

**RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION OF *SENI DODOD*
TAKING PLACE AT *MEKAR WANGI VILLAGE*
SOUTH *BANTEN***

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ABSTRACT

Religious transformation of *Seni Dodod* taking place at Mekar Wangi Village, Saketi District, Pandeglang Regency, South Banten, Banten Province enriches the analysis of the community cultural pattern based on the art characteristics born and developing in the community. In relation to that, this study describes the cultural phenomenon of religious transformation as the ideological basis of the pre-modern, modern and postmodern communities. Multidisciplinary qualitative method was employed in this study and the data needed were collected by in-depth interview, participatory observation and documentation techniques. The findings show that the *Seni Dodod* has the belief or the religion adhered to by the people living at Mekar Wangi Village as its religious background. Such a belief affects the relation pattern between the individuals and their community, nature and God. This is used as the reference in what is done in the agricultural process, making *Seni Dodod* a cult and realization. When the cultural transformation process was taking place, it was found that there was a point of contact between traditional arts and modern arts outside the domain of *Seni Dodod*. Nowadays new compositions of *Seni Dodod* have been created functioning as instruments of wedding and *khitanan* rituals (*khitanan* = a feast celebrating a circumcision). The process of acculturation was formally performed at school by using its compositions as the learning material of art and culture. Its application in its original form and composition was informally inherited through *Seni Dodod* studios, the youth and villagers. Its religious meaningfulness was reflected from the country life performed by the people living at Mekar Wangi village. Such meaningfulness was based on that given by the leaders of *pondok pesantren* (Muslim boarding school) and on the explanation clarifying, showing, separating and elaborating seven clauses of Al-Qur'an. The meaningfulness provided resulted in intactness of movements, the costumes worn, the poem of *lutung kasarung*, the magic formula or the prayers used. In addition, it was also referred to as Muslim art and culture. It seems that nowadays a shift has taken place as far as its function is concerned. It used to be employed as a means of agricultural ritual but now it has been an important part of wedding and *khitanan* rituals; however, it has not been employed as a secular art.

Keywords: Transformation, religious, *Seni Dodod*

Background

The realization of the relationship between tradition and religion determined by the intensity of the concepts of art works and religiosity has caused the religious transformation of *Seni Dodod* to take place. Such concepts refer to those included in the teaching of *Sunda Wiwitan*. It is a teaching which was adhered to by the pre-modern community. Based on the data obtained from the previous researches, it has been found out that in the last fifteen years cultural patterns of activities or daily behavior of the local community have changed and so have the art activities. In relation to that it is interesting to analyze deeply the discourse of religious transformation contained in a ritual art, based on the discourse of the shift and changes taking place in the pre-modern, modern and postmodern communities.

This study discusses the religious transformational process, inheritance as an attempt made to preserve culture, and the religious meaningfulness of Moslem art taking place on *Seni Dodod* performed at Mekar Wangi village, South Banten. This study aims at describing to what extent the religious transformation on *Seni Dodod* has taken place in the pre-modern, modern and postmodern communities. The significance of this study is not only to give ideas and views on the transformation taking place on *Seni Dodod*, in which religiosity becomes the binding characteristic, but more importantly to give beneficial contribution to the development of science, especially cultural studies and arts.

Discussion

The theory of semiotics, the theory of hermeneutics, the theory of deconstruction, the theory of religious transformation and the theory of power and knowledge are employed for analysis. The research findings show that a shift and change has taken place as far as the religiosity and ideology of *Seni Dodod* is concerned, from the ideology referring to *Dewi Padi (Dewi Sri/Nyi Sri Pohaci)* to the ideology based on the Moslem values. The development of era, which contributes to the strong thinking pattern of the community, as a Moslem one, has been responsible for such a shift and change.

The cultural pattern adhered to by the community members living in South Banten is generally the same as that adhered to by the Sundanese community, that is, the cultural pattern categorized as *pattern three (pola tiga)*. The system of their belief is monistic-naturalistic in nature. What is meant is that human beings are only familiar with the God's manifestation in the

form of the nature. The mythologies expressed by the poem of *Lutung Kasarung* in *Seni Dodod* are considered sacred by the community members living at Mekar Wangi village. They talk about the existence of the three worlds such as the Upper World, the Middle World and the Lower World. The upper world refers to the sky world, the middle world refers to the human world and the lower world refers to the world under the earth (the sea). The three worlds are real to human beings and are known as *tilu sapamula* (there have been three).

What is categorized as *pattern three* above is used as the model or the cultural pattern of the community members living at Mekar Wangi village known as *Tripartit makrokosmos*. Such a model or cultural pattern is also applied by the farming communities all over Indonesia. The upper world is the sky which is opposed to the earth; the wet sky (the rain, the female) and the dry earth (the hilly land, the male). The middle world refers to the human beings with their various farming activities producing various plants which can be used as food resources for maintaining life in the world. The middle world (known as *Buana Panca Tengah*) refers to the world where the female and the male get united, that is, where the sky and the earth meet (where being wet and being dry meet; where the rain and the land meet). This means that the two transcendent worlds (the sky and the earth) get united in the immanent world of human beings. The middle world is paradoxical with the male as well as the female. The lower world refers to the earth (including the sky), that is, the nature where human beings are buried when they are dead.

The rituals conducted when the people living at Mekar Wangi village, South Banten, plant and harvest their rice reflect the cultural *pattern three*, that is, the early, middle and last journeys of human life in the world. The early stage refers to the existence of the early life of human beings in the earth, that is, the birth process. The central stage refers to the existence of human beings when they undertake their lives, and the last stage refers to the existence of human beings when they die. The ideology on which how the rituals are performed when the people living at Mekar Wangin village plant and harvest their rice is based is described as follows.

The process of cultural contact undergone by *Seni Dodod* in this modern era has led to ideological contact which has basically responsible for the process of change in form and function of *Seni Dodod* nowadays. The process of contact has also resulted from the sustainable interactive process between its performers and their socio cultural environment. It has been observed that an intense shift has taken place in regard to its religious content. The extent to

which the contact has taken place has not been deeply reflected but has also been made easier by the extent to which the adjustment of cultural pattern has taken place between the supporting individuals of *Seni Dodod* and the individual cultural pattern beyond their area collectively agreed. However, this means that every detail of the cultural contact taking place can be observed in order to observe the process of transformation taking place. This does not mean that all aspects of the contact can be understood through the other forms of *Seni Dodod*. By observing several aspects of change taking place and the data obtained at the location where the research was conducted, the researcher predicts that the contact had taken place for 15 (fifteen) years, that is, from 1994 to 2009.

In this modern era, several groups of the community members are still identified to perform *rasulan* ritual. The activities performed at *tetanen* and *ngalaksa* rituals are also performed when the *rasulan* ritual is performed. However, the length of time during which it is performed nowadays is relatively shorter than when it was performed in the past. Changes have also taken place in regard to role, function, form and structure of how it is presented and in regard to the meaning it contains.

The shift in thinking pattern of the modern community has led to the creation of the new compositions of *Seni Dodod* which can be observed from the aspects of movement, the make-up, the costumes worn, the form of the floor pattern, and even the property and the instruments used in the intactness of its presentation. However, the sequence of the music accompanying it, that is, *angklung Dodod*, tends to follow its original pattern. Several works which are related to *Seni Dodod* are (1) *Garapan (Production) Kohkol Dodod* (2007), which is in the form of a musical attraction played by 20 adult musicians; (2) *Collaboration of original Dodod and children* (2008), which is in the form of performing attraction and music played by 15 supporting adults, and 12 supporting children; (3) *SKDA (Senam Kesenian Dodod Angklung, 2009)*, which is a development of performing movements of *Seni Dodod* which is collaborated with health gymnastic movement. It is played by primary school and junior high school students.

Nowadays the people living in South Banten are known to faithfully adhere to Islam. They will do their best to always reform their environment in such a way that they are in line with the *taudid* (oneness of God) teaching implanted in the religion they adhere to. Therefore, the meaningfulness of the process of religious transformation of *Seni Dodod* has been made to go

to such a proper direction that it is in harmony with the principles, values and conceptions of Islam.

From the results of the research, it has been found out that the meaningfulness based on the principles, values and conceptions of Islam can be observed in regard to (1) the intactness of movements; (2) the costumes worn; (3) the meaning of the poem *Lutung Kasarung*; (4) the meaning of the magic formula or prayers; and (5) the fact that *Seni Dodod* is considered Moslem culture and art. The meaningfulness of the religious content of *Seni Dodod* as the art and culture Islam, emphasizes, as far as its vision and mission to strengthen strong personality in maintaining Moslem teachings is concerned, that its existence needs to be appreciated and maintained. In addition, if the religious transformation of *Seni Dodod* is employed as the means of *berdakwah* (missionizing) and maintaining good pre-modern culture, it will certainly be useful to both individuals and groups of the people living at Mekar Wangi village. The creativity of the people living at Mekar Sari village in repackaging *Seni Dodod* nowadays is appreciated in accordance with the degree of its values and usefulness. As far as the context of Moslem art and culture is concerned, whatever the form and name of a creation is cannot be considered to contrast with the religious teachings.

Conclusions

Seni Dodod is the only traditional cultural heritage which has been in existence and developing up to now at Mekar Wangi village, Saketi District, Pandeglang Regency, South Banten, Banten Province. It was predicted that it was born in the sixteenth century, when it served as a means of agricultural ritual. It is performed in three ritual stages such as *tetanen*, *ngalaksa* and *rasulan*. The *tetanen* ritual is a ritual performed by the people living in the country when they plant rice. The *ngalaksa* ritual is a ritual performed when the rice bears young fruit. The *rasulan* ritual is performed when the rice is harvested and when it is stored in what is called *leuit* (the rice barn).

In this modern era ideological and religious shift has taken place as far as *Seni Dodod* is concerned, from being performed for the Goddess of Rice to being performed when wedding and *khitanan* (feast celebrating a circumcision) are conducted. Such a cult refers to a belief influenced by the culture of the ancestors of the people living at Mekar Wangi village, which is known as *Sunda Wiwitan* tradition. The ideology on which *Seni Dodod* is based nowadays has

been much influenced by the belief in Islam. All the behaviors performed in it are based on the consideration whether what is done is in accordance with the religion they adhere to, that is, Islam or not.

The process of cultivation, as an attempt made to inherit *Seni Dodod*, has formally and informally taken place. The informal inheritance has been undertaken from generation to generation, based on family relationship or genetic factors. In other words, the dancers and musicians are genetically related. The informal inheritance has been carried out by participating in performance and imitating. The formal inheritance has been done through formal schools such as primary school, junior high school and senior high school. It has been used as the learning material of art and culture which is expressed as one of the terms that culture is recognized as something which should be systematically inherited and expressed. This means that the ideas, behaviors and instruments created by the ancestors or predecessors of the people living at Mekar Wangi village should be systematically inherited to the next generation.

The religious meaningfulness of *Seni Dodod* in the pre-modern community was based on the depth of the meaning contained in its performance and was always related to Islam. The meaningfulness has been focused on the intactness of its movements, the costumes worn, the meaning of the poem *Lutung Kasarung*, the meaning of the magic formula or prayers and its existence as the culture and art of Moslem. Nowadays its new compositions will be in existence for a period of time as an art which strongly contains the religious teachings and ideology adhered to by the people living at Mekar Wangi village, South Banten.