

COMODIFICATION OF *MAENGGKET* DANCE IN MINAHASA, NORTH SULAWESI IN THE GLOBALIZATION ERA

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ABSTRACT

This research explores Comodification of *Maengket* Dance in Minahasa (*Tari Maengket* hereon abbreviated to TM) in the globalization era. It reveals the empirical field reality related to comodification. The influence of global culture in Minahasa has been responsible for the cultural practices of capitalism such as the emergence of cultural industry which refers to the comodification of cultural forms as amusement industry, mass culture, popular culture and culture of consumerism. The TM has been comodified, commercialized, touristified in such a way that new meanings and forms are created.

This research is focused on (1) form of the comodification of the TM in Minahasa, North Sulawesi in the globalization area; (2) the factors which have been responsible for the comodification of the TM Minahasa, North Sulawesi, and (3) the effects and meanings of the comodification of the TM in Minahasa, North Sulawesi in the globalization era.

The related data were collected through interview, observation and documentation and they were descriptively, qualitatively and interpretatively analyzed. The data sources are some key informants and some other ordinary ones. The purposive method was employed to interview them. The theories used are the theory of comodification (Fairlough), the theory of popular culture (Williams and Agger), the theory of deconstruction (Derrida) and the theory of representation (Hall).

The research findings show that comodification has tended to the shift of the TM values following the pattern of arts organized by the ruler and entrepreneur, the pattern of distribution carried out through the inter group or institutional power relationship, and that the form of comodification has taken place from the process of production to the community of consumers which have been conditioned. It has also been found out that the factors of the supporting community, the creativity of the artists, Christianization, industry of culture, mass media and tourism have been responsible for the comodification of the TM in Minahasa. The effects of the comodification are that the orientation of the magic-religious values has shifted to Christianity, the creativity of the artists has been shackled, and the minahasanese political identity has become crystallized. And then, the meanings of the comodification are competitiveness, contestation, image, well-being, and representation of minahasanese identity.

Key words: commodification, Maengket Dance, Minahasa, North Sulawesi, globalization

Background

The influence of global culture in Minahasa has been responsible for the cultural practices of capitalism such as the appearance of cultural industry which refers to the commodification of cultural forms as amusement industry, mass culture, popular culture and culture of consumerism. The fact that TM has been commodified, commercialized, touristified is reflected by the current form of the *Maengket* Dance (*Tari Maengket* hereon abbreviated to TM).

The TM in Minahasa used to be performed as a sacred dance and to have highly religious meanings. It used to be performed at particular events such as the event when it was time to harvest rice. The expressions sung were directed to *Empung Walian Wangko*, God, the Almighty. Before the twentieth century, the TM did not undergo any change with regard to its forms of representation, its context and setting. The TM was performed as a ceremonial ritual activity in various aspects of traditional life of Minahasa community. Now it has been performed for three aspects of tradition such as harvesting rice (*maowey kamberu*), dedicating new houses (*rumamba*) and youth social intercourse (*lalayaan*).

The interaction of interests in the process of the commodification of the TM involves the production agent, the distribution agents, and the consumers. The process of commodification acted by the entrepreneur and the government in producing and distributing the TM including the culture of its supporting community is interesting and relevant to explore in the perspective of cultural studies.

Discussion

The form of commodification of the TM in Minahasa in the globalization era has followed the patterns of arts organized by the entrepreneur (the capital owner) and the ruler (the government). They have produced the TM and have distributed it as an attempt to fulfill the demand of the market and consumers.

The commodification of the TM has taken place from the process of production and distribution. It has taken place in various forms of consumption. As a whole it has been commodified and its elements have been commodified as well. As far as its current form is concerned, the dancers performing it, its movements and formation, the accompanying

instruments , the uniform and make up worn by the dancers, the property, the place where it is performed have all been commodified in such a way that it may satisfy the consumers (the market).

The factors which have been responsible for the commodification of the TM are its supporting community, the artists with their creativity and innovation, and the construction of the minahasanese identity as a response to the pressure of the global culture. Apart from those factors, the factors such as Christianization, the mixture of the global culture and local culture, the cultural industry, the mass media as the popular cultural agent, and tourism have also led to the commodification.

The effects of the commodification of the TM in Minahasa in the globalization era are that the orientation of the religious magical values has shifted resulting from the conversion from the traditional religion into Christianity, the creativity of the artists which has been shackled as a consequence of the structural domination, the TM products which have been claimed by several organizations known as the commodifying groups as there is a power relationship between them and the ruler (the government). In addition, the commodifying groups also have capital of power and knowledge. There are still some other factors which have also led to the shift of orientation of the religious magical values. Those factors are the artists and the cultural observers who belong to the same politics of arts get united, the socio capital which binds the Minahasa leaders coming from different background of influences, and the commodifying groups have power to create the community of consumers (accessibility of capital). Structural domination, cultural claim, and the conditioned eliticism of groups of arts have made the creativity of the artists and cultural observers who belong to the same politics of arts and those who are marginalized, being not included in the those elite groups, shackled. Then, the next effect is that there is a political crystallization of identity on the identity of the ethnic group of Minahasa and on the identity which unifies the other plural and multicultural ethnic group communities in Minahasa.

The meanings of the TM in Minahasa in the globalization era are competitiveness, contestation, imagology, and well-being which refer to the economic benefit and exchange values in the forms of status, image and group identity. Then the meaning of

the representation of Minahasaness identity is expressed in many ways and is reflected by the dancing uniform, the dancing formation, the sounds and the lyrics.

Novelties

The novelties of this study are as follows.

1. The finding which enriches the concept and theory of comodification is called the layer or stacked comodification.
2. The finding that there have been claims made by several studios of arts such as Association of *Waranei Wulan Minahasa* (*Persatuan Waranei Wulan Minahasa* hereon abbreviated to *IWMM*), Association of *Maengket Massamper* (*Persatuan Maengket Massamper* hereon abbreviated to *PMM*) of North Sulawesi, Institute of Arts and Culture of North Sulawesi, and the teams of arts of the TM from all the regencies in Minahasa for the final products of the TM.
3. The finding in the form of the concept and redefinition of the TM. Nowadays, the TM is referred to as a popular dance which can be performed in various places, any time and in various programs and activities. The dancers may wear colorful uniforms and may be adjusted to the context of the programs in which it is performed. It may be performed by at least eight pairs of dancers, or at most twelve pairs of both female and male dancers, or may also be colossally performed by hundreds and thousands of dancers. The leader of the dance is called *kapel* and the musical instruments used are *tambur*, iron *kolintang* (*momongan*), *gong*, and *tetengkoren* (*tuked*). The TM has not been performed in three stages any longer but now it has been performed as a formation of three themes such as the themes of *Maengket maowey kamberu*, *marimba*, and *lalayaan*. These three themes may be performed as a package or separately, depending on the context and the objective of the program for which it is performed.

Conclusions

The *first conclusion* is that the comodification of the TM takes place when it is produced, distributed and consumed. The process of comodification takes place in the

form of a package performed to welcome guests ceremonially, to dedicate a program activity and to celebrate the anniversary of any regency, any town and the province. It is also performed for evening of cultural entertainment, any festivals, any bestowal, any parade and any cultural carnival, any personal activity such as wedding parties and tourist attractions performed for domestic and foreign visitors.

The production and distribution of the form of the comodification of the TM in Minahasa has been done by the Association of *Maengket Massamper* (*Perhimpunan Maengket Massamper*, hereon abbreviated to PMM) of North Sulawesi, the Association of *Waraney Wulan Minahasa* (*Ikatan Waraney Wulan Minahasa* , hereon abbreviated to IWWM), the Institute of Arts and Culture of North Sulawesi. The dancers, the choreographers, the movements and the formation, the lyrics, the accompanying instruments, the uniform, the property, and the place where the TM is performed to satisfy the consumers (the market) have also been comodified. The pattern of distribution has been made through the power relationship among the institutions, the studios of arts and the community of the consumers of the TM which is conditioned.

The *second conclusion* is that the supporting community, the creativity of the artists, the construction of *minahasanese* identity, Christianization, the mixture of the global culture and the local culture, the rapid development of cultural industry, the mass media of industry as the agent of popular culture, and tourism industry have been responsible for the comodification of the TM in Minahasa.

The *third conclusion* is that the effect and meaning of the comodification of the TM in Minahasa in the era globalization are that the magical religious values have shifted resulting from the conversion of *foso* traditional religion into Christianity, the shackled creativity of the artists, crystallization of the politics of identity and the meaning of well-being. As far as the meanings of the comodification of TM is concerned, the meaning of competition, the meaning of contestation, the meaning of image, the meaning of image and the meaning of the minahasanese identity representation are reflected through the products of dancing uniform, the formation of the dance, the sounds and the lyrics.