bali, this institution is called *Pita Maha* which aims to encourage and maintain art quality, as well as to improve the members' well-being. On the other hand, Jepara focuses more in the development of education institution who is also able to play the role of an art institution where students can learn arts and craftsmanship that has been developed since the early twentieth century. Therefore, most schools in Jepara teaches their students how to make furniture, ornaments drawing techniques, and creating carved artwork.

B. Continuity and Change

Changes that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century were born as a social product of art and the artists in which they have integrated into the society and sociocultural institutions later forming the social construction of art. As Holt said, Balinese artists tend to quickly grasp and imitate every renewal that grabs their imagination, especially those who have gained success [4]. According to them, the measure of success is, if an original work has obtained approval or admiration from individual experts in local artwork. In addition to that, Balinese also think that they are successful if their imitation of new styles is commercially viable.

Transformation in the government structure, which resulted from the shifts of the supporting communities of both the arts in Bali and the art of crafts in Java began when the Dutch colonials entered and controlled Bali and Java. Also, cultural blending among technical workers from different countries, such as China, India, and Western Europe, which has been going on for a long time, encourages assimilation of art styles.

In the nineteenth century in Jepara, R.A. Kartini as a patron gave freedom in creation toward artisans and craftsmen which initiated changes that are independent of the whole cultural values, religion and society. Whereas, the new style of painting or modern art in Balinese painting began to grow at the beginning of the twentieth century which was no longer tied to wayang and other mythologies, but instead switched to the world of everyday life that affected its color and composition techniques.

The existence of mass-produced artworks and crafts, both in Bali and Jepara, does not solely end in

the souvenir industries. Many artists come up with a strong aesthetic intuition that can deliver new astonishing creativity.

CONCLUSION

Western painters played a significant role as agents of change in Balinese painting during 1930. Whereas Chinese and European artists contributed to the art of furniture carving in Jepara. Various developments and changes as the result of foreign painters/artisans engagement, and also diversified forms, patterns and style of art by each artist, generated a fusion of modern elements with local cultural conventions. These reforms and changes continue to survive alongside the local community traditions, in which the Hindu religion in Bali and the Islamic religion in Jepara that has been adopted integrated all components of their lives. New elements do not change completely, and new patterns cannot be separated from tradition. There are connections between external and sociocultural factors.

However, due to the immense demand for paintings and crafts, as well as the increase of other forms of art objects that is happening both in Bali and Jepara, the painting and crafts manufacturer shifted their production to become a mass-marketed product causing deterioration in quality and artistic originality as people who cannot afford to purchase the original artwork will prefer to buy the fake product.

Since the reign of Queen Kalinyamat in Jepara between the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, the Government through official institutions sought to develop a patron-client relationship in carved furniture sector which involved production, marketing, promotion and exhibition of artwork. Even in Bali, the involvement of foreigners is also seen in institutions such as *Pita Maha* as an art organization that protect art which aims to encourage and maintain the quality of art, as well as to improve marketing. During the carved furniture development, the first President of Indonesia, Sukarno, was well-known as an art collector who was also transformed his palace into an art museum.

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