

## Cultural Studies: Degradation of Youth's Interest in Karawitan Arts Due to Current Developments and the Role of Culture in Economic Progress in Gawok Village, Wuluhan District, Kab. Jember

Mila Mufira<sup>1</sup>, Elegi Nur Aisah<sup>2</sup>, Muhamad Helmi Wakhit Yansyah<sup>3</sup>, Surya Rizki Mubarok<sup>4</sup>  
Universitas Jember, Indonesia

### Abstract

*Culture is one of the ancestral heritage that needs to be maintained and preserved. One of the typical Javanese local cultures is karawitan. In Gawok Village, it used to be very famous for its karawitan art. Nowadays, this art is less attractive among young people, so the regeneration process of karawitan activists becomes hampered. This condition can be dangerous, even in the long term, causing the extinction of this local culture. In fact, if utilized properly this local culture, it becomes its own icon that can bring the economic life of the community forward. We will describe this phenomenon using Frederich Jamesson's thoughts on the end of capitalism. This research uses a qualitative approach.*

**Keywords:** Local Culture, Karawitan, Economy

### INTRODUCTION

In this contemporary era, many traditional cultures inherited from our ancestors are starting to be degraded. The presence of globalization brings acceleration in the fields of technology, communication and information. Massive developments make people overwhelmed in receiving information. Apart from that, society has become very exclusive, and lacks interaction and communication with others (Prastiwi and Wardhana, 2024). In the end, people just swallow information raw without any definite filter. One of the types of information circulating penetrates the realm of culture and tradition. This massiveness has encouraged the spread of modern cultures which have begun to expand and erode existing traditional cultures.

Cultural results are a sign of recognition of the progress of a civilization. Java in a historical context can be said to be the nation with the highest civilization in the world. It can be clearly seen the culture it produces. Europeans at that time were only able to create guitars, a musical instrument made only of wood and strings. The Arabs created the fly, a musical instrument made of wood and leather. Meanwhile, Java has been able to produce high class culture using iron and copper smelting techniques which are incorporated into gamelan musical instruments. Gamelan has been an icon of Javanese culture since ancient times. In today's contemporary era, gamelan activists have

formed art groups that are members of Karawitan.

Karawitan itself is a sound and vocal art that uses slendro and pelog tones (Martopangrawit in Setiawan, 2017). The art of musical music has a unique characteristic, namely the use of notation using scales with a high level of difficulty. This art is usually used to accompany traditional Javanese songs and traditional dances such as: wayang kulit, uyon-uyon and so on. Wayang could be one of the Javanese icons that is starting to be abandoned. Shadow puppetry is a cultural heritage from the Hindu Buddhist era that has existed for 1500 years ago (Anggoro, 2018). This art has become an identity inherent in ancient Javanese society. Even shadow puppetry is a means of Islamization on the island of Java (Praharani, 2007). Through art, noble and religious values can be channeled.

Lack of regeneration can threaten the existence of this art. young people are less interested in studying this cultural heritage. It cannot be denied that capitalism is the scourge of destroying musical culture. Capitalism changes people's views, especially young people, about traditional culture, which over time has increasingly lower economic value. This is demonstrated by the sad phenomenon of working in the traditional arts sector such as "karawitan" where currently people's interest in "karawitan" entertainment is experiencing degradation driven by the high prices for renting "karawitan" entertainment.

The reduced regeneration of gamelan musicians is a major threat that could disrupt the existence of our culture. Apart from that, the regeneration of gamelan musicians could also threaten the economic life of the local community.

Efforts to preserve culture should be encouraged by various sectors to maintain the integrity of ancestral cultural heritage. Because this ancestral cultural heritage, if used well, will also have good implications, especially in the local community's economic sector, including establishing tourist villages, or cultural arts as a medium of entertainment which of course can encourage the creation of jobs as well as encourage changes in the lives of local communities for the better. Again. On the other hand, if the degradation of young people's interest in local culture continues to increase, and the cultural heritage of their ancestors is not properly maintained, then this will bring great danger to the life of the country. Apart from that, it could be that the culture we have is claimed by other people to be just a matter of our own negligence in maintaining it. Through this context, the new social structure created becomes the focus that wants to be explored further, referring to the activities of the Karawitan activist community in Gawok Village, Jember Regency.

## THEORY AND CONCEPTS

### The End of Capitalism

Jamesson holds the view that the current era of capitalism is entering the final phase of capitalism which is causing the growth of a new cultural logic (Ritzer, 2014: 1078). Marx saw that people's life patterns are based on needs, whereas in the current era, people choose based on the prestige they will achieve. Jamesson describes Postmodern society into 4 characteristics, namely: superficiality, weakening of affection, loss of historicity, and the presence of new technology (Ritzer, 2014: 1081-1083).

*First*, Superficiality is an era that shows the weakness of depth. It cannot be denied that capitalism creates a society that is transformed into one oriented towards material production (Marx, in Yanto and Baratha, 2019). This

causes people's orientation to change and they tend to look for material things. Second, weakening of affection. The characteristics of postmodern society are characterized by weak emotions towards culture. As a result of the tendency towards material production, society becomes less aware of cultural values. Apart from that, people see culture only from its external appearance, not from the values within it.

Third, Loss of history, which refers to weak emotions and lack of soul, can over time erode culture. It cannot be denied that culture is a product of society's actions. Culture not only functions as a communication tool, but refers to cultural production relations (Rosa, 2017). If the emotional bond is lost, over time the culture will fade and may even disappear by itself. Fourth, the presence of new technology and massive information systems makes the spread of culture faster and wider. This is the essence of Jamesson's thoughts, the expansion of external capital is usually comprehensive into areas that are not commodified (Ritzer, 2014: 1079). The presence of technology actually helped accelerate the spread of capitalism. As a result, society's perspective has changed from being oriented towards values to numerical values.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research carried out this time used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is research conducted to find out and understand what phenomena are experienced by research subjects (Creswell, 2003). The approach used is a realist ethnographic approach. Realist ethnography is an objective report about a situation, research is written using a third person perspective and the report is written objectively based on data obtained from informants (Creswel, 2015). The researcher decided to use one of the villages in Jember Regency which has the potential to have cultural value, namely Gawok Village, as the location for his research. The object of research this time is the cultural activities of local village residents, namely the Karawitan activity which experienced several problems in its implementation. Data collection techniques

carried out by researchers used in-depth interviews and field observations. Interview conducted this time using responsive interviews. Responsive interviews were chosen because with these interviews the questions can be changed as the research progresses. This is because responsive interviews can adapt to situations in the field (Creswell, 2015). The informants chosen by the researchers were local residents who were musical art activists. The data analysis technique in this research uses an interactive model, namely by reducing the collected interview data into transcripts and displaying the data and drawing conclusions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Social Settings

Indonesia is a country known for its heterogeneous citizens, one of the drivers of which is multiculturalism. Apart from that, it is supported by the fact that all regions in Indonesia have diverse cultures and of course they can be found in all regions in Indonesia. This statement about ethnic and cultural diversity is driven by data from the Central Statistics Agency in the 2010 population census that there are more than 1,300 various ethnic groups in Indonesia. With so many ethnic groups, it encourages the creation of a system in society that refers to the cultural context, the implementation of which directly has implications for the lives of the people themselves.

In line with the previous discussion, Jember is one of the cities in Indonesia which also has heterogeneity in its ethnic and cultural background, one of which is Gawok Village, which is one of the villages in Wuluhan District which has traditional cultural potential which is currently still being preserved, including "karawitan" activities. Apart from its cultural values, geographically Gawok Village has almost the same characteristics as villages in other countries in Indonesia, such as most of its residents are farmers, so it is normal to find a fairly large agricultural area in this village.

Javanese and Madurese communities dominate this village. This can be seen in the way they speak and the language they use in

their daily lives. The cultural heterogeneity that exists in this village shows a destructive situation considering the intention of the people to live a life side by side and ignore ethnocentric nature. The heterogeneity of existing cultures also does not prevent one culture from preserving its existing culture. Apart from that, this is demonstrated by the Javanese people who have been preserving culture for almost 30 years through "karawitan" which runs regularly every week. This short period of time shows that culture has become their daily food and is embedded in their social structure.

### Cultural Analysis of Local Villages

Gawok Village has a community structure that does not contain elements of homogeneity. This situation certainly does not prevent the people of this village from carrying out various activities that contain elements of heterogeneity, including culture. As mentioned from the beginning, the people of this village have several ethnic groups which can be seen from the characteristics that were visible during the research process. However, this heterogeneity does not invite tension or major conflict in this village. The society which upholds the value of tolerance is reflected in the condition of the village which is far from ethnocentric problems which can threaten the integrity of the village itself.

The dominant tribes in this village are the Madurese and Javanese. Apart from that, in this village, people who have different cultures still preserve their respective cultures. And in particular, Javanese culture which is attached to the local community and supported by "Karawitan" activities. The people of Gawok Village who are involved in this "karawitan" activity are mostly men aged around 30 years and over and come from other villages such as Lojejer Village, Taman Sari Village which is located not far from Gawok Village which is the training center for every day. Intense interaction and the use of strong Javanese language are reflected in their activities in carrying out the "karawitan".

"Karawitan" activities are a culture that is still carried out by the local community. This activity has been carried out for approximately

30 years and is still being pursued to this day. Several efforts were made by the local community to introduce this culture to the community who could then continue the tradition. By introducing traditions to teenagers who have currently lost interest in continuing or even preserving them.

This effort was made because the community wants the "Karawitan" culture to continue and not be lost to the times. It is not easy to introduce musical culture to the public because it takes years to become an expert in this culture. With a variety of tools and different sounds, it requires people who learn to really understand each one. This is what makes most people have no interest in studying musical culture.

Basically, Karawitan is an activity carried out by the community by singing Javanese songs or songs (Javanese songs) and accompanied by gamelan music. People who sing songs in karawitan are usually referred to as "Sinden" (female singer) or "Dalang" (male singer). This karawitan is usually used as entertainment by the community when there are weddings or circumcisions for Javanese people. People who deliberately invite the musical culture are usually people who can afford it, because musical instruments require quite a lot of money compared to other entertainment events. Therefore, people rarely invite this musical tradition.

Cultural activities such as Karawitan in this village continue to this day and encourage the continuity of the application of cultural values in the community and this is encouraged by routine karawitan training which is carried out at one of the houses of the people of this village, namely Mr Sugik. Not only cultural values, social values were also found during the musical practice, including intense interaction, as well as several jokes which added to the closeness of the residents at that time. There are several types of traditional musical instruments used in this karawitan and of course there is a distribution of musical instruments for each resident who is a karawitan player. The musical instruments used include gender, gambang, bonang, saron, kenong, gong, kempul barang, kempul dodo,

kempol Manis, sautan, demung, peking, kethuk kempyang, drum drum, ketipung, drum sabet, drum kosek, gending.

#### **A. Degradation of Youth's Interest in Local Culture**

The art of karawitan itself is now starting to be abandoned and replaced by modern culture. The lack of interest from young people has hampered the regeneration of arts activists. There are many factors that cause delays in the regeneration of musical musicians, including: economic factors, the difficulty of notation for playing this musical instrument and shifting trends towards modern culture. Several factors have hampered the regeneration of musical industry activists in Gawok Village.

*First*, economic factors, demands of needs encourage young people to prefer to fulfill their needs first. They have to work so they don't have time to learn to play this very complicated musical instrument. The young people think, rather than playing musical instruments, it is better to work. This is because they can get economic value. Apart from that, karawitan is currently only used as a hobby, not a permanent profession for local people. In the past, this art was an art that was very popular with the public. Almost every important event such as: weddings, circumcisions, people, especially the upper class, invite this art as an entertainment performance.

In fact, in ancient times, this art was considered to have its own prestige value. This is because not all people can afford to invite this art as performance entertainment during processions for very sacred events. Even in Javanese tradition there is also the term "ngruwat". Ngruwat is one way to "repel bad luck" or get rid of bad luck. Ngruwat is usually done by Javanese people.

The presence of technology has shifted the market. In the past, people often "used" karawitan for wedding celebrations and similar events. However, shifts in market tastes have made the art of

karawitan quiet. It is difficult to learn this musical art. The notations and keys contained in musical are very difficult to learn. Especially by young people. Because there is no guide book. The teaching system is only done autodidactically and only studied together with seniors.

This degradation phenomenon is in harmony with Jamesson's thinking, that the current era of Capitalism is causing new cultural thinking which is a marker of entering the final phase of Capitalism. And as mentioned at the beginning, Jamesson explains Postmodern society into certain characteristics, including superficiality which is reflected by young people who have an excessive focus on economically valuable activities such as work so that attention to local cultural values is weakened. And the second is the weakening of affection which is characterized by the weakening of people's enthusiasm for cultural values as a result of being too focused on activities that contain economic value which is driven by logic or their thinking which is too focused on external cultural values. And the third is the loss of history which refers to the weakening of people's enthusiasm for cultural values, which causes culture to continue to be eroded and will be inferior to popular culture which is or will develop and leads to weak emotional ties to local cultural values. Fourth, the presence of new technology which has the potential to change society's perspective which is oriented towards numerical values which is also a representation of the spread of capitalism.

## **B. The Role of Local Culture in Community Economic Value**

This cannot be separated from the previous discussion, namely the decline in young people's interest in local culture which is caused by the formation of an understanding that working in the local cultural sector is considered less promising in terms of wages earned. In fact, if analyzed more deeply, through arts and

culture it can create promising jobs and has the opportunity to improve the economic situation of local communities. So that major contemporary problems such as poverty driven by a lack of employment opportunities can be overcome.

And it is known through the page of one of the journal publications, namely "ResearchGate" that it is explained that there is data obtained from the Central Statistics Agency which states that the number of people categorized as poor in Jember Regency has increased by 0.12 percentage points in one year from 9.39 percent in March 2022 and has now reached 9.51 percent in March 2023. So, this data can be the basis for the government to be able to create policies through local cultural values so that they become a medium for the community to carry out constructive or constructive economic activities. With this effort, the cultural implementation of Gawok Village, such as karawitan activities, will continue to be carried out, taking place in continuity while also having a positive impact on the economic life of the community.

## **C. Solution**

Culture is actually not just mere entertainment, but can be used as a medium to create people's lives which are certainly better than before. If in the context of the degradation of youth interest in local culture, this can take efforts to spread arts and culture skills to society at all levels. In a culture that has been passed down from generation to generation, there are various values that were highly upheld by the ancestors. However, recently the culture has slowly faded due to the times. Various parties are needed to restore this faded culture, one of which is support from the government. The government as an authority that has policies plays an important role in efforts to preserve culture, one of which is karawitan. The government can come up with a concrete policy to regulate the process of preserving musical arts. For example, by including

musical arts into extracurricular activities at school.

Schools are a means that can be used to preserve local culture. In general, school is a place of education to provide knowledge and character formation to children. In karawitan culture, there are also various kinds of characters that show the authenticity of the Javanese tribe, starting from the politeness and softness of typical Javanese speech. Even today there are many terms "Wong Jowo ilang Jawane" which means: Javanese people who have lost their Javanese identity. In this context, schools can be used as a milestone for the continued regeneration of musical arts. If this art is taught in school, it will be easier for children to learn it. In the end, musical art will continue to develop, or may even continue to be sustainable for several generations to come.

Meanwhile, in an economic context, arts and culture activities can be an arena or medium for providing employment opportunities, such as through the "karawitan" training group in this village and of course the government will intervene, including creating facilities that support the holding of arts and culture activities or cultural festivals that will be held. absorbing many cultural arts performers as well as local art lovers who are not only local residents, but also people from outside the region, even overseas. This policy can be supported by the use of technology in promotional actions, namely the introduction of cultures that have tourism potential. Apart from that, musical culture can be developed through the economy, where people can become aware of the importance of preserving the musical culture. This is related to community participation in preserving this culture.

## CONCLUSION

Culture is an important aspect of a country whose existence is used as a characteristic that can differentiate between one country and another. Including the Indonesian State itself, the identity and characteristics of Indonesia which are only shown through culture, should be the basis for the intention to maintain the continuity of cultural values in life. The existence of culture must be responded to with appropriate steps as an effort to minimize and anticipate problems that threaten culture. Not only the government, its implementation certainly requires the role of various parties considering that culture here concerns shared fundamental interests and not just the interests of a group. Apart from that, with the existence of this local culture, if it is followed with the right attitude, it will also directly have the potential to cause problems for living together..

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anggoro, Bayu. 2018. *Wayang dan seni pertunjukan: Kajian Sejarah Dan Perkembangan Seni Wayang di Tanah Jawa Sebagai Seni Pertunjukan dan Dakwah*. Jurnal sejarah peradaban islam vol 2 no 2 tahun 2018.
- Praharani, Ruli. 2007. *Wayang Kulit sebagai sarana penyebaran agama islam di Demak pada abad ke XV*. Yogyakarta. Universitas Sananta Dharma.
- Prastiwi, M I dan Wardhana, I J K. 2024. *Devlopment of Inclusion Tthought Minority- Conssius Madura Tourism rreligion Area*. Jurnal of Contemporary Sociology issues. Vol 4 2024. 68-83.
- Rosa, Dien Videa. 2017. *Representasi kelas sosial dalam ruang teks Jalanan*. Layar: Jurnal ilmiah seni media rekam vol 4 no 2 tahun 2017.
- Ritzer, George. 2014. *Teori Sosiologi: dari Sosiologi Klasik sampai Perkembangan Terakhir Postmodern*. Yogyakarta. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Yanto, Nuril Fahbi dan Baratha, Lukman Wijaya. 2019. *Pembentukan Subjektifitas Buruh di dalam Pabrik: Etnografi Buruh Perempuan di Jember*.

Jurnal E SOSPOL vol 6 Edisi Januari  
2019.

Finaka, Andrean W et al 2023. Sebaran Jumlah  
Suku di Indonesia. Diakses pada 22 Mei  
2024 dari

[https://indonesiabaik.id/infografis/sebaran-  
jumlah-suku-di-indonesia](https://indonesiabaik.id/infografis/sebaran-jumlah-suku-di-indonesia)

Hadi, Samsul, et al, 2024. (BPS) Kabupaten  
Jember Analisis Tingkat Kemiskinan  
Tahun 2023 di Badan Pusat Statistik.  
Jurnal Masyarakat Sosial Indonesia.  
Vol 2 No 1, Februari hal 32-39.  
Diakses pada tanggal 22 Mei 2024 dari  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publicati  
on/378659896 Analisis Tingkat Ke  
miskinan Tahun 2023 Di Badan Pu  
sat Statistik BPS Kabupaten Jember](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378659896_Analisis_Tingkat_Kemiskinan_Tahun_2023_Di_Badan_Pusat_Statistik_BPS_Kabupaten_Jember)