

Ceramic as an Expression of Local Culture: Conservation, Creativity and Adaptation to Change of a Ceramic Center in West Java

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Received April 13, 2021; Accepted August 09, 2021

ISSN: 1735-188X

DOI: 10.14704/WEB/V18I2/WEB18344

Abstract

This article explores the function of the ceramic cottage industry as a means of conserving local culture. This descriptive-qualitative study presents the efforts of ceramic craftsmen in Purwakarta, West Java, Indonesia in preserving their culture. With the theory of structural functionalism, it was found that there were still religious elements and traditions that participated in the preservation of this culture, even though the times had changed to modern. Because of that local tradition, there must be a lot of conservation efforts from the government so that the culture is not lost in the days. Even so, there are still many who appreciate both at the national and community levels for the results of the local culture.

Keywords

Local Culture, Ceramic Industry, Community Craft, Tourism.

Introduction

Industry has become a habit of modern life. Various things have now been cultivated industrially, including art. Ceramics which are art products are also undergoing industrialization (Parker et al., 1967; Watson, 2003; Rahman, 2015). This can be seen in developments in Anjun Village, Plered District, Purwakarta Regency, which poured its art through the ceramics industry. Ceramics is one example of craft art. The word ceramic in itself means clay that is burned and mixed with ingredients or items made of porcelain. Ceramics are very popular with their function as decorative objects. This can be seen from the legacy of the Venetian Republic in the 1400s. Ceramic art which is a branch of fine arts can be distinguished based on the principles of functionality and production (Vansina, 2014).

West Java is an area that is rich in cultural potential. This can be seen from the many types of art that have lived and developed in the past. Therefore, it is not surprising that West Java has a very strong cultural potential to the present (Garna, 2008). Local culture can be studied and developed as a praxis concerning elements of values, attitudes and behavior, beliefs, orientations and general assumptions that spread throughout the community. The attitude of people's lives that appear in symbols, daily actions, institutions and social relations is part of the elements of local culture (Kinzig et al., 2013; Huber et al., 2020). Local culture is a tradition that is often carried out by people who only exist in certain communities, so that it becomes a distinctive feature that is different from other regions, and the community can utilize the local culture to become a livelihood system for their survival (Ranjabar, 2006).

The Plered ceramic industry has existed since the beginning of the 20th century, which is certainly still the era of Dutch colonial rule. Since then, the Plered District is known as the ceramic industry. Ceramics making work is carried out from generation to generation with various models made such as jars, piggy banks and other decorations. The ceramic material is made from clay material from the Plered District itself. Because of its quality and uniqueness, many tourists visit there only to buy ceramics to complete the needs and decorations in their homes. For society itself, industry is useful because it has a function to create economic living standards of the community, providing added value to goods and services that transform an item or service that was originally only in the form of raw materials into semi-finished goods and into goods that are ready for use. Then, because basically an area has different needs and abilities, some have large needs but still experience deficits in producing a product, some have more production than the needs of an area or a production surplus (Suharto, 2007).

In the ceramics industry there is a matter that must be considered regarding its use both in terms of function to maintenance of culture. The ceramics industry located in Anjun Village, Plered Subdistrict, can be an example that along with the development of increasingly advanced times, local people still believe in the activities carried out by their ancestors before starting ceramic production. This is considered as a preservation and is believed to be an industrial cultural heritage so that this belief will continue to be attached to the local community from generation to generation.

This study will be discussed about the maintenance of local culture through ceramic handicraft business.

Research Methods

The method used in this study uses descriptive research methods with a qualitative approach. This is because the object described is a person and institution based on facts that appear as they are. Through this approach will be revealed a picture of actualization, social reality, and perception of research objectives. Qualitative research is intended to understand human behavior, from the actor's own frame of reference, namely how actors perceive and interpret activities in terms of their establishment (Gunawan, 2013). Qualitative research also has a specific research design. This design is primarily related to data collection, data analysis and research reports, but still comes from various disciplines and continues to develop dynamically throughout the research process (for example, types of problems, ethical problems, etc.) (Creswell & Creswell 2017).

In this study the data was obtained directly through observation and direct interviews with informants who were domiciled in Anjun Village, Plered District, Purwakarta Regency, who were directly involved in the subject matter, namely the ceramics industry. Here the researchers also became part of the object under study and were directly involved in the activities carried out by the research subjects. So the data obtained is still actual data, in the sense that the data collected and obtained from the subject at the time of the behavior, and the validity of the measuring instrument can be known directly.

Maintaining Local Culture in the Ceramic Industry

The concept of developing culture as an industry is an important and strategic survival step into the current global era. This is due to the strength of cultural resources in particular, living culture. Foreign tourists are certainly not the only targets and targets for the development of cultural tourism in Indonesia. Domestic tourists or local tourists are a huge potential, because culture has a connection between historical roots and traditional values that are better known by local people than foreign tourists. The source of the power of tourism development so that it can continue depends, among other things, on the creation of a sense of pride in this potential by the community itself (Sonya et al., 2014).

Likewise in the case of the ceramic industry found in Anjun Village, Plered Subdistrict, which is very closely related to the cultural elements of their ancestors since long ago. As is well known that society and culture cannot be separated which is a duumvirate, where every society there will always appear culture and vice versa where there is culture there must be a society that gives rise to that culture.

Indeed, humans are the key to change in their environment, because humans with their behavior will greatly affect their survival. But through that environment too, human behavior is determined so that there will be a balanced reciprocal relationship between humans and their environment. Thus, in order to create a harmony, people must behave and behave well towards the environment. In this case the local wisdom or local culture contained in the ceramics industry strongly involves his mind so that from these treatments, the results of human mind activities themselves and describe how to behave, the actions of the community in responding to changes that have characteristics in the physical environment. and cultural.

As stated by the head of UPTD ceramic R & D staff Mr. BM, 50 years (interview, 23 April 2018), that all ceramics craftsmen in Anjun Village are not careless when they are making ceramics, there is a special ritual that they must do before starting the making in honor of their ancestors. By respecting ancestors it was felt as well as cultural preservation carried out by people in ancient times. But the ritual is done only in a certain time if it will do Mitembiyan or start production. In addition, various honors were held for their ancestors so that their efforts were successful. The ceremony is carried out, among others, on the month of Maulud or on regular days is always done on Tuesday night and Friday night by slaughtering chickens and their blood is planted around the furnace, and followed by giving offerings that are stored on a stove and do not forget to hold a thanksgiving with the family by inviting Ustadz to pray together for their smooth life.

One of the rituals when starting production is often called Mitembiyan by the local community. It is a ceremony that uses all-white clothes because it is considered a polite color to face the ancestor and the prayer is always recited from generation to generation at the start of ceramics burning which is usually done on certain days namely Tuesday night or Friday night kliwon. According to them, those days are considered sacred days when they are going to do a ritual, whatever the activity is a ritual it should be done on Tuesday night or Friday night kliwon. In addition, the ingredients offered are various bananas, plantains, or bananas, black bitter coffee and sweet black coffee, cigars that are believed to be the most favored food by ancestral spirits and served in front of the burning door or above the kiln. After the prayer was offered, the burning of production began. Likewise, the methods and techniques in the burning of ceramics are still using the procedures carried out by their ancestors. The time needed in combustion was relatively long, and maybe when compared to the time of burning ceramics in other areas, Plered ceramics were much longer, i.e., 24 hours. Whereas in other areas only takes 8 hours.

In addition to giving offerings and praying in front of the burning stove, there is one more ritual carried out by the local community, namely slaughtering a chicken. Where chicken blood is stored around the incinerator. They believe that storing the blood of a chicken around the kiln will make the furnace sturdy and the fire will not be easily extinguished.

According to the local community that the work in making ceramics is considered to violate world order because it is closely related to land, water, fire and air as well as in their work they always use land and fire in their burning. That is their main reason why the making of ceramics is always preceded by rituals and giving offerings to ask permission to avoid unseen curses. As stated by Mr. JJ, 45 years (interview, 23 April 2018), the majority of people have self-taught abilities and these activities are born from generation to generation, a habit and tradition that is always carried out by their ancestors by performing a ritual when they will start production, the community is still continuing to carry out and preserve this activity. The philosophy of these ritual activities is because in fact in the manufacture of the ceramics industry they are not of printed origin, they process nature which consists of elements of soil, fire water and air which are combined into one ceramic object. Therefore, it is not permissible for anyone to make a ceramic. That is where it can be seen that society and culture influence each other.

The surrounding community still believes that there is a tradition or ritual in the process of making ceramic industries. Because their ability has been passed down from generation to generation so they will do a tradition that their parents have taught. With the philosophy of culture that is still strong throughout the idea, the action is obtained by learning to interpret a process in making ceramics, in which there are norms and values about social relations and behavior that are the identity of the community concerned.

Industries that are seen as cultural heritage cannot be underestimated. As part of the creative economy sector, this type of industry is deemed to be a valuable and unlimited asset until whenever it will never be erased by time, with a sign that the process of creation and innovation must be continuously empowered. Because the culture of each nation or community consists of large elements and small elements that are part of a unity that is unity. This was proven from the first beginning of its establishment in 1904 until the Plered ceramics industry still exists.

In an industrial culture that is still strong, myth plays a very large role in social interaction. It is needed to maintain altruistic traditions and social actions (acting together). Land can be saved, water can continue to flow when associated with things that smell mythology. However, even in a culture like this, myth is very dangerous. Keeping

myths side by side with things that are very dangerous if just a little erroneous in the interpretation, it will have a bad impact on the surrounding community. This is where there must be reasonable wisdom to maintain safety and human dignity.

Functions of the Ceramic Industry

Function has meaning as bringing the implication that social phenomena are interrelated and interdependent, and change in one thing has a certain influence on the other. The function of an activity may be intentional and recognized by those involved. On the contrary, the activity might also bring unintentional and recognized influence. Function can also be said as a desired consequence and move the community. Functions can be negative, positive or neutral depending on their use (Rahman, 2011).

In preserving culture, especially in the ceramics industry in Anjun Village, Plered District also functions to maintain the traditions that have been carried out by the ancestors of previous communities. One way out to build a love for cultural heritage is through an approach by the community towards the next generation. Thus the function of maintaining culture in the ceramics industry will have a positive impact because it involves a unity of interdependent parts between culture and society. As expressed by Mr. JJ, 45 years old (interview, 23 April 2018), preserving the ceramics culture tradition wherever it is when it has made the ceramics a livelihood, it will definitely be preserved, especially the *kaifiyat* (activity) not the product. When linked to tradition, it will create works of art. That's where the ceramics function is seen by preserving the culture or activities that are often carried out by their ancestors. This can be referred to as one of the natural *mentafakkuri* in terms of trust, because humans are also created by God with four elements namely land, water, fire and air. In fact there will be no ritual activity or giving offerings to ancestors when the ceramics industry does not exist.

In other cases, the surrounding community believes that by continuing to preserve the culture that was once carried out by their ancestors, ranging from the development of production to marketing, the production of ceramics will continue to grow rapidly and will continue to exist for any time because they have asked permission from their ancestors for blessing and fluency. marketing the ceramics. As expressed by Mr. MM, 39 years old (interview, 23 April 2018) as a ceramics craftsman, the local community strongly believes that the ceramics contained in Plered will continue to exist at any time, when the true history of ceramics is hundreds of years old and proven to date this still continues to exist and innovate. They assume that the rituals carried out in the production of ceramics can be assumed as one of the earth's taxes to their ancestors.

Local culture is a knowledge that is carried out by the community emerges from a long period that evolves together between the community and its environment. With a long process of evolution in society, it can make the local culture a potential source of energy from the collective knowledge system of society to live together dynamically and peacefully. That's why the local culture is not just a reference to someone's behavior, but furthermore, that is able to dynamize the lives of people who are full of order.

Substantially, the local culture contained in this ceramics industry is a value that are valid in a society, namely values that are believed to be true and become a reference in behaving in the local community. Therefore, it is reasonable if the local culture in the ceramics industry is an entity that determines human dignity. This means that the local culture contains basic elements of creativity and local knowledge from the community elites. This was confirmed by Mr. EK, 42 years old (interview, 24 April 2018) as a ceramic craftsman, when talking ceramics must be related to culture that serves as a reference to respect their ancestors because the ceramics have become an industrial cultural heritage, in addition to ceramics as livelihoods to meet their economic needs, the ceramics have taught them how to preserve a culture that has existed since a long time ago.

The culture contained in the ceramics industry illustrates a specific phenomenon that usually characterizes the community or community group and is an attempt to find truth based on facts or symptoms that are specifically applicable in a particular community culture. To understand the way that the local culture contained in the ceramic industry continues to grow and survive, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the psychological processes that build and maintain it.

Ideologically the local community is still strong in understanding the function of the ceramic industry in preserving the culture of their ancestors. As is well known that ideology is a system that is interdependent in which there is a tradition, beliefs, and principles that reflect and maintain the interests of a community group. In other words, ideology is a pattern of ideas that not only describes and validates the social and cultural structure of a society, but also provides justification for the patterns of behavior, attitudes, and ideals of these community groups.

The structural functionalism focuses on macro structure in its social system, where the social system is always meaningful in its use and supported by the belief of interdependent parts (Talcott, 2013; Buxton et al., 2001). So that when a part of the system changes, it is considered to cause other changes from the system.

In this case the local culture has an important role in making the ceramics industry function as a place to preserve a tradition that is closely related to the development of the industry. Industrialization in Indonesia provides characteristics because it has to deal with a strong national culture. This view should be maintained by the community in the face of future situations so that the creation of a mutually influencing situation between the industry and the cultural essence carried out by the community itself.

In another view, the ceramic industry has become an activity that can strengthen social relations in all walks of life. Because the ritual tradition is what makes the relationship between people interact and reciprocate with each other which shows their existence, even creatively continues to develop without being oppressed from the modernization process. Local wisdom in the production of the Plered ceramic industry can be understood by the public as an effort that uses reason to act and behave towards something, objects, or events that occur in the ceramic industry.

Specifically, the local culture contained in the ceramic industry refers to a room of interaction with a limited value system, meaning that the interaction space has been designed in such a way that involves patterns between people and between people and their physical environment. The interaction pattern that has been designed is where a person can form a face-to-face relationship or deal directly with their environment. In this case also life that has been formed directly will produce values. These values form the basis of their relationship or become a reference for their behavior.

Even though traditional things that happen in the community are old-sounding words, even so they are considered as uniqueness that must be preserved. This view is certainly a benchmark for a culture and tradition. Likewise with the manufacture of the Plered ceramics industry, some of the people want the ceramics they make as a type of ceramic that has a traditional feel. The result will certainly be very different from making ceramics with elements to the west. Therefore, the traditional element of making ceramics in Plered is still the main menu for its consumers.

Furthermore, for Talcott (2013) there are four important functions that are absolutely necessary for all systems of action. *First*, adaptation, that is a system must overcome external systems, where the system must adapt to the environment and adjust the environment to its needs. The same thing with the Plered ceramic industry which is known from year to year is always growing. The question today is why is Plered's ceramic industry still maintained despite its hundreds of years of age? The answer is of course

because the Plered ceramic industry is always adapting to the culture of the previous community, when the ceramic industry is not in accordance with culture, the ceramic industry will be difficult to achieve or experience dysfunction. Because basically the culture is the key to the success of an item that is still for generations still preserved by the local community. Adaptation can also be said to include an effort to save resources in the surrounding environment, and then the next step is to distribute it through an action system. Every community is also required to have the ability to be able to mobilize every source in its environment, so that the action system will run well.

Second, achievement of goals, namely a system must define and achieve its main objectives. The same thing with the Plered ceramics industry which has the aim of maintaining its existence as a whole, with the ceramics surrounding communities can respect a cultural activity carried out by their ancestors, the main purpose of which is the flight of community culture in accordance with values and norms by preserving it through ceramic industry production. For the purpose of creating this goal, it is necessary to have effective and systematic steps for the local community so that they can be sure that the Plered ceramic industry can continue to grow from year to year.

Third, integration, that is a system must regulate between the various relationships of the components that are its components, the system must also manage between relationships and important functions namely (adaptation, achievement of goals, and latency or maintenance of existing patterns). In this case the Plered community must be able to instill the values of unity (integration) to the next generation in preserving the culture contained in the ceramic. The value planting must be done since childhood, many ways that can be done in the planting one of them through both formal and non-formal knowledge. For example, through formal knowledge can provide lessons in school about the importance of culture. Non-formal knowledge can be provided through direct interaction with the child, or through television shows that are related to culture.

Fourth, latency or maintenance of patterns, namely the system must maintain, complement and improve cultural patterns that already exist in society. In this case cultural patterns in Indonesia are considered to be a culture that is muticultural with this cultural diversity, the community should have maintained, improved and must continue to be preserved, including the culture contained in the ceramics industry. Besides that, maintenance of patterns is related to efforts to convince the next generation to display a characteristic that is considered appropriate, whether it is related to the needs and functions of the ceramic industry itself. Even though today preserving cultural elements has been eroded by modern times, but with the planting of cultural values carried out by

the previous people towards the next generation, it is felt that it will not be difficult when facing the times in this globalization era.

The essence of Talcott' (2013) thinking is found in the four systems of action he has created. Seen from the lowest level is found in the physical environment and organisms which include human aspects with a very influential role for the environment, while the highest level in the system of action is found from the reality that occurred today both from conditions, behavioral organisms and systems cultural. In the case of the Plered case too, ceramics have played a role in the human environment so that there is mutual preservation between ceramics and humans, so that for the sake of preservation these traditional cultures that have been entrenched in society must still be preserved. Thus, there is a noble value in the making of ceramics, namely the preservation of the local culture of the community itself which is based on trust in the glory of the earth and the environment.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research and discussion on the function of industry in maintaining local culture in Anjun Village, Plered District, Purwakarta Regency, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, the basic function of ceramics in Anjun Village, Plered Subdistrict, Purwakarta Regency is as disposable objects and ornamental objects. From year to year this handicraft-based industry has experienced a fairly good development. Starting from the 1930s, Plered handicrafts became a home industry in the Dutch era and then gradually improved in the Japanese era and the beginning of independence.

Maintaining the local culture in the ceramics industry strongly involves human reason. The surrounding community is not careless in the matter of making these ceramics. There is an activity or special ritual tradition that they do to preserve the culture carried out by their ancestors. They assume that in making this ceramic industry is something that violates world order because its manufacture involves land, water, fire and air. The way out is by giving offerings to the ancestors in the hope that they can avoid unseen curses. The function of the ceramic industry in maintaining local culture is an activity carried out by the local community in preserving hereditary traditions. With this culture makes ceramics into something that is sacred. He needed a series of ceremonies to honor the ancestors of the makers. In addition, preserving culture in the ceramics industry also serves to maintain the traditions carried out by their ancestors. One way out to build a love for cultural heritage is through the approach of the community to the next generation, so that the continuity of tradition occurs. The Plered community feels that the ceramic

industry is preserving their own culture that must be maintained. That is because cultural heritage in the future will be the same trend as environmental issues. This is where the need for all parties to respect local cultural heritage as humanitarian and social assets themselves.

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