

Year Work Tradition (Merdang Mardeng) as Traditional Communication in the Karo Tribe Community in Dokan Cultural Village

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received Oct 29, 2022
Revised Nov 05, 2022
Accepted Nov 26, 2022

Keywords:

Intercultural;
Communication;
Traditional
Communication;
Tradition Merdang
Mardem

ABSTRACT

Tanah Karo is an area occupied by the majority of the people of Karo ethnicity. In this tribe there are many lessons, the Merdang Mardem tradition teaches the author that multicultural cultural communities can coexist. Therefore, culture is a bridge that can unite people in differences. The tradition of Merdang Mardem in ancient times was used by the community to celebrate the overflowing harvest. This is then inherited and continues to be done by the community regardless of any belief or religion.

ABSTRAK

Tanah Karo merupakan sebuah wilayah yang ditempati masyarakat yang mayoritasnya bersuku Karo. Pada suku ini terdapat banyak pelajaran, tradisi *Merdang Mardem* mengajarkan pada penulis bahwa masyarakat budaya multikultural dapat hidup berdampingan. Oleh karena itu, budaya merupakan jembatan yang dapat mempersatukan masyarakat di dalam perbedaan. Tradisi *Merdang Mardem* pada jaman dahulu digunakan masyarakat untuk perayaan atas hasil panen yang melimpah. Hal ini kemudian diwariskan dan terus dilakukan masyarakat tanpa memandang kepercayaan atau agama apapun.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The country of a thousand islands is one of Indonesia's nicknames in the eyes of the world. This is evidenced by the cultural diversity and invaluable natural wealth in it. Consisting of dozens of islands that stretch between the ocean and the ocean, making Indonesia's land fertile and providing a good life for its inhabitants. One of the identities that is no less famous in the Indonesian state is the culture, customs, and traditions that continue to be preserved and maintained until today. In the midst of technological and industrial advances, it does not dilute people's love for the heritage of ancestral cultures. This is reinforced because of a group bond commonly called a tribe.

Based on the survey results of the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) population census in 2010, it is known that the number of Indonesians with Batak ethnicity is 3.58%, Malays are 2.27%, and Nias is 0.44%. This result makes the Batak tribe the third largest population that dominates Indonesia when sorted by tribe (BPS, 2010). In the Batak tribe there are seven sub-tribes, namely, Batak Angkola, Batak Karo, Batak Mandailing, Batak Pakpak, Batak Toba, Batak Simalungun,

and Batak Tapanuli. Geographically, Karo is an area located at 2°50'-3°19' North Latitude to 98°38' East Longitude. This area is bordered by Langkat, Deli Serdang, Dairi, Simalungun and Nangroe Aceh Darussalam Provinces. Capital Kabanjahe. The Majority Ethnicity is Karo Ethnicity. Surrently traveled until menetap for a long time in the location of the area with the village of Dokan. saw firsthand the tradition of *merdang mardem* in Dokan village, Karo Regency, North Sumatra. As a student who focuses on the study of communication science, researchers feel tetarik ontraditional communication carried out by the community at the *merdang mardem* event. Throughout the Karo region there is an annual tradition called *merdang mardem*. The *Merdang mardem* tradition, which in Indonesia language is called year work, is a hereditary event carried out by communities throughout the Karo land area with the aim of maintaining peace and balance in society and building communication with families who have not seen each other for a long time (Maba & Diandala, 2017).

Communications so great and so important to man as a social being. Without human communication can be said to be "lost" in the wilds of this life. Humans who are classified as social creatures can be sure to be "lost" because they cannot put themselves in the environment (Miftahul, 2019). Culture is a way of life that has been agreed upon and formed based on the ideas and thoughts of a group that lasts continuously from generation to generation. It is undeniable that the cultures mentioned above are values that arise due to human interaction in a certain region or country. This culture is the basic reference for the communication process between people in it. Based on the previous background, the formulation of the problem is: How is the tradition of working years (*merdang mardem*) as a traditional communication in the Karo tribal community in the Dokan cultural village?

II. RESEARCH METHODS

Merdang Mardem Tradition

The Karo tribe is one of the dozens of tribes in Indonesia. The community with the majority of the Karo tribe is in Kabanjahe Regency, North Sumatra. In general, the people who live in this region have long relied on the economic point in agriculture. The types of crops that thrive in the Karo land area are rice, corn, vegetables, crops and others. There are even some people who increase their income by making beds, broomsticks, and palm sugar that are processed simply. In the past, the Karo people planted rice with a period of 1 year. This makes the rice plant so important to them, that the harvest moment is one of the anticipated moments. Therefore, the Karo people have a tradition and culture of *merdang mardem* (work year) as an effort to celebrate once a year as gratitude and happiness for the harvest obtained. *Merdang mardem* or in Indonesian better known as year work is a traditional party that is carried out in descending and falling by *Karo kalak* with the aim of maintaining the peace and balance of the community. In the past, the traditional *merdang mardem* event was carried out with the aim of giving thanks to the spirits of the ancestors for the abundant agricultural harvest of rice crops (Ginting, 2007).

The implementation of the year's work was not carried out simultaneously in every village in Tanah Karo. There are regions that celebrate it in the early days of planting, some celebrate when the rice begins to leave, there are also when the leaves turn yellow, and harvest. Although each region has differences in celebrations, the tradition of this year's work still has the same purpose.

Traditional Communication

Human thinking is inseparable from history and civilization. All existing knowledge and technology are the result of previous research. Similarly, communication, before humans enjoyed communication as it is today, traditional communication was the starting point of the human communication journey. In general, traditional communication is communication that emphasizes the process of conveying messages through various communication media that are traditional or simple, and are used by a certain group of people or ethnicities that are certainly different from

other groups. Therefore, traditional communication has its own way of delivering messages through traditional media that develops and is born in a certain place where a certain society is located. This then gives a characteristic of communicating to the cultural system of the community and creates harmony and bonding for that community (Muslimin, 2011).

For example, arts such as wayang kulit, tor-tor dance, anggok and so on that are still alive in the community can actually be used as a means of conveying information. If put to good use these traditions can attract people's attention to certain information conveyed. Freddy H. Tulung said that broadly speaking, Indonesian society can be classified into two types, namely, a society that has a modern lifestyle pattern with traditional society. For modern society, mass media such as newspapers, radio, television and the internet are more in demand and popular. Meanwhile, for traditional communities where access to mass media is limited, traditional communication media such as folk performances are still used (Waluyo, 2011).

Intercultural Communication

According to (Thwaites et al, 2002) culture in the perspective of semiotics can be interpreted as a matter of meaning. He explained that culture is a set of social practices that store values of meaning that are produced, circulated, and exchanged. This meaning is at the level of communication studies, both interindividual communication and communication that occurs in groups. In the practice of human-to-human communication, it is undeniable that culture is the result and has values that arise as a result of human interaction in a certain region or country. Intercultural communication has its roots in the way of communicating, language (in particular sociolinguistics), sociology, cultural anthropology and psychology. This discipline psychology became the discipline that became the first reference for cross-cultural communication. The growth of intercultural communication in the business world has a main place, especially companies that expand their markets outside their countries, which in fact are countries that have a variety of cultures. Therefore, through cross-cultural communication, foreign people can explore the beauty and meaning contained to add insight and experience. It can also be used as an economic market to boost the welfare of local people.

Nowadays, human civilization has changed with the times. Currently, modern life that occurs is characterized by an improvement in the quality of social change that is more pronounced in the transitional phase (advanced village life). The life of modern society is already *cosmopolitan* with a very prominent individual life, professionalism in all fields and the appreciation of the profession are the keys to social relations between elements of society. Therefore, in a certain area, not a few local people began to switch and forget the old culture slowly. But in certain areas, the impact of modernization is not an influence and there are even some people who make traditions or culture for business purposes. For example, local culture is displayed to seek popularity, materials, and other positive things.

This research is of a qualitative descriptive type, namely research that is based on describing an event or event that occurs at the object of study. Descriptive research focuses on the actual problem as it was at the time of the study. Descriptive research aims to describe various conditions, various situations or various variables that arise in the society that is the object of the study, then draw to the surface as a characteristic or gameness about certain conditions (Juliansyah, 2011). The location of this study is located in Dokan Cultural Village, Brand District, Karo Regency, North Sumatra. This study used interview and observation data collection techniques.

The data sources used in this study are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained directly from the source through the interview stage and is the main information that is directly related to the subject matter of the research. The information chosen by the researcher is the community that is the perpetrator of the tradition of working years (*merdang mardem*). Secondary data is data obtained by researchers from several existing sources. This secondary data can be obtained from sources such as books, journals, research reports and others. According to

(Sugiyono, 2013) data collection techniques are the most strategic techniques in research, because the main purpose of research is to find and collect data. The data collection techniques used are in-depth interviews, observations and documentation. The data analysis techniques used are data reduction, presentation and drawing conclusions.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Dokan Cultural Village Community

Based on the results of a survey by researchers in the field, in general, people in the Dokan Culture village in Tanah Karo work as horticultural and palawija farmers. In addition, people in Dokan Village take advantage of local wisdom by selling services such as wicker, souvenir, entrepreneurship and others. Dokan Cultural Village is a multicultural village that has three religions that coexist with each other. The majority of religions in the village are Protestant Christianity, then Catholic Christianity and Islam. Therefore, to maintain stability and tranquility in the multicultural context of the community in Dokan Cultural Village, it upholds the values of tolerance. The diversity of beliefs held between communities does not make boundaries in life, starting from socializing such as working, neighboring, and so on. This is because people believe that by respecting each religion, respecting others can maintain harmony in life. In Dokan Cultural Village, facilities and infrastructure in the nature of infrastructure development are very capable. The road used by the community or visitors to get to this village is quite good. Even along the way to Dokan Village, visitors will be presented with clean and beautiful scenery. In addition, the people of Dokan Village still uphold family values, so that every visitor who comes will be treated well by the local community.

The cultural values and traditions of the ancestors are still very attached and upheld by the people in the Dokan Cultural Village. One of the cultures we encounter is the Work Tradition of the Merdang Mardem Year. The people who inhabit the Dokan Cultural Village have a strong and strong kinship system, this sense of brotherhood is created among various differences. This is realized by the community because they believed that Indonesia could become independent because it was united among differences itself.

Data Findings and Analysis

In the results of the interviews conducted, the researchers obtained data that in the Merdang Mardem Year Work Tradition there are several elements of activities carried out by all communities in the village that celebrate this tradition. The elements contained in this tradition are:

a. Saying Thank God

In the interview, the informant explained that, the Year Work Tradition was carried out for generations by the Karo people with the aim of maintaining the peace and balance of the Karo community. Because the activities carried out are very large, so they involve many people to work together in designing the event. Therefore, the community will gather so that they can build communication with each other, even families who are separated because of the distance will meet each other as well. In the past, this Merdang Mardem traditional event was intended as a thanksgiving to the spirits of the ancestors for the abundant agricultural harvest. This ceremony is in accordance with the pamera beliefs held by the ancient Karo kalak. Dokan Cultural Village carries out Merdang Mardem activities once a year. All the youth of the village will design this event in advance because there is a drum-guro-guro aron which will be a very large cultural event and is usually done for 3 days. In the custom of the people of Dokan Cultural Village, work years are the most appropriate time to return home for people who are outside the village. Parents who have children overseas, will usually ask their children to go home so that they can celebrate this tradition together. For the Karo people, this celebration is considered much more important than other traditional events or religious events such as Christmas, Easter, and Eid celebrations, so that people of any religion are

expected to attend. During this celebration, each household prepares traditional Karo specialties such as pagit-pagit, Karo roast pork, cipera manuk, tasak telur, cimpa, and labar, for the guests who come for free. This is done by the community to maintain the relationship.

b. Elements of Art in the Merdang Mardem Tradition

In the Merdang Mardem celebration or work year, there are various art and cultural performances performed by the youth/ i. In addition to the appearance of the local community, visitors who want to be directly involved and have a talent in singing will be given the opportunity as performers to fill this activity. Dance and singing can be said to be a medium of mass communication in the form of verbal and non-verbal. In dance, it usually contains a meaning and story that is conveyed through the mimics of the dancer's face, hand and foot movements, the setting and atmosphere that occurs. Through dance, the audience will enjoy their own way of digesting and understanding the meaning implied in it. An artistic work of art has an abstract and fragile form, for which it is important that we keep the ancestral heritage as a sense of honor for what they give and we enjoy today.

IV. CONCLUSION

Tradisi Merdang Mardem carried out by the Karo people is an ancestral heritage as a celebration of gratitude and gratitude for the bountiful harvest. Through this tradition, the people of the Karo land area make a moment to meet relatives, and strengthen the relationship between people and friendship. Through this celebration, we can also see that multicultural culture is not a limit, but a wealth that must be maintained through tolerance and respect for each other. Instilling a love for culture is an obligation, because culture is the heritage and wealth of the country that is priceless.

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