



CERAMICS ENCULTURATION OF ARTISANS' COMMUNITY IN MAYONG LOR VILLAGE: ADAPTATION STRATEGIES IN THE PRESERVATION AND CONTINUATION OF LOCAL CULTURE CREATIVE POTENTIAL

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Abstract

The facts showed that traditional ceramic arts are one of the local cultural heritages in which their existence is not easily maintained and continued because of competition with modern industrial products in market. The opposite condition occurs in Mayong Lor village that this local cultural heritage is still well maintained and developed from generation to generation for about six centuries in communities. Thus, a fundamental question arises why and how this phenomenon occurs. This study examines ceramics enculturation problems of crafters in Mayong Lor village communities, Jepara as the manifestation of adaptation strategies in the preservation and continuation of local culture creative potential. Two approaches used as the basis of assessment strategies. First, the theoretical approach was applied through the approach of culture, aesthetics, structural functionalism, adaptation, and education. Next, the methodological approach was used through anthropological research approach operated by using qualitative research method. The results show that the ceramics enculturation of artisans' in Mayong Lor village communities naturally appear to function as a cultural mechanism of ceramics traditional activities in the environment of crafter families. This cultural mechanism is the form of informal education as the manifestation of adaptation strategies in maintaining and continuing creative potential of ceramics culture in the community, across generations since 15th to 21th century. The local culture stakeholders are recommended to adopt or adapt the findings of this study as a model in determining policies for the development of conservation programs and local culture potential in their respective regions.

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INTRODUCTION

Various forms of traditional arts often said to have alienation after entering the 21st century. Dozens or even hundreds types of arts day by day disappear from their existence. Along with it, their supporters are even more decreasing. Due to the modernization or industrialization, many traditional arts have turned to be "negative" leading to degeneration, marginalization, and even extinction (Jazuli, 2001; Wiyono, 2012; Dahana, 2012). One of traditional arts undergoing process of declining and even extinction is the community ceramic art (Iswidayati, 2009; Sidhartha, 1991). Although small parts of them can survive and develop (see: Gustami, et al, 2014), most changes are related to the degradation of traditional ceramic products in market through the time. Consequently, many ceramic industrial centers die.

Meanwhile, Mayong Lor village as one village in the district of Mayong, Jepara historically has long been known as the traditional ceramic industrial art centers. The fact showed that the presence of traditional ceramic art was about in 15th century (mayong.jeparakab.go.id/index.php/web/data/6.8; Harjito, 2002). The ceramic art survived and continued from generation to generation for six centuries until now. The existence results in art works with the aesthetic values and becomes the cultural identity and the economic resources for the village (Karthadinata, 2005; Rahmawati, 2008; Mahbub, 2010). Although ceramic phenomena face many problems due to the modern industrial products in market (Chambers, 1988; Compass, 2012), they can still survive and continue until now. Thus, it raises some fundamental questions: first, what kind of knowledge, values, and beliefs guide crafters to keep doing these activities until now? Second, how can ceramics center in Mayong Lor survive and continue from generation to generation until now? Third, what cultural mechanisms are undertaken by the crafters to maintain and continue the ceramics?

Referring to Greets (1973) and Suparlan (1983) that the theoretical assumptions used to explain the first question is that every human

behavior and pattern is always guided (organized, directed, or controlled) symbolically by the culture containing the system of knowledge, values, and beliefs. It means that the ceramic crafters' behaviors in Mayong Lor village, consciously or not, are always symbolically driven, organized, directed, or controlled by culture owned by the communities.

In reference to the idea of structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons (Ritzer and Goodman, 2007) that the theoretical assumptions that can be put forward to explain the second fundamental question is that the maintenance and development of ceramics in Mayong Lor village is because ceramics still has the function to maintain the community life system. Whereas, social action, in case of ceramics activities, still fulfills its functions in the crafters' lives, then the action will be maintained (latency).

Finally, according to Rohidi (1993) the theoretical assumptions can be put forward to explain the third fundamental question is that the cultural mechanism used by crafters to maintain and continued ceramics business from generation to generation are possible since social institutions in the family through enculturation process, which is a cultural mechanism for children care and introduce, transmit, and pass on ceramics knowledge, values, beliefs, and skills on to future generations. Through the social institutions, the generations can learn and maintain ceramics cultural.

Based on these assumptions, the model of theoretical framework for this research, can schematically be described as follows.

Based on research theoretical framework model above, hypothesis can be stated as follows: "ceramics behavior and result from the crafter community members in Mayong Lor village can maintain and continue the ceramics culture to the next generations if crafters as parents can develop the adaptive strategies through enculturation in the family by utilizing environmental resources with the orientation to the fulfillment of life needs based on the systems of community residents' knowledge, values, and beliefs".

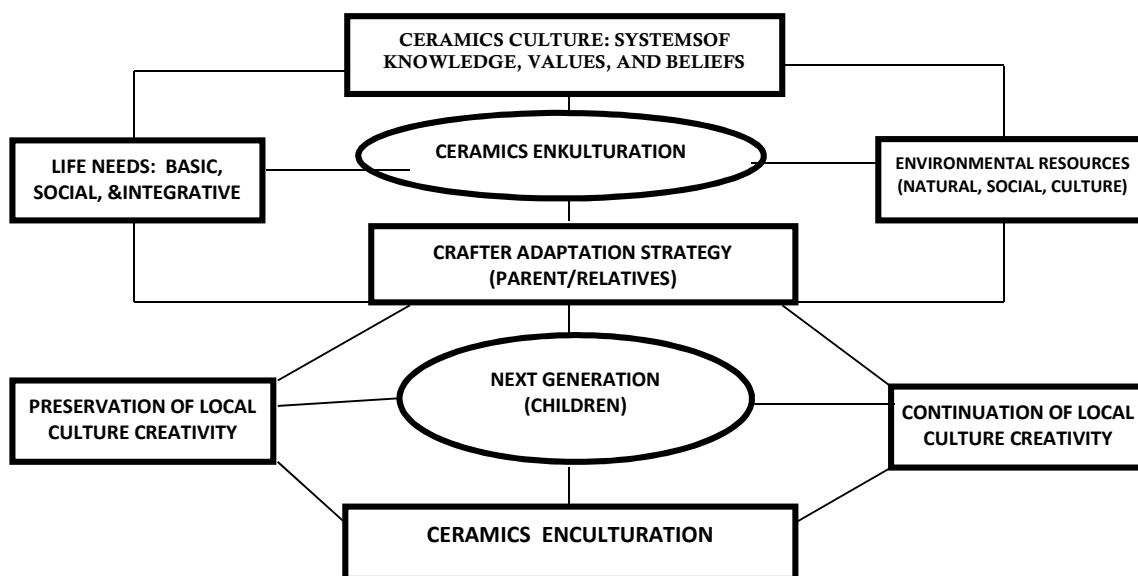


Figure 1. Research Theoretical Framework Model (Adapted from Rohidi 1993)

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted by using the anthropological approach (culture) which was operationally realized by elaborating the qualitative research methods. The research location was in Mayong Lor village, Mayong Sub-district, Jepara District., Central Java Province. The main purpose of this study was related to the ceramic cultural patterns, processes of production, and distribution, ceramics function in maintaining the system of life needs, and ceramics enculturation processes within the family environment of crafter communities.

Subject of data source is the crafters, their family members, and the key informants: the local community leaders. The key informants include chief of the village and officers, Sub-district Head of Mayong, influential Kyaier Ustad, junior high school teacher, Cultural or Village Artists, community Elders, Industrial Department Officials of Jepara. Data or information required which was collected by using participated observational technique, in-depth interviews, individual life's history, visual recording, and document data collection: archival recording data of village potential and

history, photographs, and videos of cultural tradition activities of the community, and the previous research results upon Mayong Lor ceramic.

The collected data or information was inductively analyzed by using interactive cycle analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman (1991) through the following stages: reduction, display, and verification of data. Ending these three stages of analysis is by using paradigmatic analysis by placing the empirical facts of research results into the discussion of theoretical research problems abstracted in the theoretical framework model with the following research hypothesis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Mayong Lor Village as Research Background

Mayong Lor village is part of Mayong sub-district, Jepara district, Central Java known as industrial centers of traditional ceramic craft of the ancestor heritage. The village is located approximately 1km to the southwest of the Official District of Mayong. Around the office complex, there is a monument where the placenta of woman emancipation movement hero, R.A.

Kartini, was planted. The village is approximately 24 km to the west of the capital of Jepara. The village has an area of 289.8 hectares, which are divided into four hamlets: Gleget, Krajan, Karang Panggung, and Bendowangen. Krajan and Bendowangen is the central location of the ceramic industry.

Based on village archives data, the natural environment topography of Mayong Lor village is generally owl and with an average daily temperature of about 33°C. The soil condition is fertile with the color of reddish yellow. The soil texture is clay with the slope level of 0 to 2°. The air humidity is in medium category with the average rainfall of 50 to 100 mm. Therefore, it is not surprising if various types of plants and trees are well flourished coloring the atmosphere of natural environment. This topography and soil conditions are also used by the people as settlements, rice fields, and sources of raw material for ceramic making.

In general, Mayong Lor village has great facilities of physical, social environment, and cultures that supports ceramics activities of community both in production and distribution process. The majority of community is graduated from primary or secondary education as well as puritan Muslim that generally on ceramic as their primary jobs.

The Culture of Mayong Lor Village Community

The culture of Mayong Lor community including knowledge, values, and beliefs, consciously or not, serves as guidance or normative reference to the attitude and behavior. Ceramics attitude and behavior, the community has the knowledge revealed in the cosmological view that this nature (earth) is the God blessing that people should be grateful and use it for their prosperity. Humans as *khalifatulfil ardhi* (rulers of the earth) have duties and responsibilities to manage and utilize the potential of earth as a means to worship God. In that context, the potential of earth (soil and waste of trees and plants) in its natural environment is used as clay raw material for the ceramic manufacture.

While the values of community life orientation in ceramics activities are reflected in their expressions that: *urip iku kudu nyambut gawe* (to live, we have to work), *urip iku ora usah ngoyo* (don't be ambitious), *urip iku kudu nrimo* (except your life), *pasrah* (surrender completely), *ikhlas ing pandum* (sincere in everything), *urip iku wis tinekdir Gusti Allah* (God has destined life), *anak iku kudu kurmat lan memundi tinggalane wong tuwo* (the child must respect and uphold parents' heritage), and, *urip iku ora mburu raja-brana nanging kanggo srana ngibadah marang Gusti Allah* (life is not merely to pursue possessions but as a means to worship God). These expressions have become the source of motivation, regulatory, or control for the crafters to persevere undergoing ceramics activities and pass it to their children.

The belief system of Mayong Lor village community is expressed in some ritual ceremonies of social and cultural tradition, which seems to require ceramic "properties". In other words, the belief system of Mayong Lor village community is the determinant factor why ceramics activities continue from generation to generation.

The Ceramic Production-Distribution System and the Visual Forms of Aesthetic Characteristics

The production system starts from clay raw material obtained from their own environment, neighboring villages, or buying from suppliers. Every purchase is in the form of rough lumps of soil with the purchase unit of perdump truck. The clay soil is processed by utilizing the Molding service machine (Molding circumference). To make the refined products, the soil should be manually processed by pulping soil for filtering.

The ceramic forming process, especially for the traditional form is performed by female crafters with the traditional equipment called *perbot* (a tilting rotary table on the axis of rotation is given winding rope tied to the bamboo slats driven by foot). Besides, the formation process is performed with the standard equipment of turn table, bivalve, and single solid print. The combustion process is performed by the male

crafters using traditional open stoves with the fuels of waste dry leaves, dry twigs of trees, brambut (skin of dry rice), and the wood waste production of wood furniture, Jepara. The finishing process is performed by both male and female crafters by brushing and painting the ceramic body with the can painting material, acrylic, and screen printing.

The distribution or marketing systems performed with active, passive, and active-passive marketing patterns. The active marketing pattern was performed by crafters themselves out of town by selling to their colleagues and in public night fairs on the sides of the roads on the annual activities of socio-cultural traditions, such as: Dandangan in Kudus, Grebeg Besar Demak, Dugderan in Semarang, and Sekatenan in Solo and Yogya. The passive marketing pattern is performed by waiting for buyers to visit their homes or ceramic vendors from various markets of different cities in Central Java, and the local middlemen who use *ijon* system (purchasing things by lending money before or in the middle of standard production process with the lower market price). In this pattern, conflicts often arise due to the middlemen's competition in gaining crafters' sympathy. The active-passive marketing pattern is performed by both active and passive marketing patterns.

The forms of processed products include the traditional forms of predecessors' legacy such as celengan, kendi, paso, padasan, cowek, kendil, gentong, and remitan (girls' toys such as, small kitchen appliances in small size) and some "new" forms of well-developed pre-existing traditional or new creative products. Some booming forms of products are produced by developing the children cartoon figures, animals, and fruits to face the market competition.

In general, the visual aesthetic forms show its unique and simple characteristics. The aesthetic expression is the manifestation of natural symbolic of villagers' lives who are straightforward, innocent, and simple in life. These aesthetic natural forms can be categorized as "rough" art.

Ceramics Function in Crafters' Community Life System

The ceramics of Mayong Lor village can survive and continue across generations, since it functionally meets the needs of crafters. There are at least three categories of life necessities in the social system that can be fulfilled through the ceramics actions: basic, social, and integrative (cultural) needs.

First, the ceramics actions performed by crafters in Mayong Lor community, economically, are able to function as a principal means of daily livelihood to meet their basic needs: *pangan* (food), *sandang* (clothing), *papan* (settlement), and costs of education and health. Through ceramics, the average monthly income has meet and even above the standards of District Minimum Salary and Living Needs established by Jepara Government. Second, the ceramics actions, ranging from production to distribution process, the social field has been created serving as vehicles for social interaction to meet the needs of business in order to develop and maintain the social system as the whole community. In addition, the social needs requiring social costs can be fulfilled from the income of ceramics business. Third, through ceramics, it unwittingly has become a means of integrative (cultural) need fulfillments related to the esthetical disclosure of feeling. No matter how simple it is, ceramic production is the artistic activity producing the aesthetically pleasing works. Besides, ceramics has become the cultural identity symbol that local residents are very proud of it. This has raised awareness and cultural needs of people in community to maintain and sustain from generation to generation. These needs can be fulfilled through family inheritance system by involving the entire family in the process of production and distribution.

Ceramics Enculturation: Family Enculturation Process

As an inheritance system, ceramics enculturation performed by crafters' community



Figure 2. Visual Aesthetic Forms of Mayong Lor Ceramic

of Mayong Lor, is manifested through family patterns of ceramics parenting and informal learning. Parenting and learning is a social institution that contains rules, habits, and patterns of children and parents relationships in addition to prepare the next generation to have status and social role in the community in accordance with the customs, to introduce, maintain, and develop the traditional heritage of ceramic from their ancestors which is considered meaningful and valuable for their lives in the present and future.

The main pattern of parenting is a long process for parents to care for, maintain,

introduce, and instill the values and customs to their children since they are in their mothers' wombs (when the pregnancy reaches seven months), childbirth, children, adolescents, up to become adults who are ready to become independent persons. Meanwhile, the process of family ceramics enculturation is performed early informally taught, introduced, and socialized or conditioned involved in helping their parents in the process of production. The learning process conducted by parents using teaching approach based on context, which is gradually introduced and trained, learning the stages of production process. Children are learning by doing.

Conditioning, modeling, and internalization methods are seen to be used in the learning process. When children enter formal educational period at school, the ceramic learning activities are conducted after school. Since learning process takes place in a long period, unwittingly children learn and acquire a wide range of ceramics knowledge, values, beliefs, and skills that result in the future of their culture.

Ceramics Behaviors and Their Enculturation Results

The ceramics behaviors of crafters' community in Mayong Lor and their family enculturation results are overall based on empirical facts as presented above, connecting each other forming a system of social action to realize the actors' adaptation strategies maintaining and sustaining their local cultural and creative potential. The elements in the ceramics social action system, simultaneously, are functioning as cybernetic energy and controller in maintaining their social life system.

Cultural system owned by ceramic crafter communities in Mayong Lor includes knowledge, values, and beliefs as controller (latent functions) for crafters' behaviors in their capacity as system of organisms and personality to adapt the available environmental resources (adaptation function) to achieve the goal to fulfill their needs (goal achievement function) through social institutions developed in the form of rules, habits, and patterns of relationships in the production and distribution systems (integrated function). In the context of ceramics cultural inheritance need fulfillment, the developed social institution is family enculturation in the form of ceramics parenting and informal learning for children or the next generation. Through enculturation process, ceramics culture is maintained and continued from generation to generation.

What are performed by crafters in maintaining ceramics, in fact, are the enculturation proofs conducted by their parents. In the efforts to develop this cultural heritage in the future, the crafters now also perform actions such enculturation to their children. All is

performed as the cultural responsibility form of memundi (honoring) the legacy of their parents or ancestors.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the empirical facts of the above results, it can be concluded that the success of maintaining and continuing ceramics culture of crafters' community in Mayong Lor village was performed through family enculturation process. In short, ceramic enculturation of crafters' community is a social institution that serves as the cultural mechanism in achieving the adaptation strategies in maintaining and continuing the local culture creative potential from generation to generation.

Based on the research results, the fostering local cultural potential stakeholders are suggested to utilize the findings of this research as input in formulating the strategies or policies to implement the maintenance (conservation) and development (innovation) program upon local culture potential threatened by extinction based on their own situations and conditions.

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