Construction of the Shifting Values in Javanese Culture: Study on Sekaten Tradition in Yogyakarta

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Abstract
Whether a tradition can survive or not depends very much on various factors, such as political, social, economic factors, as well as globalization, digital technology, media coverage, and many more. This study examines the construction of a shift in the value of tradition in the celebration of Sekaten in Yogyakarta, which is still preserved by the community, though its image as a sacred traditional ceremony has been faded over the time. The main theory used herein is the construction of social reality, added with some concepts of Javanese culture. The selected research method is based on a constructivist paradigm, with a qualitative approach and its ethnographic research strategy was conducted in the village of Manding, Yogyakarta. Informants were selected based on certain criteria, and there were 5 informants with age ranging between 20-78 years, from different educational and religious background and raised in different eras. The results of research indicate that the construction of cultural values shifts occur through media, government policy and religious institutions.

Keywords: Sekaten, social construction, Javanese cultural values.

Introduction
The development of globalization and media technology have both positive and negative impacts on local culture. Few people are concerned about the decline of local culture, values and customs. It does not happen simultaneously and the intensity is different. Indonesia is known to be rich in local culture was not spared from the phenomenon of globalization that shows the penetration of foreign culture to Indonesia through the means of various media (see Ravina, 2008:1; Suh, 2006:6; Dwihiadiah, 2015;
Astuti, 2012; Utami, 2014; Nilan 2006:91-92). However, this fact does not eliminate indigenous Indonesian culture including Javanese culture. Eventough, the exist culture have to deal with the outside culture, but the Javanese culture such as belief systems, values and norms that guide life is still maintained. Preservation of Javanese culture is demonstrated by a study conducted by Harwati (2013: 32-33).

However, there has also been pessimism that local culture in Indonesia will be able to survive modernization (Abdurrahman Wahid)\(^1\). Similarly, experts of Javanese culture, Magnis Suseno & Reksosusilo (1983: 1; Nurcahyo, 2010; Pradanta 2016) argue that this society has the ability to survive in the midst of other cultures because they have the ability to pass on the virtuous values, and the spirit of patriotism and they also believe in the importance of good harmony. These communities still carry out ritual ceremonies, such as *wayang kulit* or Rasulan performances which is a unique village cleaning tradition which reflects the spirit of cooperation. The society still holds various traditional ceremonies related to the cycle of human life cycle from birth, marriage and death.

Bakdi Sumanto explained that Yogyakarta Palace is an institution of power as well as center of culture perceived as reference for values by the society\(^2\). The palace, is also trusted by most people as a spiritual protector and a guidance for the way of life of the community. Bakdi said that still there are people who obey the commands or instructions of the Palace especially if there is an imbalance of the cosmos. After the earthquake in 2006 that many casualties, Yogyakarta Palace recommends supporting community to make vegetable soup from 7 vegetable ingredients. The recommendation of the palace for its supporters is an order to be carried out.

They also attend various religious celebrations organized by the palace called Garebeg, which are actually taken from muslims’ festive days, namely Garebeg Shawwal\(^3\), Garebeg Besar\(^4\), and Garebeg Mulud\(^5\). According Agmasari (2017)\(^6\), In Sekaten, there are many symbols that contain messages and noble values for the community. These values govern the relationships between individuals, between human beings and the environment, and that with the Creator.

In one hand, Sekaten does exist in the present, but in the other hand, there has been a shift in its perceived “sanctity” and its function. A research conducted by Ni’mah (2007) found a change in sectional function. In the era of Walisongo, Sekaten is considered as a medium of propagation of Islam. While in the period Yogyakarta Sultanate, Sekaten became a forum to convey political and cultural messages and to foster Sultanate traditions. When the responsibilities to carry out Sekaten were transferred to the city

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\(^1\) Nu.or.id. Our Regional Cultural System and Modernization. July 24, 2015 accessed April 25, 2017
\(^3\) to celebrate Eid al-Fitr
\(^4\) to celebrate Eid al-Adha
\(^5\) to commemorate the birthday of Prophet Muhammad
government of Yogyakarta, Sekaten became the Palace’s cultural and political arena, as well as political and economic event of the government, especially in the year 2004-2005 when the Jogja Expo Sekaten (JES) was first introduced, the politicization and cultural commodification of the Sekaten ritual became more apparent.

Thus, the question to be examined further is how the shifts in the construction and reconstruction happen in the traditional cultural values of Sekaten celebrated by the local community? Studies of construction of social reality within culture need to be developed because the results of the previous studies focus more on media content. Thus, the academic significance of this study is to develop social construction of the reality of local cultural traditions in society.

**Literature Review**

To be able to answer research questions, researchers use the theory of social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Delia and Grossberg (in Miller, 2001: 96) as the grand theory. Here the construction process of social reality is a dialectic of externalization, objectivation and internalization that occur in interplays, both at society and media levels. The construction process of social reality is a dialectic of externalization, objectivation and internalization that occurs interplay, both in the level of society and media. According to the experts above, the social reality is understood from the interaction of individuals in progress on an ongoing basis. Such interactions are governed by previously established structures and social contexts. These interactions become experiences that are then stored, constructed, and grouped by their similarities and differences.

Externalization is an adaptation to the socio-cultural world as a human product. The process of self-adjustment is a human effort to express oneself into the world of mental and physical activity. Objectivation is the individual social interaction within the intersubjective world that is institutionalized or institutionalizing. Social interaction takes place through the communication process. Internalization is the process of individual self-identification with the socio-cultural world. Individuals make a direct understanding or interpretation of objective events as a disclosure of meaning.

The construction of reality is an individual effort that is understood as socialization. First, something about human experience is the subject of interpretive variables, every knowledge is a product of reality, not merely value-free. The activity of interpretation itself contributes to the creation of social reality. Second, the reality discussed in the constructionist is an understanding of the everyday world in general. This everyday life there are various kinds such as, knowledge, religion, law, morals and so on depending on the level of agreement between the subject of the object or referent.

The framework theory of social construction of reality (Berger, 1966) is a sociological analysis of the meaning from the actors in understanding the social phenomena constructed through the assumption 1) all human beings have a meaning.
group and strive to live in a meaningful world, 2) the meaning understood by a human beings can be understood by others, 3) meaning can be classified into meaning directly used by the individual as a guide of everyday life and meaning that is not immediately required to guide individual actions.

To strengthen the analysis, this research uses some some supporting concepts such as Javanese culture, Islam as Javanese culture, Sultanate of Yogyakarta as center of power and belief. According to Kodiran (2002: 322), Javanese culture is a culture that exists throughout the central and eastern parts of Java Island. Other areas supporting Javanese culture stretch across the north coast of Java from Cirebon to Banyuwangi. The central of culture itself is located in Yogyakarta and Surakarta. Simuh (1996: 110) explains more about the Javanese culture that relates to religious life by dividing it into 3 typologies, namely Javanese culture before Hindu-Buda, Hindu-Buda, and the period of Islamic empire. Thus Javanese culture lives on the people in the middle and east of the island of Java. Javanese culture is colored by Hindu-Buda and Islam cultures.

Islam as a Javanese culture emerged along with the spread of Islam as religion in Java. According to Ricklefs (1991) people who spread Islam in Java were mystical clerics with supernatural powers. This is a sensible tool for perpetrators of Islamization among Javanese courts who have long been accustomed to the mystical ideas of Hinduism and Buddhism. Ricklefs opinion is increasingly clarify the role of Walisanga in initiating the spread of Islam in Java. Walisanga also holds a role in the joints of the life of Demak kingdom, as a form of Islamic government.

Walisanga used a cultural approach through arts such as wayang, tembang, child games, building architecture, fashion clothing, creating a radical or traditional ceremony (Purwadi, 2004). The spread of Islam in Java is done by using existing symbols and local values. The wall perform modifications to various forms of Javanese culture that has developed. According to Graaf and Pigead (2001: 14) the process of Islamization in Java took place peacefully, the civilization of Java Majapahit Hindu slowly Islamized.

Demak as the first Islamic kingdom in Java experienced ups and downs in succession. Sultanate of Yogyakarta and Kasunanan Surakarta in its history is the kingdom of Mataram (Islam) which has been able to change its status from district to kingdom. This status change brings implications for the effort to reinforce its new position. The Mataram dynasty needed to consolidate its position as a supremacist in Java. The effort is a patterned military politics, mystical and religious magic, and cultural (Moedjanto, 1987: 41). Moedjanto elaborated in detail that the concept of Javanese Islamic Mataram power was built through a) drawing up a political genealogy; b) focusing power on one hand; c) the monarch exercises strict supervision of the regents; d) foster military power and regional conquest; e) collecting an heirloom; f) create a title; g) develop a fine-grained Keraton culture; h) creating marriage legend with the southern coast queen Nyi Roro Kidul (Koentjaraningrat, 1993); i) the myth that the king’s power comes from God’s revelation.
Woodward (1999) emphasizes that the most prominent thing of Islamic dominance is when Islam enters the power structure and becomes the religion of the Palace. Islam is embraced by the king and the courtiers and then the king's power that influences the spread of Islam and is accepted by the people. The king has a title that represents political and religious power. The first king of Mataram namely Panembahan Senopati titled Senopati Ing Alogo Sayyidin panotogomo Khalifatullah Ing Tanah Jawi "(Wahid, 2001: 64). Khalifatullah title closely related to the title of the world's Muslim community is the caliph. The king's duty is to defend religion and settle disputes among people. Khalifatullah means God's representative on earth. The king has the power to change the law to fit the local conditions through the establishment of the Royal Law.

**Research Methodology**

The paradigm applied in this research is constructivism (see Merten, 1998 and Creswell, 2007), with a qualitative approach. The research strategy is ethnography (Creswell 2014: 144) and sites selected, one of which is the village of Manding, Yogyakarta, are those which have transitional communities: they still carry out traditional ceremonies and have strong emotional ties to the Yogyakarta Palace.

Selection of informants is done purposively (Patton, 2002), taking into account -as criteria- their age and habits of practising the Javanese tradition and of believing in Kejawen, or Islam Kejawen or Islam. Researchers choose AS (women aged about 70 years, not educated, a follower of Kejawen), S (male, 55 years old), and SP (female, 48 years old) who are both believe in Islamic Kejawen, as informants. To have Islamic Kejawen belief means to believe in God as construed according to the values of Kejawen which provide guidance in everyday life. Furthermore SH (46-year-old woman) and her son Y (20 years) who are Muslims were also selected as informants. Since childhood they have been studying or learning to read Al-Quran.

Data analysis is done through open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990-96-97). As for the limitations of the study, in this study one informant did not approve to researchers’ taping and recording their conversation. Consequently, not all details of the interview could be verbally recorded. In addition, during the 2 years’ research, SP's husband died, so she was reluctant to tell a lot related to Sekaten. The validity of this research is achieved through triangulation of data sources.

**Result and Discussion**

The results in this research is based on several major theoretical concepts. First, Sekaten's objective reality is a social reality understood by its society. The objective reality of Sekaten is 1) Sekaten ceremonial procession that is metu gongso and gongso condom; 2) the objects used in Sekaten's traditional ceremony are two sets of Sekaten
gamelan, named Kyai Guntur Madu and Kyai Nagawilaga; 3) the distribution of udhik-udhik; 4) listen to the reading of the Prophet Muhammad's history. Other things that always exist in Sekaten celebration is sego gurih and eggs are red, kinang and cambuk.

Second, the symbolic reality of Sekaten is ceremonial location (royal palace and mosque), ceremony time (Mulud month in Javanese calendar or Rabiul Awal in almanac Hijri), objects (gamelan, udhik-udhik, sego gurih, red egg, kinang or betel and its completeness, cambuk), ceremonial procession (metu gongso, kendur gongso), activities of the parties involved (appearance of king, family and punggawa), listening to the reading of the prophet Muhammad's history.

Third, the subjective reality of Sekaten is the individual interpret the objective reality or symbolic reality of Sekaten. The subjective reality of sekaten is the meaning of the ceremonial procession of sekaten, the objects used in the ceremony, the appearance of the king, the family and the punggawa, listening to the reading of the Prophet Muhammad's history, the meaning of the Palace and the mosque and the meaning of the moon Mulud.

Brief analys that can be seen from the social context is internal and external factors bring affect to the construction Sekaten tradition. External factors are the social, political, economic and cultural background of the Javanese community, the role of the media in constructing local cultural values. Internal factors are individual predisposition consisting of cultural background and understanding of religiosity. Analysis of subjective reality, which is the meaning of individuals to the objective reality of the tradition of Sekaten celebration. Individual meaning is obtained from the construction process that has been done.

The results show that there is a difference between the informants of SH and Y, who have Islamic beliefs with S, SP and US who believe in Kejawen and Islam Kejawen. Differences can be seen in interpreting objects that become trademark ceremonial tradition Sekaten perudan udhik-udhik and sego gurih. Informants S, SP and AS believe that udhik-udhik has magical power. Every time attending Sekaten celebration, informants S, SP and AS try to participate for it.

Udhik-udhik is the term of coins that are not of value to be talisman and believed to bring blessings for everyday life. The udhik-udhik results are kept at home. US informants who believe Kejawen will keep udhik-udhik in the cupboard, while the informant S P store it in a wallet that is made specifically and can be taken anywhere. Informants S and SP who are into Islam Kejawen, believe that udhik-udhik have magical power, with the blessing from God. Informants SH and Y, devout Muslims, do not believe that udhik-udhik is a form of gratitude to God, a way of sharing to the community.

The red and white colors on the egg symbolize the bad and good in human beings. The purpose of life is symbolized by the savory rice which means that the good and pleasant life can be enjoyed if you are on God's and you can place yourself here if you obey His commands and avoid His prohibition.
udhik has magical powers. According to informants SH and Y, storing objects that are considered to have power is a shirk and is prohibited by Islam. Shirk is an act of associating with God. People who do shirk are considered by informants SH and Y do not believe in the power of God and they are sinner.

Informants who have the beliefs of Kejawen and Islam Kejawen, believe in the magical power of sego gurih. The informant has been internalized that savory rice brings blessings. Every visit Sekaten celebration, informants always buy sego gurih. If they do not buy it, then they feel no blessing from Sekaten. What they believe is also believed by their peers or peer groups. If any of their friends who did not have time to visit Sekaten, then they will ask for souvenirs nasi gurih. Thus, what has been internalized within them is reinforced by externalization among friends. Some people also cook nasi gurih at home during the celebration of Sekaten, but nasi gurih bought in the arena of Sekaten is considered to have a different meaning that is a blessing.

This construction not only occurs among small groups, but also the objectivation that nasi gurih is a trademark of Sekaten can be seen from the media that wrote the title: "Sego Gurih, one symbol of celebration Sekaten Yogyakarta"10 and "Sego Gurih Sekaten Special Servings are Almost Extinct"11

The belief in the existence of magical powers, as well as the philosophical values of the purpose of life and relationship with God in the tradition of Sekaten celebration, is reflected in informants AS, S and SP. Informants are internalized by the values of Kejawen experienced and carried out throughout their lives, such as the cycle of human life cycle of birth, marriage and death. The AS will make a complete offer as his grandmother once did. According to him the offerings in this great ceremony are intended for the ancestral spirits so as not to disrupt the course of the event. S has a habit of bathing keris, every month of Sura. They also do slametan when they are going to build a house, enter a new home and so on.

Meanwhile, SH and Y, devout and active Muslims in this research, do not believe in the seek for blessings and magical objects because according to him it is not in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Both assume that the slametan done by society is a habit that needs to be appreciated but it does not mean to be done.

Similarly, objects and processions of Sekaten interpreted as a cultural entertainment that is a local characteristic of fun and a place to shop. Y which is apart of millenials interpret the tradition of Sekaten celebration as a venue for selfie photos.

The change in the construction of reality can be seen clearly in fading of the beliefs of Kejawen into Kejawen Islam and then become the belief of Islam. During the time of President Soekarno and Suharto, there was a flow of trust recognized by the government as one of the beliefs besides the existing religion. At that time also developed the term

Islam ID card in the sense someone has an Islamic identity, but do not implement religious teachings obediently. The term Islam refers to the group of Kejawen and Islam Kejawen as seen from the results of this study (See Presidential Decree No. 27 No. 40 of 1978 on Trust believers).

In the Old Order of Bung Karno, the state accommodated believers, including Kejawen, in the early New Order period, the people were still accommodated. TVRI broadcast the pulpit for religions in Indonesia including for the Believers of Faith. Currently, the space for other government-recognized religions on television is getting minimal. Television gives more space to Islam with all forms of commodification.

In addition to the role of government, the media has a big role in changing the meaning of tradition. Private television, which emerged in the mid-1980s, emphasized the importance of development programs as well as entertainment and economic benefits. Without realizing it, the media tend to construct Sekaten rituals as an entertainment that appeals to many people. Media coverage in the 1980s, no longer put the Sultan or gamelan as a central celebration, but emphasized the aspect of entertainment and ceramics (Kedaulatan Rakyat)\(^\text{12}\). In the 1990s, news began to turn to the economic element\(^\text{13}\).

**Conclusion**

The social construction of Sekaten celebration produces cultural value. Cultural values are constructed in the form of cultural objects. The meaning of cultural objects in Sekaten constructed by the socialization agent produces two forms of construction that are the objects of cultural meaning magical and cultural objects without meaning. Cultural objects that have magical significance appear in the form of cultural values that are considered blessing so this is still be the goal of the community came to Sekaten. Cultural objects have no magical meaning constructed as a result of incoming values from construction agents other than the family. This resulted in the construction of "blessing" as a form of transcendental sanctity that changed.

The construction of this cultural value is influenced by the predisposition of the individual ie external and internal factors. External factors are socio-political and cultural backgrounds when individuals are raised. and the role of the media at the time. Internal factors are individual personal background and religious belief.

The findings of the study indicate that the shift in traditional traditions of Sekaten is inseparable from religious, government and media institutions. There are three categories of religious beliefs namely Kejawen, Kejawen Islam and Islam. People who belief in Kejawen and Islam Kejawen interpreting objects in the tradition of Sekaten.

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\(^\text{12}\) "On Upcoming Sekaten Ndongdut 'Will Be Strictly Controlled'. \(^\text{13}\) Harian Kedaulatan Rakyat of 19 December 1983.

\(^\text{13}\) A not so profitable Sekaten: Blame it on the rain Daily Newspaper, Kedaulatan Rakyat (5 September 1992)
celebration has a magical meaning. Society who embraced Islam obedient interpret the objects in the tradition of sekaten celebration as cultural objects that have no meaning.

The government since the time of the old order, the new order and the reform order treat these three beliefs differently. The old order accommodates believers to God including Kejawen, giving his followers sphere to express worship. Similarly, in the New Order era, still accommodate a believer who is supported by the Presidential Decree. The period of reform order until now, the government does not accommodate the believer.

The media has a role to change the construction of the tradition value of this Sekaten celebration. The media during the Old Order emphasized the importance of the Sultan and Sekaten. During the New Order period, the media focused more on development and entertainment programs. The early period of 1990. The existence of private television emphasizes on the economic aspect. In relation to religion, television before the reform order provided space for all religions including belief in religious pulpit programs. Television nowadays doesnt accomodate people with certain belief.

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