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Devy Kartikasari
A. M. Susilo Pradoko



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Editorial Office

Indonesia Institute of The Arts Denpasar
Jalan Nusa Indah Denpasar 80235
Phone +62-361-227316 ext 159 Fax +62-361-236100
E-mail : penerbitan@isi-dps.ac.id

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Political Identity Of Transmigrant Communities In Tanah Abang Village In Jambi Through *Gamelan*

Devy Kartikasari¹, A. M. Susilo Pradoko²

This research is intended to discover the procurement process of *gamelan* musical instruments as an effort to preserve the identity of Javanese transmigrants community in Tanah Abang village, reviewing the idea to the benefit to the community and exploring the meaning and the social values that is implied by the existence of the *gamelan* used by the communities to learn *karawitan*. The research was carried out in the Tanah Abang Jambi village, with the *pengrawit* and trainers as the objects, and the informants, through interview, of this research were the head of the Tanah Abang village, *karawitan* coach, *pengrawit*, and those who was part of the agent of change. The data taken was in the form of field-notes which were processed in such a way and sorted into an intact data that was easily traced. Afterward, the data was used to answers the problem statement. The results of the study conclude that the procurement process of *gamelan* in Tanah Abang village went through a challenging process, however; the impact that follows is quite satisfying since it brings benefits to the community and the village. The process is described through a chart to facilitate understanding. Furthermore, another important point that can be taken from the existence of a set of *gamelan* musical instruments is social values that can be implemented in everyday life.

Keywords: Political identity, karawitan, transmigrants, social values.

^{1,2}.Art Education Program, Graduate Program,
Yogyakarta State University
1st Colombo Street, Depok, Caturtunggal,
Sleman, Yogyakarta, 55281

¹kartikasaridevy@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Around the 1980s, the Indonesian government launched a transmigration program for several communities on Java Island. The purpose of the program is to reduce population density on Java Island. The destinations of transmigration include Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi. One of the destinations of transmigration in Sumatra is the village of Tanah Abang, Merangin, Jambi. The majority of the population that migrated to Tanah Abang village was people from Yogyakarta, Central Java, and its surroundings. From 1982 until now, the population in the village has increased from regeneration or subsequent transmigration. As a result, Jambi's indigenous population that occupy the village are only about 20% of the total population

Most residents use Javanese to communicate in everyday life. Over time, Javanese culture experienced re-fusion with the Jambi culture; in fact, Jambi culture was not too strong in the village. The fusion of Jambi culture can be seen from the pace in which the Javanese people adapted through language, and vice versa, the Jambi Malay people were able to quickly understand Javanese, sometimes even deliberately using the language while talking to Javanese. This affected cultural identity in the new generation, of Javanese descent born on the island of Sumatra. They experience a cultural identity crisis. From this point, the efforts of transmigrant communities are **to show** identity, clarify the identity that they were part a Javanese tribe, and **build** their own identity they **wanted**. One of them is by providing a set of *gamelan* musical instruments in the village of Tanah Abang.

Ethnic equality, as well as having the aim to prove and maintain identity as a Javanese tribe, is a strong reason for transmigrant communities in Tanah Abang village to revive traditional Javanese art through *gamelan*. This was carried out with the expectation to introduce the ancestral art to a new generation that experiences an identity crisis.

The existence of Javanese *gamelan* musical instruments set in Tanah Abang village proves how the transmigrant community is trying to show and maintain their identity seriously. Their existence wants to be recognized, as a Javanese tribe, of course. The efforts made are inseparable from a community consensus made by the leaders of the Tanah Abang village. From the beginning of the initial idea to the completion of the procurement of a set of *gamelan*, there must be many pros and cons experienced, as well as constraints in terms of cost, planning, location, and possibly future maintenance. The community here acts as the originator, developer, and user of the culture created.

Through the learning of the *gamelan*, the community does not only obtain material, but also to practice playing *gamelan*. People who learn to play *gamelan* are expected not only to be adept at playing, but also to be able to instill

the noble values implied by *gamelan* and *gendhing* (song) played into social life in the community.

METHOD

In this research, the author uses one of the qualitative research traditions, namely ethnography. Ethnographic research is concerned with cultural research. The objectives of ethnographic research include informing theories of cultural ties, finding grounded theory, understanding complex societies, and understanding human behavior. Sources of data in this study were obtained through several informants who are members of the subject. Regarding the subject, it was explained earlier that the transmigrant communities who had lived in the village for at least ten years had *karawitan* training group and those who were not, instructors of *karawitan* training, as well as some Javanese youth born in the village.

This research is qualitative research, which is non-permanent, or in progress, moreover; when it is the field. The source of the data is the result of observations on *karawitan* activities carried out by community groups, other than that, there are also library data from several village archival sources that were used to trace the efforts to maintain identity and to know the figures who play the important role. Afterward in-depth and open interviews were conducted to informants, among others, village heads, community leaders, *pengrawit*, *gamelan* connoisseurs, village youth, and *karawitan* teachers.

DISCUSSION

General description of the village of Tanah Abang Jambi

Established in 1982, Tanah Abang village is one of the largest villages in Jambi province. The village is in the the Pamenang sub-district, Merangin district . This district was led by a village head. The geographical location of Tanah Abang village stretches as far as 20 km southeast of the city of Pamenang, 50 meters above sea level, with an area of about 19 square kilometers. Tanah Abang Village or commonly called SPE (E Settlement Unit), was one of the village destinations in the massive transmigration program in 1982 under the leadership of President Suharto. Around the village of Tanah Abang (SPE), there are Pematang Kancil villages (SPC), Sungai Udang (SPB) village, and Pauh Menang village (SPA).

Having a densely populated population of more than 5000 people, Tanah Abang is divided is into 5 cadets, and 24 RTs. 97% of the population is Javanese as a result of transmigration; the remaining 3% are Minang Kabau, Batak, and tribal children in the original Kubu Jambi. Javanese is the dominating language that is used daily. It is not surprising that the inhabitants become fluent in Javanese; living in the village as if it is in Java.

Most villagers in Tanah Abang work as farmers (oil palm, rubber, secondary crops) and traders, the rest are being civil servants, tailors, health workers (doctors, midwives, nurses) or teachers. Tanah Abang Village has two Public Elementary Schools since the establishment of the village, then several years later MI and MTs were established. A quite large and complete central market makes the heartbeat of the Tanah Abang village getting stronger, not infrequently some residents from neighboring villages visit markets every Sunday. Other village facilities are two large mosques, one bank, health services center, village halls, and village cooperatives. Preservation of Javanese Culture through *Karawitan* Arts According to Edi Sedyawati in his article entitled "Nation Identity" presented at the cultural congress in Bali, besides language, traditional dress, and dance, music is one of the markers of cultural identity of a nation or group. The identity of a group will be formed if there are systematic efforts in that direction, namely "culturing" (enculturation).

This was done by a group of people in the village of Tanah Abang, attempting to systematically procure a set of *gamelan* to strengthen Javanese identity in the village. In 2012 a community called Ngesti Budoyo was formed consisting of 10 members of the Javanese transmigrant family heads, some of whom are community leaders in the Tanah Abang village such as the village head, elementary school teacher, and head of the KUD (Village Cooperative Unit). The Ngesti Budoyo Association regularly holds meetings, the agenda besides *artisan* (social gathering), is also to discuss the continuity of Javanese culture or art in the village of Tanah Abang. What is clear from the existence of the community is that in every wedding ceremony that uses Javanese customs, will be chaired directly by representatives from the Ngesti Budoyo community, starting from the opening, the meeting procession, to the closing. The whole series of events fully uses the Javanese language of *Krama*. The initial management structure of the Ngesti Budoyo Association can be seen in the appendix.

In 2012, there was an idea to bring a complete set of Javanese *gamelan* to the village of Tanah Abang. The originator of the idea was one of the organizers of the association who served as an advisor, and worked as a teacher in the state primary school in the village named Suparno, he thought that traditional Javanese art in the village of Tanah Abang would develop if he had a set of *gamelan* as a medium for the community to learning and art. The idea was welcomed by the community members. Starting from the idea, several attempts were made raising funds to finding information from Java about the existence of the intended *gamelan* to be purchased. An immediate proposal for *Gamelan* procurement was directly submitted by the village head to the regent in office at that time, in Merangin district. Information on the existence of *gamelan* candidates that will be brought to Tanah Abang village has also been obtained, originating from Solo, Central Java.

although it was not a new *gamelan*, but the conditions and quality are still relatively good. The price which was then obtained was worth 85,000,000 plus for the Solo-Jambi transportation fee of 15,000,000. Coupled with the community donations, the costs were finally fulfilled to bring in a set of *gamelan* including transportation costs using trucks from Solo to Jambi which took approximately two nights and two days to travel and was accompanied by a community member named Sutarno.

The village hall is a place to store a set of *gamelan*; incidentally the village hall will be built new on the new land as well, so the old building will be used for *gamelan* storage as well as training activities. Although there were several obstacles that accompanied the process, the benefits generated from the existence of the *gamelan* were felt in the community of Tanah Abang village, member of the communities were happy to empower themselves to take part in *gamelan* training, this was certainly very good in shaping the character of Javanese people in transmigration land, strengthening the identity of a Javanese person, also to increase the community skills.

The implicit Javanese Social Value through *Karawitan* Activities

From the description above, coupled with the results of observations during the process of musical practice involving PKK mothers in Tanah Abang village, it is easy to understand that learning *gamelan* or *karawitan* has good impacts and influences on the Javanese social values in social life. The following are some points of social value that were successfully captured through observations that have been carried out regarding this matter.

1. Manners are closely related to cultural customs. Basically, all cultural customs in Indonesia contain noble values that continue to be preserved until now, one of which is manners. Through *karawitan* practice activities that are routinely conducted every week, **PKK** mothers can take courtesy as social values which includes:

a) In practicing playing Javanese musical instruments, knowledge about *gamelan* (how to use, how to do maintenance) is delivered at the beginning of the training meeting. That it should not be arbitrary to treat *gamelan*, such as the example of not being able to step on it using legs, behaving politely when heading to the *gamelan* to play it, especially when going to stage on a stage, seen by many people.

By being polite and courteous, people who watch will increasingly believe that Javanese cultural customs do carry a high level of courtesy in behaving.

b) Hitting or playing a *gamelan* instrument in accordance with the tone of the song, and that it may not be hit too hard as it could cause the *gamelan* to be defective or damaged. Playing *gamelan* or playing music does have to use feelings. By being thoughtful in processing the tone, the music produced would have a 'life' so that it can be enjoyed by those who watch and enjoy it.

c) The neat and polite manner of dress also reflects a polite Javanese culture. Neat by wearing uniformed matching clothes when going to appear that adds to the cohesiveness of the players will also look more polite. Bratasiswara (2000: 845), which was quoted again by Endraswara in his book entitled *Javanese Ethnology*, stated that uploads were customary manners in association which included forms of attitudes, dress, and language. From the description above, manner is clearly seen and indirectly influences the way of behaving towards fellow musicians, also in acting in society.

2. Mutual respect

The use of everyday language, in Javanese, is known as strata of language or a position in language that includes *krama hinggil*, *madrakah*, and *ngoko*. Through the level of usage of the language, an attitude to mutual respect is taught. Should it be explained to be a few points, mutual respect values would be as follows:

a) The use of Javanese etiquette as a means of communication between musicians. "Use Javanese manners, because there are young people who are old, *sinden* also learns," said Pak Darsi as the musician coach when asked about the use of language in the training process. According to Pak Darsi as a trainer, there were several members who were native to Jambi, they were interested in learning *gamelan*, and even some of them were positioned as *sinden*, which required him to learn Javanese. In addition to preserving the Javanese language, *karawitan* activities also introduce Javanese to indigenous people of Jambi whose daily language is the Malay-Jambi language.

b) Mutual respect for fellow musicians can also be shown by respecting time. They must be timely in attending the recital and apologize when arriving late. . "Nggih namine ibu-ibu kendalane nek enten acara utawi kerepotan lain, latihane prei, kadang nggih anggota mboten lengkap atau terlambat datang, tapi nggih ngabari." Asked the coach when he asked about the training schedule. Mutual respect is indicated by notifying you that you cannot attend the training.

3. Mutual cooperation

The third social value that can be taken from this *karawitan* activity is mutual cooperation. According to Endraswara (2015: 137) the Javanese hold fast to the saying: the same weight is carried, light and equally carried, which is a basic concept of coexistence and prioritizes the concept of mutual cooperation to carry out various activities including:

a) Mutual cooperation is reflected from the process of *gamelan* procurement, members of the Ngesti Budoyo association work together to collect funds, one member named Sutarno was willing to pick up *gamelan* from Solo to Jambi. Then, along with other members worked together put down and arranged the *gamelan* in the village hall.

b) Mutual cooperation is also reflected when *gamelan* instruments will be used for performances, moving many musical instruments as *gamelan* requires several people to lift them. Crowded residents worked together to put *gamelan* instruments into a pickup truck, to then take them to the addressing place, then rearrange according to its formation.

c) *Kenduri* includes thanksgiving, celebration, or commemoration of the number of certain days since someone's death is also included in the mutual cooperation corridor. Mothers work together cooking for the needs of the event, because in Tanah Abang, which is located far from the city, it does not recognize catering services thus it requires cooking together when there is a celebration. Besides interpreting the essence of the event, this tradition of *kenduri* clearly shows the efforts of a community group in maintaining harmony in living in a community.

In social life many elements support it, which synergizes into one as a foundation. Among of these many elements are elements of language and communication, social organizations, and arts. All three are found in the Tanah Abang village community.

Tanah Abang Village has three elements, namely language and communication, namely the use of Javanese language in daily life as the identity of the Javanese people dominates living in the Tanah Abang village resulting from transmigration, then social organization elements as evidenced by the Ngesti budoyo community, then the arts in the form of *karawitan* until now it still continues. Then, what is produced from a cultural identity in the village of Tanah Abang through *karawitan* media, among them 1) is politeness, 2) mutual respect, and 3) mutual corporation.

CONCLUSION

After observing, examining, and describing the problem formulation in Chapter IV, it is concluded that the identity preservation of transmigrant communities in Tanah Abang village through *karawitan* was realized in a process of procuring a set of *gamelan* imported directly from Solo, Central Java, with self-financing and some government budgets. The existence of a set of *gamelan* has a good impact on people of Tanah Abang village. In addition to several groups of people who can practice *karawitan*, this initiative also introduce Javanese culture (language, art, and ritual) to the indigenous people of Jambi. There are a number of social values, through the existence of *karawitan*, which can be taken and applied in everyday life, including 1) courtesy, 2) mutual respect, and 4) mutual cooperation. The five values obtained from *karawitan* activities and the implementation of Javanese culture includes performances in celebration, festivity, and the use of Javanese language to communicate in everyday life.

Suggestion

Some suggestions that can be conveyed when viewed from the benefits of the results of the research obtained are as follows:

1. The Javanese community in Tanah Abang keeps what they have obtained, which has been going on through *karawitan* activities. Also bequeath it to the next generation to maintain its sustainability. Innovation is also needed to follow the trend, however attention should still be paid to original custom that cannot be changed.
2. The regional government in the village of Tanah Abang, Pamenang sub-district, Merangin district, should continue supporting community activities that have a good impact on the environment. Support can be in the form of providing a more feasible training center or art center for performances.

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