Change Of Social Environment From Development Of Creative Carving Industry In Jepara

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**Abstract**. For centuries, the City of Jepara has been famous for carving crafts that follow the social development of its people. Over time, various creative carving industries emerged in the city of Jepara. The creative carving industry in Jepara has existed since the 1980s. This growth has caused the income level of the people and the city of Jepara to increase, especially with foreign investment from abroad in the furniture sector. This has implications for social changes such as improving people's living standards. On the other hand, the emergence of foreign investors creates panic for local entrepreneurs. In addition, environmental damage can be seen in the crisis of community forests, which causes a scarcity of raw materials for the carving industry. This article was compiled using the literature study method from primary sources in the form of newspapers, books and related research, and presented narratively, and aims to discuss the dynamics of the carving industry in Jepara from the beginning of its emergence until it can affect the social life of the people in the city of Jepara, especially in the social environment.

1. Introduction

Jepara City is a city located in Central Java. This city, known for its carving crafts in Indonesia and abroad, has earned the nickname World Carving City. The results of this carving are in demand in many countries such as Saudi Arabia, Spain, Australia, France and Hong Kong. Its export value has touched 100 billion US Dollars [1]. Carving from Jepara is not something that has just developed. Its history can be seen until the time of the Queen [2]. Motifs such as lotus, animals, and other plants whose shape is disguised, are the hallmark of this city carving. The carving motif that has developed today is a carving motif influenced by Islam [3]. The development of Jepara carving crafts had slumped after Queen Kalinyamat died. After three centuries of adversity, RA Kartini is here to redevelop the carving art in Jepara [4]. This movement began the development of the carving craft industry in Jepara. However, a new chapter of the existence of the Jepara handicraft industry only occurred in the early 1980s [5]. Its presence is so rapid that it has caused many changes in the social life of the people of the city of Jepara [5]. Carving in Jepara has its place in people's lives. This form of ancestral heritage has lifted and improved their standard of living [6].

International trade in wood crafts (furniture) has touched 1% of the global trade [1]. In Indonesia alone, it is the fourth major export commodity after Palm Oil, Garments, and Rubber. This industry is up-and-coming and has a massive market in the world and in Indonesia. Jepara is a carving-producing city and is undoubtedly very profitable. This industry has absorbed so many workers in the city of Jepara. In 2010, it was estimated that Jepara contributed 10% of the export of the carving industry in Indonesia. This was confirmed by the Department of Trade and Industry of the Jepara Regency. As for the Jepara district, the handicraft industry has contributed more than 20% of its income and economy [1]. Industry players and furniture craftsmen in Jepara have touched a significant number of 11,981 business units and continue to grow. This industry is dominated by small cottage industries, and the rest are medium and large industries [1]. Thus, the carving furniture industry in Jepara has brought significant changes to the people of Jepara. What kind of changes has been caused by the growth of this carving industry?

In this study, data collection consisted of primary data and secondary data. The primary data collection method is an in-depth interview. In this case, in-depth interviews were conducted with informants who included actors in the carving craft industry sector, especially craftsmen who produce various carving craft motifs. The selection of informants was carried out on carving craftsmen in Jepara who could tell the process of changing the cultural environment along with the development of the carving industry and international market demand in the sector. Meanwhile, secondary data was collected from written sources, books, published articles, government regulations, and online news. Data that can be collected through interviews and secondary data are then arranged chronologically to explain the process of changing the cultural environment referred to in the research problem.

**2. Method**

This research was carried out using a literature study method divided into several stages: searching and collecting, analyzing and presenting literature. The libraries used are in the form of journals, articles from newspapers, and electronic books. These libraries were obtained from various sources, both online and offline, including Jstor, Google Scholar and the Merdeka Voice Archives Office in Semarang. To find this literature, the author uses keywords such as Jepara, Industry in Jepara, Jepara Furniture, Kartini, and Jepara Carving. In total, there are 24 works of literature that the authors collect. Then after being collected, the writer analyzes this literature and presents it in a coherent and chronological order.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Japanese Industrial Development

The Jepara carving industry has taken root and developed for a long time. However, the beginning of its existence in the international world occurred in 1980. This was marked by the entry of orders from Singapore for 500 carved doors every month [7]. Reportedly, in Singapore in 1980, there were also craftsmen from Jepara who lived there. However, the Indonesian government policy in 1980 prohibited the export of teak logs abroad, plus Singapore, which has limitations in providing wood as the primary raw material for the carving industry. Made the Singapore government have to order carvings to Jepara [7]. Within a year, the number of carving craftsmen in Jepara increased dramatically. From 1979 to 1980, the carving industry in Jepara experienced an increase of almost 200 entrepreneurs, and the number of craftsmen increased to 2000 [8].

Meanwhile, the amount of income contributed by this industry in 1988/1989 reached 36 billion, and for exports, it reached 1.4 million US dollars. In the 8-9 years since its existence in the international market, the number of Jepara carving craftsmen and entrepreneurs has also increased sharply. It was recorded that the increase was 600 business units and more than 9000 craftsmen [9].

The year 1980 was indeed the beginning of the existence of this carving in the international market since the independence of Indonesia. However, if we look at the Jepara carving industry's general development, it can be seen that this industry has developed since Indonesia was not yet independent. Starting from the role of RA Kartini in promoting this industry to the Netherlands, the colonial government's concern with the sustainability of this industry, to the establishment of various forums and cooperatives for the carving industry in Jepara, such as the Carpentry Industry cooperative in Panggang Djepara, the Suka Damai Carpentry Industry Cooperative, these two cooperatives, was founded in 1964 [10]. Five years later, another cooperative was established, namely the Annual Jaya Carving Furniture Cooperative [11]. The establishment of these various cooperatives is a sign of the seriousness and support of the government and entrepreneurs in pursuing and promoting the carving craft industry in Jepara.

The development of this industry certainly has many supporting factors, especially from the formal element, namely the government. The government has played a significant role in developing this carving industry, especially in funding and policies. The government, through state-owned banks such as BRI and BNI, provides many soft loans to the MSMEs of the Jepara carving industry. In 1980, the government-appointed BRI and BNI as capital credit providers to the MSME carving industry. This loan provided by the government is an unsecured loan that only requires a feasibility study. The District Industry Office will conduct the feasibility study [8]. The decade of the 1990s was a time when the Jepara industry was incessantly entering the international market. The development of this industry is shown by the number of handicrafts marketed abroad, especially in America. Furniture in the form of carved wooden beds in Chicago [12] and furniture in the Australian Parliament room such as boxes, tables, etc. [13].

**3.2** . **Entry of Foreign Entrepreneurs**

The entry of Jepara carving crafts into the international market cannot be separated from the role of the Jepara government in holding Jepara carving furniture exhibitions. However, the Jepara government cancelled the carving furniture exhibition due to financial constraints. Through the Minister of Tourism and Telecommunications, Susilo Sudarman, the government of Jepara successfully held an exhibition in Bali [6]. The Japanese government also regularly makes working visits to Korea, Denmark and Germany to promote and attract their investment. From here, many Jepara furniture was bought directly by foreigners from abroad. They come to Jepara and look for furniture that matches their interests through various sources such as exhibitions, showrooms, and exhibitions [24].

The entry of foreigners into Jepara brought its impact on society. Kompas newspaper edition January 17, 1989, noted that at least some foreign nationals live and do carving business in Jepara. They are people from France, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia. This freely run business threatens the lives of local craftsmen and MSMEs. In addition, in terms of licensing, this foreign businessman does not yet have a full operating license and only uses a tourist visa [9]. Those who previously only acted as buyers saw the opportunity from the development of this industry and eventually developed into finishing products, modifying designs, and even carrying out total production for export.

This foreign businessman runs his business by directly visiting the village where the craftsmen are or buying semi-finished materials. They have their craft workshop, and some local craftsmen work for them. The pretext used to justify this activity is to participate in developing and contributing to the government of Jepara and the youth of Jepara in particular [9]. The purpose of investment is to find the maximum profit. To fulfil this, it is necessary to do various ways such as being close to the source of raw materials, the extent of new markets, selling technology and many other things [14]. This foreign investment has two sides, good and bad. On the bright side, foreign investment brought substantial foreign exchange for the government, especially in the early 1990s when foreign investment was loosening up. The bad side of foreign investment like this threatens local entrepreneurs, especially those who do not have capital. The government, as the holder of the regulations, must act as a mediator so that the state can still make a profit, but on the other hand, local entrepreneurs have a guaranteed and sustainable existence. To that end, the Jepara government issued various policies such as equalizing the price of goods or products, raw materials, and prices for both local and foreign entrepreneurs, regular meetings between foreign investors and local entrepreneurs, monitoring their movements, and asking foreign investors to comply with foreign investment regulations. [14]. From 1989 until 1993, 32 foreign entrepreneurs played a role in the Jepara carving industry.

**3.3. Social transformation**

The most visible change from the development of the craft industry in Jepara is, of course, the economic impact. Economic development impacts the development of people's living standards which are becoming more prosperous. This is evidenced by the number of poor people in Jepara who are in the bottom two in Central Java. This condition makes the average community in Jepara live above the poverty line [5]. In addition to living above the poverty line, the increase in people's living standards is shown by the increasing number of elite settlements in the centre of Jepara city. However, this new settlement displaced the old settlers, who eventually became more and more in. This phenomenon led to the emergence of urban villages in downtown Jepara [16]

The city centre of Jepara has turned into a densely populated area with high social inequality and societal inequality. A few parties only enjoy this development, but even so, the income of the people of Jepara, in general, is still relatively good [5]. The indicator can be seen from the wages paid to carve workers. Per day, foreign entrepreneurs who employ carving workers pay them Rp. 2000/day, of which the minimum wage set by the Jepara government is Rp. 1600/day. The greatness of the carving industry in Jepara was evident during the 1998 economic crisis. The value of the rupiah plummeted, making almost all businesses in Indonesia very severely affected. However, this does not apply to the Jepara carving industry. Those who do not work in the carving industry are moving to find opportunities to work in the carving industry. The influx of job seekers affected by the crisis caused the population density level in Jepara carving centres to increase [5]. This makes Jepara a diverse city yet very vulnerable to social inequality, which can lead to conflict. Another gap that occurs due to the development of this carving industry is the absorption of labour. Since foreign investment entered Jepara in the late 1989 and early 1990s, employment has decreased, especially among domestic workers. Foreign workers dominate local workers because they are more agile and tenacious in developing export value and company production [17].

Contract marriage is one of the other changes that occurred due to the development of this carving industry. Contract marriages carried out in Jepara presumably will be very dominant for economic motives. This is often done to maintain the sustainability of the foreign furniture industry in Jepara [18]. However, this contract marriage is seen as a solution to solve the economic problems of married people. The reason is that residents with contract marriages with foreign entrepreneurs will undoubtedly get some kind of incentives and benefits. This concept in history is not new. From a historical point of view, contract marriage is the same as the practice of "Nyai". Nyai herself is an indigenous woman whom the Dutch married to teach them about the way of life in Java. This term is used in Java and Bali. The difference between a contract marriage and marriage is its purpose. Nyai aims more for sexual desire and help, while contract marriage is economical and business [19]. However, even though they are different, these two practices have almost the same thing in common; namely, the process is not complicated, the cost is low, can be abandoned after the contract expires, and the most important thing is the profit generated.

The government knows this phenomenon. However, because the government considers the foreign investment to be able to move the wheels of Jepara furniture exports which have implications for PAD (Regional Original Income), it is considered that in dealing with foreign entrepreneurs, the government is not too severe and tends to be loose. The increase was also significant, from 90-100 containers per month in 1991 to 200 containers per month in 1993 [15].

The rapid development of the carving industry in Jepara also has an unfavourable environmental impact. This impact will again affect the business of the craftsmen in terms of scarcity and the price of raw materials. The massiveness of this industry, not accompanied by AMDAL (Analysis of Environmental Impacts), of course, becomes a separate issue, where the carving industry, in its activities, exploits nature [20]. Reporting from the annual report of the Environmental Service of Jepara Regency in 2007, the environment in Jepara has decreased but is still within tolerable limits. The carving and brick industry is the most significant contributor, where land conversion occurs for carving and brick making. In addition, population growth due to this industry has caused the depletion of green open space in the Jepara Regency. Critical lands are scattered in all sub-districts in Jepara, with the leading cause being land conversion for industry and housing [20]. The main contributors are the construction of factories, houses, and workshops that seem original and ignore AMDAL rules. This has caused an environmental crisis that has an impact on the shortage of teak wood supplies as the primary raw material.

The lack of materials has led to an increase in the price of teak wood as the primary material for making carvings. Prices of raw materials that experience inflation and can rise twice in 1 year have an impact on taking village wood or wood from community forests [21]. This wood is taken from community forests in Jepara, Semarang, Kalimantan, etc. Excessive timber extraction from community forests has caused community forests in Jepara to experience a crisis. The crisis that hit the community forests in Jepara was caused by the taking of wood that was not proportional to the replanting [21]. This crisis is further exacerbated by illegal loggers who cut wood illegally and then sell it to craftsmen [22]. At first, the founders faced a dilemma with stopping this cycle; on the one hand, this threatened the preservation of natural resources, but on the other hand, the carving is the economic breath of the Jepara Regency [22]. To overcome this confusion, the government as a regulator issued regional regulation no 3 of 2004 to anticipate illegal timber [23]. This step is considered to be the best step that can be taken to combat illegal timber, but on the one hand, it does not kill the craftsmen's business. This wood problem has had an impact on the ability of the Jepara carving industry to compete in the global market. The percentage is quite far compared to its competitors, namely Vietnam and China. As reported from Suara Merdeka on September 2, 2004, the export percentage of Jepara carvings only reached 60%. This percentage is far lower than that of China and Vietnam, which reached 200% and 180%, respectively. This impacts the decline in the value of exports and profits for entrepreneurs [23].

4. **Conclusion**

The rapid development of the carving industry in Jepara has caused many social changes in its society. This change is slowly but surely, starting from the influx of foreign investment, which causes panic and competition between foreign and local entrepreneurs. Lack of strict government control and higher wages for workers is one of the causes. This foreign businessman also brought the impact of the rise of contract marriages. Contract marriages occur due to economic motives so that foreign entrepreneurs can borrow the names of indigenous people. The rapidity of this industry and its resilience to local and global situations make the carving industry a magnet for residents from outside Jepara who are interested in improving their lives from this industry. From here, the city of Jepara becomes congested, but the density can still be tolerated. Even so, social inequality is still visible here, where urban villages are rife in Jepara. Indeed, the carving industry has made progress, but not everyone has enjoyed it. A few people only feel the impact. However, from this industry, people can still live kissing, thus making Jepara out of the poverty line.

The development of this industry has declined due to scarcity and rising prices of raw materials. This has led to illegal logging in community forests in Jepara. This logging is supported by rogue buyers (craftsmen) who want to make more profit using illegal wood. This incident caused the export percentage of Jepara carvings to foreign countries to be less competitive with carvings from Vietnam and China. This influence causes a decrease in the profits of handicraft entrepreneurs. The government finally issued a Regional Regulation of 2004 no three regarding illegal timber to overcome this.

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