

DISCOVERING THE LOCAL WISDOM FOR TRADITIONAL WEAVING FABRIC AND PANJI SHADOW PUPPETS AT *DUSUN* GUNUNG MALANG

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research project was to discover the values of traditional weaving fabric and Panji shadow puppets to sustain the local culture and livelihood of the people living in Dusun Gunung Malang, Taman Ayu Village, West Lombok, Indonesia. This study used qualitative methods, namely in-depth interviews and field observations to get a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being studied. The results showed that both the weaving fabrics and Panji shadow puppets were inherently teeming with deep-rooted local wisdom and could be used as a potential source of livelihood for the people of Dusun Gunung Malang through tourism development and local business ventures.

Keywords: Weaving Fabric, Wayang Panji, Local Wisdom

BACKGROUND

Dusun Gunung Malang is a small hamlet in *Taman Ayu* Village, West Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. For many generations, this small village has passed down the creation of high-quality woven fabrics which is renowned in West Nusa Tenggara, particularly in the West Lombok Regency. In addition, there are also *Panji* shadow puppets (*wayang kulit*) craftsmen in the village which are considered as a hereditary profession and their products have been purchased by buyers throughout the country and even from abroad.

From the in-depth observation the researchers did in 2018, it is discovered that weaving fabric products and *Panji* puppets creation and performance in *Dusun* Gunung Malang have a deep-rooted local wisdom. For the weaving fabric, every motif has a distinct meaning and local wisdom. Likewise, the specific times that the fabrics are used/worn by the locals also contain certain cultural meanings. This has become part of their everyday norm and served as a unifier among the hamlet residents which is interesting to be further analyzed. Likewise, the *Panji* shadow puppets has become somewhat of a pride of the residents of *Dusun* Gunung Malang because it is the only one in existence in the entire West Lombok Regency. Furthermore, it even has not just local but also foreign customers.

This *Panji* shadow puppets is also bursting with local values that need to be further explored to enrich Indonesia's cultural treasures and also to be developed into local cultural products that can ultimately be commercialized.

Therefore, the purpose of this research project is to discover the values of traditional weaving fabric and *Panji* shadow puppets to sustain the local culture and livelihood of the people living in *Dusun* Gunung Malang, *Taman Ayu* Village, West Lombok, Indonesia by empowering young entrepreneurs. The objectives of this research project are two-fold: firstly, the researchers are interested in building up awareness of the local cultural values to the indigenous young generation, and to break the poverty chain among the indigenous society by empowering indigenous young generation with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, especially during the natural disaster recovery phase in Lombok. This research project will employ a qualitative research method through in-depth interview using Critical Discourse Analysis to discover the new values of the traditional weaving fabric and *Panji* shadow puppets as their core cultural commodities.

This research project is crucial for their cultural sustainability and to provide indigenous people with sustainable income generated through their own local culture and tradition, especially in the aftermath of the 2018 earthquake in Lombok. Consequently, entrepreneurship capacity building and empowerment for the young generation within the age of 13 to 18 years old are needed in order to ensure that they are well aware about the underlying values of their traditional weaving fabric. Ultimately, by then, they could sustain their local culture going forward and promote as well as distribute the traditional weaving fabrics and *Panji* shadow puppets to the global market through e-commerce and other potential outlets in the future.

This research project focuses on discovering the principle values of traditional weaving fabric by formulating the local cultural concepts in order to support the livelihood of the people in *Dusun* Gunung Malang.

PROBLEM FORMULATION

The technological convergence that is happening today with the ease of accessing various kinds of information through the internet and social media causes an erosion of values and culture found in society, especially for the younger generation, and in turn changes the paradigm regarding the way the researchers think about culture. This can be seen from the entertainment programs that people consume, both through traditional and digital media, which offer many new perspectives on culture and its associated values, and are prone to erode the original culture and the local wisdom contained in it.

This was also experienced by residents in *Dusun* Gunung Malang, *Taman Ayu* Village, West Lombok, who felt the loss of various local wisdoms that had existed for years and become a deep-seated tradition for generations. As a result, the younger generation in

the *dusun* has a tendency to move to the city to earn a better income and livelihood due to the lack of jobs in their hometown. One of the reasons for this is because there is no proper management system and fostering of the results of cultural creativity by the community in *Dusun* Gunung Malang. As a result, they can only wait for orders to come from within their own community, which in turn makes their income somewhat limited and uncertain. Consequently, working in the field of cultural tourism is not the first choice for the local people. If there is no intervention in the fostering and management of local culture involving various stakeholders, both from the community and the government, the local wisdom and rich culture that form the glue of social life in *Dusun* Gunung Malang will be at risk of disappearing.

RESEARCH QUESTION

To frame the theme of the study, then the research question is required to map the problems. The research questions include:

- What is the essence of local wisdom in woven fabrics in Mount Malang?
- What is the essence of local wisdom in *Panji* shadow puppets in Mount Malang?

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Local Wisdom in Tourism

Basically, local wisdom is a joint effort in a community to maintain resources that are used continuously to support the community and maintain environmental balance [1]. Local wisdom is a positive attitude of the community when interacting with nature and the environment around them which comes from the values they have about rituals in religion, messages from elders or local culture, which are formed naturally in a community so that people can adapt to the surrounding environment. Local wisdom can also be interpreted as a human effort by using their ability to think (cognitive power) to run and behave towards an object or condition that occurs in a particular place [2]. Local wisdom can also be defined as a variety of local ideas that are wise, full of noble values, well embedded, become a tradition, and run by the local community naturally [3], [4].

In general, local wisdom occurs because of an internal process in a community that is maintained for generations in a relatively long time and is a result of interaction between humans and the surrounding environment. In other words, local wisdom can be interpreted as a communal social system, rather than individual [5]. In his research, Sartini [4] concluded that local wisdom is a combination of noble religious values with various values found in society, from those related to life that is sacred to the profane (not holy). Although local, but the values contained in local wisdom are universal. In addition, Adimihardja [6] and Sartini [4] explained that local culture has a direct or indirect influence on the formation of local wisdom.

According to Soedigdo, Harysakti, and Usop [3], there are two main elements of local wisdom. First is the human aspect and mindset, and second is the local natural and climatic conditions. Local wisdom also consists of tangible aspects such as writing and buildings, and is intangible, such as the advice of elders and traditional traditional songs that contain hereditary teachings.

Cultural Products

The development of culture-based products was explained by Smith [7], who emphasized the importance of this in meeting the potential demand in the tourism market that is dynamic and supports the sustainability of the industry in the future. There are at least five elements of culture-based products, among others: physical buildings, services, hospitality, freedom of choice, and involvement. Culture is interpreted as the embodiment of the life of a person or group in treating their natural environment. Therefore, there are demands to constantly develop abilities, creativity, and various new discoveries [4].

Ideally, to be able to ensure sustainability in the future, the development of culture-based products is centered on the interdependent relations between the social and economic dimensions of a culture. In addition, the use of new media such as the internet and social media in developing social and cultural communication initiatives also enables a variety of networks to open up tourism markets that were previously unimaginable. The right marketing mix to carry out established marketing strategies is also important to ensure that culture-based products are competitive and have the right positioning in the eyes of tourists as a target market [8]

In developing culture-based products, the community as the main agent in the process of change must also always be involved so that they can actively participate and not only be seen as limited to the subject of development. The community is also the party that best understands the potential of the region that can be developed into an integrated cultural product [9], [10]. On the other hand, tourists as the main clients of the product must also be given the opportunity to be involved in the development of culture-based products. In the context of tourism, involvement is not limited to being understood as physical participation, but also active participation in order to fully enjoy tourism services [7].

According to Benur and Bramwell [11], cultural products can be concentrated or diverse. First, concentrated cultural products have the implication that the development of cultural products is only focused on one or a few products. This can be advantageous because the product offered can have a unique identity and reputation that attracts many tourists, even though there is a risk of problems with the product due to limited choices. Second, cultural products can also be diverse, which can increase the attractiveness of tourist destinations, increase the likelihood of being able to provide services that can be

tailored to the needs of customers (customized), and ensure greater flexibility in meeting the tastes and demands of tourists who keep changing as with the times.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study uses a qualitative research method by conducting in-depth interviews with informants, as well as field observations to compare and obtain data for analysis. The resource persons the researchers selected for the purpose of this study were Mr. Nur Hidayat, the Head of *Dusun* Gunung Malang who was also a keen observer of the culture and a highly respected figure in *Dusun* Gunung Malang; Mr. Nurhadi, an elder of *Dusun* Gunung Malang and a renowned *Sasak* puppeteer; Ms. Oni, an observer and a weaver of woven fabrics; Mr. Darwisi (aka. Amaq Darwilis), a *Panji* shadow puppet craftsman; and Mr. Ramli, a cultural activist in *Dusun* Gunung Malang who also happened to be the researchers' host during the researchers' observation. The selection of the respondents was based on recommendations from Mr. Nurhadi as the head of *Dusun* Gunung Malang. After the data is collected, the researchers will be able to explain the data by analyzing the findings of the study.

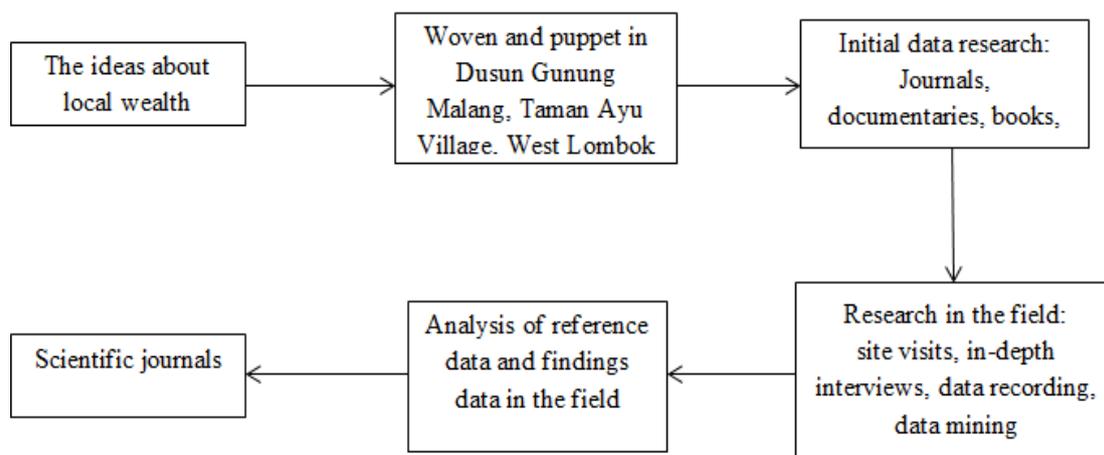


Figure 1. Research Stages

THE PURPOSE OF EXPLORING THE VALUES OF LOCAL WISDOM

An exploratory study is expected to be able to contribute suggestions for the development of the object being studied. This is intended to further enhance the potential of said object to be more beneficial and meaningful. Some of the benefits expected from this research are:

1. Improvement of the economic condition for the local people;
2. Preservation of the endangered local culture to be invigorated and preserved as a learning medium;

3. Revitalization of the arts/local wisdom that is almost lost by recollecting various forms of local culture and values;
4. Re-establishment of identity through local wisdom;
5. The increase of ties and friendship between citizens;
6. As an alternative activity for the young generation in counteracting certain trends that could potentially divide the nation; and
7. As a positive avenue to reduce juvenile delinquency.

DISCUSSION

Dusun Gunung Malang Weaving Fabric

Aside from being a farmer or a handyman, weaving is one of the side jobs available in *Dusun* Gunung Malang to improve the livelihood of the people. Initially, the majority of the 400 families in the *dusun* were weavers, but due to the rapid expansion of the modern machine tools that could produce weaving fabric much faster, this traditional home industry began to decline. To date, there are only around 20-30 weavers who are still active and capable. Not only to the emergence of the machine industry, the weaver community is also facing a crisis of orders. This has an impact on the production system carried out by the weavers, as they do not want to invest a large capital investment if the demand is low. Furthermore, for the majority of the weavers, this weaving fabric creation is only a side income only and is not considered as their main occupation. The weakness of the management system as well as the lack of marketing effort for this precious cultural product are partly to blame for this condition. The management is carried out individually by the weavers themselves and there is not any collaboration among them to manage together in the form of, for instance, cooperatives, which could boost the sales outlook.

The weaving fabrics in *Dusun* Gunung Malang are created from yarn spun from cotton, with a touch of human creativity by knitting the fabric one by one to become a beautiful piece of fabric. Weaving fabric is not just a mere piece of fabric, but one in which prayers and hope are deeply incorporated into the motifs and creation process. In the past, people who reached this level of thinking had typically experienced a time of glory and gold. Understanding the values exposed in the motifs of the woven fabric are a good way to rejuvenate one's awareness regarding the character of the nation through culture.



Figure 2. Bamboo matting similar to the *Ulat Bide* motif

According to Mr. Nurhadi, a *Sasak* puppeteer and an elder from *Dusun* Gunung Malang, in the past, there used to be a particular motif using the *ulat bide* fabric with noble meanings and deep values that looked like a woven bamboo which is often used for homes, similar to the bamboo matting on Figure 2 above. This type of motif is no longer produced by the weavers in this village, because it is very difficult to make, and the demand is virtually non-existent these days. *Ulat bide* fabric and motif were typically used to create shirts which could be donned when attending a special event like wedding ceremony. Unfortunately, this type of motif has become extinct, and the deep values embedded in the fabric can no longer be passed down and appreciated by the next generation. *Ulat Bide* motif is a symbol of a society that is tightly knit and always helps each other in life.

In addition to the typical *Ulat Bide* motif, there are some other motifs which originally comes from and is representative of *Dusun* Gunung Malang. For instance, there is the motif of "*ragi pengantin*" (bridal yeast) weaving fabric that can be seen in Figure 3 below.



Figure 3. "*Ragi pengantin*" weaving fabric motif

The *ragi pengantin* motif can be interpreted as part of the long and winding process of becoming a bridal couple. In the *Sasak* language, "*ragi*" can be roughly translated as "prerequisites". This type of fabric is only used by wedding couples who are preparing for their future lives together so that they are always reminded to support and encourage each other to achieve their shared hopes and aspirations in life. There are also other types

of old motifs that the researchers discovered during the observation in *Dusun* Gunung Malang, such as *ulat bide*, *ragi seganteng*, *bugis*, *ragi ketap*, and *ragi kutik*. Unfortunately, some of these motifs are no longer available for various reasons, most notably due to the lack of attention and urgency for the locals to preserve them. If this matter is not given further consideration, including through data collection, artifacts preservation, and workshops, there is a strong chance that a lot of the weaving fabric motifs which are still available today will be obsolete and extinct in the future.

The process to create the weaving fabric itself is quite intricate. It starts off by inserting the thread in a warp and weft movement. In other words, the woven fabric is created as a result of the crossing between the two intertwined threads which are perpendicular to each other. The threads move in two directions: vertical and horizontal. Threads that are vertical or follow the length of the fabric are called warp threads, whereas the threads that are horizontal or follow the width of the fabric are called weft threads. In practice, the threads are arranged parallel and mounted on a loom, while the weft threads are moving to the right and left and then inserted in between the warp threads and mounted on binoculars in the form of rolls on a pallet. This weaving ability is inherited from the ancestors and has been passed down from generation to generation. There is an old tradition in the *Sasak* Tribe wherein a girl must be able to weave before they get married. This shows that weaving skills are an important requirement to be successful and independent in life.

Weaving fabrics typically have deeply philosophical motifs that serve as an added value to the work of art. The noble values are embedded in a fabric that can function as an "adhesive" in a cultural setting. If the products of such cultural ingenuity along with the values contained therein are managed more optimally through strategic means such as cooperatives, show rooms, coaching sessions by relevant agencies, as well as utilizing advances in contemporary media technology which can reach wider society to raise awareness and improve sense of belonging for the people.

Creating the *Sasak* Shadow Puppets

The existence of *Sasak* shadow puppets at the moment is not getting enough attention from the general public. Although there are still a number of puppets shows, their popularity tends to decline compared to the emergence of alternative media and entertainment sources these days. Worse still, *Sasak* shadow puppets shows are rarely put on stage at parties or holidays. People no longer consider *Sasak* shadow puppets as a source of education and entertainment. Shadow puppets in Lombok have entered a declining period and are feared to disappear if nothing is being done to revive them. This condition is markedly different from the 1950s, when *Sasak* shadow puppets were still a very popular source of entertainment for the people. At that time, because there was not

much choice for the public, the community still came in droves to see the shadow puppets show all night long until early in the morning.

The puppets show is not just merely a traditional show, but beyond that, it is a precious cultural event, in which many pertinent elements of the society like traders, puppets community, the general public, the government, among many others, partake in the show. Because the event involved many stakeholders, the puppets show is no longer standalone in nature but has become an all-encompassing cultural event in which each element of the community intersects and communicates so that it becomes a public space where the people can express themselves.



Figure 4. An unfinished Sasak shadow puppets

The *Sasak* shadow puppets have evolved since the Hindu era and are now being used as a medium for the spread of the Islamic religion by introducing original stories sourced from "*Serat Menak*", an adaptation of the saga of Amir Hamzah from the Persian Kingdom which was translated to the *Kawi Javanese* by Yosodipuro II during the Islamic Kingdom of Mataram era. The story revolves around the journey of the Prophet Muhammad SAW to broadcast Islam in the past. However, since they were not allowed to visualize the Prophet, the main character of the story was the uncle of the Prophet, Amir Hamzah. In the *Sasak* puppet, he was known as the figure of Umar Maya, and Jayengrana or the king of Mecca. This was an intelligent cultural acculturation by the predecessors in presenting the essence of an important religious and cultural message in the form of entertainment. One of the remaining shadow puppets craft villages in Lombok is located in *Dusun Gunung Malang, Taman Ayu Village, West Lombok*.



Figure 5. Mr. Amaq Darwilis with his unfinished *Sasak* shadow puppet and various certificates of appreciation

The only *Sasak* shadow puppets maker in *Dusun* Gunung Malang is Mr. Amaq Darwilis (pictured in Figure 5 above), who is the younger brother of Mr. Nurhadi, the renowned *Sasak* puppeteer in Lombok. Craft works from Mr. Darwilis have even been purchased by collectors from many foreign countries such as Germany, The US, South Korea, and Japan, among others, who came all the way to his house to buy the *Sasak* shadow puppets. Likewise, a lot of local puppeteers in Lombok also ordered puppets from Mr. Darwilis. Thus, the creation of *Sasak* shadow puppets in *Dusun* Gunung Malang has a great potential to be used as a tourism, education, and commercial program. However, Mr. Darwilis explained that he was dealing with certain difficulties when it comes to the preservation and sustainability of *Sasak* shadow puppets in the long run. Most notably is the fact that the demand for the puppets is somewhat unpredictable with a downward trend of late. Unfortunately, there seems to be a lack of support and guidance from relevant government agencies to remedy this situation. As a result, Mr. Darwilis worried that the treasured heritage of *Sasak* shadow puppets could disappear if nothing happened.

The *Sasak* shadow puppets in *Dusun* Gunung Malang are made of cow leather carved in keeping with the desired character. Then after the results are completed, the parts of the puppet are colored using the “*sungging*” technique (coloring in the puppets with technical gradations and semiotic colors that are applied to each character). From the arrangement of puppets on the *kelir* (the screen used to show the puppets on the stage), one can examine and learn more about the good and bad side of the character's behavior. For example, if the shadow puppets’s figure is facing to the right side of the audience, it generally means that the shadow puppets’ characters have a good attitude. Conversely, if the characters are facing to the left, in general they have an ill-advised nature. From the color, one can also learn a lot about certain meaning. For example, if the face of the shadow puppet is reddish, it means that the puppet’s character gets easily mad or excited, while the black color typically means that the character has a calmer persona.



Figure 6. Examples of Sasak shadow puppets

There is a lot of learning experience and values that can be learned from the *Sasak* shadow puppets. Puppets act like a window into a human's life in the real world. Therefore, watching the shadow puppets performance is like a glimpse into the many events in one's lives. This kind of value should be maintained and preserved so that it can act as the nation's unifying media and the foundation of the country's future generation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the great potentials in *Dusun* Gunung Malang that is rich in cultural heritage and customs, the researchers conclude the following points:

1. *Dusun* Gunung Malang has a valuable potential regarding its weaving fabric and *Sasak* shadow puppets production which should be capitalized on as a main source of livelihood for the people and a solid foundation for tourism development (as a Tourist Village);
2. Weaving fabric and *Sasak* shadow puppets in *Dusun* Gunung Malang require certain technical improvements in terms of overall capacity building, product creation and management, business planning, marketing and promotion, and tourism development, among many others, in order to maintain their sustainability in the long run.
3. One of the main challenges faced by the local creative industry in *Dusun* Gunung Malang is the lack of leadership and capability to properly manage and showcase their cultural products in order to improve the lackluster sales at the moment;
4. The government (at local and national level) should pay more attention to the many cultural potentials in *Dusun* Gunung Malang and allocate their resources to turn the area into a promising Tourist Village;
5. There is a need for further fostering and skills development of weavers and shadow puppets art crafters in *Dusun* Gunung Malang
6. The cultural preservation/revitalization program should be supported and maintained.

7. Local arts and culture in *Dusun* Gunung Malang could serve as a diplomatic strategy to attract potential visitors to the village.

The cultural wealth and heritage in Dusun Gunung Malang are remarkable. However, in the absence of a proper direction and leadership, it is feared that the rich cultural heritage in the village would eventually become irrelevant in this modern world and gradually cease to exist. In addition, the lack of product management and marketing have also turned potential customers/visitors away from discovering the great offerings that the *dusun* possesses.

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