



Scientific Speech

Cultural Policy: Some initiatives and trends to manage cultural diversity in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the cultural policy in the state level. The discussion on cultural policy cannot be separated from the idea of the state's interest in maintaining citizens' trust in government programs. The strong role of the state in formulating cultural policies is often seen as the hegemony of the state over society, in the perspective of governmentality, as if the state has the power to determine what its citizens may do.

In Indonesia, cultural policies have also been tried to be implemented from time to time. However, some of our cultural policies tend to look at the macro and general aspects. Local initiatives are indeed seen, but in the end, macro ideas are taken into consideration. Besides being aimed at tourism, the development of local culture is also carried out by referring to certain standards that come from outside the community context. One of the standards that is currently popular is to identify a tradition and then trying to convince the public that the tradition has the right to be included in the category of national intangible cultural heritage.

I try to reformulate cultural policies, in the context of Indonesia, which has diverse traditions, amid this global change, as an effort to maintain the dynamic of local traditions. It can be pursued primarily by protecting traditional (adat) communities and their cultural works. It is not a question of 'extinction' or 'sustainability' but how these traditions can develop in the community, become part of the community, and rediscover its relevance to conditions outside the rapidly growing community.

1. Introduction

I will briefly explain why it is important to talk about cultural policy. As we all know, when we hear the word policy, what immediately comes to mind is a state instrument that contains guidelines that are translated into operational steps to achieve certain goals. Although the policy also appears in the context of the organization outside the state, but I want to invite all of us to focus on the level of state policy.

Meanwhile, when we talk about culture (*budaya* or *kebudayaan*), anthropologists always hint at its existence at the community level. They view culture as a set of values that underlie all thoughts and behavior of community members. It is at the community level that individuals as cultural supporters or cultural bearers operate.

I underline this contrast of 'policy at the state level' and 'culture at the community level' when discussing cultural policy. This concept is like an oxymoron. Anthropologists assume that culture is at the community level and only members at the community level have the right to design, direct, and become active actors in social life. It is not surprising that in this view, cultural expressions vary greatly from one community to another. At this point, we feel the next contrast; policies tend to provide a general, macro frame, so that their implementation tends to be uniform and controlled.

The discussion on cultural policy cannot be separated from the idea of the state's interest in maintaining citizens' trust in government programs. The role of the state according to Bell & Oakley (2014:126) is to:

1. control, censor and prohibit certain forms of cultural expression;
2. provide protection for national culture; and
3. promote national culture;

Bennett (2001) argues that in discussing cultural governance, it is necessary to emphasize the awareness of differences in social and cultural aspects. This distinction is important in understanding the history of cultural formation so that we can see its implications in the realm of action. According to Bereson (2003), cultural policies tend to be political; contemporary art-cultural opera projects in a number of countries in Europe are actually a form of defeating 'small countries' (in this case local-traditional communities) to accommodate the acceptance and adaptation of dominant cultural forms. On the other hand, Meinhof and Triandafyllidou (2006) assert that the first step before discussing cultural policy at the state level is to first explain what is being aimed at, then put forward the issue of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. The most popular coverage of cultural policies is usually associated with the development of the arts, museums, cultural industries, and tendencies towards authoritarianism or command culture (Miller & Yudice 2002; Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005).

The strong role of the state in formulating cultural policies is often seen as the

hegemony of the state over society, in the perspective of governmentality, as if the state has the power to determine what its citizens may do (Mulcahy 2006). Now the issue seems to be shifting; cultural policy is considered to have a positive connotation in state-society relations as long as it prioritizes democracy and community participation (Hadley & Belfiore (2018; Bonet Négrier 2018).

2. The Role of State in Indonesia

In the context of Indonesia, with its diverse ethnic cultural backgrounds, traditions, values, and views on life, I view the role of the state as important. However, in contrast to the scope of the role of the state as described by Bell & Oakley (2014) above, I emphasize the importance of the state in ensuring the freedom of every community to develop and express culture in accordance with its context in the corridors of social life that has become a social consensus.

The classic work of Daniel Lerner (1958) on modernization in developing countries shows how traditional communities are encouraged to become modern in the name of state development programs indicated by prosperity and welfare of the people. That is when various kinds of communities in the form of ethnic groups, tribes, and traditional social units were transformed into modern organizations. In Indonesia, we know how *nagari*, *huta*, *banua*, *kampung*, etc., are rearranged by law to become *desa*.

Modernization also brings changes in our attitudes and perspectives, including about ourselves. When we are modernizing ourselves, we become awkward with our traditions. Orientation to cultural standards from outside, namely science and a modern perspective that is western in nature makes some of us ashamed of traditions that are given the impression of being left behind, not following the times, and ancient. In short, we change the format into a new human: a modern man.

This perspective, which is very developmental, has received a lot of criticism. Critics point out how certain communities maintain their traditions, survive the major transformations that are now global. They adapt, assimilate ideas from outside to become part of the local culture, while at the same time dynamically maintaining the old principles commonly called *adat* (custom).

However, how many communities can survive? I believe that modernization which appears in the form of development is also closely affiliated with capitalism and industrial principles. So, we see that it is not only the culture of the traditional people who have changed but also the areas around them. The forests where indigenous groups live, coastal areas, and seas are all divided into industrial extraction concession areas to finance development.

Traditional communities based on *adat* are losing the natural resources that are the inspiration for all cultural knowledge and social behavior. They were uprooted from the natural context around them. Even their way of life must be adjusted. Hunting and farming are placed in an ancient and detrimental image so they must be adapted

to a more advance farming modes such as settled agriculture with a village as the social unit. I would like to point out that agriculture, for example, from an anthropological perspective is not only an economic activity, but also a part of traditional rituals dealing with religious systems (Van Wieren 2018; Tanko 2020). Cultivation is part of religious expression; by changing it, we are not only changing the economic orientation but also religion or believe system: a fundamental cultural change.

Our side is with all indigenous communities who are struggling to defend their socio-cultural rights. Every indigenous group is a struggling group: struggling to face the domination of the state, industry, capitalism, and various external forces that make cultural contestations seem not in favor of traditional groups.

3. A Comparative Study in Taiwan

I was fortunate to be able to do a comparative study in Taiwan, a country that has been considered like the People's Republic of China (PRC) in terms of culture. In fact, politically, the Republic of China (ROC) or Taiwan is in a position opposite to the PRC. Taiwan is considered a mere province of it. Until now, its independence continues to be questioned in the international diplomacy arena (Lawrence 2021).

Although it was designed as a democratic republic, the atmosphere of freedom was actually only felt by the people of Taiwan in 1987. The change of regime to become more open and democratic brought many implications. On cultural issues, I notice that the government has an interest in culturally distinguishing Taiwan and China. The choice taken is to identify themselves as a nation of Austronesian ancestors. The population whose de facto majority are immigrants from mainland China, namely the Han People, are encouraged to trace their indigenous roots to indigenous groups with an Austronesian pattern.

The government sponsored the movement to find Austronesian roots. The Council of Indigenous People was formed and in a short time, several groups were identified as being part of an indigenous group that was different from the Han People. Through the council, the state distributes assistance and facilitation for citizens who are members of indigenous peoples.

Indigenous communities are encouraged to reinvent forgotten folk dances and songs, use long-abandoned local indigenous languages, design old-style houses, and various traditional invention activities (invented tradition). When I did research in 2020, it was recorded that there were 16 customary groups officially recognized by the government scattered throughout the world 55 customary territories. The number of groups will continue to grow, apparently because cultural inventions are ongoing.

From the case of Taiwan, we can learn how cultural identity is used in the diplomatic process to uphold national identity. Inwardly, the state actively helps communities develop their traditions. It even facilitates efforts to rediscover the roots of traditions that have been lost because for hundreds of years they were forced to assimilate into

Han People. A milestone of support for indigenous communities was when on August 1, 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen apologized to indigenous communities for the treatment of the state that had hurt them for hundreds of years. This statement of attitude was accompanied by various tradition development programs: curricula regarding custom entering and becoming a priority development in the education system, affirmation of indigenous groups in recruitment at nationally renowned universities, opening of traditional museums, traditional TV and radio, parks, and even welfare policies for the community (Hou & Kuo 2019).

One interesting example is when the state is willing to allocate a piece of forest land in the Taitung area to be used as a customary forest area for the *Orang Amis* (The Amis People). In tradition, Amis's son will only be considered an adult if he has managed to catch an animal in a sacred initiation ceremony. This tradition has been stalled for decades because forests are controlled by the state to be managed by forest companies. Now they can start again to carry out the tradition of hunting in a controlled manner, namely during ceremonies, and gain the cultural legitimacy of one's maturity by custom. In turn, the social structure and social unit of the *Amis* get strengthened from time to time (Yeh 2012, 2013).

The case from Taiwan shows how traditions from the past, which may have been lost from memory, can be reinvented and find relevance in today's conditions. I want to give another very popular case from (South) Korea. These days, some of us are very fond of Korean dramas; but this is not a new phenomenon because previously we have also fallen in love with pop songs and Korean cuisine. It seems this is not happening to us alone. Songs, dramas, food (Huong, 2012), and various Korean cultures are in demand by the global community. The world has been invaded by the Korean wave or *hallyu* since the late 1990s, and in the new millennium Korea slowly dominates the world's cultural industry (Howard 2020).

How could this happen? The tradition of singing, playing dramas, cooking, etc. can be used as an industry and then become a very valuable commodity (Lee 2018; Lee, H. K., & Zhang 2021). The community of artists, culturalists, cooks, in short, all Koreans think of showing off their creativity, as if they are free from the shackles of their ancestral customs and traditions. Every part of the community is active in creating superior creations. Not only on the big screen, TV screen, but also on social media (Jin 2018). The state facilitates certain leading areas with infrastructure and funding support (Hong 2019; Burlyuk 2020).

4. Cultural Development through Different Era

The two examples above show how the state plays an important role in cultural development. In Indonesia, cultural policies have also been tried to be implemented from time to time. Jones (2013) revealed that since the Dutch and Japanese colonial times 1900-1945, a kind of cultural policy has been known. The Dutch pioneered cultural policies in the field of education and welfare of the natives through 'ethical politics' in 1901. To be more effective, the colonial government began conducting

research on *adat* so that they could control and direct the development of *adat* (culture) as servants of the lower-class state (Jones 2013:42). In the Japanese era, culture was used as an instrument for mass mobilization not only in the Dutch East Indies but in the Asian countries colonized by Japan. Awareness as an Asian nation with distinctive values compared to Europe is used to build strength.

It should be noted that despite being under Dutch colonial pressure, several scholars and humanists were able to hold a Cultural Congress as a medium to discuss the direction of cultural development in the country of Dutch East Indies colonial. There were seven series of congresses from 1918, 1919, 1921, 1924, 1926, 1929, and 1937 which were held. The debate over whether the natives will become modern westerners like the Dutch and Europeans, or develop the basis of eastern traditions such as the Chinese, Indians, and Japanese, or mixed forms colored the congress. The proposal regarding the cultural orientation surfaced especially in the fields of literature, painting, and education in general (Supardi 2013).

The Old Order era, from 1945 to 1965, was an important period when the Ministry of Education and Culture was drafted and debated. Ki Hadjar Dewantara, one of the most respected Indonesian founding fathers, proposed the name and scope of the ministry, and specifically placed the cultural policy production process in the Directorate General of Culture. A model that we still use with all its dynamics today (Jones 2013). During this period, four cultural congresses were held in 1948, 1951, 1954, and 1957, which were marked by, among other things, the experiment of implementing the idea of democracy in Indonesia. Not separated from the political situation, culture was directed at efforts to develop liberal democracy and western orientation in the period 1945-1957. However, the liberal initiative slowly turned into a more socialist one but with the centralization of power in the figure of the President which lasted until 1965 (Jones 2013).

The New Order era is considered by Jones (2013: 181-2) as a period when cultural processes at the community level are used as programs (development) and policies. This period is also marked by prosperity due to soaring oil prices so that the country has the energy to talk about culture. At the same time, the state has also become such a powerful institution that it feels capable and entitled to direct the dynamics of culture. The issue of national culture with the Taman Mini Indonesia Indah project is an important example. The state gives command over what individuals should and may do at the community level; Jakarta (and Java) became the central command.

After the New Order period which was centralized, our national cultural policies were more colored with ethnic revival and freedom of expression in accordance with the periodization of the Reformation Order. From 1998 until now, starting with the politics of regional autonomy, we have seen the rise of local culture, namely ethnic and culture the rise of self-identification based on ethnicity in almost all places in Indonesia. At the same time, the power of forest, oil and mining reserves is depleting, causing the country to have to look for alternative incomes. One of the most strategic economic modes to be developed is tourism. And, various traditions

and cultural elements are considered capable of becoming the core of tourism activities in the formulation of cultural tourism. In addition, because the progress of information and communication technology is getting faster, we then enter the creative economy mode. Culture, once again, becomes the basis of the creative economy.

After briefly looking at the dynamics of our cultural policy, I argue that culture seems to be seen more as an asset for the nation to be able to prosper. I would not say that I disagree with this opinion. However, we must be critical of this cultural issue. Back to the focus of anthropology which has been paying more attention to the community level, will culture be placed as the capital of the nation or the capital of the community?

I observe some of our cultural policies tend to look at the macro and general aspects. Local initiatives are indeed considered valuable, but in the end, macro ideas are more taken into consideration. The data that I obtained from many opportunities to discuss with officials and implementers at the Directorate General of Culture, artists, cultural observers and socio-cultural activists, shows that there are one or two macro directions that have been aimed at. The direction that has been set is to 'develop culture', especially those related to tradition, to become a commodity to be marketed as a tourist attraction. Almost all of our policy-level efforts to protect local culture eventually come down to whether a custom has the potential to draw tourists. If so, the traditional element should be considered as a possible cultural component to be developed. If not, we'll keep working to make it a tourist magnet in the future. Besides being aimed at tourism, the development of local culture is also carried out by referring to certain standards that come from outside the community context. One of the standards that is currently popular is to identify a tradition and then trying to convince the public that the tradition has the right to be included in the category of national intangible cultural heritage. The relevant agencies are then busy promoting it to be listed as one of the world's intangible cultural heritages in the UNESCO scheme. Currently, there are 7,241 cultural elements from 34 provinces as national intangible cultural heritages.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

While I do not discount the significance of the aforementioned two objectives, I believe that they have the potential to diminish the position and role of the community. Customary-based traditional culture and communities, at the first place, must receive protection from the state. The concept of protection (Bell & Oakley 2014) is given a dynamic meaning, so that the program carried out by the state today (preserving) is correct. In the concept of preservation, according to the cultural policy drawn up by the Directorate General of Culture, there are elements of protection, development, and utilization. The general policies that have been drawn up are correct, but the accompanying goal orientation creates problems.

First, packaging traditions into tourist attractions, one-way with the logic of

transforming traditions into products for sale (Thorsby 2010). This is part of commodification. Is it wrong? Not really. But it does not always have to be done. Second, when a product can be sustainable as a cultural attraction, it is often only the tangible attraction. The meaning of these attractions for the community has often been lost or changed. Third, the parties who are actively involved in the process are mainly those who see more market opportunities. I suspect parties outside the community are more prepared to take this opportunity rather than community members.

The same thing also happens when we place a common goal, which comes from outside the community as the end of the tradition preservation program. In the end, the final product in the form of cultural documents and inventories is more prominent than the cultural process itself.

Taking all this into account, I try to reformulate cultural policies, in the context of Indonesia, which has diverse traditions, during this global change, as an effort to preserve traditions. We develop it primarily by protecting traditional (*adat*) communities and their cultural process. It is not a question of 'extinction' or 'sustainability' but how these traditions can develop in the community, become part of the community, and rediscover its relevance to conditions outside the rapidly growing community. The implementers of cultural policies are certainly state officials, but in their work, they must be closely related and consider local dynamics at the community level. The product of this cultural policy must make the community more empowered based on a dynamically developing tradition.

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