Panopticon in Javanese Culture

A Prasetiyo

{ari.prasetyo61@ui.ac.id}

Universitas Indonesia

Abstract This paper is based on research on the tradition of *nyumbang* in one of the villages in Yogyakarta. This tradition is carried out when the villagers hold traditional ceremonies such as circumcision, wedding ceremony, etc. The results of the study found that most of the villagers have felt burdened by the tradition of *nyumbang* because this tradition is considered to be burdensome for their lives. Some villagers have tried to become agents of change to change the tradition of *nyumbang*. Efforts to change the tradition of *nyumbang* were unsuccessful. Moreover, the agents of change received negative views and responses from the villagers, in the form of gossip, satire, ridicule, and exclusion. Problems and difficulties faced by agents of change in the context of changing a tradition are due to panopticon supervision. The Panopticon took the form of the Javanese people's way of life, customs, and social sanctions. Both panopticon functions as social control that controls people's thinking and behavior.

Keywords: *Javanese, panopticon, customs, traditions*

1. Introduction

In Javanese society, many traditional ceremonies cover the life cycle of human life. The ceremonies are related to the process before birth until the death ceremony[1] Traditional ceremonies relating to the life cycle are carried out in the form of a celebration, for example, a circumcision, a wedding celebration, and others. In the celebration event, there is a tradition called the tradition of *nyumbang*. In the tradition of *nyumbang*, people who make a celebration will invite relatives, neighbors, friends, and colleagues. The invited person then comes to the house to hold a celebration and give donations in the form of money or goods.

Based on the research that I did regarding the tradition of nyumbang in one of the villages in Yogyakarta[2], I found something very interesting. The interesting thing is that most of the villagers said they had felt burdened by the tradition of *nyumbang*. Seeing the fact that the tradition of *nyumbang* is actually burdensome to live, some villagers are motivated to try to make changes and become a kind of agent of change to change the tradition of *nyumbang*. One way that they do is when they make a celebration, they do not receive donations. The way to do this is to put an inscription on the invitation that reads "By not diminishing our respect for you, we had a request that we don't receive any donations. The presence of you is more than a gift for us".

What was done by the agents of change did not produce any results. The community did not support the agent of change's effort. People respond with negative views and attitudes. The

negative views and attitudes are in the form of unfavorable treatment to the agent of change. The residents who try to be agents of change are considered arrogant, stingy, unwilling to socialize, and other negative views. Getting responses, treatment, and negative views. The residents who tried to become agents of change eventually inevitably returned to follow or carry out the tradition of *nyumbang*. The tradition of *nyumbang* took place as usual.

What needs to be discussed is why the community does not want to change or leave the tradition, on the other hand, the community has felt burdened with the tradition of *nyumbang* at the same time.

2. Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a process of inquiry to understand the social world or human problems based on a complex things, a holistic picture, formed with words, reporting in detail the description of the informant and in the natural environment[3]. In this regard[4] states that the experiences and activities of informants become very important.

Data were collected in two ways, namely in depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). In depth interviews are conducted by interviewing selected informants based on a list of questions that have been prepared previously as a guide in conducting interviews. According to[5] through in depth interviewing technique allows researchers to obtain as much and broadest data as possible. To further strengthen the results of the in-depth interviews, a focus group discussion was also conducted by inviting community representatives who were grouped into two groups, namely men's and women's groups. The FGD`s participants were determined based on their educational background and diverse social status, with the aim of getting more varied data and representing all elements of the community. The questions asked are still based on interview guidelines as well as those conducted in-depth interviews.

3. Results And Discussion

With the consideration that culture is the result of human creation, then humans as creators of culture should be able to change the culture it creates if the culture is considered to be less or not relevant to the development of human life. According to the opinion of[6], tradition can be translated as inheritance or continuation of norms, customs, rules, and assets. Tradition is not something that cannot be changed, tradition is actually integrated with a variety of human actions and raised in its entirety. The human being who makes something with that tradition: he accepts it, rejects it, or changes it. In line with the opinion of [6], [7] argues that changes in society, in general, can occur naturally and regularly, especially if the changes are following the growth of community interests. Under certain conditions, social change cannot be avoided, especially if the current situation is considered to be unsustainable or unsatisfactory. The dissatisfaction with the current situation is caused by the existing values, social norms, knowledge, and technology which are no longer following the demands of the people's lives, or because they are considered unable to fulfill increasingly complex and completely unlimited interests.

Based on the opinions [6] and[7] above, it is clear that a tradition can change or can be changed. Returning to the failure of what the agents of change did to change the tradition of

nyumbang, I assume that it was caused by a discourse that prevailed in society, where the discourse contained power which directly or indirectly influenced the mindset and behavior patterns of the community.[8] (see also)[9] says that in discourse can not be separated from power relations. According to [8], discourse can be interpreted as a way of describing, defining, classifying, and thinking about people, things, knowledge, and abstract systems of thought. According to [10], in understanding and analyzing discourse can use a three dimensional framework, namely the dimensions of discourse as text, discourse as a discursive practice, and discourse as a social practice. In line with this opinion[11] states that discourse is a collection of knowledge about an actual object or concept that is constructed as 'reality' and which is a long process is supported and legitimized by various institutions. The conclusion that can be drawn from these opinions is that in the relationship between individuals and individuals in society, or individuals with society, covered by a discourse that has or contains a power that regulates the relationship. In other words, the discourse becomes a kind of supervisor who always oversees the thoughts and behavior of individuals in social life.

In connection with this supervision reminds us of Foucault's thought about the concept of the panopticon that inspired by the architectural form of a prison created by Jeremy Bentham. In his book entitled *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault states:

> *The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see / being seen dyad: in the peripheral ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen.*

The architecture of the prison building gives an analogy about a form or system of supervision. The basic concept of panopticon supervision is that an individual will always feel supervised in every move of his steps even though the supervisor is not present concretely or physically in his life. This supervision even has the power to regulate and influence the thinking of an individual human. Whatever thoughts or forms of human behavior, will always be influenced by a discourse that applies in the society in which the individual is located.

Its relation with Javanese culture, the failure to change the tradition of *nyumbang* seems to be caused by panopticon oversight. This has caused the village community to continue to carry out the tradition of *nyumbang* even though the community members actually objected to carrying out the tradition of *nyumbang*, and agreed if a change was made. Panopticon in Javanese culture is related to discourse about Javanese way of life, customs, and social sanctions in the village community. The following will be discussed one by one the form of panopticon in Javanese culture to answer the above problems.

Regarding to Javanese way of life,[12] said that the pattern of association in Javanese society was determined by two basic rules. First, in every situation humans should behave in a way that does not cause conflict. Second, so that humans in speaking and carrying themselves always show respect for others, according to their rank and position. According to[13], the first rule is called the principle of harmony while the second rule is the principle of respect. In connection with the principle of harmony and the principle of respect,[14] states that Javanese people try to prevent conflicts openly as a result of emotions attached to conflicting personal interests. Each individual tries to refrain by acting *sareh* and *alus*. *Sareh* means patience, *alus* means soft. Similar with these opinions,[15] said that the attitude of *rila* (willing)*, narima* (accepting), and *sabar* (patient) is the basic concept found in the Javanese worldview, both *priyayi* and *abangan*. This opinion is reinforced by the opinion of [16] which says that Javanese values that stand out are efforts to maintain harmony and avoid conflict, both in the hierarchical and communal dimensions. About social control systems,[17] said that social control is often interpreted as supervision by the community of the course of government,

especially the government and its apparatus. The true meaning of social control is far broader, because this understanding encompasses all processes, whether planned or not, which are educational, inviting or even forcing citizens to comply with applicable social norms and values.

In connection with the tradition of *nyumbang*, the Javanese people's way of life that functions as a supervisor that influences people's behavior is that humans must always create harmony in the community, to prevent conflicts -especially open conflicts- in social life, humans must be able to restrain themselves, *sareh* (patience), *alus* (soft), *rila* (willing), *narima* (accepting), *sabar* (patient), and always respect others. All of which play a role in the ongoing contribution of the tradition to the present and difficult to make changes. What is meant here is that the village community continues to carry out the tradition of *nyumbang* even though they have objected to the tradition because they are trying to comply with the prevailing discourse in the community in accordance with the views in community life. If they do not carry out the tradition of *nyumbang*, it is feared that there will be disharmony and even conflict in society. Disharmony and conflict is something that is highly avoided by the Javanese people.

Another thing that is a form of panopticon in Javanese culture is related to the community's understanding of customs, namely that the village community is very firmly adhering to the customs that have been passed down for generations.[1] defines customs as a complex of norms by individuals who embrace them as being above human beings who live together in the reality of a society. From the understanding conveyed by[1], we can get an understanding that customs are a guideline for every individual who lives as a citizen of the community. Melville J. Herskovits (in [18]) views culture as something superorganic, in the sense that culture passed down from generation to generation continues to live on even though people who are members of the community continue to take turns due to death and birth.

According to[19], customs is "*the most spontaneous of all social rules and often the most compelling. But they are sanctioned not like law, by organized coercive authority, but by a wide variety of informal social pressures*". Based on Mac Iver's opinion, customs are interpreted as social rules that arise spontaneously and as if something that must be implemented or supported by every citizen. In addition, it also mentioned the existence of sanctions for violations of customs that are not like sanctions if people violate the law, but in the form of social pressure. Based on the opinions above, we can draw an understanding that custom is an abstract conception that arises from the majority of citizens spontaneously, and is an unwritten regulation as a control over human behavior or attitudes as citizens of a society.

From the understanding of these customs would have provided an answer to the question above. Indirect supervision of customs and traditions affects the mindset of the community. Because the tradition of *nyumbang* has been going on for generations, this is why the tradition of *nyumbang* is difficult to change and continues to be carried out until now. This can be seen in the interview excerpt as follows:

> *Saya sih juga merasa keberatan, tapi karena nyumbang itu sudah menjadi tradisi yang turun-temurun dari simbah-simbah dulu, susah untuk merubahnya. Kalau tidak melaksanakan tradisi itu nanti kita dianggap ora umum `nggak umum`. Sumbang-menyumbang itu kan merupakan bentuk gotong-royong kemasyarakatan. Hidup di masyarakat kan harus saling pengertian.*

> (I also objected, but because donation has become a tradition that has been passed down from the simbah first, it is difficult to change it. If we do not

carry out this tradition, we will be considered as 'uncommon'. These contributions are a form of community cooperation. Life in the community must be mutual understanding).

According to the informant, what is meant by 'uncommon' public ora is that the donation tradition has become a kind of tradition or habit practiced by all citizens, so that if any citizen who does not carry out the donation tradition is considered to be an unusual, unnatural act, and is considered as an attitude that is not sociable, and will even be considered or treated negatively by the community. The community members are considered to have *tepa selira* (tolerance), do not have a social, individual, arrogant, stingy, do not know the customs, and assumptions other negative. Social sanctions in the form of negative views can be in the form of gossip, satire, ridicule, even removed or ostracized. They are considered not to exist in society.

The use of satire as a form of social sanction is related to the Javanese way of life where the Javanese people avoid open conflicts. This is closely related to the nature of alus inherent in the Javanese which resulted in his actions not being open. It is too heavy a risk that must be borne in the form of social sanctions if someone wants to change the tradition of *nyumbang*. It is this direct or indirect supervision of social sanctions that makes the tradition of *nyumbang* difficult to change [20].

4. Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, several important things can be drawn. First, human-created culture in order to facilitate human life. Second, over time, the function of culture has changed. The purpose of the change is that at first the culture functioned to make it easier for human life to become difficult or burdensome for human life. Third, humans try to change or improve a culture that is not appropriate and does not provide a positive function in their lives. Fourth, changing cultures that have become a hereditary tradition is not something easy. Fifth, as creators of culture, humans are the ones who should master culture. Contrary to this, based on this research, it was found that culture is what dominates humans. In other words, culture that rules humans.

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